

CAVALIERS TROUNCE OBION COUNTY 11-0 IN BASEBALL DISTRICT PLAY OPENER



Above: Crockett's Brody Parlow rips a single through the left side during the two-run rally that brought the Cavs their fourth straight mercy-rule victory Monday. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Crockett County senior outfielder Callan Willis has been a solid performer throughout his career for the Cavaliers, but as he stepped to the plate Monday night to face Obion County – a team that has not exactly been the cream of the crop in the Cavaliers' district – he knew he had never had a hit against the Rebels.

Willis, batting in the leadoff spot in the bottom of the first, took pitches for two balls and a strike before fouling off the next three offerings. After another ball, on a 3-2 count, he fouled off yet another pitch.

The Cav centerfielder has been crushing the baseball thus far this spring as Coach Brad Smith's club has raced out to an 8-2 start, with their last three wins coming by way of the mercy rule. So not being able to square up a ball against Obion for his entire career was getting old.

Could Willis get the monkey – now growing to be the size of King Kong – off his back on a rapidly chilling Monday night in Alamo?

Yes. On the ninth pitch from Rebel starter Ryker Whitson, he scorched a liner past third baseman Tucker Phelon that was fair by the width of a baseball and hugged the left-field line long enough for Willis to cruise into second base with an easy double.

It was the start of an 11-hit night – in just four innings of batting – as Crockett opened regular season district play with its fourth straight mercy-rule verdict, clobbering the visitors 11-0 behind a combined one-hitter from hurlers Carter Winders and Jameson Bushart.

Winders went the first three frames and surrendered only a second-inning leadoff infield hit to Obion's Brody Smith, who barely beat second baseman Aiden Austin's leaping throw after backhanding the ball up the middle. By the third inning – in which he upped his strikeout total to six – Winders admitted he "was just working on some stuff." The senior has yet to allow an earned run this season.

Winders threw strikes on 28 of his 38 pitches, and when southpaw Bushart took the hill, his "effective wildness" kept the Rebels scoreless. Bushart hit the strike zone on just half of his 40 pitches and walked two batters, but still struck out five.

Meanwhile, the Cavaliers were getting offensive production throughout the lineup, scoring five times in the first, four runs in the third, and two more in the fourth in gaining the district win.

After the leadoff double by Willis, who advanced to third on a wild pitch, Nash Kilburn was hit on a 3-1 toss and promptly stole second. Brady Fronabarger plated Willis with a sacrifice fly to left and then Winders lined a run-scoring single to center.

Courtesy runner Myles Perkins stole second and took third on an error before Austin singled him home and then stole second himself. A George Randall single put runners on first and third, and Karson Kail made it 4-0 with Crockett's second sac fly of the rally. When Mason Ray's base hit to right dropped in, Randall scored to boost the edge to 5-0.

In the Cav third, Ray smoked a two-out double to left-center off relief pitcher Noah Stover, who then walked Sam Proctor. Willis – now free of the Obion curse – dropped a single in front of centerfielder Adrian Meadows to score Ray, and Kilburn plunked a two-run single into left to make it 8-0. A Fronabarger single to center upped the margin to 9-0.

In the bottom of the fourth, Randall walked and took second on a sharp single to left by Brody Parlow. A wild pitch advanced both runners, who then scored easily on a Landry Fronabarger single. Willis and Ray collected two hits apiece for the Cavs, with Willis, Kilburn, and Randall each scoring twice and Kilburn and both Fronabargers knocking in two runs.

The two teams meet again Tuesday night in Troy at 6:30.



Above: Carter Winders -- who still hasn't yielded an earned run this season -- delivers a pitch after giving up an infield single to Obion County. It was the Rebels' lone hit. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Nash Kilburn stole second and then third (pictured here) after being hit by a pitch in the first inning. He later singled in a pair of runs. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Catcher Sam Proctor has done an excellent job catching Carter Winders this season. The duo has not allowed an earned run yet. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Callan Willis finally got his first hit against Obion County on this double -- and then got another one later in the contest. (Photo by Ron Barry)



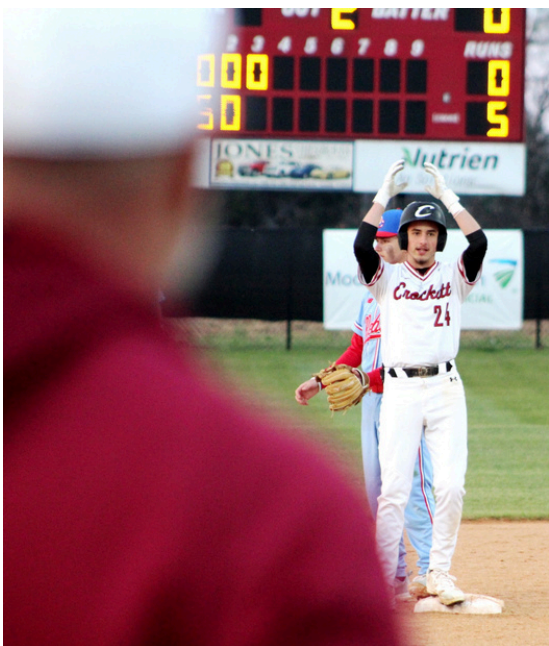
Above: Second baseman Aiden Austin ranged way to his right to snare this ball up the middle in the second inning ... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: ... and set his feet to throw from all the way over on the shortstop side of the base ... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... and then launched this throw that nearly beat the runner to first. It was to be Obion's only hit of the game. (Photo by Ron Barry)

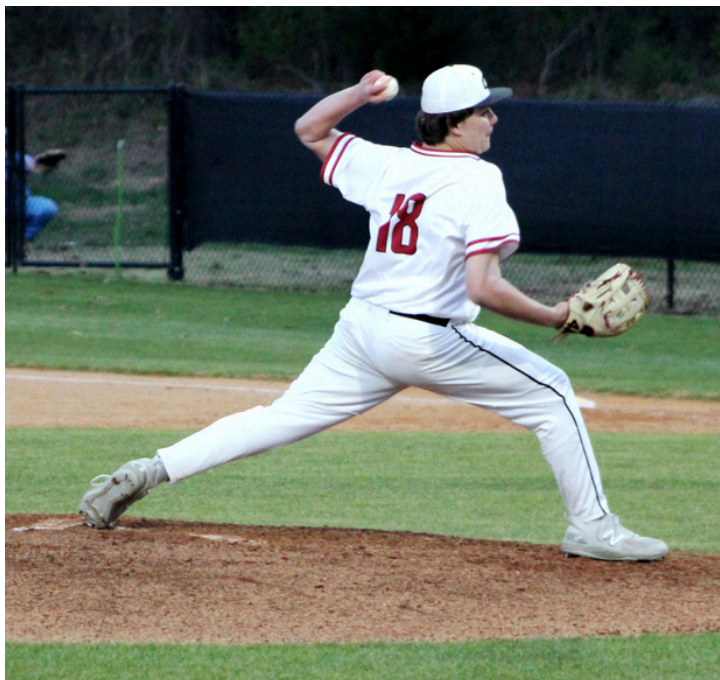




Above: Mason Ray -- who has just lined a long double -- signals to his teammates in the dugout as Coach Brad Smith (left foreground) looks on. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Courtesy runner Myles Perkins comes motoring toward third base on a teammate's hit. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Jameson Bushart threw two scoreless innings of relief, striking out five, to preserve the shutout. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Nash Kilburn, who has been a huge part of Crockett's resurgence this season, watches as a couple more teammates score. Kilburn drove in two himself and also scored twice. (Photo by Ron Barry)