CROCKETT LOOKS TO REBOUND FROM LOPSIDED LOSS; FACES ELIZABETHTON WEDNESDAY

Above: Wesley Thornton hammers a slam against the normally potent Valor Prep block … (Photo by Ron Barry)

It was David vs. Goliath… if you gave Goliath David's sling, David's God, and told him David's been saying bad things about his mother.

Mercifully, it only took 56 minutes.

But now with Crockett County's opening-round lopsided loss at the TSSAA State Volleyball Tournament squarely in the rear-view mirror, the Lady Cavaliers will be heading into their consolation bracket matchup against Elizabethton with a renewed optimism that Wednesday is a brand new day.

On Tuesday morning, Coach Andrew Laman's crew had the unenviable task of starting the tournament opposite Valor College Prep, a misnomer if there ever was one. This group of Lady Wildcats needs no more "prep" at all to be ready right now to take on several college teams.

Valor knocked off Crockett (now 30-12) by the scores of 25-8, 25-3, and 25-14, with Laman hoping that the improvement in the third set carries over into Wednesday's 2:30 duel with Elizabethton, which lost in straight sets to Upperman on Tuesday.

"I was not really upset with anything today except our body language in the second set," Laman said, "and that's what we talked about before the third set began. I don't know if the improved attitude in the last set brought the score up or not, but I told our girls we can't control what the opponent does, but we can control ourselves. And the body language was not showing anything good in the second set."

With the third set much more competitive, Laman hopes his "normal" group of Lady Cavs resurfaces.

"Let's face it, Valor is really good," he said. "They've won it all the last two years, and probably are going to do it again. I don't see anybody beating them here. You just have to tip your hat to them. But Wednesday's a new day, and we'll see what we're made of."

Valor Prep (now 43-5) plays a straight-out power game that relies on blistering serves, quick sets for their hitters, and pile-driving kills at every opportunity.

Crockett sophomore defender Nataly Amador described what it's like facing the screaming serves and shots that she and her teammates were seeing.

"The difference is mostly the speed," she said. "The ball has movement too, but it's just coming so fast. You have to just get in your mind that it's going to get there fast so you have to let your instincts take over. There's not time to think about it."

Most of the Lady Cavs – even with the discouraging second-set body language – tried to keep occasional smiles on their faces during the Valor onslaught, knowing there really wasn't much they could have done differently to combat the missiles coming at them. The Lady Wildcats truly don't seem to have a weakness, and when senior Anarela Mejias is serving – offering a 30-foot toss into the air, with front spin, and then hammering it with a gigantic leap toward the net – you expect to hear the Olympic theme playing in the background as Valor racks up point after point.

But Wednesday brings a new opportunity. The Lady Cavs battled into the Final Four a year ago. Laman hopes they can do it again.

Above: … but manages to power it through for a Lady Cavalier point in the opening set Tuesday at the TSSAA State Tournament. (Photo by Ron Barry)

By Ron Barry

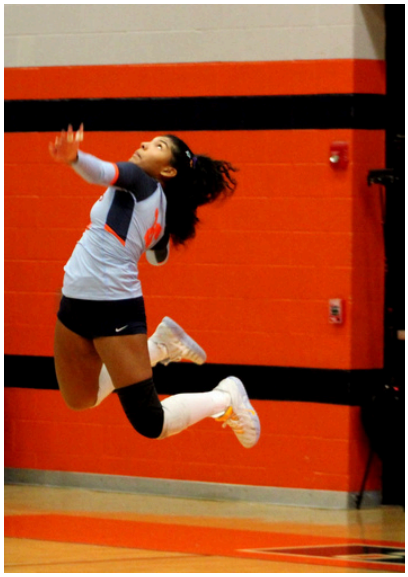
Below: Addie Davidson managed to get in front of one of Valor Prep's rocket serves and deliver an accurate pass for a Crockett point. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Left: Jentry Elmore hollers some encouragement as the Lady Cavs try to keep their heads up against the Valor onslaught. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Above: Lakyn Forsythe found a few points she could smile about Tuesday ... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... but much of the time it was a frustrated look like this one on her face. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Above: Lola Bailey and Jentry Elmore try to figure out the best way to tackle these incoming missile serves ... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: ... such as the ones being fired by Valor's Anarela Mejias, which would make an Olympian proud. She's headed to East Carolina University next fall. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Valor Prep also received kill after kill from Kerrington Corbin, who has committed to Ball State University. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Above: Corbin's quick hands at the net even offset Crockett's Kira Bray on this rare opportunity that surfaced in the third set. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Wesley Thornton strung together some service points in both the first and third sets, but Valor Prep seemed to have answers for everything. (Photo by Ron Barry)

By Ron Barry

Above: Crockett actually led in the third set when it scored the first point. Here's photographic proof. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Nataly Amador tried to let her instincts take over, but they weren't always as fast as the approaching serves. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Above: Madi Collins snuck this third-set smash past the Lady Wildcat front line. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Wednesday is a new day, and maybe more kill chances like this one for Wesley Thornton will come the Lady Cavs' way. (Photo by Ron Barry)