

LADY CAV SOFTBALLERS GUT-PUNCHED BY LAST-INNING DYER COUNTY HOME RUN



Above: Crockett pitcher Anna Stallings deserved a better fate, as only three of the nine Lady Choctaw runs were earned. (Photo by Ron Barry)

By Ron Barry

Just when Crockett County softball fans were allowing themselves to wonder that maybe the road to a district championship DOESN'T go through Dyer County... the momentum shifted like an 8.0-Richter Scale earthquake.

And if you're leading the Lady Choctaws early on in a game, but you crack the door open just a little bit... they're likely to kick it down on the way in.

That's exactly what happened Tuesday afternoon in Alamo when the Lady Cavaliers - up 7-1 with two outs in the top of the third inning - didn't make a play that would have ended Dyer County's at-bat with that same 7-1 margin still intact. Instead, when the frame ended, it was 7-4 and the entire nature of the game had changed.

After four innings, it was 7-5. And even when the sixth frame had ended with Crockett increasing its lead to 8-5, it didn't feel safe. The Lady Choctaws sent just seven batters to plate in the fifth and sixth, and six of them had made solid contact.

So when the top of the seventh began with Dyer County's Rylee Key reaching on an infield error, even the optimists were getting nervous. Then Emma Wray reached on another infield error, and that would bring the tying run to the plate in the person of Katie Caldwell - whose error in left field in the bottom of the sixth had allowed the Lady Cavs to tack on their insurance run.

Looking for redemption, Caldwell found it, slamming a 1-and-0 pitch well over the center-field fence to deadlock the battle at 8-8. And there were still no outs.

Allie Ables followed with a single to right, and courtesy runner Emma McGavock entered for her, taking second on a successful sacrifice bunt by Natalie Armstrong. McGavock moved to third when Kennedy Hill grounded out. Two outs, go-ahead run at third base.

Dyer County's Molly Woody then hit a soft line drive up the middle that just trickled off the edge of a lunging Piper White's glove, chasing home the tally that made it 9-8, Lady Choctaws. Crockett went down in order in the bottom of the seventh, and that was the ballgame.

By the way: For Crockett fans looking to the future, none of the Lady Choctaws mentioned thus far are seniors.

The 9-8 decision was a major gut-punch to Coach Baron Jimmerson's crew, but if nothing else, it showed that the Lady Cavaliers can go toe-to-toe with the district favorite. Any play going either way could have completely swung the game's outcome.

Dyer County jumped to a quick 1-0 advantage in the top of the first on Wray's RBI double, but the Lady Cavs bounced back with three of their own in the bottom of the frame.

With one out, White lined a single to right field and stole second three pitches later. Wesley Thornton drilled a hard grounder to short that went for an error, putting runners on second and third for Madison Stitts, who promptly singled to center to drive them home. Stitts moved all the way around to third when the throw to the plate evaded the catcher.

Maddie Haynes smacked a hard grounder to short and reached on yet another error as Stitts came home to make it 3-1.

Crockett pitcher Anna Stallings cruised through the second, and her teammates cranked up the offense in the bottom of the frame. Madison Solis led off with a long fly ball to left that reached the top of the fence railing as Lady Choctaw outfielder Abbie Giddens crashed into it trying to make a play, and the collision knocked her to the ground, dazed, as Solis circled the bases for an inside-the-park home run.

The game was delayed for a few minutes as Lady Cav trainer Carah-Beth Beck attended to Gibbons in the outfield, and the Dyer County senior was driven back to the dugout in a golf cart and seemingly was okay, with an ice pack applied to the side of her face.

As play resumed, after a groundout, Crockett's Hannah Carter beat out a bunt and took second on a wild throw. White followed with a long triple in the right-center gap to score Carter, and Thornton followed with a line triple to almost the identical place to score White. With two outs, Haynes singled Thornton home, and the hosts led 7-1.

In the top of the third, Stallings induced two quick outs by sandwiching a groundout and a fielder's choice around a single by Evie Rogers.

But then Wray hit a hard ground ball that produced an infield error, and that proverbial door had been cracked.

Caldwell walked to load the bases and Ables - just a freshman - fouled off six pitches before lining a single to center to knock in a pair and make it 7-3. Natalie Armstrong doubled in another tally before the uprising ended.

Crockett lost a baserunner in the bottom of the third by virtue of leaving first base too soon on a pitch, and the nervousness was beginning to build.

In the fourth, singles by Gibbons and Key pushed across another run, cutting the margin to 7-5. The Lady Cavs had a runner at third with just one out in the bottom of the inning, but couldn't get her in as the tension mounted.

Stallings zipped through the fifth despite a couple of hard-hit balls, but Crockett also went down in order. Dyer County didn't score in the sixth, but the hosts added an insurance run. Solis reached on an error, and Chloe Adkisson entered as a courtesy runner, but was still at first two outs later. But White blooped a double to left field and Adkisson - racing around third as Caldwell kicked the ball in the outfield - zoomed home to make it 8-5 as White hustled around to third. Thornton then smoked a line drive, but it went right at shortstop Armstrong.

That set up the fateful seventh, and the Lady Choctaws engineered their comeback.

White led Crockett's offense with a single, double, and triple in three official trips, scoring twice. Haynes and Stitts had two RBIs each, and Carter added a couple of hits. The Lady Cavs dropped to 23-8 with the defeat. Only three of the nine Dyer County runs were earned. Moody pitched the final four innings for the visitors in relief of Key to post the victory.

Crockett will travel to Munford Thursday for a 5:30 contest.

BASEBALL: Despite three hits apiece by Callan Willis and Carter Winders, the Cavalier diamonders lost a 5-2 decision to district front-runner South Gibson in Alamo Tuesday.

Both teams scored twice in the first. Cade Allen doubled in a run and Cameron Alford singled in another for the Hornets, while Willis and Bryson Vance led off with singles for the Cavs and an error on a Brady Fronabarger grounder scored the first Crockett run and Winders singled home the second.

Crockett had men on second and third with one out in the third, but couldn't score, and left another runner in scoring position in the fourth.

A fifth-inning, bases-loaded fielder's choice grounder broke the tie for South Gibson in the fifth. An ensuing infield error allowed the final two runs to race home. The Cavs wasted a fifth-inning double by Winders and also left runners on first and third in the seventh to fall to 11-11 on the season.

Crockett plays at Dyersburg Wednesday at 4:30 in another district clash.

MIDDLE SCHOOL BASEBALL: Coach Tyler Mosier's CCMS Cavaliers defeated Martin Westview to claim the conference tournament championship Tuesday night in Medina. Cole Summar, Will Dodds, and Rylan Redding were named to the All-District Team.



Above: The fateful blow: Katie Caldwell's 7th-inning home run (the ball is at the top left of the scoreboard) sails over the fence as Crockett outfielder Gabby Bursey runs out of room. The three-run blast tied the game 8-8 for Dyer County. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Crockett's Madison Solis crashes this long fly ball to left field, which ended up being an inside-the-park home run when Dyer County's Abbie Gibbons crashed into the fence railing trying to make a play on it. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Madison Solis -- while everyone's attention is focused on the dazed outfielder on the ground in left field -- continues to circle the bases for an inside-the-park home run... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: ... while Crockett trainer Carah-Beth Beck tends to Lady Choctaw outfielder Abbie Gibbons as coaches and teammates from both squads look on. Gibbons would be all right, although she left the game to apply an ice bag to the side of her head. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: Lady Cav shortstop Piper White charges in to make a tough play on a chopped ball... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: ... and then gathers it in to make a throw while on the run... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Piper White also stole this base, getting in ahead of a bobbled tag applied by Dyer County shortstop Natalie Armstrong. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: ... as she guns down the Dyer County runner at first base. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Hannah Carter races hard to first base to beat out an infield hit in Tuesday's district duel with Dyer County. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Wesley Thornton slides safely into home plate as part of a three-run first inning for the Lady Cavs, scoring on a Madison Stitts single. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Lady Cav outfielder Sadie Hoover chases down this double by the Lady Choctaws' Emma Wray and fires it back in to prevent even more damage. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Maddie Haynes is all smiles as she's congratulated by first base coach Tre Jimmerson after knocking in a run with a single Tuesday. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Piper Smith hustles down the first base line to try to beat out a grounder as her Crockett teammates look on from the far dugout. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Crockett third baseman Madison Stitts fires across the diamond to beat Dyer County's Natalie Armstrong to first base, where Piper Smith gathered it in for the out. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Courtesy runner Chloe Adkisson's speed gained Crockett an insurance run in the sixth when she scored all the way from first base when Piper White guided a bloop double into left field. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: This scorching bullet by Wesley Thornton almost took off the head of Lady Choctaw shortstop Natalie Armstrong, but she speared it in self-defense to prevent Crockett from adding another sixth-inning run. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: The Crockett County Middle School baseball team won its season-ending Conference Tournament Tuesday night, defeating Martin Westview for the championship. (Photo by Beth Williams)



Right: Three CCMS players -- Cole Summar, Will Dodds, and Rylan Redding -- were named to the All-District Team. (Photo by Beth Williams)