01/09/26 By Ron Barry

STRONG DYERSBURG FINISH FELLS CAVALIERS; LADY TROJANS "BOMB" CROCKETT GIRLS



Above: Dyersburg's Jace Ward (0) tries to avoid the shot block by Max Woods but runs over Crockett's Jayden Frye in the process in Friday night's game. (Photo by Ron Barry)

With just 5:18 remaining to play, it was still a one-possession game.

Coach Spencer Bursey's underdog Crockett County Cavaliers had put up a whale of a fight on the road against the talented Dyersburg Trojans. They had done so without the services of one of their best outside shooters, Carter Wren, who is dealing with a calf injury, and DK Woods, who could have supplied some defensive muscle inside.

Playing in front of one of the best-dressed student sections you'll ever see – it was Dyersburg's basketball homecoming – the Cavs had gone toe-to-toe with the Trojans on the strength of distance shooting by Cortland Reddick, the slick post game of Kevin Pledge, and a solid point guard performance by Jayden Frye, in spite of intense full-court pressure from the athletic hosts.

But in the space of two minutes, the "blink-and-you'll-miss-something" Trojans – propelled by the superb Jace Ward – ran the margin up to nine points and then fought off Crockett's final charge to post a 57-47 triumph, improving their season record to 10-4. In the final quarter, Ward netted a key field goal and made all four of his free throws to complete a game-high 20-point performance.

There was certainly nothing for the Cavs to hang their heads about. The large Dyersburg gymnasium – especially all decked out for homecoming – is not an easy place for visiting teams to play, and Bursey's club served notice that it isn't going to be an easy foe during district play.

The game's first six minutes shockingly quieted the large homecoming crowd as Crockett zoomed to a 15-5 lead after making three straight three-pointers: the first by Corey Savage and the next two by Reddick. Frye had scored four of the contest's first six points to ignite the surprise start.

But Dyersburg's strength is its ability to score points in a hurry, and in the next 68 seconds the Trojans netted seven unanswered tallies to cut the margin to 15-12. After that, the duel was a virtual see-saw until that final fourth-period spurt by the Trojans.

The Cavaliers would have led at the half had it not been for buzzer-beating threes at the end of both the first and second quarters by Dyersburg. Each one erased a Crockett edge and put the hosts in front. It was 32-30 at the intermission, in which Lady Trojan hoop star Chelby Jordan – more on her court royalty later – was named the basketball homecoming queen.

With Ward scoring the first two baskets of the third period, it looked like the Trojans were about to take off and run speedily toward at least a moderately-sized margin of victory, opening up a seven-point edge with 6:36 to go in the stanza. But at the 1:40 mark, Frye snaked in for a layup to get the Cavs within four as they headed into the fourth quarter.

Pledge opened the final frame by muscling in a miracle layup with his off-hand and his back to the basket while avoiding a pair of Dyersburg shot-blockers, and after Savage added a free a minute later, Crockett trailed just 43-42 with only 6:34 to go. The Trojans' Demonte Johnson connected on a short jumper at 5:18, however, and the lead slowly grew from there.

A three-pointer by Frye temporarily closed the gap to six (51-45) with 3:05 on the clock, but Dyersburg netted six of the last eight points to seal the win. Crockett dropped to 10-8 with the defeat, but competed admirably in the process.

Pledge and Reddick topped Cav scorers with 13 points apiece, and Frye added 12. Ward's 20 for Dyersburg was supported by Johnson with 14.

The girls' game that opened the night's doubleheader was a tad less exciting. Dyersburg needed less than three minutes to open up a 9-0 lead that ballooned to 22-4 by the end of the first period, and it only got more lopsided from there as the 2024 state champions recorded a 59-26 demolition. It was the second straight game in which the Lady Cavaliers failed to even reach 30 points.

Dyersburg actually made more threes (11) in the contest than Crockett made baskets (seven total). Most of the bombs came from point guard Kay Kay Strayhorn, whose shots seem to almost scrape the ceiling before dropping through nothing but net; she made five rainbows on the night.

That meant that homecoming queen Jordan didn't have to flash her usual brilliance so heavily. Possessor of one of the prettiest mid-range shots in high school ball, Jordan was content to move the ball around and take relatively few stabs at the hoop. She netted eight points as Strayhorn's 20 and Zya Currie's 10 gave the Lady Trojans as many points as they'd need.

It didn't help matters for the Lady Cavs that sophomore point guard Wesley Thornton – the team's most dependable ballhandler – sat out the final 10 minutes after enduring some type of ankle injury.

Crockett's offense for the night was paced by Audrey Whitby, Halle Holyfield, and Ruth Gourley, each with five points. Alice Luten came off the bench to score four in just a few minutes of play in the final period. Thornton and Keeton Holyfield – the Lady Cavs' two top scorers for the season – had a combined five points in the defeat, Crockett's seventh in 18 starts.

Things don't get any easier as both Crockett teams return home to battle district foe South Gibson Tuesday night. The girls' game tips at 6:00.

CCHS Girls GM 18: Jan 9 at Dyersburg
Crockett 4 11 3 8 - 26
Dyersburg 22 12 14 11 - 59
Crockett – Audrey Whitby 5, Halle Holyfield 5, Ruth Gourley 5, Alice Luten 4, Wesley Thornton 3, Keeton Holyfield 2, Ellie Henderson 2, Torey Savage 0, Tink Willis 0, Sydney Smith 0, Callie Freeman 0. 2-Pt FG: 4. 3-Pt FG: 3 (Whitby, Thornton, H Holyfield). FT: 9-14. Record: 11-7.

Dyersburg – Kay Kay Strayhorn 20, Zya Currie 10, Chelby Jordan 8, Kathleen Harrell 6, Aerie Quinn 5, Bre Parr 5, Kaliyah Lewis 3, Liz Lemons 2, Brooke Parr 0, Laya Currie 0, Julieanne Cundiff 0, Makayla Johnson 0, Lily Kate Jones 0. 2-Pt FG: 12. 3-Pt FG: 11 (Strayhorn 5, Z Currie 2, Harrell 2, Quinn, Bre Parr). FT: 2-4. Record: 12-3.

CCHS Boys GM 18: Jan 9 at Dyersburg
Crockett 17 13 9 8 - 47
Dyersburg 18 14 11 14 - 57
Crockett – Kevin Pledge 13, Cortland Reddick 13, Jayden Frye 12, Corey Savage 4, Andre Garduno 2, Ben Burgess 2, Squirt Pickens 1, Karson Kail 0, Max Woods 0, Brilan Dunagin 0. 2-Pt FG: 11. 3-Pt FG: 7 (Reddick 3, Frye 2, Pledge, Savage). FT: 4-10. Record: 10-8.

Dyersburg – Jace Ward 20, Demonte Johnson 14, Frank Barringer 5, Ja'Kaydyn Parr 4, Isaiah Thomas 4, Cam Rhimes 3, Peyton Hill 3, Tylen Thomas 2, Jayce Ellerbrook 2, Rainin Watson 0, Terrell Ragland 0. 2-Pt FG: 15. 3-Pt FG: 6 (Ward 2, Johnson 2, Barringer, Rimes). FT: 9-11. Record: 10-4.



Above: The Cavs' Kevin Pledge somehow made this almost impossible off-hand shot with his back to the basket while spinning between a pair of Dyersburg shot-blockers. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Cortland Reddick looks for an opening around Dyersburg's Ja'Kaydyn Parr in second-half action Friday. Reddick's long-range shooting got the Cavs off to an impressive start in the contest. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Right: Crockett cheerleaders Lexie Beaird (left) and Kennedy Henning share a laugh after a timeout stunt during Friday night's game with Dyersburg. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Dyersburg's talented Jace Ward (0) was the main thorn in the side for the Cavs, as he fires over Crockett's Ben Burgess here for two of his game-high 20 points. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Jayden Frye -- working here against Dyersburg's Terrell Ragland (14) -- tries to receive an inbounds pass in the fourth quarter of Friday's duel. Frye had 12 points for Crockett. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Corey Savage netted a big free throw to bring the Cavaliers within a point of Dyersburg (43-42) with just 6:34 to play, but the hosts eventually pulled away with a late spurt. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Left: Crockett's Squirt Pickens tries to initiate a footrace with Trojan defenders Demonte Johnson (2) and Isaiah Thomas (32) as Cav teammates Corey Savage and Cortland Reddick follow behind. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Ben Burgess (33) and Cortland Reddick force Dyersburg's Ja'Kaydyn Parr to dish off rather than follow through with this shot attempt. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Crockett cheerleaders Gracie Gaines (right) and Auriana Taylor kept up a steady stream of encouragement for the battling Cavs. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Kevin Pledge challenges this Jace Ward shot attempt in the fourth quarter as the game stayed tight throughout. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: The athleticism wasn't limited to the players Friday night. Crockett cheerleader Amy Mena -- also a member of the Lady Cav soccer team -- dazzled the crowd with this series of moves, ... bounding and tumbling her way across three-fourths of the court ... ... and topping it off with a quick flick of the wrist to get the hairstyle back in its proper place ..... before casually strolling off as if it were no big deal. The Crockett fans in attendance flipped for her, though. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Below: Crockett's Alice Luten races for the basket -- with teammate Tink Willis following her -- on her way to scoring four points in the final quarter Friday. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: In the girls' game, Crockett's Audrey Whitby and teammates saw too much of Dyersburg's Kay Kay Strayhorn (1), who nailed five three-pointers on her way to 20 points. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: The Lady Trojan defense got right in Crockett's face -- demonstrated here by Kathleen Harrell's intensity against Ellie Henderson -- and disrupted the Lady Cav offense. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Left: If a picture is truly worth a thousand words, this one is representative of how Friday night's game went for the Lady Cavs, who are now 11-7 for the season. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Two of the best athletes in West Tennessee -- Dyersburg's Chelby Jordan and Crockett's Wesley Thornton -- battle each other on this play. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Dyersburg's Chelby Jordan -- possessor of one of the best mid-range jumpers in West Tennessee -- didn't have to over-exert against Crockett, scoring eight points in the win. (Photo by Ron Barry)

