

ENERGY & ENTHUSIASM PROPELS VOLLEYBALLERS TO HUGE DISTRICT TOURNAMENT WIN



Above: Excited Crockett teammates gather around sophomore Wesley Thornton (20) after she slammed home the clinching point for a 25-23 Set #1 victory over Milan Tuesday night in the District 13-AA Tournament. Visible Lady Cavaliers (from left) are Ellie Henderson (12), Thornton, Katherine West (3), Darcy Puffer (, Lakyn Forsythe, Deonna Cole, Ava Lee, Addie Davidson, manager Tink Willis, assistant coach Lanie Riley, and Keeton Holyfield. (Photo by Terry Thornton)

Sometimes when an athletic event is played on a “neutral” court – even in a tournament setting – there can be a concern that the atmosphere just doesn’t feel quite the same for a big game.

But when your school can bring an enthusiastic crowd that makes it sound like a home match, that team’s players may just get the jolt of extra energy necessary to help them get the job done.

That was definitely the case Tuesday night in Newbern, when Crockett County faced a “win-or-go-home” volleyball duel with Milan in the second semifinal of the District 13-AA Tournament at Dyer County High School.

“Our crowd was fantastic tonight,” said Lady Cavalier Coach Andrew Laman, citing the Crockett throng as a key reason for his club’s 25-23, 25-15, and 25-16 victory over the LadyDawgs, sending the winners into Thursday night’s championship match with Dyer County, and – even more importantly – guaranteeing Crockett a berth in next week’s Region 7-AA Tournament. “That extra encouragement helped us stay after it through all three sets.”

When the taut first set finally ended in Crockett’s favor on a Wesley Thornton slam, that crowd erupted in joy with a force that helped carry the Lady Cavs for the rest of the evening. It was a welcome boost, as Milan had defeated Crockett the last time the two teams matched up.

“I’m super proud of our girls for their hustle, discipline, and energy tonight,” Laman said. “I think our desire to win was better tonight than the last time. We knew what was at stake, so we had to bring it. We for sure had a strategic game plan against them which we executed well, but our #1 focus coming into tonight’s match was the energy and communication. And although it wasn’t perfect, they did a great job of that.”

Crockett played solid volleyball through all three sets, which seemed to rattle Milan a bit at times. The crowd noise was definitely in the Lady Cavs’ favor, and it was obvious Laman’s crew was feeding off of it. Crockett played team ball in one of its best performances of the year, with all hitters contributing and blockers keeping the LadyDawgs off-balance.

Now – although heavy underdogs Thursday night – Crockett (now 27-7) will tackle Dyer County for the third time this season. And if it can pull the upset, the Lady Cavs will host next week’s Region 7 event. If not, it will be back to Newbern – but at least Crockett now knows it will be there. And there’ll be a crowd of encouragers right behind it.



Above: Coach Andrew Laman addresses his Lady Cavaliers during a timeout Tuesday night at the District 13-AA Tournament. In the seats (from left): Lakyn Forsythe (11), Katherine West, Wesley Thornton (20), Audrey Whitby (10), Madi Collins, Keeton Holyfield, and assistant coach Bobby Rawson. Standing (from left): manager Tink Willis, Emilee Chandler (4), Addie Hoover, Lola Bailey (1), Presley Lewis (30), Ellie Henderson (12), Darcy Puffer, Deonna Cole (15), Ava Lee (22), Addie Davidson, and assistant coach Lanie Riley. (Photo by Terry Thornton)



Above: Addie Davidson has been bringing the energy in Crockett's libero position this season. (Photo by Ron Barry)...



Left: Audrey Whitby has delivered from the service line and from the back row. (Photo by Ron Barry)...

Below: Crockett's hitters were solid all night against Milan, including Deonna Cole ... (Photo by Ron Barry)...



Below: Darcy Puffer adjusts her arm pad as she prepares to receive a serve. (Photo by Ron Barry)...



Left: ... and Keeton Holyfield ... (Photo by Ron Barry)...

Below: ... and Madi Collins ... (Photo by Ron Barry)...



Above: ... and Katherine West ... (Photo by Ron Barry)...



Right: Lakyn Forsythe provides the sets for the hitters to attack. (Photo by Ron Barry)...



Right: ... and Wesley Thornton. (Photo by Ron Barry)...

