DEFENSIVE HEAT AND AN ATHLETIC GOLFER TOPPLE LADY CAVS IN CHAMPIONSHIP MATCHUP



Above: TCA's Jenna Joyce (5) forces a change of direction by Crockett point guard Wesley Thornton in Tuesday's HUB City Classic championship. Joyce's defensive pressure -- and scoring the first five points of the final quarter -- were keys in the Lady Lions' 38-27 victory. (Photo by Ron Barry)

When All-Tournament selections are made at basketball events, someone is inevitably left out that deserves a little bit more attention.

At the conclusion of Tuesday evening's HUB City Classic championship game, that someone is most definitely Trinity Christian Academy's Jenna Joyce.

TCA defeated Crockett County 38-27 for the HUB City title, and few would fault the voters for naming Lady Lions Tori Robinson and Ava Ingle as the winners' honorees. Robinson – who upon graduation will be heading to the College of Charleston (SC) on a golf scholarship – scored 18 of TCA's 38 points. Ingle, a freshman with impeccable timing, blocked seemingly every shot that Lady Cavalier players took from inside the lane area. She was officially credited with 11.

But the main reason TCA took home the championship trophy rather than the runner-up award was the relentless, merciless, stick-like-glue defensive effort that Joyce produced against Crockett's Wesley Thornton, completely disrupting any semblance of an offensive rhythm and so discombobulating the Lady Cavs that not a single player reached double figures in the scoring column.

On every single inbounds pass Crockett made while she was in the game, Joyce was there to first attempt to deny the ball even reaching Thornton's hands.

If that failed, the senior guard shadowed Thornton constantly as if attached at the hip, forcing direction changes, a couple of five-second possession infractions, and generally making life miserable for the Lady Cavs' talented sophomore point guard.

Joyce's defense also caused other Crockett players to turn into the lane, where Ingle was available to swat away drives to the basket – which she did, with regularity. That defensive recipe – matched with Robinson's crusade to prove that golfers are, in fact, athletes (and she's convincing) – is a big reason that Coach Jana Kahler's Lady Lions are now 11-3 on the season.

Crockett, now 10-5, continues to struggle to find reliable offense despite its credible record. Keeton Holyfield led the Lady Cavs Tuesday but scored just nine points, down from 20 in a semifinal win in which more three-point shots were available. Coach Kayla Irvin's club actually made more shots from the foul line (12) than from the field (7) against Trinity.

Robinson netted 10 of her points in the opening quarter as TCA raced to a 17-7 advantage. After she picked up her third foul with 3:33 to play in the second period, the Lady Lion offense soured somewhat, allowing Crockett to stage a comeback that actually tied the game at 21-all late in the third period on a pair of Ellie Henderson free throws and then go ahead 25-23 on a Holyfield layup at the 1:39 mark.

It was 25-25 when Robinson immediately answered with a driving layup for the go-ahead basket and Joyce began the final quarter with a dagger three-pointer and another bucket, and Crockett saw the Lady Lions pull away with an 11-2 edge to secure the triumph.

Holyfield was named to the All-Tournament team for Crockett. Thornton scored seven for the Lady Cavs, and Henderson and Audrey Whitby each had four. Ingle and Mallory Arnold supported Robinson's offense for TCA wiuth six points apiece.

Crockett's girls and boys return to action Friday night with a 6:00 home doubleheader against Gibson County.

CCHS Girls GM 15: Dec 30 at Jackson
Crockett 7 7 11 2 - 27
TCA 17 4 6 11 - 38

Crockett – Keeton Holyfield 9, Wesley Thornton 7, Audrey Whitby 4, Ellie Henderson 4, Halle Holyfield 2, Torey Savage 1, Ruth Gourley 0. 2-Pt FG: 6. 3-Pt FG: 1 (K Holyfield). FT: 12-14. Record: 10-5.

TCA – Tori Robinson 18, Ava Ingle 6, Mallory Arnold 6, Jenna Joyce 5, Rylee Hidrogo 3, Annie Payne 0, Laney Williams 0, Mary Grace Cleek 0. 2-Pt FG: 10. 3-Pt FG: 3 (Robinson, Joyce, Hidrogo). FT: 9-11. Record: 11-3.



Above: Another factor in TCA's favor Tuesday is illustrated on this play, in which Crockett's Halle Holyfield (20) appears to have a step toward a clear path for a layup ... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... only to have TCA freshman Ava Ingle -- named the tournament's Most Valuable Player -- swoop in and block the shot, one of several she swatted in the Lady Lions' triumph. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: The main thorn in Crockett's side from a scoring standpoint was TCA's Tori Robinson -- the reigning TSSAA Division II Class A State golf champion -- who netted 18 of the winners' 38 points despite early foul trouble. Robinson is bound for the College of Charleston (SC) on a golf scholarship after claiming the State title by a whopping 12 shots. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: One of the few times Crockett stopped TCA's Tori Robinson came on this play, when after Ellie Henderson and Keeton Holyfield were able to cut off her drive, Wesley Thornton reached in and knocked the ball away. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Torey Savage puts up a left-handed layup in second-half action of Tuesday's HUB City Classic championship game. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: In the end, it was the disruptive defensive effort of TCA's Jenna Joyce that made a huge difference in the matchup, as she never allowed the Crockett offense to get untracked. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: But on the other end for the Lady Cavs, there was too much of this: getting into the lane for a shot attempt (by Wesley Thornton here), only to have Ava Ingle looming for an eventual block. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Left: Keeton Holyfield -- Crockett's top scorer in the game with nine points -- operates against TCA's Rylee Hidrogo out of the right corner. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Ellie Henderson works against the defense of Tori Robinson in Tuesday's battle with the Lady Lions. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Keeton Holyfield was named to the All-Tournament Team for Crockett County, averaging 13 points per game over three contests. (Photo by Ron Barry)