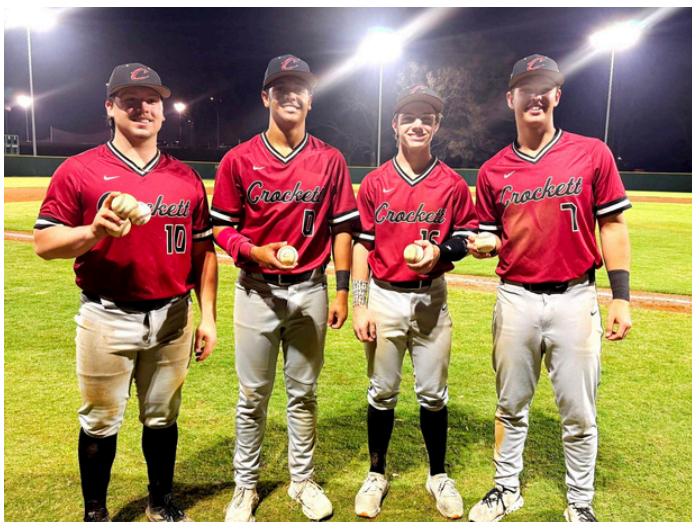


## ANOTHER MIRACULOUS BOUNCEBACK EXTENDS CAVALIER BASEBALL WINNING STREAK



**Above:** These four Cavaliers hammered homers in the 12-8 victory over Paducah Tilghman in Union City Thursday night (from left): Carter Winders (who hit three), Callan Willis, Nash Kilburn, and Brady Fronabarger. (Photo by Jennifer Winders)

If iconic baseball announcers Jack Buck and Vin Scully were still alive, they'd have trouble describing what occurred in Union City Thursday night.

Buck might have said, "I don't believe what I just saw – again!" And Scully might chime in with, "In a year that has been so improbable, the impossible has happened – again!"

In the meantime, if you see a group of people in Crockett County whose fingernails look like they've been gnawed down to the bone, they're probably the parents and fans of the Cavalier baseball team.

If you thought there was some divine intervention in Monday's 6-5 win over Dyer County, which was then amped up a notch in Wednesday's 8-7 victory over Community School of Naples (FL) – well, Thursday's 12-8 extra-inning triumph over Paducah (KY) Tilghman might rival the plagues God and Moses rained down on Egypt's Pharaoh.

The Cavs, playing in the L. H. Ladd Memorial Classic in Union City, may have used all the remaining magic left in Coach Brad Smith's wand in escaping the Blue Tornado of Tilghman, a school with a rich baseball history that includes former Major Leaguers Steve Finley and Terry Shumpert. Defying the pressure – multiple times – of trying to extend its winning streak to an astounding 14 games, Crockett kept finding ways, led by its savvy senior core.

A summary would have to start with veteran catcher Carter Winders, who is enjoying a season for the ages with this club. Winders slugged three home runs in Thursday night's win, giving him nine for the season in just 19 games. He drove in four runs, boosting his spring total to 43 – again, in just 19 games. His batting average is now .565, he's getting on base at a 65% clip, he's slugging a whopping 1.145 (.500 is considered extremely productive), and he has an OPS (on-base + slugging percentage) of – gulp! – 1.794. For reference, the all-time single-season OPS record in Major League Baseball is held by Barry Bonds, who posted a 1.422 in 2004.

As if those numbers weren't impressive enough, when Winders pitches this season, he's 4-0 with an ERA of 0.27, posting 45 strikeouts in 26 innings.

There are others on this Cavalier squad with numbers nearly as mind-blowing, but let's get back to Thursday's game and its series of miracles.

Crockett was the visiting team in this one, and the Cavs put two runs up on the board quickly when Winders followed a Callan Willis walk with his first home run. But Tilghman's Landon Hinz answered with a two-run shot in the bottom of the frame, and it was obvious a battle was about to ensue.

Neither team scored in the second, but Crockett's Nash Kilburn – another senior – led off the third with a home run to right field. But the Blue Tornado fought back to tie it again on a bases-loaded walk. It was 3-3 after three innings.

The fourth was scoreless, but Kilburn started the fifth with a line single to right and then stole second. He came around to score when Brady Fronabarger's hard ground ball to short was booted for an error. Fronabarger stole second and third, enabling him to race home on an eventual wild pitch for a 5-3 Crockett advantage. Tilghman trimmed it to 5-4 in the bottom of the fifth on a homer by Wyatt Gower.

In the sixth, after a walk to Sam Proctor, Willis hammered his fourth long ball of the season to make it 7-4 and then, as a relief pitcher, retired the Kentuckians in order in the bottom of the frame to bring Crockett within three outs of their fourteenth consecutive victory. It looked assured when Winders began the seventh by cranking his second homer of the night, an opposite-field shot to right for an 8-4 Cav margin. But then, Tilghman did to Crockett what the Cavs had done to Naples the previous evening.

A leadoff double and subsequent single made it 8-5. Two walks loaded the bases, and the winning run was coming to the plate with nobody out. It was Gower – who homered earlier – and this time he ripped a single which was misplayed in the outfield for an error, and suddenly it was 8-7 with runners on second and third and still no outs. The outlook was beyond gloomy.

It got worse. A ground ball in the infield was kicked for another error, a run scored, and it was now 8-8 with the winning run at third – still no outs. Tilghman tried to engineer a double steal to grab the win, but Gower was thrown out at the plate with Winders making the tag. Now it's one out and the winning run – Stone Crowe – is on second.

After another walk, Willis struck out a pinch-hitter for the second out. But Will Keller grounded a single into left field, and the Cavs needed another miracle. They got it when junior Brody Parlow charged the ball quickly, came up throwing, and gunned Crowe down at the plate to send the game into extra innings.

After letting a four-run lead slip away like that, some teams don't rebound. But this 2026 Cav squad isn't "some teams." Even after the first two hitters in the eighth made outs, Willis – who has now reached base an incredible 49 times in Crockett's 19 games – drew a walk. And on a 2-2 count, Kilburn laced an opposite-field triple to left, chasing Willis home with the go-ahead run. However, Tilghman would have another turn at bat – would the one run hold up?

Fronabarger promptly made that a moot point when he launched a 2-0 pitch over the right-field fence, scoring Kilburn in front of him for an 11-8 lead.

"In a year that has been so improbable, the impossible has happened – again!"

But wait – Winders wasn't finished. On a 1-2 delivery, he crushed his third homer of the night into the purplish sky beyond the center-field fence, and the Cavs would take a 12-8 edge into the bottom of the eighth.

"I don't believe what I just saw – again!"

The drama wasn't over, though. Willis had thrown 71 pitches in his pressure-packed three frames. Smith turned to Rylan Redding – a freshman who'd experienced just five varsity innings thus far this season – to try to close it out. And when Hank James led off with a single and Brendan Mira drew a walk, it was easy to begin to think "here they come again."

But Redding induced a flyout to right and then struck out Hinz – who'd homered earlier – before getting Gower on another fly to Kilburn in right. Game over. Fourteen in a row. 17-2 on the season.

And ready to duel Carlisle County (KY) at 10:00 Friday morning.

**SOFTBALL:** The fortunes weren't as good in Newbern Thursday evening as Dyer County's talented Lady Choctaws outlasted Crockett's Lady Cavaliers 6-3, aided by three unearned runs from five Cav miscues.

Volleyball star Rylee Key doubled and homered to pace Dyer County's offense, driving in two runs and going 3-for-4 in the contest. Wesley Thornton was 3-for-4 for Crockett, smashing a pair of doubles and scoring twice. Fallon Beard and Gabby Bursey also had doubles for the Lady Cavs, and Madison Stitts contributed two hits.

Crockett fell to 17-4 for the season and to 2-1 in district play. The Lady Cavs will play South Gibson in Medina at 5:30 on Monday.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL SOCCER:** The CCMS boys had to survive a misting rain, a lightning delay, and a stadium power failure Thursday night in rolling to a 7-0 victory over Paris Inman in a game that was eventually called for darkness with 18 minutes left to play.

Crockett took 14 shots on goal, and half of them went for goals. On an assist from Jaaziel Perez, Lucas Morales scored the first goal at 27:00. Three minutes later the match was stopped for lightning in a 40-minute delay. The power then went out, forcing a race against the setting sun to get in as much of the game as possible.

It only took two minutes for the Perez-to-Morales combo to click again, followed by a Caleb Ferguson goal at 15:05 from a Damian Marquez pass. Ferguson netted another at 9:35 on an Antony Mena assist, and Marquez scored at 6:30 on the third assist of the evening from Perez. Morales and Marquez added second-half goals before darkness set in, giving Crockett goalkeeper Henry Mayfield a clean sheet for his night's work.



**Above:** Aiden Austin had three hits in the game for Crockett, boosting his season batting average to .365. (Photo by Ron Barry)



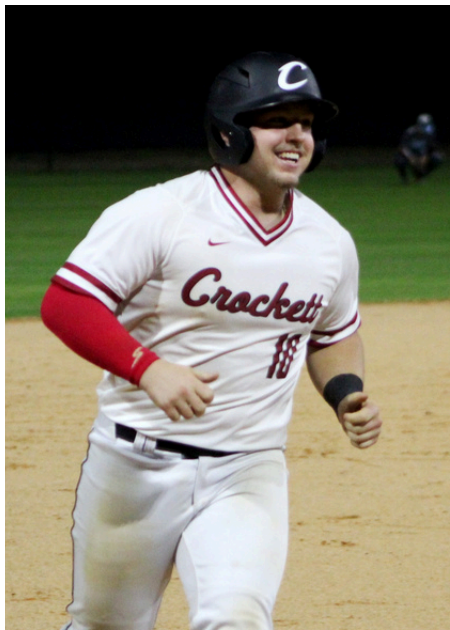
**Above:** Brody Parlow gunned down the potential winning run with a perfect throw to the plate in the bottom of the seventh inning to preserve the Cavalier streak. (Photo by Ron Barry)

**Below:** Nash Kilburn belted a triple that broke the 8-8 tie with two outs in the eighth and had his second home run of the season earlier. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Left:** Freshman Rylan Redding blanked Paducah Tilghman in the bottom of the eighth to secure Crockett's 12-8 win. (Photo by Ron Barry)

**Below:** Brady Fronabarger -- hitting .446 for the season -- delivered a big two-run homer on the heels of Nash Kilburn's triple to provide a little breathing room for the Cavs in the top of the eighth. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Above:** Carter Winders was doing plenty of this -- just rounding the bases -- during his three-homer night in Union City against Paducah Tilghman. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Left:** Callan Willis just keeps getting on base for Crockett -- 49 times in 19 games -- and aided the Cav cause with a home run as well Thursday night. (Photo by Ron Barry)

**Right:** Wesley Thornton ripped two doubles and a single and scored twice, but it wasn't enough to offset Crockett fielding miscues that led to a 6-3 district loss at Dyer County Thursday. (Photo by Ron Barry)

