BRANSON STEPPING DOWN AS CROCKETT SOCCER COACH AFTER EIGHT SEASONS



Above: Carli Branson is stepping down after eight seasons as Crockett's soccer coach. (Photo by Ron Barry)

If you've ever doubted the commitment that Carli Branson has made to developing the soccer program at Crockett County, you must have missed the sideline photo from a few years ago when she was cradling her week-old newborn in her arms while actively coaching a regular season game.

Monday night at the Lady Cavalier soccer banquet, Branson surprised those attending by announcing she was stepping down from her coaching position after eight seasons in order to better enjoy – and be present for – the childhoods of her three young kids.

"I've kept it under wraps because I didn't want this season to be about me," she said after the event at First Baptist Church of Maury City. "And I stepped aside for a year once before, but this time the decision is more clear-cut. I have a peace about it – I know it's the right time to pass the torch."

In Branson's eight years as the girls' coach and five seasons at the boys' helm, her teams recorded 111 wins against 59 defeats, with 13 draws. The boys made two State Tournament appearances, and matched the girls' two District Tournament runner-up finishes while actually winning two Region Tournament championships. The girls also had a Region Tournament runner-up placement and earned one West Sectional berth.

"My calling to Crockett County soccer was to give back, to invest in the place that invested in me," Branson said in her announcement, "and I did that with all I had. But now, God is making it clear that it's time to pass the torch, to take some things off my plate, breathe a little deeper, and wait on the next chapter to open. So tonight, as I step away from coaching – for real this time – I do so with peace in my heart and a deep sense of gratitude. Isaiah 60:22 says, 'When the time is right, I the Lord will make it happen.' I proclaim this over my decision, because God's timing for things in my life will always be superior and perfect. I am trusting Him with my next steps. Thank you [to the team and community] for the love, the support, the laughter, and the lessons. This program has been my family for eight incredible years. It's been fun, it's been chaotic, it's been an honor. Once a Lady Cavalier, always a Lady Cavalier."

Branson's most recent team was laden with freshmen, but still posted a 7-5-2 mark and took the two best clubs in the district to the final horn in narrow losses.

In the awards portion of Monday's banquet, Rebecca Waddey received plaques for most goals and most assists; freshman goalkeeper Hannah Wede was selected Defensive Player of the Year; freshmen Amy Mena and Charlee Lewis were named Most Improved Players; Claire Nichols received the Cavalier Award; freshmen Caroline Scruggs and Kyleigh Kelley were chosen as Rookies of the Year; Emme Grace Martin won the Foxhole Award; freshman Ruth Gourley was given the Hustle Award; and speedy defender Chloe Campbell was selected as the team's Most Valuable Player.

VOLLEYBALL: The Lady Cavaliers make their third straight State Tournament appearance, opening Tuesday with a noon match against Sullivan East at Rockvale High School near Murfreesboro. The Lady Patriots are led by their District's Hitter of the Year Makayla Moore, countered by Crockett's District Hitter of the Year Wesley Thornton.

MIDDLE SCHOOL BASKETBALL: Crockett's boys dropped their season opener to Trenton 42-23 Saturday when CJ Porter netted 18 points and Kylen Wells added 12. The Cavaliers were led by six points from Cade Reasons and five by Reese Jones. Crockett will play TCA at 7:20 Tuesday night at South Gibson Middle School.

Crockett (23) – Cade Reasons 6, Reese Jones 5, Messiah McCurry 3, Brendan Green 3, Jaylen Frye 3, Ryder Sanderlin 2, Theo Lawrence 1. 2-Pt FG: 6. 3-Pt FG: 2 (Frye, Green). FT: 5-12.
Trenton (42) – CJ Porter 18, Kylen Wells 12, Ty Autrey 10, Kyson Belmed 2. 2-Pt FG: 13. 3-Pt FG: 3 (Autrey 3). FT: 7-12.

Right: Chloe Campbell -- Most Valuable Player. (Photo by Robin Waddey)



Below: Rebecca Waddey -- Most Goals; Most Assists. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: Hannah Wede -- Defensive Player of the Year. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Left: Ruth Gourley -- Hustle Award. (Photo by Robin Waddey)

Below: Claire Nichols -- Cavalier Award. (Photo by Robin Waddey)



Above: Emme Grace Martin -- Foxhole Award. (Photo by Robin Waddey)

Right: Kyleigh Kelley -- Co-Rookie of the Year. (Photo by Robin Waddey)







Above: Caroline Scruggs -- Co-Rookie of the Year. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Amy Mena -- Co-Most Improved Player. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Charlee Lewis -- Co-Most Improved Player. (Photo by Robin Waddey)



Below: Wesley Thornton -- the District 13-AA Hitter of the Year -- will be hammering away Tuesday as Crockett faces Sullivan East at noon in Rockvale at the TSSAA State Volleyball Tournament. (Photo by Ron Barry)

