CLUTCH PLAYS OFFSET FIRST-HALF BOBBLES AS CROCKET SLIPS PAST NORTH SIDE 2-26



Above: Crockett cheerleader Gabby Dobbelaire may be signaling "touchdown" or just doing the Cav Clap, but either way she appears to be a happy camper. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Only 3:21 was left on the scoreboard clock. Jackson North Side had just scored a touchdown, but needed a two-point conversion to pull even with Crockett County. When the Indians came to the line of scrimmage, quarterback Quinn Jenkins had left the game. Behind center, in the shotgun formation, was Tennessee Vol signee Javonte Smith, one of the fastest wide receivers in the state.
Three yards stood between the ball and the goal line. At stake: the top spot in the Region 7-4A football standings.

Everyone in North Side's stadium – still known as The Reservation – knew that Smith was just going to take the snap and run. The only question was to where.

On the Cavalier side of the line of scrimmage, a nervous defensive unit waited. By most accounts, Crockett was the underdog in this matchup. But this group of tacklers – although burned on a couple of pass routes earlier – had performed reasonably well overall. Honestly, the only reason they were in this situation was because of another first half bout with fumble-itis, and that wasn't the defense's fault.

In fact, the player that defense had held in check the best all night was Smith himself. He'd only caught one pass for five yards, and run the ball three times for 25 more. That's it. Crockett had double-covered him throughout the contest, sacrificing yardage to others, but making one thing crystal clear: Javonte Smith was NOT going to beat them.

But now – here he was, off-night and all – ready to do just that. If he found the end zone now, an overtime was likely, and North Side would have all the momentum going into it.

So where would Smith go? Would he take the shortest route right up the gut, hoping his linemen could keep the Cavs occupied for the split second it would take him to slide through the line? Or would he choose a sweep to the side, knowing he could likely outrun anybody giving chase? And if so, WHICH side? North Side's team was to the left, and many teams favor going toward their own side on key plays. The Cavs could be forgiven if they were leaning that way.
The ball was snapped, and Smith took off like a lightning bolt – to the RIGHT. Uh-oh.

The senior speedster quickly got outside of Crockett's linemen and row of linebackers. Crockett's Dre Walker was blocked just enough for Smith to clear his space, so Walker smartly moved to at least prevent cutting the run back up inside. So now it was just a footrace.

But the Cavs had a couple of defensive backs on that side named Amarion Hobson and Demo Pickens. If you stacked them on top of each other, you might reach the height of a "normal" football player. They can run, though, and neither one is afraid of giving you a pretty good pop if they catch you.

But – could they catch Javonte Smith, who expects to be zooming through SEC secondaries next fall?

Hobson had the first shot at him, but it was going to take a running leap to reach him. And just as Hobson left his feet, Smith tried to put a move on him. The Crockett senior managed to get a hold of one leg, with just enough of a grip to trip up Smith's left foot.

That slowed him up enough – and upset his balance such that he couldn't make another cut – to allow Pickens to finish the job. Pickens nailed Smith right on the hip, wrapped his arms around him, and took him down for no gain. Still 28-26, Crockett. Still needing to cleanly handle the upcoming kickoff. Still needing a first down after that, and maybe another, to run out the clock.

Squirt Pickens caught the "pooch" kickoff for Step One. DK Woods plowed through the Indian line twice for a total of 11 yards for Step Two. And then Hobson – on only his fourth carry of the entire season – exploded for a 33-yard run that iced the Cav triumph.

"I am so proud of this team for the way we came back after that horrible first half," said Crockett Coach Kevin Ward, still shaking his head at the memory of the five fumbles (three lost) and the pass interception his team suffered in the opening 24 minutes. "North Side is a very good football team.

But I thought we contained them pretty well. We knew we'd be giving up some yardage to the others by keying on Smith, but we had made up our minds in our game planning that if somebody from North Side was going to beat us, it wasn't going to be him."
Yet all of it might have been moot if not for three clutch plays made by Woods, Crockett's standout junior running back.

He took a handoff on the game's first play from scrimmage and rambled 63 yards for a touchdown, stunning the sparse home crowd. And on the last play of the first half, when most thought the Cavs would just go to the locker room and try to regroup from all their turnovers, quarterback Ben Burgess tossed a quick out to tight end Walker in the right flat. As the Indian defense arrived to take him down, Walker flipped a lateral to the trailing Woods – the old "hook-and-ladder" play – and somehow the burly back rambled 40 yards and crossed the goal line before he could be knocked out of bounds. Instead of being down by a touchdown, it was 14-all at the intermission.

"We've had that play in our back pocket for a time like this," said Cav offensive coordinator David Barker. "We practice it a lot; the players like it because it's fun. And when we execute it right – well, who's going to tackle a 240-pound back downfield when he gets up a head of steam?"

Even so, the hosts were resilient too, and began the third quarter with a 59-yard scoring drive capped by a 19-yard touchdown pass from Jenkins to Davien Caruthers. But North Side missed the extra point, and the door was open again.

It stayed open only because of Woods' third clutch play. On a fourth-and-two from the Indian 48, Burgess was hit on a scramble and coughed up the football, but Woods scooped it up and dragged a gang of North Side tacklers for four yards, gaining a first down. He then carried three more times down to the 28 before leaving the lineup to try to walk off an aching hip injury.

Pickens took his place and, on his second rush, dashed 22 yards for a touchdown. Noah Mayfield booted the extra point that pushed Crockett back in front 21-20 with 2:23 remaining in the third quarter.

The Cavs forced a punt and then marched 68 yards to another score, keyed by a 10-yard Pickens gain and a 22-yard pass to Karsen Burgess. Hobson ran for five yards to the one, and Woods reentered to finish off the drive from there. Mayfield's extra made it 28-20 with just 5:17 left in the fourth.

North Side used passes from Jenkins to Leonard Tucker (19 yards) and Caruthers (34 yards) to get to the Cavalier one, and Jenkins took it in himself with 3:21 remaining, setting up the afore-mentioned two-point conversion try.



Above: Dependable Noah Mayfield (25) made all four of his extra point attempts -- which turned out to be the difference in the 28-26 Cavalier victory. (Photo by Ron Barry)

"We were going to see how they lined up for the play and then maybe call a timeout," Ward said, "but we also thought that might give them extra time to design something. When we saw Smith back there to take the snap, we also knew this is something they don't ordinarily do, so they might be a little disorganized. We knew he'd run it. We just hoped we could get someone out there in his way, and we were able to do that."

Ward had special praise for both Pickens and Woods after the contest.
"Demo is a quiet kid who just always seems to hang around in the background, but he'll do anything we ask him to do," Ward said. "He doesn't complain as the backup to DK, and when he gets his chances, he makes the most of them. And DK respects that too. Tonight when he'd come out because of his hip, we got to a situation where we were ready to ask him to go back in. And to show you what kind of a teammate he is, he said, 'Coach, Demo is playing really well right now. He can do it. Keep him in there.' This is coming from a kid who'd like to score 12 touchdowns every game. It's special."

Crockett's win was a huge step forward in the race to secure a decent playoff position in Region 7-4A. The Cavs now sit atop the standings with a 3-1 record (5-1 overall), tied with Lexington – but the Cavs would hold the tie-breaker over the Tigers if they are the only two teams to stay at the top. South Gibson is 2-1 and blanking the suddenly freefalling Dyer County 35-0. Lexington defeated Jackson South Side 28-20 Friday, giving the Hawks, North Side, Dyer, and Chester County two Region losses apiece now. Hardin County is 0-3.

Crockett steps outside the Region to host Dyersburg this coming week before getting an open date the following Friday.

Game Statistics: Crockett 28, North Side 26
Total Offense (Plays-Yards): CC 46-357; **NS** 47-258.
First Downs: CC 11; **NS** 8.
Penalties-Yards: CC 6-38; **NS** 7-50.
Punts-Yards-Avg: CC 0-0-0.0; **NS** 4-131-32.8.
Fumbles-Lost: CC 5-3; **NS** 0-0.
CC Rushing (Carries-Yards): DK Woods 18-158, Demo Pickens 5-39, Amarion Hobson 2-38, Ben Burgess 11-10, Dre Walker 1-4, Team 37-249. **NS Rushing:** Quinn Jenkins 13-50, Javonte Smith 3-25, Davien Caruthers 2-17, Demingo Maupins 11-8, Josh Wallace 3-5, Team 32-105.
CC Passing (Completions-Attempts-Yards-Interceptions): Ben Burgess 5-9-108-1. **NS Passing:** Jenkins 8-15-153-0.
CC Receiving (Catches-Yards): Karsen Burgess 2-45, DK Woods 0-40 (1 TD, run with lateral), Dre Walker 3-23. **NS Receiving:** Caruthers 3-74 (1 TD), Wallace 2-55 (1 TD), Leonard Tucker 2-19, Smith 1-5.
CC Pass Interceptions (Int-Yards): None. **NS Pass Interceptions**: Wallace 1-0.
CC Fumble Recoveries: None. **NS Fumble Recoveries:** 3.
CC Kickoff Returns (Returns-Yards): None. **NS Kickoff Returns:** Caruthers 3-40, Wallace 1-12.
CC Punt Returns: None. **NS Punt Returns:** None.
CC Scoring (TD-2PC-FG-XP-Points): DK Woods 3-0-0-0-18, Demo Pickens 1-0-0-0-6, Noah Mayfield 0-0-0-4-4, Team 4-0-0-4-28. **NS Scoring:** 4-0-0-2-26.

The Linescore:
CC 7 7 7 7 - 28
NS 7 7 6 6 - 26

Crockett – DK Woods 63 run (Noah Mayfield kick)
NS – Davien Caruthers 3 run (Ben Mendes kick)
NS – Josh Wallace 34 pass from Quinn Jenkins (Mendes kick)
Crockett – Woods 40 run with lateral after Dre Walker 7 pass from Ben Burgess (Mayfield kick)
NS – Caruthers 19 pass from Jenkins (kick failed)
Crockett – Demo Pickens 22 run (Mayfield kick)
Crockett – Woods 1 run (Mayfield kick)
NS – Jenkins 1 run (run failed)



Above: Crockett's Amarion Hobson survived a stiff-arm from North Side's Javonte Smith and managed to trip him up by the left foot, slowing him down long enough ... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Season Statistics (6 games; 5-1 record; 3-1 region):
Total Offense (Plays-Yards): CC 219-1,851; OPP 260-950. **First Downs: CC** 65; OPP 47.
Penalties-Yards: CC 25-173; OPP 35-309.
Punts-Yards-Avg: CC 8-222-27.8; OPP 21-591-28.1 (1 blocked).
Fumbles-Lost: CC 12-9; OPP 7-4.
CC Rushing (Carries-Yards): DK Woods 68-561, Demo Pickens 28-183, Ben Burgess 34-160, Gabe Dupree 3-100, Amarion Hobson 4-86, Khalan Thomas 6-75, Squirt Pickens 8-44, Dre Walker 7-33, Davis Porter 2-18, Kris Phillips 3-17, Karsen Burgess 1-4, Chris Vance 2-1, Chris Mann 1-(-1), bad snap 2-(-31), Team 169-1,250. OPP Rushing: 164-412.
CC Passing (Completions-Attempts-Yards-Interceptions): Ben Burgess 37-56-644-1. OPP Passing: 50-96-538-10.
CC Receiving (Catches-Yards): Squirt Pickens 8-165 (2 TD), Karsen Burgess 11-124, Dre Walker 6-110 (1 TD), Titus Luten 2-91 (1 TD), Kris Phillips 6-88, DK Woods 3-59 (1 TD), Demo Pickens 1-7. OPP Receiving: 50-538 (7 TD).
CC Pass Interceptions (Int-Yards): Gabe Dupree 4-24, Ian Greenberg 2-17, Demo Pickens 1-36, Kris Phillips 1-5, Austin Carroll 1-1, Amarion Hobson 1-0, Team 10-83. OPP Pass Interceptions: 1-0.
CC Fumble Recoveries: Demo Pickens 1, Amarion Hobson 1, team recovery 2 (1 for safety). OPP Fumble Recoveries: 9.
CC Kickoff Returns (Returns-Yards): Demo Pickens 4-108 (1 TD), Squirt Pickens 2-31, Amarion Hobson 1-17, Brody Parlow 1-5, Carson Bridger 1-1, Team 9-162 (1 TD). OPP Kickoff Returns: 25-534 (1 TD).
CC Punt Returns: Demo Pickens 5-35, Squirt Pickens 1-4, Team 6-39. OPP Punt Returns: None.
CC Punt Blocks: Kris Phillips 1.
CC Scoring (TD-2PC-FG-XP-Points): DK Woods 13-0-0-0-78, Ben Burgess 5-1-0-0-32, Noah Mayfield 0-0-1-25-28, Squirt Pickens 3-0-0-0-18, Dre Walker 2-1-0-0-14, Demo Pickens 2-0-0-0-12, Gabe Dupree 2-0-0-0-12, Titus Luten 1-0-0-0-6, Amarion Hobson 1-0-0-0-6, Khalan Thomas 1-0-0-0-6, team safety 2, Team 30-2-1-25-214 (includes 1 safety). OPP Scoring: 12-0-0-9-81.



Above: ... to allow Demo Pickens (3) to arrive and finish the job, taking Smith down to foil the two-point conversion that would have tied the game at 28-all. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: On the game's first play from scrimmage, DK Woods (32) follows the blocks of Zerafin Guardian (left), Austin Carroll (7), Carson Bridger (79), Brooks Harris (73), and Sebastian Garduno (right) through a hole that doesn't appear that large ... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... until all of a sudden he's cruising 63 yards into the end zone for a touchdown as his blockers celebrate the achievement. Woods ran for 158 yards in 18 carries. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: Ben Burgess, who completed five of nine throws for 108 yards and a touchdown, fires a ball downfield as Zerafin Guardian (76) provides protection. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Cheerleaders Leah Beaird (left), Allyssa Ward (middle), and Cacie Jo McNeill (right) were all smiles at halftime after the miracle play that tied things up on the final snap. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Austin Carroll gets the "Sunset Flip" on North Side quarterback Quinn Jenkins. The Cavs held the powerful Indian offense to just 105 rushing yards. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Cav linebacker Jake Knox (35) takes down North Side back Demingo Maupins (17). Maupins, one of the top runners in the Region, gained only eight yards in 11 carries. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Demo Pickens (3) bursts out of the pack for the 22-yard touchdown run that gave Crockett a 21-20 lead in the third quarter. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Tight end Dre Walker (6) caught three passes for 23 yards and turned a seven-yard quick toss from Ben Burgess into a 47-yard score on the last play of the first half by lateraling the ball to DK Woods. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Grant Smallwood (77) puts a hit on Indian quarterback Quinn Jenkins (5) on this play. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Karsen Burgess (2) made a 22-yard gain on this pass reception to help set up Crockett's final touchdown in the fourth period. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: If the Cavaliers continue the good fortunes that have brought them to the top of the Region 7-4A standings, fans will always remember when Amarion Hobson (4) grabbed onto Javonte Smith's foot. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Five different North Side tacklers have a grasp on DK Woods on this play and they still aren't anywhere close to getting him on the ground. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Left: Double coverage like this -- from Demo Pickens (3) and Austin Carroll (7) -- was an emphasis on the night as the Cavs tried to limit the contributions of the Tennessee-bound star receiver. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: : Jake Knox (35) hammers down Quinn Jenkins as Crockett's Amarion Hobson (4), Carson Bridger (79), and Grant Smallwood (77), arrive to lend support. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: DK Woods (32) takes a handoff from Ben Burgess to run behind the blocking of Zerafin Guardian (76). (Photo by Ron Barry)