

SOCCER SEASON ENDS WITH 2-0 DISTRICT TOURNAMENT LOSS TO LADY HORNETS



Above: Crockett's Braniya Green (14) is shadowed by South Gibson's ever-present Kayla Hatch as she tries to get an offensive attack started. (Photo by Ron Barry)

There was a time in the not-too-distant past when Crockett County's soccer team was eliminated in the district tournament by a 9-0 score – and that's why Tuesday night's 2-0 loss to South Gibson may sting for a while, but it's still an indication that Coach Carli Branson's program is trending in the right direction.

The District 13-AA Tournament semifinal boiled down to one defensive lapse and one sensational long-distance kick. Other than that, the Lady Cavaliers hung with the Lady Hornets like Taylor Swift's bitterness with ex-boyfriends.

South Gibson scored one time in each half of the closely-played contest, the first when speedster Jaci Walters ran past Crockett's defensive backline to chase down a long pass and punch it past a defenseless Hannah Wede in the Lady Cav net; and the second when Carly Coble drilled a 25-to-30-yard high-arching shot that sailed just under the goal's crossbar. The shot seemed unexpected when Coble took it; that she executed it so well demonstrated that it came as no surprise to her.

And while Crockett's Branson remains confident that the Lady Cavs are narrowing the gap between themselves and the district's best teams, she also realizes the task ahead isn't getting easier. Both South Gibson goals were made by freshmen.

"This one stings, not just because of the scoreboard, but because we all know how close we are to something truly great," said Branson, who has started as many as six freshmen herself in some matches this year. "That sting comes from caring deeply, from loving this game, and from holding ourselves to a high standard of excellence. If we're going to take the next step, it's going to come because enough returning girls decide to train harder in the off-season. There's just not enough time during after-school practices to master what it takes to truly excel as a team. We'll see if we have enough players who accept the challenge."

But Branson was equally quick to express her praise for the way her team performed against the physicality of South Gibson, a very solid squad which passes superbly and always seems to have a defender in the right place.

"I'm extremely proud of the way we played tonight," Branson said. "The first 20 minutes or so was the most aggressively we have ever played against them; I told them that at halftime. Every single player on this team has shown grit, heart, and growth throughout this season. They've faced challenges head-on, pushed through adversity, and continued to represent Crockett County with pride, class, and determination."

Tuesday's semifinal was an absolute stalemate for the first 20 minutes as Crockett held its own with the Lady Hornets, keeping possession toward the SGC net most of that time although no great shot opportunities developed. All of a sudden the Lady Hornets cleared a ball with a long pass, sailing it past the Lady Cavs' back line, which had crept up too far during the offensive rush.

South Gibson's Walters took off and ran right by Crockett's defense, forcing goalkeeper Wede to approach to try to cut down the angle of a good shot. Wede actually slid into Walters' initial kick and deflected the ball, but the slide took her out of any recovery position as the ball slowly trickled toward the goal line. Walters was able to reach it and punch it in for the first half's only score.

The second period began with a similar stalemate as the first until Coble – coming out of a congested midfield area – booted a long drive that took Crockett's defense by surprise. The shot arched high over the traffic between Coble and the goal area and went above the shielded Wede's head and just under the crossbar for an Olympic-level goal at the 27:36 mark and a 2-0 SGC advantage.

Crockett never seriously threatened after that as the Lady Hornet defense continued to thwart any serious attempts at a rush. SGC will face top-seeded Dyersburg for the district championship after the host Lady Trojans blanked Dyer County 8-0 in the other semifinal.

The Lady Cavs finished the season with a 7-5-2 record. Following are the goals and assists totals for the 2025 campaign:

GOALS: Rebecca Waddey 18, Alivia Hale 7, Ruth Gourley 7, Avery Thornton 4, Caroline Scruggs 4, Emily Morales 2, Cesia Sanchez 2, Cristal Martinez 1, Braniya Green 1, Skyleigh Qualls 1, Kate Davis 1, own goal 1.

ASSISTS: Rebecca Waddey 11, Ruth Gourley 6, Braniya Green 3, Kate Davis 2, Cristal Martinez 1, Cesia Sanchez 1, Litha Jones 1, Evelyn Calderon 1, Skyleigh Qualls 1, Alivia Hale 1, Caroline Scruggs 1, Kamiliah Juarez 1.

VOLLEYBALL: Host Dyer County continued its mastery over Crockett County and the rest of Region 7-AA as it captured its fifth straight Region 7-AA Tournament title Tuesday night, downing the Lady Cavaliers in straight sets 25-9, 25-12, and 25-13. Keeton Holyfield and Wesley Thornton were selected to the All-Tournament Team for Crockett, which will now carry its 28-9 record into a West Sectional matchup Thursday night at Covington at 7:00. Covington defeated Millington for the Region 8-AA championship Tuesday.



Left: Lady Cavalier goalkeeper Hannah Wede braces for a possible save as South Gibson's Jaci Walters (14) barrels toward the goal, but Crockett defender Kamiliah Juarez (right) was able to deflect the ball from Walters. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Crockett's leading scorer Rebecca Waddey (7) tries to rip a long pass downfield as South Gibson's Holland Johnson (25) is in close pursuit. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: This was about as open as any Lady Cav player could get against South Gibson's smothering defense, as Crockett's Avery Thornton (13) attempts to get past the Lady Hornets' Anna Fawcett (7) and launch a shot toward goalie Katie Hicks. The shot never materialized as Fawcett closed the gap too quickly. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Lady Cavalier defender Kyleigh Kelley sizes up the possibilities prior to a side throw-in by the Lady Hornets. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: At the other end, SGC was able to put one goal on the board in the first half when Jaci Walters (14) raced past Crockett's back line, forcing Hannah Wede to try to make a diving save. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Hannah Wede actually was able to deflect Jaci Walters' initial shot, but the ball rolled slowly over in front of the netting, ... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... from where Walters was able to easily tap it in as support for Wede arrives much too late. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: Lady Cav defender Amy Mena (15) looks upfield after clearing a ball from deep in the goal box. (Photo by Ron Barry)

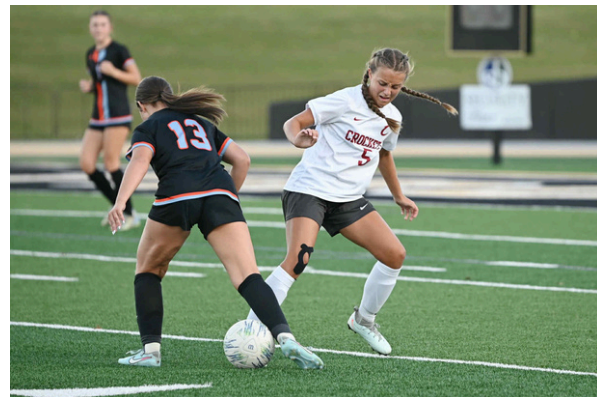


Below: Charlee Lewis clears out another Lady Hornet penetration in second-half play Tuesday night in Dyersburg. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Ruth Gourley tries to beat South Gibson's Kayla Hatch to this loose ball as Crockett tried in vain to muster any kind of rush that produced a decent shot. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Skyleigh Qualls (18) had the only other really close call for Crockett when a lead pass from Ruth Gourley (4) found its way toward the net, but Lady Hornet goalie Katie Hicks was able to grab it before Qualls could get there. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Caroline Scruggs (5) fights for control of this ball with South Gibson's Rylee Hood (13) in Tuesday's battle. (Photo by Robin Waddey)

Below: When South Gibson's Carly Coble (center) drilled a long goal from 25 yards or so out, it triggered this celebration from her teammates and pretty much sealed Crockett's doom, although 27 minutes remained. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Ruth Gourley (4) clears this ball after an unsuccessful Lady Hornet corner kick. Gourley carries it out ahead of Kyleigh Kelley (23), Amy Mena (15), Rebecca Waddey (7), Caroline Scruggs (5), and Claire Nichols (25). (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Crockett's speediest defender Chloe Campbell (24) gets this ball out of the scoring zone as teammate Kendra Juarez (11) looks on in the background. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Crockett's volleyball team had two players selected to the Region 7-AA All-Tournament Team: Senior Keeton Holyfield (pictured here) ... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... and sophomore Wesley Thornton (pictured here). The Lady Cavs will travel to Covington Thursday night for a West Regional match at 7 p.m., with the winner earning a state tournament berth. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Rebecca Waddey -- every bit the warrior she appears here -- led the Lady Cavaliers this season in goals with 18 and in assists with 11, done in the span of 14 matches in which Crockett went 7-5-2. (Photo by Ron Barry)