12/12/25 By Ron Barry

LATE LADY CAV SURGE WINS SQUEAKER; CROCKETT BOYS CRUISE PAST GIBSON COUNTY



Above: When Crockett cranked up the defensive pressure in the third quarter -- illustrated here by Halle Holyfield (left) and Wesley Thornton (2) shutting down Gibson County's Jazmin Bailey (10) -- the Lady Cavs wiped out a seven-point halftime deficit. (Photo by Ron Barry)

In Game 1 of the 1988 World Series, St. Louis Cardinal broadcasting legend Jack Buck was on the national radio call when multi-injured Kirk Gibson hit his improbable, pinch-hit, walk-off home run for the Los Angeles Dodgers against Oakland A's relief specialist Dennis Eckersley.
Buck's reaction: "I don't believe what I just saw!"

That may well have been the feeling of many of the spectators in the Gibson County High School gymnasium Friday night when Crockett County's Lady Cavaliers – after struggling mightily through another inept first half of basketball full of turnovers and clanked shots – somehow pulled off a miraculous 48-44 triumph over the host Lady Pioneers, who entered the contest with an 8-1 record.

Coach Kayla Irvin's troops did it by cranking up their third-period defense – holding Gibson County to just four points – and then finally having a few shots drop from behind the three-point arc that turned out to be the difference in the game.

The victory, which boosted the Lady Cavs' season record to 5-3, ignited a winning night of basketball for the entire Crockett contingent as Coach Spencer Bursey's Cavaliers followed with a commanding 64-46 rout of the Pioneers' scrappy but significantly undersized squad. Crockett's guys are now 4-4, and dropped the Pioneers to 3-7.

The girls game began in a fashion that has been growing common in the early going. The Lady Cavs weren't making many shots, they kept throwing the ball away against the Gibson press, and point guard Wesley Thornton was saddled with two quick fouls that banished her to the bench for the remainder of the opening half.

Somehow Crockett managed to avoid falling too far behind, primarily for two reasons: (1) Gibson County wasn't shooting much better, and (2) Lady Pioneer Coach Mitch Wilkins – who has won a pair of state championships at the school – never substituted. As a result, his players were noticeably gassed by the halftime break, although leading 27-20. That included Sania Reaves, who torched the Lady Cavs for 15 of those 27 points.

What doesn't show in the stat sheet was that Crockett's Ellie Henderson – despite a size disadvantage – made Reaves work hard for every one of those points, staying in her way as she tried to move without the ball. It wore Reaves down, and the talented post player could manage only a single bucket in the third quarter when Crockett began to make its move.

The halftime advantage disappeared when a Halle Holyfield layup on a rebound and a three-pointer by Audrey Whitby knotted the score at 27-all with 4:33 to go in the period. Keeton Holyfield hit a three to give Crockett its first lead shortly thereafter and scored again on a layup to keep Irvin's crew ahead 32-31 as the final stanza began.

For the first four minutes of the fourth quarter, the lead seesawed between the teams until Gibson County – with Reaves gallantly trying to put her team on her back – edged ahead by four, 42-38, at the 3:45 mark. But Crockett's Torey Savage muscled in a layup and Thornton then drilled a trey from the top of the key to make it 43-42, Lady Cavs, with just 2:23 remaining.

Seconds later, Thornton pulled down a rebound after a Lady Pioneer miss and got the ball quickly out to Keeton Holyfield, who was fouled on a shot attempt. She hit one of the charity shots and then stole an entry pass in the Gibson lane intended for Reaves, keying a fast break pass to Thornton for a layup that made it 46-42 with 1:20 to play.

Reaves, who finished with a game-high 25 points, netted a pair of free throws to cut it to 46-44 with 52 seconds left, but Keeton Holyfield again got free for a layup 11 seconds later and Halle Holyfield pulled down a rebound off the next Lady Pioneer miss and held it until Irvin called timeout with 17.6 seconds on the clock.

When Crockett inbounded, the Lady Pioneers never tried to foul in the remaining time, perhaps because they were so tired. All five starters played all 32 minutes for the hosts.

Keeton Holyfield led Crockett with 14 points, backed by Thornton's 10, Whitby's eight, and Henderson's six. The Lady Cavs only shot six free throws in the entire game, and missed four of those. But their six three-pointers offset Gibson County's 11 points from the foul line.

The boys game was highlighted by the uncanny effectiveness of the player rotation Bursey used. Three of his reserves produced instantaneous offensive benefits: Corey Savage netted two baskets in each of the final three periods to finish as Crockett's leading scorer; Karson Kail nailed five points in a span of just 41 seconds in the second frame as the Cavs pulled out to a double-digit lead; and Carter Wren splashed six straight points in 24 seconds as the visitors blew the game open in the third quarter.

Ben Burgess and DK Woods were also effective off the bench, combining for eight points and snaring several rebounds. Starting guard Jayden Frye continued his smooth play in conducting the Cavalier offense and contributed six points of his own.

Savage – who closed the first half with an amazing 360-degree spin move fast break layup – totaled 12 points for the winners. Wren scored nine and Kail and Kevin Pledge had eight apiece.

Both Crockett squads hit the road Monday for rematches with Chester County in Henderson, with the girls tipping off first at 6 p.m.

CCHS Girls GM 8: Dec 12 at Dyer
Crockett 8 12 12 16 - 48
Gibson Co 14 13 4 13 - 44

Crockett – Keeton Holyfield 14, Wesley Thornton 10, Audrey Whitby 8, Ellie Henderson 6, Halle Holyfield 4, Torey Savage 4, Kira Bray 2, Ruth Gourley 0. 2-Pt FG: 14. 3-Pt FG: 6 (K Holyfield 3, Whitby 2, Thornton). FT: 2-6. Record: 5-3.

GC – Sania Reaves 25, Akira Riding 6, Jazmin Bailey 6, Kaitlyn Patterson 5, Jada Hart 2. 2-Pt FG: 12. 3-Pt FG: 3 (Bailey 2, Patterson). FT: 11-13. Record: 8-2.

CCHS Boys GM 8: Dec 12 at Dyer
Crockett 15 13 17 19 - 64
Gibson Co 11 6 12 17 - 46

Crockett – Corey Savage 12, Carter Wren 9, Kevin Pledge 8, Karson Kail 8, Jayden Frye 6, Max Woods 6, Cortland Reddick 5, Ben Burgess 4, DK Woods 4, Squirt Pickens 2, Brelin Dunigan 0, Nolen Turner 0. 2-Pt FG: 19. 3-Pt FG: 6 (Wren 3, Kail 2, Reddick). FT: 8-12. Record: 4-4.

GC – Trajan Eddings 20, Skyler Robertson 9, Braylen Griffie 8, Jakayden Ivie 4, Brett Russell 2, JP Wofford 2, Brayden Duvall 1, Kyran Perry 0. 2-Pt FG: 11. 3-Pt FG: 5 (Eddings 4, Robertson). FT: 9-13. Record: 3-7.



Above: As Halle Holyfield maintains pressure on Jazmin Bailey, Ellie Henderson (background) makes it extremely difficult for Gibson County star Sania Reaves to establish position to receive a pass. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Crockett's enthusiastic cheer team kept the encouragement going all night for the Lady Cavs and the Cavaliers. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Audrey Whitby zooms upcourt past Gibson County's Jada Hart (1) in first-half action Friday night in Dyer. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Keeton Holyfield -- who led Crockett scoring with 14 points -- blocks this shot by Gibson County's Akira Riding as Ruth Gourley follows behind for a potential rebound. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: More tough Lady Cav defense is displayed here as Ellie Henderson, Keeton Holyfield, and Halle Holyfield surround Lady Pioneer star Sania Reaves, forcing a dumpoff to Jazmin Bailey (10). (Photo by Ron Barry)





Left: Wesley Thornton drilled this gigantic three-pointer with 2:23 remaining to give Crockett a 43-42 lead. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Crockett cheerleader Hadleigh McCoy -- high above the floor, thanks to her "supportive" teammates -- keeps the crowd revved up during a timeout. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Ruth Gourley works her way around Gibson County's Akira Riding in the second quarter. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Left: Torey Savage gets ready to put a move on Lady Pioneer defender Jazmin Bailey. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: A minute later -- off a Keeton Holyfield steal -- Wesley Thornton outran two Gibson County defenders for the layup that made it 46-42. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: During the game's final timeout with 17 seconds left, Cacie Jo McNeill subliminally tried to let the officials know which team should be favored on a close call. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Kevin Pledge looks to get open inside against a packed Gibson County defense. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Crockett's Max Woods drives the baseline against Gibson County's Jakayden Ivie. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Squirt Pickens brings the ball upcourt in first-half action against Gibson County Friday night. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Corey Savage sails in for two of his team-leading 12 points as the Cavaliers routed the Pioneers 64-46. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Karson Kail came off the bench in the second quarter and drilled in five points in a 41-second span to help Crockett's margin reach double figures. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Carter Wren (15) and DK Woods (left) team up to deflect the ball away from Gibson County's Skyler Robertson (11). (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Jayden Frye continued his effective playmaking, here drawing three defenders before passing to a slicing Kevin Pledge for a layup. (Photo by Ron Barry)





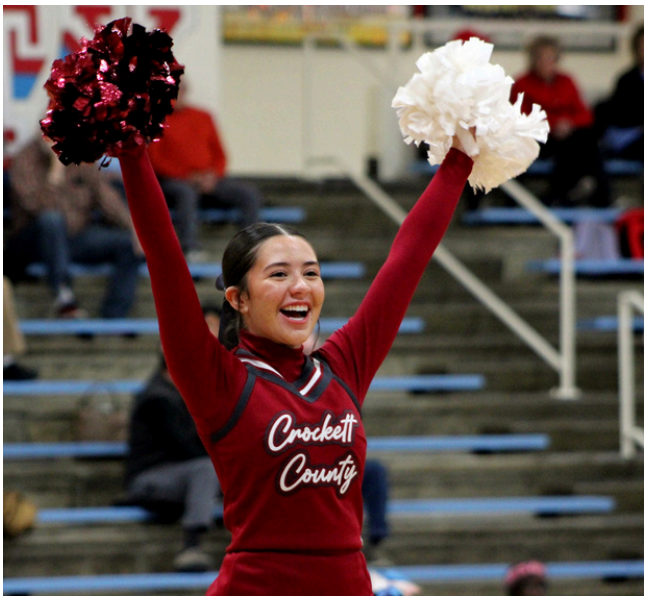
Above: Corey Savage dove on the floor to claim possession of this loose ball and spur a Cavalier attack in the other direction. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Senior cheerleader Carrington Smith liked practically everything she saw from both games Friday night. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Ben Burgess avoided a blocked shot by Gibson County's Jakayden Ivie by slipping under the rim for this reverse layup. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Gabby Dobbelaire kept her smile on display as the Cavaliers steadily pulled away from the host Pioneers. (Photo by Ron Barry)