12/19/25 By Ron Barry

THORNTON BASKET RESCUES LADY CAV WIN; BOYS COMPLETE SWEEP OF MCNAIRY



Right: Time is ticking down as Wesley Thornton looks for just the right opportunity to try to penetrate the McNairy Central defense, with the Lady Cavaliers down by a point. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Two of West Tennessee's finest high school softball players went at it Friday night – on the basketball court.

Senior Bailee Shelton – a University of Tennessee signee – was the only reason McNairy Central kept the game close. But sophomore Wesley Thornton – who will soon be sifting through offers much as Shelton did – was the main reason Crockett County won the contest.

Thornton muscled in a heavily-contested drive to the basket and banked in a layup with just 14.7 seconds on the clock to give the Lady Cavaliers the lead and then added a final free throw with 1.4 seconds remaining as Coach Kayla Irvin's club hung on for a 41-39 triumph on the road at Selmer.

Shortly thereafter in the nightcap, Coach Spencer Bursey's Crockett boys made it five wins in a row by posting a 48-35 victory over the host Bobcats. It wasn't pretty, but the pressing defense continues to overcome less-than-stellar shooting percentages as the Cavaliers are now 7-4.

The girls contest was as close as it could possibly be, but it too was far from a work of art. Both teams took turns handing the ball over and missing shots for the majority of the duel, but at crunch time, the Lady Cavs found a way to prevail. That can be traced to four key points: (1) Thornton's competitiveness and willingness to face the big moments; (2) tough defense and rebounding by reserve Torey Savage; (3) a huge three-pointer by Ellie Henderson with 4:42 to play that shot Crockett back into the lead; and (4) Keeton Holyfield's defense on Shelton when the game came down to a final potential winning shot.

Thornton scored five points off a three and a steal in a 20-second span midway through the second quarter to provide the Lady Cavs with a 19-17 advantage and serve the first notice to McNairy County that they had come to compete. Three more times in the contest, the sophomore point guard netted baskets that brought Irvin's club from behind, including the eventual game-winner.

Savage helped cut off McNairy's cuts through the lane with a couple of blocks and a handful of rebounds after coming in off the bench. She also grabbed the rebound when McNairy's Shelton missed a 12-foot baseline jumper – over a perfect defensive posture from Holyfield – with 4.3 seconds left. A successful shot would have put the hosts up by one with little response time left for Crockett.

Henderson's big shot provided the only non-Thornton points for the visitors in the final period, in which the lead changed hands four times. Thornton tallied seven points in the fourth, including the final free throw that forced a last-second desperation toss by the Lady Bobcats.

She finished with 17 points as Crockett improved to 8-3 for the season. Holyfield – fighting an illness all day – added nine on a trio of threes. Henderson contributed seven and Savage and Audrey Whitby had four apiece. Shelton paced McNairy with 14, and her strong arm launched full-court passes for many of the Lady Bobcats' fast break attempts.

In the boys contest, McNairy's club demonstrated two traits: (1) an extremely impressive ability to move the ball around from player to player without dribbling, nearly always finding an open shooter simply by whipping the ball around numerous times; and (2) an almost complete inability to make a shot once the open man was found. A jackhammer placed directly against the rim would have made less noise than the clanks from the Bobcat launches.

Crockett's guys didn't shoot it much better, but their press allowed more opportunities, and Bursey's club seemed to hit in spurts. Corey Savage came off the bench to score six straight first-period points to help construct an early 14-8 advantage. Three-pointers by Karson Kail and Cortland Reddick boosted the halftime edge to seven; and solid inside play from Ben Burgess was instrumental in slowly stretching the margin over the second half.

The defense was solid throughout, and that is what has carried the Cavs in their current win streak. The press was effective again against McNairy, and sound rebounding from DK Woods, Kevin Pledge, and others continues to help Crockett be more competitive.

Reddick led the scoring Friday night with 11, followed by Burgess with eight and Savage and Carter Wren with six apiece. Jackson Allen had 11 for the losers. The others – at least on this night – were auditioning for summer construction jobs.

Both Crockett squads travel to Paris (Tennessee) Monday night to face a pair of talented Henry County teams.

CCHS Girls GM 11: Dec 19 at Selmer
Crockett 10 11 10 10 - 41
McNairy 12 7 11 9 - 39

Crockett – Wesley Thornton 17, Keeton Holyfield 9, Ellie Henderson 7, Audrey Whitby 4, Torey Savage 4, Halle Holyfield 0, Ruth Gourley 0. 2-Pt FG: 9. 3-Pt FG: 7 (K Holyfield 3, Thornton 2, Whitby, Henderson). FT: 2-5. Record: 8-3.

McNairy – Bailee Shelton 14, Neerajah Wade 10, Carlee Shelton 8, Joselyn McGee 3, Haylee Whittemore 2, Macee Gilbert 2, Rhyan Gray 0. 2-Pt FG: 13. 3-Pt FG: 3 (Wade 2, C Shelton). FT: 4-6. Record: 7-3.

CCHS Boys GM 11: Dec 19 at Selmer
Crockett 14 10 12 12 - 48
McNairy 11 6 11 7 - 35
Crockett – Cortland Reddick 11, Ben Burgess 8, Corey Savage 6, Carter Wren 6, Kevin Pledge 4, Max Woods 4, Karson Kail 3, Squirt Pickens 2, Andre Garduno 2, DK Woods 2, Brilan Dunigan 0, Nolen Turner 0, Jeremiah Young 0. 2-Pt FG: 16. 3-Pt FG: 3 (Reddick 2, Kail). FT: 7-13. Record: 7-4.

McNairy – Jackson Allen 11, Kaneon Brooks 6, Jayden Wilson 5, Konnor Shelton 4, Hayes Teague 4, Connor Plunk 2, JD Gaines 2, Tyler Mangrum 1, Lake Chambers 0, Jackson King 0, Jackson Cook 0. 2-Pt FG: 8. 3-Pt FG: 2 (Shelton, Allen). FT: 13-26. Record: 3-7.



Left: That opportunity came with about 17 seconds left, when Wesley Thornton drove to her left, negotiated the traffic, and muscled in this layup despite the defense of Neerajah Wade, moving Crockett ahead 40-39 with 14.7 seconds on the clock. (Photo by Ron Barry)

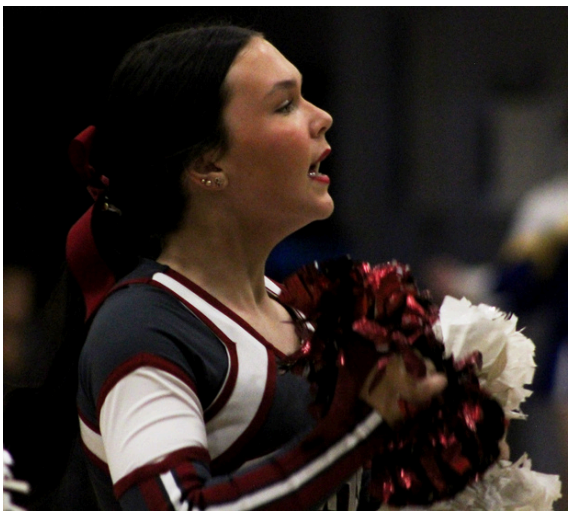


Above: The textbook-perfect defense of Keeton Holyfield -- going straight up vertically -- forced Bailee Shelton's response shot to miss, helping to preserve Crockett's road victory. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Crockett's Torey Savage (24) blocks this shot by McNairy's Neerajah Wade as Audrey Whitby tries to help out from behind the play. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: CCHS cheerleader Mia Simmons kept the encouragement coming toward the Lady Cavaliers as Friday's game with McNairy stayed close all night. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Ellie Henderson -- who hit a huge three-pointer midway through the final quarter to regain the lead for the Lady Cavs -- makes a move past McNairy's Rhyan Gray (33). (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Wesley Thornton was off and running after this steal, made when a pair of Lady Bobcats tried to exchange the ball with each other. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: It wouldn't be a Lady Cavalier game without Ellie Henderson diving on the floor for a ball, here wrestling it away from Bailee Shelton as Keeton and Halle Holyfield arrive to help out. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: Keeton Holyfield -- despite fighting an illness all day -- knocked down a trio of threes, including this first-half shot over the defense of Bailee Shelton. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Torey Savage (24) rips this rebound away from McNairy's Bailee Shelton. Savage's rebounding and defense were significant contributors to Crockett's win. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Wesley Thornton stuffs this shot attempt by Neerajah Wade as Halle Holyfield (20) and Torey Savage (24) converge on the lane. (Photo by Ron Barry)







Above: It was Wesley Thornton's showcase game of the season, with the ball in her hands most of the time against an aggressive defense, the winning basket, and an overall 17-point performance. (Photo by Ron Barry)

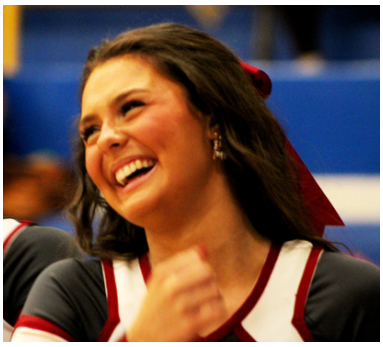
Below: Corey Savage came off the bench to score six immediate points in the opening period, helping Crockett's boys establish a 14-8 lead. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Karson Kail (22) nailed a big three-pointer with 3:30 left before the half to stretch Crockett's edge to 21-13. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Crockett's press maintained its intensity all the way to the end, displayed here by the effort put forth by Nolen Turner to knock this ball loose from McNairy possession. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Cortland Reddick was the Cavaliers' top scorer against McNairy Friday night with 11 points. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Left: The final outcome certainly pleased Crockett cheerleader Gracie Gaines, who was extremely proud of the effort put forth by both CCHS teams Friday night. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Squirt Pickens (00) had to handle the bulk of the point guard burdens Friday night in the absence of injured Jayden Frye. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Ben Burgess takes a water break during a second-half timeout after contributing eight points and more solid defense to the Cavalier cause. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Jeremiah Young corrals this loose ball from a pair of McNairy opponents as the Crockett hustle continues to harass its foes. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Carter Wren tallied six points for the Cavs as Crockett improved to 7-4 by winning its fifth straight game. (Photo by Ron Barry)

