LADY CAV VOLLEYBALLERS PUSH DYER COUNTY, BUT CAN'T GRAB THE VICTORY



Above: Emilee Chandler (4) congratulates Kira Bray on a successful block for a Lady Cavalier point Tuesday night. (Photo by Ron Barry)

The current reigning queens of West Tennessee high school volleyball don't seem intent on yielding their thrones anytime soon.

Some folks thought the Dyer County Lady Choctaws might finally be vulnerable in district and region play this season after the graduation of 6-4 hitter Rylee Key, who has been such a mainstay for that program. And the other West Tennessee team that joined them at the TSSAA State Tournament a year ago – Crockett County – thought this might be an opportune time to step up.

The teams met Tuesday night in Alamo's Emerson Memorial Gymnasium, and the atmosphere – and play – was very reminiscent of a state tournament feeling. And for about three-and-a-half sets, the foes engaged in an all-out war, going back-and-forth like two Olympic boxers determined not to lose.

Dyer County won the first two sets, but both were extremely close: 25-22 and 25-21. Crockett then took the third set 25-21, and the home crowd – sparked by an extremely enthusiastic group of Cavalier students – started to think this could, indeed, be the night somebody finally hangs a district defeat on the Lady Choctaws.

Set #4 saw the visitors jump out to an 8-4 advantage, but Crockett was still hanging in at 13-9 minutes later. But then… it was as if the Dyer County "army" stole all of the remaining ammunition from its opponent.

The senior-laden Lady Choctaws – who seldom seem rattled by anything – flipped a switch, as if to say, "All right – we've had enough of a close call. Let's rain on this parade." And they proceeded to open the floodgates.

Dyer County won nine of the last 12 points, riding the power game of Katie Beth Caldwell and her very athletic friends to an eventual 25-12 romp that kept them undefeated in district play through seven contests. And while Crockett was the first foe to claim a set off them – just like last year – the Lady Choctaws handed the hosts their first district defeat.

Tracking the set scores shows just how tight the match was. Set #1: 8-7, 9-9, 12-10, 16-10 (Crockett's biggest lead), 16-16 (it didn't last), 17-19, 19-21, 21-21, 22-21 (a Wesley Thornton kill had the gymnasium rocking) – but then Dyer County won the last four points.

Set #2: 2-6, 8-12, 13-15, 14-19, 16-22, 19-23, 21-24 (after another Thornton kill) – but then the visitors closed it out.
Set #3: 3-1, 5-1, 7-3, 10-5, 12-9, 16-10, 19-12, 19-15, 20-15, 20-18, 21-19, 22-20 (on a Lola Bailey tip shot for a winner), 24-21 – and then Crockett's Madi Collins directed a perfectly-placed drop shot, and suddenly there would be a fourth set required.

But Caldwell and company quickly established that – at least for now – they're not going away anytime soon.

Despite the outcome, Coach Andrew Laman's Lady Cavs received spirited play from several players who haven't had much experience in big-time matches – such as Kira Bray, Emilee Chandler, and Bailey. Collins and Thornton were their normal dependable selves. Setter Lakyn Forsythe credibly fed the hitters all night.

From the back row, libero Addie Davidson was digging all over the place, aided by Nataly Amador, Carmen Claybrooks, and Jentry Elmore. The honest difference in the match – which featured some superb play on both sides – may simply have been Dyer County's team confidence. The Lady Choctaws always expect to win, and it shows. It also doesn't hurt that they have excellent athletes at all six positions on the floor at all times.

But Crockett gave them a fight. There'll be a rematch September 29 in Newbern.

HIGH SCHOOL SOCCER: South Gibson County continued its recent winning ways by blanking Crockett 5-0 Tuesday night in Medina. The Lady Hornets were firmly in control throughout, dropping the Lady Cav season record to 3-4-1. Rylee Hood netted two goals for the hosts, with Carly Coble contributing a pair of assists.



Above: Addie Davidson was all over the place for Crockett on Tuesday night, fetching digs from everywhere. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Wesley Thornton goes high to steer a drop shot past Dyer County's front line as Lady Cavs Jentry Elmore (3), Carmen Claybrooks (13), and Lakyn Forsythe (11) back her up. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Kris Phillips (left) and Landry Fronabarger (right) were among the enthusiastic Cavalier athletes and students supporting the Lady Cavs. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: It wouldn't be a Crockett match without some kind of distinctive face made by the Lady Cavs' supreme setter Lakyn Forsythe. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Crockett saw entirely too much of Dyer County's tremendous Katie Beth Caldwell, whose power game was on full display. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Madi Collins has just made a third-set tip shot to put Crockett ahead 23-20, and then gets her teammates tickled with some kind of explanation of what she just did. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Lakyn Forsythe intently focuses on the serve she is about to deliver. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Nataly Amador gets down low to be ready for one of Dyer County's lightning serves. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Wesley Thornton was obviously very happy with the outcome of this shot as she prepares to slap hands with a teammate. (Photo by Ron Barry)







Above: Sophomore Lola Bailey saw some extended playing time against the Lady Choctaws. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Jentry Elmore apparently feels that the ball that was called "in" should have been called "out." (Photo by Ron Barry)

Left: Carmen Claybrooks may have disagreed with the call she just witnessed from the ladder official. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Two other interested spectators Tuesday: CCHS girls assistant basketball coach Tyler Gadlen with his new little future Tar Heel Rylee. (Photo by Ron Barry)







Above: This third-set huddle helped the Lady Cavs close the deal at 25-21 and bring about a fourth set. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Madi Collins nails a kill shot from the right sideline. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: This third-set kill by Wesley Thornton put Crockett up 20-15 at the time. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Avery Thornton tries to race pace a couple of South Gibson defenders in Tuesday night's soccer game in Medina. (Photo by Robin Waddey)





Above: Rebecca Waddey tries to drive a shot through South Gibson defensive traffic. (Photo by Robin Waddey)



Below: Crockett goalkeeper Hannah Wede makes a diving save against the Lady Hornets. (Photo by Robin Waddey)

Left: Crockett cheerleaders Makayla Murphy and Emmie Pickens were among those cheering on the Lady Cavs. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: In the end, it was Lady Choctaw Katie Beth Caldwell and her teammates that got to raise their arms in triumph. The rematch is September 29 in Newbern. (Photo by Ron Barry)







Above: Amy Mena clears a ball away from a Lady Hornet attacker. (Photo by Robin Waddey)