SURPRISE ZONE DEFENSE STIFLES GIBSON COUNTY; CAVS MAKE IT A SWEEP IN NIGHTCAP



Above: Audrey Whitby weaves around the top of the key area in Crockett's win over Gibson County. Whitby drilled three key three-pointers in the first half to get the Lady Cavalier offense rocking. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Wow – talk about a quick reset.

Crockett County's Lady Cavaliers – fresh off their worst offensive performance of the season in the HUB City Classic championship game Tuesday – came out smoking from long distance Friday night and paired the quick start with a surprise zone defense in a dominant 53-28 win over Gibson County. The Lady Pioneers entered the contest with a 14-3 record, but apparently weren't expecting the active 1-2-2 zone defense Coach Kayla Irvin threw at them.

And Coach Spencer Bursey's Crockett boys, bouncing back from some flu-adjusted lineups in the Rip-Town Holiday Classic, had no trouble with the visiting Pioneers in the evening's nightcap, cruising 70-51 as Gibson County seemed to be firing most of its shots from Crockett Mills.

But in the opener, Irvin's girls put on a first-quarter show for the ages. After yielding a three-pointer by Kaitlyn Patterson on Gibson County's first shot, Crockett amazingly scored the game's next 20 points, which included four treys: the first two by Audrey Whitby and single bombs from Keeton Holyfield and Ellie Henderson. The Lady Pioneers were hampered by the effective zone, which stationed Holyfield's long arms at the top and made it hard for Gibson point guard Akira Ridings to get the ball inside to Sania Reeves.

Riding's first-period passes were frequently tipped by Holyfield or stolen by Wesley Thornton, who was stationed at one of the front wings. If Ridings did manage to get the ball into the lane, Henderson, Halle Holyfield, and later Torey Savage made it miserable for any potential shooter.

Still, when the Lady Cavs' outside shooting began to cool off, Gibson County cut the 20-3 deficit to 20-16 with 5:54 left in the second quarter, netting 13 unanswered points. But then Thornton went to work, muscling in a layup for an "and-one" three-point play and then making a steal and another bucket. When Whitby followed with her third three of the first half, the lead was back to 28-16 with 2:57 remaining before the break.

Keeton Holyfield was the main beneficiary of a third-quarter surge by the hosts, scoring six straight points and convincing Lady Pioneer Coach Mitch Wilkins that his starters seemed to have lost interest. He yanked all five with two minutes left in the third quarter, and Crockett steadily pulled even further away in the game's remainder.

"We had used that zone against them in the second half when we won earlier this season at their place," Irvin said, "and they didn't seem to handle it well. So we thought we'd try it from the beginning tonight. Keeton's height makes it hard for a smaller point guard to get the ball where she wants it to go, especially with Wesley and Audrey hustling from the wings. I thought we played it pretty effectively."

The Lady Cavs, now 11-5, were led offensively by Keeton Holyfield with 14 and Whitby with 10. Thornton added nine, reserve Alice Luten six, Henderson five, and Savage three for the winners. Gibson County did not have a single scorer in double figures and netted just seven points as a team in the entire final half.

The boys game was a rout from the beginning. Bursey's Cavs tallied the first seven points of the contest and roared to a 35-15 halftime advantage, assisted by the fact that the Pioneers never met a three-point shot they didn't like – despite the additional fact that very few of them go in. They ended up making 11 in the game, but may have taken 111 to get there.

On the other end of the floor, Kevin Pledge was doing inside damage for Crockett, muscling in 19 points for the 9-7 Cavs. Jayden Frye added 12, Cortland Reddick 10, Karson Kail six, Ben Burgess five, and DK Woods and Jett Johnson four apiece for the hosts. The defensive unit that Bursey had on the floor at the beginning of the second period held Gibson County scoreless for the first six minutes of the quarter.

Both Crockett teams return to action Tuesday night, hosting McNairy Central in a twin bill that begins at 6:00.

CCHS Girls GM 16: Jan 2 at Alamo
Gibson Co 9 12 3 4 - 28
Crockett 20 9 11 13 - 53

Crockett – Keeton Holyfield 14, Audrey Whitby 10, Wesley Thornton 9, Alice Luten 6, Ellie Henderson 5, Torey Savage 3, Halle Holyfield 2, Ruth Gourley 2, Kira Bray 2, Tink Willis 0, Callie Freeman 0, Baylee Griggs 0, Braniya Green 0, Londyn Bray 0. 2-Pt FG: 14. 3-Pt FG: 5 (Whitby 3, K Holyfield, Henderson). FT: 10-18. Record: 11-5.

Gibson – Sania Reeves 8, Kaitlyn Patterson 8, Akira Riding 5, Jada Hart 3, Bre'El Harris 3, Marle Overstreet 1, Jazmin Bailey 0, Adley Thompson 0, Raven Wells 0, Avery Hardin 0, Emma Kate Wallsmith 0. 2-Pt FG: 5. 3-Pt FG: 4 (Patterson 2, Reeves, Hart). FT: 6-14. Record: 14-4.

CCHS Boys GM 16: Jan 2 at Alamo
Gibson Co 9 6 20 16 - 51
Crockett 20 15 20 15 - 70

Crockett – Kevin Pledge 19, Jayden Frye 12, Cortland Reddick 10, Karson Kail 6, Ben Burgess 5, DK Woods 4, Jett Johnson 4, Andre Garduno 3, Daniel Morgan 3, Squirt Pickens 2, Corey Savage 2, Max Woods 0, Nolen Turner 0, Jeremiah Young 0. 2-Pt FG: 22. 3-Pt FG: 6 (Frye 2, Kail 2, Burgess, Morgan). FT: 8-13. Record: 9-7.

Gibson – Brayden DuRall 19, Skyler Robertson 11, Trajan Eddings 7, Jayden Southerland 7, JP Wafford 3, Braylen Griffie 2, Jakayden Ivie 2, Kyran Perry 0, Darius Riding 0, Jordan Fisher 0, Jay Hassey 0, Kam Mayberry 0. 2-Pt FG: 6. 3-Pt FG: 11 (Duvall 5, Robertson 3, Eddings, Southerland, Wafford). FT: 6-8. Record: 5-12.



Above: Halle Holyfield (20) and Ellie Henderson (center) show why, even if the Lady Pioneers get the ball inside to Sania Reeves, things aren't going to be easy for her in there. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Audrey Whitby came out hot -- she nailed this first three-point shot of the night for Crockett -- and several more followed as the hosts built a 20-3 lead. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Gibson County point guard Akira Ridings is surprised that Crockett has come out in a 1-2-2 zone defense, with Keeton Holyfield making it difficult for Ridings to get any passes into the lane. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Wesley Thornton wrestles a ball away from Lady Pioneer post player Sania Reeves. Thornton had nine points and several defensive deflections for the Lady Cavs. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Left: Crockett cheerleader Jentry Elmore tells Friday's Alamo crowd, "Hey -- we GOT this!" (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: It's obvious Gibson County's Sania Reeves was closely watched by the Crockett defense, here having an attempted shot thwarted by Torey Savage. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Ellie Henderson got in on the long-range attack in the first quarter, drilling Crockett's fourth successful bomb of the opening period alone. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Ruth Gourley keeps this ball away from Gibson County's Akira Ridings during Friday night's second-quarter action. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: By the time the second half rolled around, Crockett began to extend its lead by completing a series of fast breaks. Halle Holyfield (20) got this one started, as teammates Wesley Thornton (2), Ellie Henderson (30), and Keeton Holyfield (15) begin to race upcourt. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Seconds later Wesley Thornton got one going, making a steal and taking it all the way in for an "and-one" three-point play. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Reserve post player Alice Luten came in and scored six points in less than two minutes. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Keeton Holyfield presses past this steal attempt by Gibson County's Jada Hart and tries to move the ball into Crockett's Torey Savage (left). (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: A humorous moment in the game occurred when Lady Cav Coach Kayla Irvin was accidentally nudged by a sideline-trapped official and ended up in the lap of a very amused Ellie Henderson. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Jett Johnson split two Pioneers on this drive to notch two of his four points in the romp over Gibson County. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Cheerleader Makayla Murphy, sitting atop the shoulders of Eva Burleson, enjoys the fun created by the large Lady Cavalier lead. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Kevin Pledge was a monster inside for Crockett in the boys' game, here preparing to muscle past Gibson County's Skyler Robertson for two of his team-high 19 points. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Karson Kail drives against the defense of Gibson County's Jakayden Ivie. Kail was part of the defensive unit that held the visitors scoreless for six minutes; later, he nailed two three-point shots. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Jeremiah Young tries to slither inside the Pioneer defense before dishing a pass off for an assist. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Daniel Morgan was one of the Cavaliers to drain a three-pointer in Friday night's 70-51 drubbing of Gibson County. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: DK Woods (32) spent the football season taking handoffs from Ben Burgess; here he returns the favor on this weave play in Friday night's basketball game. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Left: Cortland Reddick knocks down this three-pointer over the outstretched arm of Pioneer defender Skyler Robertson. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Nolen Turner prepares to dish a last-minute pass to a teammate in the corner as he drives toward the hoop in the win over Gibson County. (Photo by Ron Barry)

