

THORNTON BLAST KEY ROUT OF HAYWOOD; POLE VAULTING BEGINS AT CROCKETT TRACK



Above: Wesley Thornton follows through on the swing that created her latest moon shot, a three-run, first-inning homer against Haywood. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Wesley Thornton didn't take long to get back into the softball swing of things.

Less than a week out of basketball season, and making her first start in the team's second game, Thornton smashed the first ball she swung at into near-orbit for a three-run homer, keying Crockett County's 10-run first inning on the way to a 17-0 rout of Haywood that was mercifully stopped by the run rule after two frames Thursday night.

Thornton's cannon shot landed some 50 feet beyond the left-field fence and scored Macie Teel and Syesha Torres ahead of her for a 9-0 Lady Cavalier advantage. It was Thornton's second time at bat in the inning, having led off the rally with a walk – one of six (plus a hit batsman) Haywood pitching issued in the rally. Piper Smith drove in a run with a groundout and Kiyra Liggins belted a run-scoring triple to close the first-frame uprising.

In the second, Crockett tallied seven more times. Smith singled in courtesy runner Tink Willis and Liggins belted a double with the bases loaded, clearing them all. Maddie Haynes knocked in the final two runs.

Coach Baron Jimmerson's crew improved to 2-0 on the season and made a winner of pitcher Emmalynn Medlin, who blanked the visiting Lady Tomcats for both innings, struck out four, and had only a hit-batsman to spoil her outing. Haywood had no hits in the contest and committed four errors defensively.

Liggins, with her double and triple, collected five RBIs. She and Nataly Amador each had two of Crockett's eight hits. Thornton and Amador scored three runs apiece.

The Lady Cavs play at Covington Friday and at Chester County Monday, with both games starting at 5:30 p.m.

TRACK & FIELD: The pole vault is coming to Crockett County – but it's intended to elevate the west side of the state to be competitive with the "better-facility-owning" Tennesseans on the other side.

At the end of February, Crockett's new track facility passed an official safety inspection and CCHS became a TSSAA-approved pole vault school, the only one in west Tennessee outside of Shelby County with this distinction. And while Coach Julie Nass is proud and grateful that her program has achieved the status, she explained that the designation may be the first step in thwarting a rule change being pushed by track & field programs in the other parts of the state.

Nass serves on the TSSAA Track Committee as the west Tennessee representative outside of Shelby County, so she is aware that several schools in east and middle Tennessee are moving to change the rules for state championship meet qualification. Currently, in each event, the top two sectional performers in each of the three parts of the state qualify, with two at-large qualifiers completing the field of eight.

But schools in east and middle Tennessee want to change the rule to taking only the three sectional champions and then boosting the at-large total to five – with their main justification being the pole vault.

Last year's state results show that west Tennessee fielded vaults at 5'6 for girls and 9'6 for boys, while the rest of the state's performances ranged from 8'6 to 11'6 in the girls division and 10' to 14' in the boys group. That meant there were some upset east and middle state programs who had athletes who didn't qualify, even though they had better heights than the west Tennesseans.

"A rule change like that would make it harder for west Tennessee teams to score points at the state meet," Nass said. "At our last meeting I had to explain to them that it's not because we lack talent in the west; it's because we lack proper facilities to train for events like the pole vault. And I told them we are trying to remedy that, and my school is leading the charge. Our new facility and pole vault approval status is the first step. So all this is bigger than just Crockett County."

With the pole vault approval, Nass is hopeful that better things are on the way for Cavalier tracksters.

"I want to express my appreciation again to the administration and to the Board of Education for the huge investment and for making sure we had all the right equipment and high-end surfacing, so we could become the premier facility of west Tennessee. To quote Coach (Principal Jerrod) Shelton, 'It's a great time to be a Cavalier!'"

With the approval granted, Nass was working Thursday afternoon with three Crockett athletes willing to be the first to try the new adventure: Addie Davidson, Avery Thornton, and Khilan Thomas. She thinks there may be a couple more who join the ranks as they see the practices occurring.

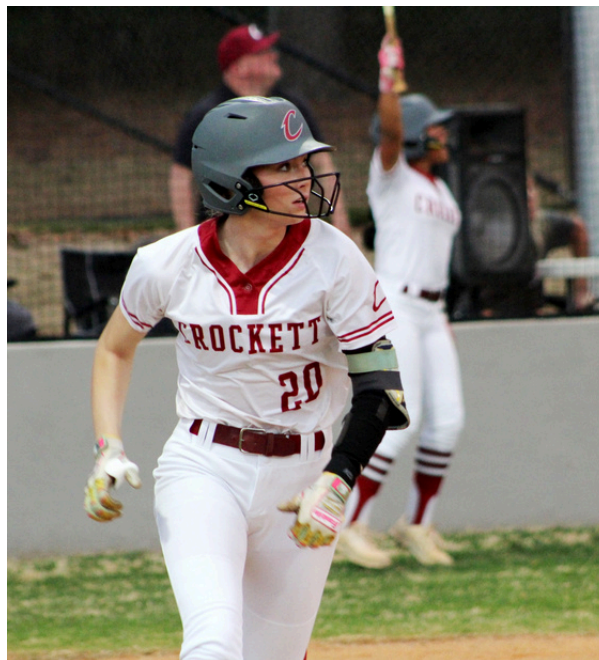
The three are still learning the basic physics involved in trusting that the pole will launch them over the bar if their technique is proper in the approach to the plant box. Davidson, Thornton, and Thomas began the Thursday practice just getting used to the feel of the pole and receiving instruction from Nass.

By the afternoon's end, all three were clearing heights that would qualify them for the West Sectional if they can do it in a sanctioned meet setting.

MIDDLE SCHOOL SOCCER: The CCMS boys only needed one half to dispose of Milan Thursday night in Alamo, with Damian Marquez netting four goals to pace the 9-0 victory.

Marquez scored at the 27:28, 24:20, 22:22, and 7:56 marks. Lucas Morales scored three times, at 26:27, 23:26, and a 12:03 header off of a corner kick. Gabe Williams, after a handball in the box was called, converted a penalty kick at the 19:30 mark. Brendan Green closed out the scoring at 6:15.

Caleb Ferguson recorded three assists for the winners, with Aaron Haliburton contributing two and Jaaziel Perez and Marquez posting one apiece. Crockett controlled the ball for virtually the entire playing time.



Left: Wesley Thornton watches her home run sail well over the left-field fence as on-deck hitter Nataly Amador (background) signals that it's long gone. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Emmalynn Medlin curls the softball in her hand before delivering another unhittable pitch in Thursday's 17-0 shutout of Haywood. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Lady Cavalier catcher Macie Teel lines a shot toward left-center that was misplayed by a Haywood outfielder, bringing two runners home in Thursday's rout. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Piper Smith slides safely into second base to beat the relay throw back to the infield. Smith drove in two runs Thursday. (Photo by Ron Barry)



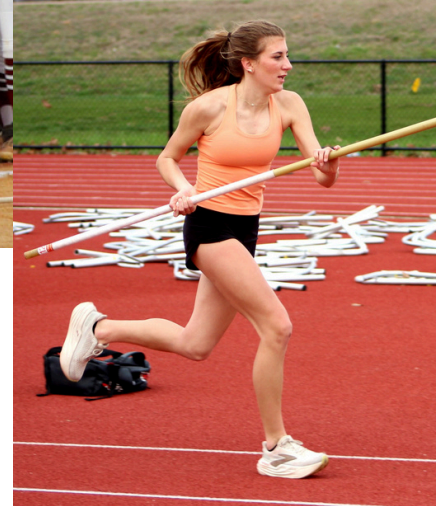
Above: Maddie Haynes gets some instruction from first base coach Tre Jimmerson after reaching on a walk. She also had a hit and drove in two runs. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: The dugout emptied to welcome home a smiling Wesley Thornton after her titanic home run in the first inning Thursday. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Avery Thornton approaches the plant box as one of Crockett's brave new pole vaulters at track & field practice Thursday. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Addie Davidson does so many multiple events for Crockett's track & field team. So what's one more? Add her to the pole vaulting lineup in Thursday's practice. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: The third adventurer in the initial pole vault journey Thursday was Khilan Thomas. By day's end -- well, you may be surprised. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: A vault begins with a speedy approach down the lane, with the hands placed on the pole according to the height being attended. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: As the vaulter nears the pit, the pole begins to level out in preparation for the plant into the box. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: With the vaulter now at full speed, the pole is directed into the plant box. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: As the pole is planted and the resistance meets the vaulter's hands, the vaulter jumps from the ground in unison with the bending of the pole. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: The vaulter relies on the pole to provide the impetus for the left and focuses on turning the body to get the feet above the height to be cleared. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: If the vault goes well, the vaulter will be lifted over the bar and then simply needs to push the pole back toward the approach area during the landing. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Addie Davidson was consistently clearing heights when the day was through. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: And Khilan Thomas? He cleared a height that would already qualify him for the West Tennessee Sectional at the end of the season. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: So how did the "rookies" do? Avery Thornton was picture perfect in clearing the bar on this jump. (Photo by Ron Barry)

