VB TEAM DRAWS VALOR PREP AT STATE TOURNAMENT; CCMS BASKETBALL OPENS BIG

Above: Wesley Thornton (20) hopes to show the TSSAA State Tournament spectators that Crockett County has a power game too. (Photo by Ron Barry)

At least this year, they'll know what to expect.

Crockett County's volleyball team has drawn two-time defending state champion Valor College Prep for the opening round of the TSSAA State Championships Tuesday morning. It's the crew that knocked the Lady Cavaliers into the losers bracket last season with a Round 2 battering so intense that all Coach Andrew Laman's squad could do was laugh about it when it was over.

The Nashville-based school fields a lineup of Amazonian-strength young women whose game plan is to nail you against the back wall of the gymnasium with as many cannon shots as possible. The best summary from last year's duel came when then-senior Audrey Whitby admitted, "Honestly, the best return I made all day was one when I just closed my eyes!"

But Crockett didn't back down last year – the Lady Cavs actually forced Valor Prep to take a third-set timeout when they trimmed a sizeable margin down to 16-15 – and aren't likely to this week either. Even though the top seed is 42-5 this season and heavily favored to take a third straight title behind the play of veterans Anarela Mejias and Jentelle McNairl, facing Crockett isn't the easiest matchup it could have hoped for.

Laman's club eventually battled into the Final Four in 2025, winning two State Tournament matches for the first time in school history. And many of the Lady Cavs who made that happen return, notably power hitters Wesley Thornton and Madi Collins and setter Lakyn Forsythe. If Crockett can serve as well as it did in the straight-set Sectional win over Covington, its chances will be much improved.

The 9:30 a.m. contest kicks off the Class AA division of the tournament at Murfreesboro's Blackman High School. If the Lady Cavs (30-11) stun the volleyball world then, they'll play Round #2 Wednesday at 9:30 a.m. against the winner of Elizabethton (20-12) and Upperman (31-6). If Crockett loses Tuesday, it will play at 2:30 p.m. Wednesday against the loser of Elizabethton / Upperman.

Dyer County (31-9) – the District 13-AA and Region 7-AA champion – faces Signal Mountain (21-15) in its opening match Tuesday at 2:30 p.m.

MIDDLE SCHOOL BASKETBALL: Both CCMS basketball teams opened their seasons with rousing victories Saturday in the first round of the annual Blue Suede Tournament in Medina.

Coach Tyler Gadlen's Cavaliers didn't allow a first-quarter field goal in steamrolling Jackson Christian School 45-11 behind a balanced attack in the boys game. Ten different players got into the scoring column for the winners, who led 29-7 at the half. Reese Jones netted nine points, Jaylen Frye eight, and Nolen McDonald seven for Crockett.

Coach Jamar Turner's Lady Cavs took a similar path in the girls contest, opening up a 21-6 halftime edge and rolling to a 44-18 triumph behind a 20-point scoring effort from Jordin Bond. Trinity Pankey added 10 for Crockett .

Crockett's teams will play their second-round games in the Blue Suede event on Tuesday, but will first host JCT (Jackson Careers & Technology Middle School) Monday at 6:00 in a doubleheader.

Saturday, Oct 17 – at Medina

CC 15 6 15 8 - 44

JCS 3 3 10 2 - 18

CCMS Girls (44) – Jordin Bond 20, Trinity Pankey 10, Lond'n Armour 5, Madison Cathey 4, Camille Randall 2, Jessica Ontiveros 2, Jaleah Tate 1. FG: 15. FT: 14-25, 3-Pt: none. Record: 1-0.

JCS (18) – Alexa Cavender 5, Evelyn Branch 3, Ireland Ward 3, Madden Van Wyk 3, Lila Beckham 2, Thea Powell-Irvin 2. FG: 7, FT: 2-9, 3-Pt: 2 (Cavender, Branch).

CC 15 14 12 4 - 45

JCS 3 5 0 3 - 11

CCMS Boys (45) – Reese Jones 9, Jaylen Frye 8, Nolen McDonald 7, Jordan Young 4, Dre Thompson 4, Hayden Carillo 4, Jayce Cobb 3, Demarcus Robinson 2, Conner Hayes 2, Liam Spence 2. FG: 18, FT: 5-12, 3-Pt: 4 (Frye 2, McDonald, Cobb). Record: 1-0.

JCS (11) – Keiden Tipler 4, Ace Angel 3, Jaheim Jenkins 2, Beckett Robinson 1, Weston Craig 1. FG: 2, FT: 7-16, 3-Pt: none.

Left: Nataly Amador and her back-row companions will be continually tested Tuesday when they face the serves and hits of Valor College Prep in the State Tournament in Murfreesboro. (Photo by Ron Barry)