

CAVALIER SOCCER SETS SIGHTS ON REGION TOURNAMENT FOLLOWING DISTRICT RUNNER-UP FINISH

By Ron Barry

Sometimes in the wide, wide world of sports, you can get carried away a little too early.

One minute your team might be doing a crowd-pleasing Macarena dance after taking a 3-0 first-half lead in the district soccer tournament – but 50 minutes later, you might be walking off that same pitch having lost 4-3 and trying to figure out what just happened.

That scenario came to life Thursday night at Cavalier Stadium in Alamo. Crockett County scored its third goal of the match when Luke Carter headed in a perfectly-placed corner kick by Braulio Marquez with 10:52 remaining in the opening half, and both of those players were joined by four teammates as they sauntered over to the grandstand sideline to perform the moves from the 1996 hit that topped the pop charts for 14 weeks.

Maybe it was the dance; maybe it was a shift of strategy; maybe it was sheer willpower. But something flipped a switch on the South Gibson County Hornets, who netted a goal on a Cav defensive miscue with 4:19 left before intermission, giving the visitors a sliver of hope. And once the second half began – except for a couple of near-miss shots by Crockett – it was all South Gibson, as the Hornets scored three more times to escape with the 4-3 decision that gave them the District 13-AA Tournament championship.

“We tried some things, and made some mistakes,” said Crockett coach Joey Soriano. “South Gibson is a very good team. If you give them opportunities, they’re going to take them, and they did tonight. We just have to reset for the region tournament. We had bigger goals than a district title anyway, and we’re still playing. We’ll be okay.”



Above: In the end, Crockett took home the runner-up trophy for the district tournament -- but still advances into the Region 7-AA event against Haywood next week. (Photo by Ron Barry)

The district defeat sends the Cavs on the road for the opening match of the Region 7-AA Tournament. They'll journey to Brownsville to face Haywood at a date and time yet to be announced. Haywood downed Fayette Ware 3-2 for the District 14-AA crown.

Crockett built its early lead against South Gibson when Daniel Grajeda headed a Marquez corner kick into the netting with 20:55 left in the first half. The hosts scored again almost immediately when Carter was fouled inside the goal box and converted the ensuing penalty kick at the 20:19 mark. And when he headed in the other Marquez corner kick for Crockett's third goal, Carter and company looked to be on their way to a blowout.

But South Gibson's club – rather than hang its collective heads – began to put more emphasis on its offensive attack, and the Hornets finally broke through with a penalty kick just before the intermission. And after that conversion, the differences in their energy level and determination were obvious. South Gibson tallied again at the 33:25 mark, the 15:29 mark (on a bending corner kick that went curving right into the goal over the head of Crockett goalkeeper Allan Marquez), and the 10:58 mark.

The final goal came right after Crockett's Carter – named after the match as the District 13-AA Offensive Player of the Year – rattled a shot that was deflected off the side post on a diving save. Carter barely missed another opportunity just minutes later when he tried to punch in a shot from within a yard of the side post, but the Hornets were able to make the save again.

Crockett fell to 11-4 with the defeat, but may get another opportunity against South Gibson if both win their semifinal region matchups.



Above: Crockett's Daniel Grajeda -- on a perfectly-placed corner kick from Braulio Marquez -- races inside of South Gibson goalkeeper Kooper McFarland and... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... (seen from the opposite side of the pitch) heads the ball into the net for the first goal of the District 13-AA Tournament championship match. (Photo by Robin Waddey)



Below: Daniel Grajeda's header goes high into the left corner of the net to give Crockett a 1-0 lead over South Gibson at the 20:55 mark of the opening half. (Photo by Robin Waddey)



Above: Grajeda is immediately swarmed by teammates Adrian Calderon (17) and Luke Carter to celebrate the match's initial score. (Photo by Robin Waddey)

Right: Luke Carter -- named the District 13-AA Offensive Player of the Year -- charges forward to launch his penalty kick after he was pushed down from behind while in the goal box with 20:19 remaining in the first half. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: Luke Carter watches with intensity as his penalty kick eludes South Gibson goalkeeper Kooper McFarland ... (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: ... and is immediately embraced by Adrian Calderon in celebration as Crockett goes up on the Hornets 2-0. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Braulio Marquez delivered two assists to his Crockett teammates with outstanding corner kicks, ... (Photo by Robin Waddey)

Below: ... including the one that set off this scoring celebration with Luke Carter and Adrian Calderon as the host Cavaliers pushed their lead to 3-0 with 10:52 remaining before intermission. (Photo by Robin Waddey)



Above: Luke Carter's second goal, and Crockett's third of the game, triggered this "Macarena" dance celebration over in front of the grandstands. But there were still 50 minutes left to play, and South Gibson dominated the match from that point on. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: ... for Cav goalkeeper Allan Marquez to corral the eventual shot with this diving save as Max Utley (21) arrives to support Martinez. (Photo by Robin Waddey)



Above: A hustling Josue Martinez (12) helped to prevent one South Gibson goal by delaying the Hornet attacker long enough ... (Photo by Robin Waddey)





Above: Crockett's Chris Cerda (10) tried to head this corner kick over to Luke Carter (1) for a better shot attempt, but the South Gibson defensive traffic shut down the opportunity. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Luke Carter had one more chance late in the match to try to tie it for the Cavs by tucking this attempt just inside the left post, ... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: Crockett defender Mason Wood (7) moves the ball upfield in an attempt to start a counterattack against the Hornets. (Photo by Robin Waddey)



Below: Camden Martin (5), with Braulio Marquez running alongside, advances the ball toward midfield as the Cavaliers try to muster some offense. (Photo by Robin Waddey)



Left: ... but South Gibson goalkeeper Brooks Waugh, who replaced Kooper McFarland for the second half, was able to get his body in front of Carter's last-gasp effort. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Angel Garcia -- intensity written all over his face -- prepares to receive a corner kick as Crockett's time was running out. (Photo by Ron Barry)

