CAVALIERS FALL AS DYER COUNTY SNUFFS OUT TWO-POINT CONVERSION TRY



Above: Kris Phillips -- Crockett's backup quarterback in prior games -- caught six passes for 88 yards in his debut as a primary wide receiver against Dyer County. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Kevin Ward knows the second-guessers out there will be having a field day with his decision to attempt a two-point conversion with 33 seconds left in Friday night's game with Dyer County.

Crockett County's veteran coach had just watched his Cavaliers – battling valiantly despite missing a pair of its keystone players – stage a 48-yard drive for a touchdown that put them within an extra point of tying the Choctaws and presumedly sending the contest into overtime.

But the excitement generated in the moment quickly died down when Dyer County's defense – predictably heavily stacked at the line of scrimmage – burst through the Crockett line to handcuff Cav running back DK Woods before he could even gather any momentum toward the goal line.

To add insult to injury, the Choctaws' burly lineman Nick Epperson then grabbed the ensuing online kick in the air and rambled 55 yards straight into the opposite end zone, clinching the visitors' 28-20 victory and continuing Crockett's recent history of bad fortune with Dyer County football.

www.crockettcavs.net

Ward – not one to dodge questions – addressed the decision to go for two immediately after the intense matchup.

"I thought we had them a little bit back on their heels," he said, "so to go for the win rather than the tie felt like the right thing to do. We had the momentum going in our favor, and I had confidence in our guys that we could get it done."

Ward also addressed the play call, a simple handoff from quarterback Ben Burgess to Woods, who was standing next to him as the snap was taken and had virtually nowhere to go when six Choctaws crashed straight through Crockett's barrier, exactly in the direction of Woods.



Above: Cav linebacker Jake Knox (35), Garner Brown (behind the runner), and Randle Perry (50) combine to put a hit on Dyer County workhorse back Bryce Fulton (22). (Photo by Ron Barry)

Burgess had earlier successfully converted a two-point play by running straight up the middle untouched, and had also – in the same way – scored the touchdown that brought about the play in question.

"I understand why the call will be questioned," Ward said. "But DK's our guy. Anyone that has watched us play for the last three years knows how strong he is. He usually either knocks down tacklers himself or drags them for a few yards when he gets hit, so we were confident he could get us two yards there. It's certainly no knock against Ben, but DK is so much harder to get down. The defense just made the play it had to make. We'll live with it, and use it to make us better. There's a long way to go in the season. I'm proud of the way our players battled tonight, in the face of a lot of adversity."

Part of that adversity was self-inflicted; another part was the result of the elements, as the near 90-degree heat took its toll in the abnormally high number of players who were affected by cramping. Self-inflicted were three first-half lost fumbles, two on kickoff returns – which accounted for the fact that Dyer County ran 66 offensive plays to 49 for the hosts. Also self-inflicted was the personal foul penalty called against Dre Walker that negated a Crockett touchdown and earned him an ejection from the game, with still over a half to play. The Cavs also lost the services of key lineman Zerafin Guardian, who left the field on a stretcher due to heat-related circumstances.

"Dre obviously is a big part of our game plan," Ward said, "and to lose a senior leader like that didn't help the situation for us. I'm proud of the way Dre handled it afterward; he was on the sidelines encouraging our players, talking strategy to them, and keeping them pumped up. I'm not proud of what he did to get sent to the sideline."

The narrow loss continues a streak of mistake-laden defeats at the hand of the Choctaws, who have become Crockett's biggest gridiron nemesis in the last few seasons.

"For whatever reason, we have not played well against Dyer County in the last few years," Ward said. "I don't think it's anything they're doing. We just make mistakes against them that we haven't made against other teams. We talked about it all week in practice; maybe we talked about it too much. But we still had a chance to overcome the mistakes at the end, and that's what encourages me for the rest of our schedule."

The Choctaws took the game's first lead when they stopped Walker on a fourth-down rushing play at midfield on Crockett's opening possession and then launched a 49-yard touchdown drive capped by a 25-yard scoring pass from Landon Daniels to Grant West – on a fourth-and-nine situation.

The Cavs fumbled the ensuing kickoff right back, but Cav defensive back Gabe Dupree offset that mistake by intercepting Daniels on the very next play, igniting a 63-yard march by the hosts aided by two major Dyer County penalties. Burgess made a 10-yard run to the one, from where Woods plowed in for the score. Crockett's extra-point try sailed wide right, and it looked like the nemesis "jinx" was on again.

It looked even more foreboding when the Cav defense forced a punt, but muffed it and gave it right back to the visitors at the Crockett 28. After a short pass completion – Dyer County's bread-and-butter for most of the first quarter, before they strangely abandoned it – Ke'Anthony Barbee ran for the final 20 yards. It was 14-6 with 11:22 remaining in the opening half.



Above: Crockett's Gabe Dupree (29) returns his second interception of the game (and fourth of the young season) when Dyer County's Landon Daniels tried to force a pass into coverage by Ian Greenberg (19), Demo Pickens (3), Jake Knox (35), and Dupree. (Photo by Ron Barry)

The Cavs killed their own next possession with a bad center snap that caused a 13-yard loss, and then again fumbled the ball away on a punt return minutes later. But a sack of Daniels by Guardian forced another Choctaw punt, and this one was shanked for only eight yards, setting Crockett up at the Cav 41.

Burgess quickly connected with newly-employed wide receiver Kris Phillips – previously the Cavs' backup quarterback – on a 47-yard pass play down to the Choctaw eight. Phillips would catch six passes in the contest for 88 yards and also made an interception of his own.

A Burgess run on the next play took it to the two, from where he ran right up the middle into the end zone on the next play – only to have the touchdown negated when Walker and a Dyer County defender he had aggressively blocked got into it. Even though the Cav senior was openly shoved after the block, when the penalty flags flew, Crockett was docked 10 yards and Walker was ejected. A resulting fourth-down pass reception was stopped well short of the goal line, and the teams entered the halftime break with Dyer County still up 14-6.

Another Dupree pass interception – he now has four in the season's first four games – ended another Choctaw drive deep in Crockett territory in the third quarter, and Woods cut behind a timely block by Randle Perry and zoomed 72 yards for a touchdown shortly thereafter. Burgess ran it straight up the gut for the two-point conversion, and the battle remained tied at 14-all until late in the fourth period.

Crockett missed a scoring chance when a perfectly-thrown Burgess pass was dropped on a third-down play past midfield. Following exchanged punts, the Choctaws mounted a 47-yard touchdown drive that concluded with a five-yard toss from Daniels to Devin Hayward with just 1:59 to play.

The Cavs then mounted their countering scoring drive, with Burgess crashing into the end zone from two yards out with only 33 seconds to go. But Dyer County stuffed the two-point conversion try, the ensuing kickoff was returned all the way, and that was that.

The Choctaws are now 4-0 and sit atop the Region 7-4A standings, the only unbeaten team remaining in the newly-drawn eight-team grouping. Crockett (3-1 overall) is one of six teams tied for second with 1-1 marks; the Cavs' next opponent, Hardin County, is the only club that is now 0-2 in the region.

Game Statistics: Dyer Co 28, Crockett 20
Total Offense (Plays-Yards): CC 49-277; **DC** 66-231. **First Downs: CC** 13; **DC** 13.
Penalties-Yards: CC 2-15; **DC** 6-65.
Punts-Yards-Avg: CC 4-115-28.8; **DC** 5-144-28.8. **Fumbles-Lost: CC** 4-3; **DC** 1-0.
CC Rushing (Carries-Yards): DK Woods 10-82, Demo Pickens 3-42, Ben Burgess 10-21, Dre Walker 3-7, Karsen Burgess 1-4, Squirt Pickens 2-2, Amarion Hobson 1-0, bad center snap 1-(-13), Team 31-145. **DC Rushing:** Bryce Fulton 22-81, Ke'Anthony Barbee 4-23, Landon Daniels 8-(-4), bad center snap 1-(-5), Team 35-95.
CC Passing (Completions-Attempts-Yards-Interceptions): Ben Burgess 12-18-132-0. **DC Passing:** Landon Daniels 19-31-136-3.
CC Receiving (Catches-Yards): Kris Phillps 6-88, Squirt Pickens 2-29, DK Woods 2-10, Karsen Burgess 2-5. **DC Receiving:** Grant West 5-54 (1 TD), Barbee 4-30, Kaleb Mahome 5-29, Devin Hayward 4-20 (1 TD), Fulton 1-3.
CC Pass Interceptions (Int-Yards): Gabe Dupree 2-4, Kris Phillips 1-5. **DC Pass Interceptions:** None.
CC Fumble Recoveries: None. **DC Fumble Recoveries**: 3.
CC Kickoff Returns (Returns-Yards): Amarion Hobson 1-17, Brody Parlow 1-5. **DC Kickoff Returns:** Nick Epperson 1-55 (1 TD), Hayward 1-20.
CC Punt Returns: Demo Pickens 2-18. **DC Punt Returns:** None.
CC Scoring (TD-2PC-FG-XP-Points): DK Woods 2-0-0-0-12, Ben Burgess 1-1-0-0-8, Team 3-1-0-0-20. DC Scoring: 4-0-0-4-28.

The Linescore:
DC 7 7 0 14 - 28
CC 6 0 8 6 - 20
Dyer Co – Grant West 25 pass from Landon Daniels (kick good)
Crockett – DK Woods 1 run (kick failed)
Dyer Co – Ke'Anthony Barbee 20 run (kick good)
Crockett – Woods 72 run (Ben Burgess run)
Dyer Co – Devin Hayward 5 pass from Daniels (kick good)
Crockett – Burgess 2 run (run failed)
Dyer Co – Nick Epperson 55 kickoff return (kick good)

Season Statistics (4 games; 3-1 record; 1-1 region):
Total Offense (Plays-Yards): CC 136-1,145; OPP 171-536.
First Downs: CC 42; OPP 30.
Penalties-Yards: CC 16-110; OPP 24-214.
Punts-Yards-Avg: CC 7-201-28.7; OPP 14-385-27.5 (1 blocked).
Fumbles-Lost: CC 7-6; OPP 6-4.
CC Rushing (Carries-Yards): DK Woods 41-344, Gabe Dupree 3-100, Ben Burgess 20-100, Demo Pickens 13-88, Khalan Thomas 6-75, Squirt Pickens 7-47, Dre Walker 6-29, Davis Porter 2-18, Kris Phillips 2-17, Karsen Burgess 1-4, Chris Vance 2-1, Chris Mann 1-(-1), bad snap 2-(-31), Team 107-791. OPP Rushing: 100-173.
CC Passing (Completions-Attempts-Yards-Interceptions): Ben Burgess 24-35-397-0. OPP Passing: 39-71-363-8.
CC Receiving (Catches-Yards): Squirt Pickens 5-152 (2 TD), Kris Phillips 6-88, Dre Walker 3-87 (1 TD), Karsen Burgess 7-51, DK Woods 3-19, OPP Receiving: 39-363 (5 TD).
CC Pass Interceptions (Int-Yards): Gabe Dupree 4-24, Ian Greenberg 2-17, Demo Pickens 1-36, Kris Phillips 1-5, Team 8-82. OPP Pass Interceptions: None.
CC Fumble Recoveries: Demo Pickens 1, Amarion Hobson 1, team recovery 2 (1 for safety). OPP Fumble Recoveries: 6.
CC Kickoff Returns (Returns-Yards): Demo Pickens 3-102 (1 TD), Squirt Pickens 2-31, Amarion Hobson 1-17, Brody Parlow 1-5, Carson Bridger 1-1, Team 8-156 (1 TD). OPP Kickoff Returns: 17-440 (1 TD).
CC Punt Returns: Demo Pickens 4-18, Squirt Pickens 1-4, Team 5-22. OPP Punt Returns: None.
CC Punt Blocks: Kris Phillips 1.
CC Scoring (TD-2PC-FG-XP-Points): DK Woods 8-0-0-0-48, Ben Burgess 4-1-0-0-26, Squirt Pickens 3-0-0-0-18, Noah Mayfield 0-0-0-16-16, Dre Walker 2-1-0-0-14, Gabe Dupree 2-0-0-0-12, Demo Pickens 1-0-0-0-6, Khalan Thomas 1-0-0-0-6, team safety 2, Team 21-2-0-16-148 (includes 1 safety). OPP Scoring: 7-0-0-6-48.



Above: Marlee Kellough was ready to cheer the Cavaliers on, even before the conclusion of pre-game festivities. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Ben Burgess completed 12 of 18 passes for 132 yards and also ran for a touchdown and a two-point conversion. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... and eventually opened up as Randle Perry (50) and Karsen Burgess (2) picked off the final two Dyer County tacklers. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: The Cavs' longest play of the night came when DK Woods (32) cut behind blocks by Brooks Harris (73), Nolen Turner (54), and Zerafin Guardian (76) to find an opening ... (Photo by Ron Barry)





Below: Finally, a green sea opened up in front of DK Woods, who carried the football 72 yards for the third-quarter score that tied the game at 14-all. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: .... that enlarged as he moved to his right, past fallen Choctaw defenders, ... (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: During the halftime performance by the Marching Cavaliers Band, "sword girl" Addy Baker dazzled the crowd with her smile and enthusiasm. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Crockett's Karsen Burgess (2) drags Choctaw defender Grant West (4) along as he braces for a hit from Devin Hayward (5). (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Demo Pickens (3) broke off a 42-yard run for the Cavaliers late in the third quarter. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Nolen Turner (54) and Grant Smallwood (77) drag down Dyer County's Bryce Fulton (22) before Carson Bridger (79) can arrive to deal a final hit. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Before the game, Cavalier baseball players Callan Willis (C), Sam Procter (A), and Brady Fronabarger (V) led the gridders out with flags flying. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Squirt Pickens (23) helped set up Crockett's final touchdown with a 15-yard pass reception. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: With less than a minute remaining, quarterback Ben Burgess leans in towards his coaches during a timeout to get instructions for the next play. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: And that play would be running up the middle behind his center Carson Bridger (79) and guard Garner Brown (67) to score the touchdown that made it 21-20, with the potential conversion to follow. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: The two-point conversion attempt never had a chance after six Choctaw defenders crashed through the Cavalier line to bury DK Woods in the backfield before he could even gain any momentum. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Dyer County quarterback Landon Daniels (7) is surrounded by Cav defenders Gabe Dupree (29), Randle Perry (50), Kris Phillips (16), and Jake Knox (35) -- one reason his rushing efforts totaled a negative four yards in the game. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Crockett's defense -- exemplified here by this Amarion Hobson (4) tackle, with assistance by Jake Knox (35), Austin Carroll (7), and Squirt Pickens (23) -- held Dyer County to 231 yards on 66 plays. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Grant Smallwood (77) puts a big hit on Dyer County's Bryce Fulton (22). Fulton was the Choctaws' workhorse, carrying 22 times for 81 yards. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: The Cavs' Randle Perry (50) comes in to make the tackle on Bryce Fulton, who's being slowed by the fact that Grant Smallwood (77) has him by the seat of his pants. Austin Carroll (7) is fighting off a block to help out. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Squirt Pickens (23) goes high to break up a Choctaw pass intended for Devin Hayward (5). Karsen Burgess (2) is moving over to provide assistance for the Cavs. (Photo by Ron Barry)