SOCCER TEAM EDGES OBION; CAVS BEGIN DISTRICT BASEBALL & SOFTBALL PLAY THURSDAY



Above: Crockett defender Max Utley made a huge "heady" play in the closing minutes to preserve the Cavaliers' 3-2 victory over Obion County Wednesday night. (Photo by Ron Barry)

When you are a defender on a very offensive-minded soccer team, you generally don't get much attention unless you make a critical mistake at the worst possible time.

Every once in a while, though, a defender gets an opportunity to shine, usually in a situation in which your goalkeeper deflects a shot or gets taken out of position during a prolonged attack by your opponent.

Crockett County's Max Utley has been used to the "non-attention" for the past few years, as one of the steadiest defenders on the Cavaliers' high-scoring units in recent seasons. The soccer ball is almost always moving toward the opposing team's goal when Crockett plays, and the defenders often spend much of their time as mere spectators.

But at a key moment Wednesday night in Alamo – with his team clinging to a 3-2 lead in the fading minutes – Max Utley made his Senior Night very memorable.

The Cavaliers had built a 3-0 first-half advantage over Obion County Central with a methodical domination of possession time, although the visiting Rebels – sparked by an active and talented goalkeeper – fended off most of the offensive pushes. Speedster Luke Carter managed to break through the Obion wall twice – first at the 34:13 mark on a Braulio Marquez assist and then again several minutes later on a set-up from Angel Garcia.

Then, with just 3:57 remaining before the intermission, Garcia assisted again on a netted shot by Chris Cerda, and the Cavs appeared to be cruising toward an easy victory.

Senior Night festivities were held during the halftime break, and the sentimentality may have drained some of the Crockett energy over the final 40 minutes.

Obion's club was much more on the attack in the second period, scoring on a direct kick with 24:55 left and again with 12:23 to go, and suddenly the Cavs were scrambling just to maintain the lead.

The Rebels continued to push hard for the equalizing goal in the closing minutes and almost had it when Crockett keeper Allan Marquez had to make a diving save just to deflect the ball away. The rebound drifted toward the far left corner of the net when Utley moved quickly to head the ball safely outward from the goal area, preserving the hosts' 3-2 triumph.

Crockett had a total of 21 shots on goal – 16 of them in the first half – but never could put the determined Rebels in the rear-view mirror. Allan Marquez made four saves for the winners, none bigger than the last deflection that Utley then knocked away.

In a special moment, Crockett opened the game with a ceremonial opening kickoff by Cam Martin, a senior who suffered a compound fracture in his right arm in the Cavs' most recent game, a 6-5 win over Dyersburg. Wearing an extensive arm-length cast, Martin drilled the ball well downfield and out of bounds to his left, allowing him time to leave the field for a replacement as the fans – including a group with balloons that spelled "We Love U Cam" – saluted his career.

MIDDLE SCHOOL SOCCER: Crockett's undefeated regular season apparently didn't impress Inman Middle School from Paris in the opening round of the West Tennessee Regional Soccer Association Tournament at Cavalier Stadium.

Inman – a 7-0 victim to the CCMS squad during that regular season – stacked the defensive box for most of the rematch and was content to wait for a Cav mistake, which occurred with only 7:19 to play in the contest when the visitors were awarded a penalty kick. The shot went to the right and grazed the fingertips of diving goalkeeper Henry Mayfield before settling into the net for the match's lone goal in a 1-0 Inman win that ended Crockett's season.

The Cavs controlled possession much of the game but managed just four shots on goal as Inman made sure their defenders were always packed back in the box. Mayfield made two saves and kept the visitors out of the Crockett goal for all but the penalty kick, which generally has an 80-85% success rate for the offensive player.

The CCMS squad enjoyed a sterling season and will move a considerable number of players up to the high school varsity unit in 2027.

DISTRICT TOURNAMENTS: Crockett's baseball boys will face Dyersburg at 4:30 and its softball girls will take on South Gibson at 5:00 as the District 13-AAA post-season tournaments move to Day #2 on the CCHS fields Thursday.

Dyersburg's guys defeated Obion County Central 11-4 in the baseball opening round, while South Gibson's girls knocked off the Lady Rebels 5-2 to advance to Thursday's winners bracket semifinals. In Thursday's two 7:00 games, South Gibson will face Dyer County – a 10-0 winner over Haywood Wednesday – in baseball, while Dyer County's softballers will tangle with Dyersburg, a 15-0 victor over Haywood behind a no-hitter from Izzie Odom.

Admission is $7 at the front gate.



Above: Chris Cerda just missed a goal by a couple of feet when he side-whipped this shot, but ended up scoring just minutes later to give the Cavs a 3-0 halftime edge. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Children line up to display balloons spelling out a salute to injured Cavalier senior Cam Martin on Wednesday's Senior Night at Cavalier Stadium. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Crockett's Braulio Marquez surveys the field and sees teammate Luke Carter breaking toward the Obion County goal early in the first half ... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... and Luke Carter takes the perfectly-placed Braulio Marquez pass and is wide-open for a point-blank shot, good enough for the game's first goal Wednesday night. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Luke Carter scored his second goal when he took an Angel Garcia assist pass and then then drilled this shot between three Obion defenders. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Mason Wood works the ball up the right sideline area as Crockett gets ready to mount another offensive attack against the Rebels. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Angel Garcia assisted on two of the three Crockett goals in the 3-2 victory Wednesday night on Senior Night at Cavalier Stadium. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: Aiden Markgraf communicates with Braulio Marquez on the placement of a corner kick late in the first half Wednesday night. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Luke Carter came this close to a first-half hat trick when he headed this shot just above the reach of the Obion goalkeeper ... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Following this pre-game huddle, Cam Martin (with his arm in a cast) performed a ceremonial kickoff and then exited for a replacement. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Carter Winders will be trying to continue his magical senior season Thursday afternoon in a District 13-AAA Tournament duel with Dyersburg. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Right: ... but the backline defender was able to hustle back and head the ball away from the Obion net. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Sophomore shortstop Wesley Thornton leads Crockett's softball team into a District 13-AAA Tournament rematch with South Gibson at 5:00 Thursday. (Photo by Ron Barry)

