

CAVS CONQUER KIRBY 7-0; BEGIN STATE SOCCER TOURNAMENT PLAY TUESDAY

By Ron Barry

If your team is playing in a must-win sectional match for a berth in the TSSAA State Soccer Tournament, it's a pretty positive sign if your assistant coach is on the sidelines making hotel reservations in Murfreesboro before the first half has even ended.

That's how dominant Crockett County's Cavaliers were Saturday afternoon as they crushed visiting Memphis Kirby 7-0 even though the starters barely played half of the match time. And assistant coach Carli Branson – the main architect of a program that has gone from scratch to one of West Tennessee's best – was on the phone making sure the Cavaliers had a place to set up shop when they begin State play Tuesday.

For first-year head coach Joey Soriano, the State berth has been the goal all along. Now that his team has earned it, he wants to “up” the expectation level.

“We want to get past the first round, because that hasn't happened before,” he said. “And I think if we play our game, and our guys work together and keep doing the things that got us this far, we can do all right and compete in Murfreesboro. And if we end up in the championship game, so be it.”

Crockett's play in the region championship match (a 4-2 overtime win over South Gibson) and the sectional – so dominant against Kirby that the Cavs split time between goalkeepers Noah Mayfield and Allan Marquez, and neither had to make a single save – shows that the club is warming to the notion of performing well on bigger stages.

The biggest stage of all begins Tuesday at the Siegel Soccer Complex in Murfreesboro.

The eight Class AA teams in the field will be seeded later Sunday according to a formula that uses a team's winning percentage, its opponents' winning percentages, and its opponents' opponents' winning percentages. Goal differential plays no role in the formula.

If that sounds complicated, the TSSAA has been posting the numbers on its website. The latest rankings (as of May 10) – if they don't change significantly when updated – would likely give Crockett at least the #3 seed. The top team in the ratings is Station Camp, and it has gained a State berth. So has the #2 team, South Doyle. Crockett, ranked sixth in the May 10 listing, is the next-highest qualifier to have gained a berth.

The others, with their May 10 rankings: Franklin County (7), South Gibson (10), Fulton (13), and Cocke County (26). The final spot will go to the winners of Saturday's match between Chester County (22) and Hume-Fogg (16) – no result was available at post time.

All eight teams in the field will begin play Tuesday. Two matches are at 4:00 and two are at 4:30, all at the Siegel Complex. The semifinals are on Wednesday and the championship match is on Friday.

For Crockett's leading scorer Luke Carter, Saturday's victory in the sectional puts the Cavs right where they wanted to be.

“Going to State has been our goal since the season started,” Carter said. “It doesn't surprise me that we made it. This team has the talent and the chemistry to do well there. We play for each other – there's no selfishness out there. We root for each other and play together. So we're excited to be going back.”

Carter scored three of the Cavs' goals Saturday, as did Chris Cerda. The two feed off each other constantly and seem at times to communicate almost telepathically, as on the opening goal against Kirby when Carter dribbled in strongly from the left side, drew the goalkeeper to his path, and then deftly slipped the ball right of the now-helpless keeper, where Cerda swooped in from out of nowhere to bang it into the net.

That would be all the scoring Crockett needed, but the assault didn't stop there. That first tally came with 28:32 left in the first half. Just 19 seconds later, Carter took a beautiful feed from Cam Martin and hammered it home for a 2-0 advantage.

Less than five minutes later, after a foul was called in the vicinity of the 35-yard-line, Braulio Marquez delivered a perfectly-placed lofty free kick to just in front of the keeper, where Cerda headed it into the net for a 3-0 edge.

It took less than three more minutes for Cerda to collect the hat trick (three goals), punching in a deflection after Marquez had threaded a pass through the middle of a box full of traffic. At that point, Soriano began substituting liberally, taking the opportunity to let his starters stay hydrated on the hot turf as they took periodic breaks from the action.

With 1:09 remaining before halftime, Angel Garcia cranked a cannon shot from the top of the box that powered its way right through the keeper's hands, making the Cavalier margin 5-0 at the intermission.

Most of the starters didn't return until the second half passed its midway point. Then, Carter took a feed from Max Utley and popped in a shot from the left side at the 17:31 mark. Four minutes later, he completed his hat trick when he headed in another perfect corner kick from Braulio Marquez.

Kirby rarely moved the ball past midfield. When they did, it seemed either Josue Martinez, Utley, Brandon Carcamo, Diego Marquez, or Mason Wood was there to send it back the other way. Mayfield and Allan Marquez could have taken extended naps during their stints in the Cav goal and it wouldn't have mattered.

Crockett (now 14-4) and chief rival South Gibson have both advanced to State play out of District 13-AA. The Hornets went on the road and disposed of Brighton 2-1 Saturday. The Cavaliers welcome any donations to assist with the financial obligations of sending the team to the State event. Details are available on the "Crockett County High School Soccer" Facebook page.



Left: Brandon Carcamo (14) shows quite a bit of vertical leap power as he heads this ball back from where it came, as teammates Daniel Grajeda (left) and Angel Garcia retreat to provide support if needed. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Braulio Marquez (6) uses his magic feet to thread his way between Kirby defenders. Marquez once again collected a pair of assists with perfectly-placed corner kicks that could be headed in for goals. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Cam Martin recorded an assist on the Cavaliers' second goal against Kirby, guiding a perfect pass to Luke Carter for the first of his three scores in the match. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Luke Carter (1) displays the instant direction-changing ability he has with his body and with the ball, while remaining aware of his teammates' locations. Carter netted three more goals in the 7-0 conquest of Kirby. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: First-year head coach Joey Soriano feels his Cavaliers have a legitimate chance to make a decent State Tournament run, if "we play together and do the things we've been doing so far." (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Chris Cerda -- while not scoring on this play, despite the spectacular effort -- still nailed three shots into the net for yet another hat trick in helping send the Cavs to the State Tournament. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: It seemed like every time Kirby managed to get the ball past midfield, Josue Martinez -- here clearing a pass toward Hutsen Stephens -- was there to boot it back. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Crockett scored its seventh goal when Luke Carter (1) headed in this corner kick from the always accurate Braulio Martinez. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Back line defender Max Utley actually picked up an assist on this play when Kirby allowed him to dribble significantly up the field before delivering a sharp pass to Luke Carter, who banged it in for the sixth goal. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: The closest Kirby ever came to threatening a shot came on this corner kick, when it was headed over the goalpost by a Kirby attacker. Defending for the Cavs are Jacob Wede (left), Uriel Diaz (22), Hutsen Stephens (standing sideways), Allan Marquez (00 in goal), Josue Martinez (12), Max Utley (back right), and George Goldsby (front right). (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Chris Cerda had a physical day on the muggy afternoon, sliding in here in an attempt to slow down a rare Kirby rush. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Chris Cerda scored Crockett's first goal when Luke Carter (left) drew the defense to his side and then dropped this excellent pass over to his oncoming teammate, who hammered it in. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Goal #2 occurred when Luke Carter took an accurate feed from Cam Martin and slammed it the sliding Kirby goalkeeper. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Goal #3 came when Chris Cerda headed in a Braulio Marquez free kick and was immediately greeted by Luke Carter for another celebration. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Goal #4 was tallied when Chris Cerda (10) corralled a deflection and banged it through all this traffic, completing his hat trick for the day. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Angel Garcia scored Goal #5 on a powerful boot that slithered right through the gloved hands of the Kirby goalkeeper... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... and then removed his shoe to simulate a phone call delivering the news to his loved ones. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: When you see this look on Luke Carter's face, you know he thinks he's got an open shot. On Goal #6, he took a feed from Max Utley, lined it up, and... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... ripped this bullet past the falling keeper and an awed Kirby defender. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: By this point -- as Luke Carter is congratulated by Brandon Carcamo (14) and Braulio Marquez (6), the Kirby defenders have whiplash from not knowing what's hit them. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Jathen Young (3) and Eduardo Galvez (4) team up to turn a ball away from a Kirby player and steer it back in the offensive direction. (Photo by Ron Barry)

