MISTAKES ELIMINATE OPPORTUNITIES AS CAVALIES FALL TO HORNETS 24-14



Above: Typical of the hard hitting in Friday's contest between Crockett and South Gibson was this play, in which Cavalier quarterback Ben Burgess (10) sees his helmet go flying when tackled by a trio of Hornets as nears the goal line. Blocking for Burgess on the play are Sebastian Garduno (63), Brooks Harris (73), and Amarion Hobson (4). (Photo by Ron Barry)

Kevin Ward is growing frustrated with his football team's tendency to shoot itself in the foot when it gets itself in a position to seize control of the Region 7-4A playoff picture.

It happened again Friday night against South Gibson – just as it had earlier in a loss to Dyer County – and Crockett County dropped out of a first-place tie in the standings after the mistake-prone Cavaliers fell to the Hornets 24-14 in Medina.

The culprits this time were untimely penalties, missed reads on defense, two pass interceptions, and inexplicably allowing a 93-yard touchdown run with just 28 seconds left in the first half inn a third-and-15 situation.

That score – on a simple sweep of left end by Matthew Austin after the Hornets had just been penalized half the distance to their own goal line because of a holding penalty – fired up the host squad and seemed to take much of the wind out of Crockett's sails just before the intermission.

"It seems like when we get into big games like this, we do things that are uncharacteristic," Ward said. "We missed a lot of reads defensively. Offensively, every time we started moving the ball, we'd commit a stupid penalty. We'd take ourselves out of scoring chances. So now, the next two weeks are going to tell a lot about this football team. How we respond to this loss is going to determine what happens from here on."

Ward, who usually speaks to his team in an on-field huddle at the conclusion of games and allows Cavalier fans to listen in, this time told the team he'd talk to them in a meeting when they got back to campus. He was not happy with a couple of personal foul calls that indicated a loss of composure from his players at key moments in the contest.

The loss throws the Region 7-4A standings into a royal mess. South Gibson now sits atop the standings with a 4-1 league mark, but then come five teams – Crockett among them – that are now tied for second place with 3-2 records. The Cavs have beaten two of them (Lexington and Jackson North Side), lost to one (Dyer County), and still has one to face (Jackson South Side). South Gibson still must face North Side, so a second defeat is possible for the Hornets (as is a third loss for the Indians). Lexington and Dyer County still have to play each other, so one of them is going to take a third defeat.

Crockett's edge is that its remaining two region games are both at home, beginning with the homecoming duel this next Friday with Chester County, which is 1-4 in region play. The South Side regular season finale is the night before Halloween.

As has been its norm, Crockett took almost no time to get on the scoreboard first against South Gibson, taking barely three minutes to march 73 yards for a touchdown. Quarterback Ben Burgess tossed a 39-yard gainer to his brother Karsen and then found Dre Walker for another 29 yards in the left corner of the end zone. Noah Mayfield's extra point made it 7-0 Crockett with 8:43 remaining in the first quarter.

The Hornets responded with a 63-yard drive, using a simple two-back (side-by-side) set in which the center had the option to snap to either one, who then followed the other – along with University of Wisconsin-bound Yahya Gaad, who lined up just behind and to the side of the center to serve as a lead blocker – to whatever hole could be produced. On the thirteenth play of the possession, Tyshaun Jeter fumbled on a fourth-and-one dive at the goal line, and Crockett's Garner Brown recovered.

The Cavs eventually had to punt out of their own end zone, and South Gibson regained possession at the Crockett 45. On another fourth-down run, the Cavs appeared to have stopped Cade Beaver short of the 35-yard stripe he needed to reach for a new set of downs. But officials didn't measure it, declaring a first down and giving the hosts new life. Jaydon Reed tallied on a one-yard plunge after a half-the-distance penalty against Crockett, and it was 7-7 with 6:26 remaining in the second period.

Crockett then drove all the way to the Hornet 16, keyed by a 31-yard Burgess-to-Burgess pass completion, but a holding call against the Cavs – immediately followed by a 15-yard unsportsmanlike infraction when somebody protested too loudly – killed that scoring opportunity. Mayfield again had to punt, and rolled it to a stop at the SGC 10 with only 1:47 left to play.

The Hornets looked content to run out the clock, gaining seven yards on two rushes before being penalized themselves back to the seven, giving them a third-and-15 and the clock ticking down near the 40-second mark. Then Austin took a snap, cut left on a sweep, and somehow no Cavalier defender got near him as he scampered 93 yards to stun the crowd and give the Hornets a 14-7 halftime advantage.

Neither team scored in the third quarter. Crockett wasted a timeout it would need later when it couldn't get a play initiated in time, and eventually came up short on a fourth-and-one at the South Gibson 27. Early in the fourth, Reed broke off rushes of 13 and 32 yards to set up a successful 42-yard field goal by McGowan with 11:03 remaining in the game, and SGC led 17-7.

A personal foul against the hosts on the kickoff return helped Crockett start at its own 45 on the following series, and two passes to Squirt Pickens gained 37 yards. Another nine-yarder to Walker set up a one-yard touchdown by DK Woods, but only 5:46 was left to play and the Cavs were still down 17-14.

The Cavs tried a pooch kickoff that was easily fielded, giving South Gibson possession near midfield. Needing a big defensive stand, Crockett instead allowed Austin and Jeter to break 17-yard runs on successive plays, and Jeter scored on another jaunt of 11 yards to make it 24-14 with only 2:26 remaining.

While Crockett managed to reach the Hornet 24 on its next series, another holding penalty and a subsequent interception (this one by Gaad) sealed the victory for the hosts.

The Cavs had to play without one of their best linemen, the injured Zerafin Guardian, which didn't help matters against South Gibson's massive front. Ward's club gained just 90 yards on the ground, while the Hornets piled up 357 rushing yards. SGC didn't even complete a pass in its win.

Crockett will take a 6-2 overall record into its homecoming matchup with Chester County.



Above: Two of West Tennessee's best players met up almost immediately as South Gibson's Yahya Gaad attempts to bring down Crockett's DK Woods (32) in the first quarter of the Hornets' 24-14 win. (Photo by Ron Barry)...

Game Statistics: South Gibson 24, Crockett 14
Total Offense (Plays-Yards): CC 47-270; SG 46-357.
First Downs: CC 10; SG 15.
Penalties-Yards: CC 6-56; SG 9-81.
Punts-Yards-Avg: CC 2-63-31.5. SG 1-25-25.0.
Fumbles-Lost: CC 0-0; SG 2-1.
CC Rushing (Carries-Yards): DK Woods 13-54, Ben Burgess 8-20, Dre Walker 2-10, Amarion Hobson 2-6, Team 25-90. **SG Rushing:** Matthew Austin 7-134, Jaydon Reed 21-111, Tyshaun Jeter 10-61, Cade Beaver 6-51, Team 44-357.
CC Passing (Completions-Attempts-Yards-Interceptions): Ben Burgess 13-22-180-2. **SG Passing:** Jeter 0-1-0-0, Austin 0-1-0-0, Team 0-2-0-0.
CC Receiving (Catches-Yards): Karsen Burgess 4-83, Squirt Pickens 5-53, Dre Walker 3-42 (1 TD). **SG Receiving:** No receptions.
CC Pass Interceptions (Int-Yards): None. **SG Pass Interceptions:** 2-0 (Drey Scott, Yahya Gaad).
CC Fumble Recoveries: Garner Brown 1. **SG Fumble Recoveries:** 0.
CC Kickoff Returns (Returns-Yards): Dre Walker 1-25, Mason Dennis 1-9, Demo Pickens 1-8, DK Woods 1-7, Team 4-49. **SG Kickoff Returns:** Drey Scott 1-29.
CC Punt Returns: None. **SG Punt Returns:** None.
CC Scoring (TD-2PC-FG-XP-Points): DK Woods 1-0-0-0-6, Dre Walker 1-0-0-0-6, Noah Mayfield 0-0-0-2-2, Team 2-0-0-2-14. **SG Scoring:** 3-0-1-3-24.

The Linescore:
CC 7 0 0 7 - 14
SG 0 14 0 10 - 24
Crockett – Dre Walker 29 pass from Ben Burgess (Noah Mayfield kick)
SGC – Jaydon Reed 1 run (Max McGowan kick)
SGC –Matthew Austin 93 run (McGowan kick)
SGC – Max McGowan 42 field goal
Crockett – DK Woods 1 run (Mayfield kick)
SGC – Tyshaun Jeter 11 run (McGowan kick)

Season Statistics (8 games; 6-2 record; 3-2 region):
Total Offense (Plays-Yards): CC 317-2,568; OPP 359-1,640.
First Downs: CC 91; OPP 76.
Penalties-Yards: CC 37-289; OPP 51-444.
Punts-Yards-Avg: CC 12-344-28.7; OPP 25-723-28.9 (1 blocked).
Fumbles-Lost: CC 13-9; OPP 11-6.
CC Rushing (Carries-Yards): DK Woods 100-822, Ben Burgess 53-237, Demo Pickens 28-183, Gabe Dupree 3-100, Amarion Hobson 6-92, Squirt Pickens 10-78, Khalan Thomas 6-75, Dre Walker 9-43, Davis Porter 2-18, Kris Phillips 3-17, Karsen Burgess 2-7, Chris Vance 2-1, Chris Mann 1-(-1), bad snap 2-(-31), Team 227-1,641. OPP Rushing: 249-969.
CC Passing (Completions-Attempts-Yards-Interceptions): Ben Burgess 58-96-970-3. OPP Passing: 58-110-671-10.
CC Receiving (Catches-Yards): Karsen Burgess 16-228, Squirt Pickens 14-226 (2 TD), Dre Walker 13-215 (2 TD), Kris Phillips 7-119, Titus Luten 3-114 (2 TD), DK Woods 4-61 (1 TD), Demo Pickens 1-7. OPP Receiving: 58-671 (8 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: 3-0.
CC Fumble Recoveries: Gabe Dupree 1, Demo Pickens 1, Amarion Hobson 1, Garner Brown 1, team recovery 2 (1 for safety). OPP Fumble Recoveries: 9.
CC Kickoff Returns (Returns-Yards): Demo Pickens 5-116 (1 TD), Squirt Pickens 2-31, Dre Walker 1-25, Amarion Hobson 1-17, Mason Dennis 1-9, DK Woods 1-7, Brody Parlow 1-5, Carson Bridger 1-1, Team 13-211 (1 TD). OPP Kickoff Returns: 33-739 (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 18-0-0-0-108, Ben Burgess 6-1-0-0-38, Noah Mayfield 0-0-1-31-34, Dre Walker 3-2-0-0-22, Squirt Pickens 3-0-0-0-18, Demo Pickens 2-0-0-0-12, Gabe Dupree 2-0-0-0-12, Titus Luten 2-0-0-0-12, Amarion Hobson 1-0-0-0-6, Khalan Thomas 1-0-0-0-6, team safety 2, Team 38-3-1-31-270 (includes 1 safety). OPP Scoring: 19-0-1-16-133.



Above: There's a big difference of opinion shown in this picture, which came on a first-period, fourth-and-goal situation from the Crockett one-yard line. The South Gibson player at the left says it's a touchdown. The Hornet player at the right has his hands on his helmet in disbelief. Crockett's Austin Carroll (7) is saying it's not a touchdown, while teammates Dre Walker (6) and Nolen Turner (54) are indicating the ball has come loose and the Cavs have it -- which turned out to be true, as Garner Brown (67) came up with Tyshaun Jeter's bobble. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Crockett's Garner Brown (67) hands the ball to the official after his goal line fumble recovery thwarted South Gibson's first offensive drive. Grant Smallwood (77) was also in on the tackle on the play. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: The Cavaliers scored a touchdown on their opening possession when Dre Walker (6) hauled in this 29-yard pass from Ben Burgess. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Crockett's early score kept the smile on the painted face of senior cheerleader Gracie Gaines, seen here just before the team's entry onto the field. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Crockett linebacker Jake Knox listens to instructions during a Cavalier timeout. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Cav running back Amarion Hobson (4) tries to escape from the clutches of South Gibson's Drey Scott. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Cav quarterback Ben Burgess (10) is pursued by South Gibson's Cade Beaver (5) and Yahya Gaad as DK Woods (32) tries to provide blocking protection on the scramble. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Left: Crockett's Ian Greenberg (19) is airborne as he and Dre Walker (6) deliver a tackle on a Hornet running back. Grant Smallwood (77) and Austin Carroll (7) are moving in to help out on the play. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Ben Burgess (10) tries to get away from the Hornets' Bryce Morris (2) on this rollout pass attempt. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: South Gibson's Drey Scott (12) goes high to pick off this Crockett pass near the end of the first half, preventing a Dre Walker reception. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Nolen Turner (54) and Grant Smallwood (77) fight their way through South Gibson's massive linemen to force the Hornets' Tyshaun Jeter to take a more inside lane. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: The play that turned the game: With less than 45 seconds to go in the first half, on a third-and-15 from his own seven, the Hornets' Matthew Austin turned this simple end sweep -- in which he's strangely alone -- into ... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Randle Perry (50) and Austin Carroll (7) team up to drag down Hornet runner Jaydon Reed just before Jake Knox (35) can arrive to finish it off. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: DK Woods (32) didn't have much running room Friday night, finding himself hemmed in by South Gibson's Drey Scott (12) and Carter Graupman (27) here, but still picked up 54 yards and a touchdown on 13 carries. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: ... a 93-yard touchdown romp, changing what would have been a 7-7 halftime deadlock into a demoralizing (for Crockett) 14-7 South Gibson advantage. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Karsen Burgess (2) caught this pass and ran for a 31-yard gain to give Crockett a good scoring opportunity, but two foolish penalties on the next play negated the chance. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Max McGowan's 42-yard field goal gave South Gibson a 17-7 lead and provided the winning points for the host Hornets. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: DK Woods dives between South Gibson's Tyshaun Jeter (11) and Matthew Austin (23) to score Crockett's second touchdown as Amarion Hobson (4) and Dre Walker (6) look on. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Randle Perry (50), Dre Walker (6), and DK Woods (32) crash through South Gibson blocking to take down Tyshaun Jeter. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Crockett's Ian Greenberg (19) drags down SGC's Matthew Austin (23) after a 17-yard gain, bringing his game total to 134 yards in just seven carries. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Karsen Burgess (2) had four catches for 83 yards in the contest, but it wasn't enough as Crockett fell to 3-2 in region play and 6-2 overall. (Photo by Ron Barry)

