WINDERS WINS STATE OPENER, MR. BASEBALL; SOFTBALLERS RALLY LATE TO ADVANCE



Above: Carter Winders threw five perfect innings before the Gibbs hitters touched him. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Carter Winders – after picking up some hardware in the morning, being named the Class AAA Mookie Betts Player of the Year "Mr. Baseball" award – threw five perfect innings before getting relief help from Brady Fronabarger to close things out as the Cavaliers won their opening-round game of the TSSAA State Tournament 5-1 over Gibbs High School Tuesday in Murfreesboro.

Across town, Crockett County's softball team was stymied for four innings but rallied late behind a run-scoring triple from Fallon Beaird and a grand slam home run from Wesley Thornton to defeat David Crockett High School 8-3 in their TSSAA State Tournament opener Tuesday.

Crockett County's soccer team was less than eight minutes away from making it a Murfreesboro sweep Tuesday night, but allowed a goal late in regulation and another with just 2:24 remaining in the second overtime period to fall 2-1 to Elizabethton, ending their season with a 13-3-1 record.

BASEBALL: While Winders was cruising through the Gibbs lineup through the first five frames, Landry Fronabarger and Mason Ray produced the offensive support as Coach Brad Smith's Cavs improved to an amazing 36-3 record for the season.

Crockett took a 1-0 lead in the second when Aiden Austin was hit by a pitch, took second on a balk, and raced home on an opposite-field single by Ray. The Cavs struck for three more in the third on consecutive singles by Nash Kilburn and Brady Fronabarger, an intentional walk to Winders, a two-RBI single to right by Landry Fronabarger – who attributes his hits to the fact that Jaxon Moore kisses his bat before he goes to the plate – and a run-scoring single by Austin.

Smith's club tacked on its final run in the fifth when George Randall walked, Ray singled to left, Sam Proctor sacrificed both runners over, and Callan Willis delivered a sac fly to center.

The Eagles bunched three hits together in the sixth to finally plate a run against Winders before Brady Fronabarger got the last two outs in relief and then added a scoreless seventh, pitching out of a bases-loaded jam with a pair of strikeouts.

Barring any weather adjustments, Crockett will take on Heritage – a 9-1 winner over Liberty Creek Tuesday – at 12:30 Wednesday at Blackman High School. A victory would advance the Cavs into a 2 p.m. game Thursday; a loss would put them into a 5 p.m. elimination game Wednesday.

SOFTBALL: Beaird's fifth-inning triple came after Maddie Haynes had been hit by a pitch and pinch-runner Tink Willis had stolen second, breaking up a scoreless pitchers' duel between the Lady Cavs' Anna Stallings and the Lady Pioneers' Madelyn Dulaney.

Now with a 1-0 lead, Coach Baron Jimmerson's crew exploded for seven runs in the top of the sixth. Nataly Amador – later needing five stiches to repair a cleat gash in her leg – singled and stole second before coming around to score on a Gabby Bursey single. Haley Leforgee was hit by a pitch and then Bursey and she pulled off a double steal, prompting the Lady Pioneers to intentionally walk Beaird to load the bases.

Pinch-hitter Emilee Chandler lined a single to left to score Bursey for a 3-0 advantage before Macie Teel drew a walk to force in the fourth Lady Cav tally. And on the very next pitch, Thornton hammered her grand slam over the centerfield fence – her eleventh blast of the season.

The uprising offset brief Lady Pioneer rallies in the sixth and seventh and Crockett County advanced to an 11 a.m. winners bracket game Wednesday (weather permitting) against Liberty Creek, a 9-3 upset winner over Alcoa Tuesday. The Wednesday game is scheduled for McKnight Field #1. If Crockett wins, it moves to a 10 a.m. game Thursday; a loss puts the Lady Cavs into a 4:30 p.m. elimination game Wednesday.

SOCCER: A Chris Cerda goal off a Luke Carter assist with 31:17 remaining in the second half looked like it was going to hold up and give Crockett County its first-ever State Tournament victory, but Elizabethton rallied to score at the 7:33 mark and then did it again with only 2:24 left in the second overtime period. Both goals came on plays in traffic in which the Cavs failed to clear the ball out of the box.

Crockett had four shots on goal in the first half but missed on at least three solid scoring opportunities in the opening 40 minutes that left the match scoreless at halftime. Cerda finally broke the ice, but it was the only shot to elude the Elizabethton defense in 100 minutes of play.

TRACK & FIELD: Results from Tuesday's TSSAA Class AA Track & Field State Championships in Knoxville, in which two Crockett County girls relay teams set new school records and Aidan Klonowski shattered the school record in the boys 1600m run:

Girls Pole Vault: (1) Braden Lawler, Station Camp 11-0; (2) Addelyn Harrison, Spring Hill 10-6; (3) Lyla Anglin, Station Camp 9-0; (4) Collette Lynch, Signal Mountain 9-0; (5) Aslin Welch, Cumberland Co 8-6; (6) Katie Mowell, Cherokee 8-0; (7) Addie Davidson, Crockett Co 7-0; (8) Laninya Jones, Raleigh Egypt 6-6.

Girls 4x800m Relay: (1) Fairview 9:20.91; (2) Heritage 9:46.87; (3) Signal Mountain 9:50.57; (4) Hume-Fogg 10:19.88; (5) Cumberland Co 10:29.03; (6) Liberty Creek 10:31.00; (7) Crockett Co [Claire Evans, Alivia Hale, Ruth Gourley, Avery Thornton] 10:39.52 (new school record); (8) Lakeland Prep 11:12.46.

Boys 1600m Run: (1) Wyatt Boling, Martin Luther King 4:15.10; (2) Trey Bailey, Greeneville 4:17.65; (3) Kevin McCurry, Volunteer 4:18.82; (4) Caden Costello, Station Camp 4:19.76; (5) Jonathan Lewis, South Gibson Co 4:23.44; (6) Sebastian Flanary, Volunteer 4:24.05; (7) Aiden Haun, Signal Mountain 4:32.16; (8) Aidan Klonowski, Crockett Co 4:35.03 (new school record).

Girls 800m Run: (1) Maxine Richards, Signal Mountain 2:12.29; (2) Chaiti Ainapure, Liberty Creek 2:12.97; (3) Brindley Duncan, Tullahoma 2:18.32; (4) Brynn Baltushot, Station Camp 2:18.93; (5) Ailee Ellis, Fairview 2:21.75; (6) Tatum Croft, Soddy Daisy 2:24.15; (7) Kate Ashby, Memphis East 2:31.28; (8) Avery Thornton, Crockett Co 2:39.39.

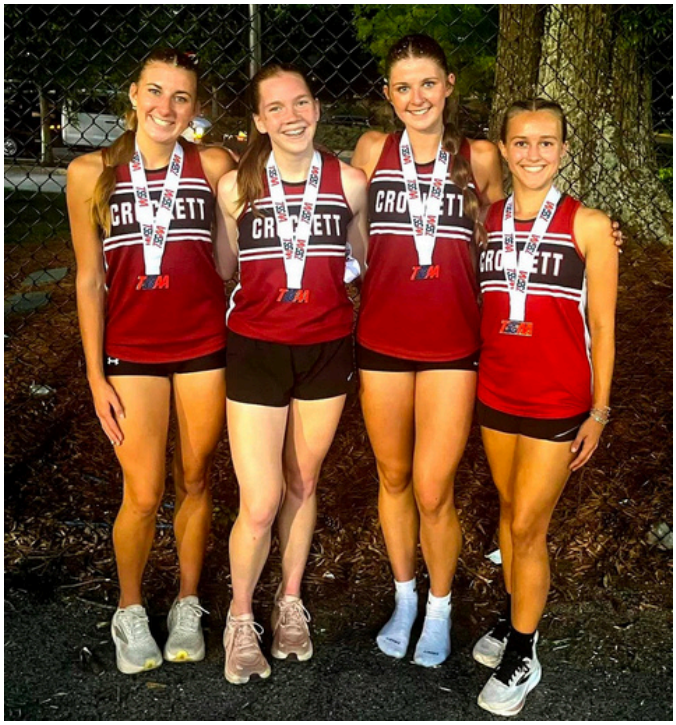
Girls 4x400m Relay: (1) Martin Luther King 3:58.05; (2) Whites Creek 3:59.74; (3) Signal Mountain 4:01.82; (4) Gibbs 4:03.14; (5) Fairview 4:04.12; (6) Cherokee 4:10.65; (7) Crockett Co [Avery Thornton, Caroline Scruggs, Marley Thornton, Claire Evans] 4:28.72 (new school record); (8) Bolton 4:53.93.



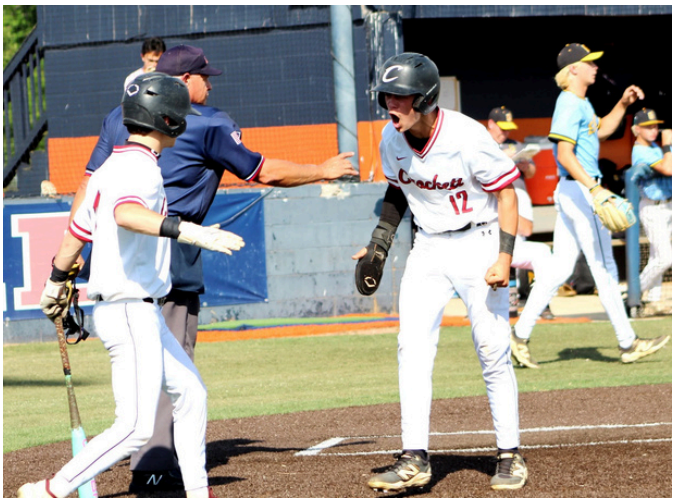
Above: Fallon Beaird celebrates her run-scoring triple that broke a scoreless deadlock. (Photo by Beth Williams)

Below: Chris Cerda drills this shot past Elizabethton's goalkeeper for what would be Crockett's lone goal Tuesday night. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Crockett's 4x400m Relay team -- Avery Thornton, Claire Evans, Marley Thornton, and Caroline Scruggs -- capped the State Championships with a school record time. (Photo by Julie Nass)



Above: Aiden Austin is fired up with teammate Sam Proctor after scoring the first run in Tuesday's win over Gibbs. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Mason Ray drove in that first run with this swing for a base hit to right. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: The Cav soccer team had several near-scores that didn't pan out, as on this flying save by the Cyclone goalkeeper. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Wesley Thornton may have been a little angry before hitting her grand slam because she was called out on this previous play when she was clearly not. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Crockett's Anna Stallings -- who picked up her twentieth win of the season Tuesday -- was locked in a scoreless pitching duel until ... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... Sophomore outfielder Fallon Beaird belted a run-scoring triple after Maddie Haynes had been hit by a pitch. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Below: And as in all soccer games, there were debatable calls that didn't go their way, such as this apparent Elizabethton hand ball late in the game. (Photo by Ron Barry)





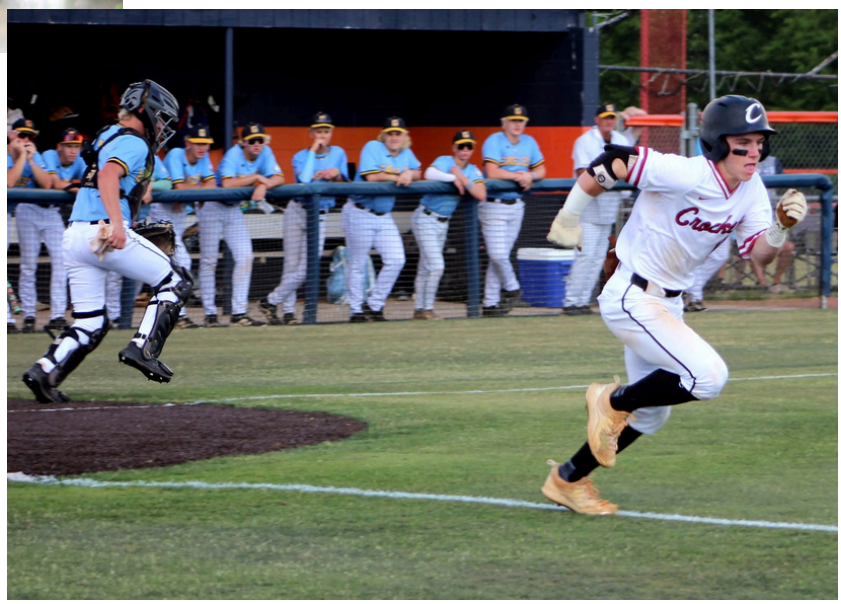
Above: Aidan Klonowski destroyed the school record in the boys 1600m run Tuesday in Knoxville. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Landry Fronabarger had the Cavs' biggest baseball hits Tuesday with a two-run single and a long double that crashed off the left-field fence on the fly. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: This photo of the Crockett medalists at the State Championships includes (left to right): pole vaulter and pentathlete Addie Davidson; the school record-setting 4x800m relay team of Ruth Gourley, Alivia Hale, Claire Evans, and Avery Thornton; 4x400m relay runners Marley Thornton and Caroline Scruggs, who also set a school record; and 1600m run record-setter Aidan Klonowski. (Photo by Julie Nass)





Above: Nash Kilburn beat out this bunt for Crockett as the Gibbs catcher chases after it in vain. (Photo by Ron Barry)