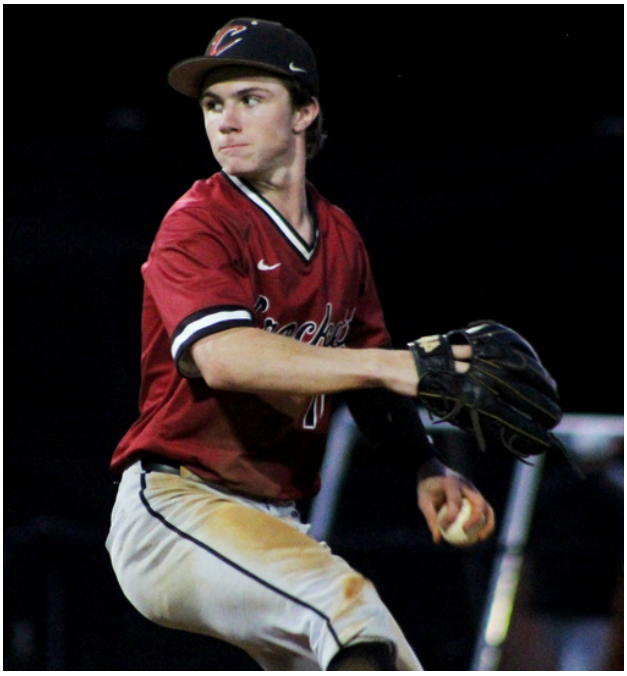
FOR ALL THE MARBLES: CROCKETT BASEBALL VS. SOUTH GIBSON, ROUND #2 TUESDAY



Above: Monday night's pitching matchup did not disappoint as Crockett's Nash Kilburn yielded just five hits in going toe-to-toe with ... (Photo by Ron Barry)

One ball that rolled just a little bit too far and another that didn't quite fly far enough – both in the sixth inning – made the difference Monday night in Medina.

So... Round #1 goes to South Gibson.
But the venue switches to Alamo for Round #2 Tuesday night, where Coach Brad Smith's Cavaliers still need just one win to claim the regular-season district baseball championship and the top seed in the upcoming post-season tournament. However, now the Hornets are also in the same position.

The two teams came into the first matchup of the two-night doubleheader with Crockett – winner of 23 straight games – holding a one-game edge over South Gibson. But the Hornets stopped the victory streak and erased the margin in the standings by posting a 3-2 triumph over the Cavs behind the two-hit pitching of Tommy Baker.

The MTSU-bound Hornet senior was nearly matched by Crockett's Nash Kilburn, who allowed just five hits as he and Baker locked into a classic pitchers' duel, especially over the final four innings when neither club could add to its score, although both had chances.

Crockett took a 1-0 lead in the top of the first when Kilburn drew a walk and advanced to third on a lined double to center by Brady Fronabarger. A sacrifice fly chased Kilburn home and Fronabarger to third. Landry Fronabarger then drove a shot down the right-field line, but South Gibson's Cason Coggins made a tremendous diving catch just inside the chalk line to end the Cav threat.

The hosts immediately responded with a couple of tallies in the bottom of the frame. Baker led off with a long double to left, moving to third on a sacrifice bunt. Jacob Bateman followed with a sizzling ground ball that stayed fair by the width of a baseball and hugged the right-field line for another double, tying the score at 1-1. Bateman took third on a groundout and came home on a wild pitch for a 2-1 SGC advantage.

The Hornets added a run in the second on a leadoff double by Harper Rushing, a flyout that moved him to third, and a groundout by Coggins for the RBI. That would be all the scoring South Gibson would get as Kilburn buckled down.

Crockett notched its final run in the top of the third when Sam Proctor beat out an infield hit, stole second, moved to third on a Callan Willis deep flyout, and raced home on a Kilburn grounder to short.

Proctor made an impressive running catch of a liner to right field in the bottom of the third, just before Aiden Austin and Mason Ray turned a sparkling double play on a Cade Allen grounder.

Neither team threatened in the fourth, but the Cavs escaped a bases-loaded, one-out jam in the fifth when Bateman smoked a shot to first base, which Brady Fronabarger speared backhanded and was able to quickly step on the sack to complete the fortunate double play.

In the top of the sixth came the decisive plays. Kilburn was hit by a pitch with a count of 0-2. Brady Fronabarger, after Kilburn had stolen second, then drove a ball all the way to the fence in left-center, but it was caught by Rushing with his back against the enclosure. Kilburn – the tying run – tagged and took third base.

With one out and the tying run on third, Baker wanted no part of the next hitter, Winders, who already had a sac fly earlier. The Hornets waved him to first base, and the Crockett senior catcher took second on the first pitch to Landry Fronabarger. On the next toss home, Fronabarger dropped a bunt down the first-base line, but it reached the charging Baker too quickly and stayed so close to the base line that the Hornet hurler was able to tag him out directly before Kilburn could even make an attempt to score. A flyout then ended the Crockett threat.

The Cavs avoided more trouble in the bottom of the stanza when – after a walk to Allen – Brady Fronabarger made a circus catch of a pop fly directly over his head in short right field. Fronabarger had been playing in to defend against a possible bunt, but Tyler DeHaan blooped a ball that seemed destined to drop just beyond the reach of both Fronabarger and second baseman Austin. With a last-second lunge, Fronabarger somehow snared it, keeping it a 3-2 game.

Baker induced a groundout and then struck out the final two Crockett batters to gain the victory for South Gibson and set up Tuesday night's rematch for the regular-season title.

So well-pitched was the Monday contest that the two hurlers – Kilburn and Baker – were also the only players for their respective teams that reached base twice.

Tuesday's duel is set for a 7 p.m. start, but could begin earlier if the JV game that precedes it ends more quickly than the time allotted.



Above: ... South Gibson's Tommy Baker, who held a Cavalier team with a collective batting average of better than .400 to just two hits over seven innings. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Crockett's Brady Fronabarger nearly turned the game around with both his glove and his bat; first, by spearing a bases-loaded line drive at first base and doubling up the Hornet runner, and then ... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: ... with his bat, taking this mighty swing and just missing a two-run, go-ahead homer in the sixth by a couple of feet at the outfield fence. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Sam Proctor hurries the ball back to the infield after making a nice running catch in the right-center gap early in the contest. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Left: Crockett catcher Carter Winders is ready to pounce on this bunt by the Hornets' Cason Coggins, but third sacker George Randall reached it first for the putout. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Second baseman Aiden Austin throws out a South Gibson batter after fielding a grounder in the sixth inning. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Brady Fronabarger (left) and South Gibson's Tommy Baker (23) chat at first base after Baker was intentionally walked. The two were teammates on a 16U national championship travel team two summers ago. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Cav coach Brad Smith made this mound visit when SGC loaded the bases in the fifth with one out. Brady Fronabarger turned his unassisted double play on the very next pitch. (Photo by Ron Barry)







Above: Tuesday night's rematch is now for the regular-season district championship and top seed in the upcoming tournament. The Cavs will send Carter Winders (6-0, 0.85 ERA, 59 Ks in 37 innings) to the hill. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Left: Nash Kilburn drove in Crockett's second run with this groundout to short. (Photo by Ron Barry)