VOLLEYBALLERS STORM INTO DISTRICT TITLE GAME; CROSSNOE PLACES 34TH AT STATE GOLF



Above: When a return from Milan on a key point in the third set went wide of the sideline, Crockett players knew they were heading to the championship game. Reacting are Wesley Thornton (20), Kira Bray (18), Lakyn Forsythe (11), and Jentry Elmore (3), along with several folks in the background. (Photo by Ron Barry)

At some point during a Milan vs. Crockett County volleyball match, the Cavalier side – players, coaches, and fans – knows that a nice, deep breath is in order. Some step will need to be taken in an effort to relax just a bit, because the competition on the court is going to be intense and the score – more often than not – is going to be tighter than the "Fat Man's Squeeze" at Rock City. (Is that feature still there?)

Toss some additional gasoline on the fire – this time it's an elimination match in the District Tournament – and there's likely to be some hyperventilation going on somewhere in the stands. Such was the case Tuesday night in Newbern. The Lady Cavs and the Lady Dawgs have had a few epic battles over the past few seasons, and they split their two regular-season meetings this fall. They're both very good teams… but one of them was going home for good, while the other would move on to face host Dyer County Thursday night for the tournament championship.

Coach Andrew Laman's crew came out smoking in the opening set and was clicking on all cylinders in capturing a 25-15 triumph. Maybe, for once, a win over Milan might be relatively easy.

Not so fast, my friend.

Set #2 resembled the Rocky Balboa vs. Apollo Creed fights, with both sides trading jabs and body blows until Milan seemed poised for the knockout, leading 24-21. At that stage, the main question going through the minds of Crockett fans was, "Oh, no – is this going to go four sets or five?"

But the Lady Cavs salvaged the first set point, which turned the serve over to Crockett's Carmen Claybrooks. And four points later, Laman's club had pulled off a miraculous 26-24 comeback win. Wesley Thornton slammed down kills to tie it at 24-24 and to go ahead 25-24 before a Milan player was called for being in the net while the decisive point was being played.

You might think that would have broken Milan's spirit entirely, yet Set #3 was tied 12-12 before Crockett went on another stretch of kills by Thornton, Madi Collins, Kira Bray, Lola Bailey, and Emilee Chandler, set up by Lakyn Forsythe from digs and passes from Claybrooks, Addie Davidson, Jentry Elmore, and Nataly Amador. When the blitz was over, Crockett had tallied 13 of the final 14 points to gain a 25-13 victory.

"We still need to get a little more aggressive on certain points," Laman said after the match, "but we played that third set much better. I thought we were getting a little too passive near the end of the second, like nobody wanted to chance making a mistake. You can't play volleyball that way. Anyway, we got through it and now we're in the Region 7 Tournament for sure and get to play for the District championship Thursday."

Dyer County, which has made the State Tournament field in the past five consecutive seasons, polished off Dyersburg in straight sets to gain its championship game berth.

HIGH SCHOOL GOLF: Senior Rachel Crossnoe made Crockett County history by becoming the first Lady Cavalier golfer to earn a TSSAA State Tournament berth. She just wishes that maybe the playing experience at Sevierville Golf Club this week might have been a little less adventurous.

For the record, Crossnoe shot a 90 and a 91 in her two rounds to finish the event in a respectable 34th place out of 47 of the state's best golfers. It's even more impressive when you consider that the course contains severe elevation changes – which West Tennessee golfers rarely face – and, for some reason, the TSSAA decided to have the girls play from the men's tees, and sometimes even behind them, making the length of several holes prohibitive for these players.

Crossnoe herself is not one to make excuses, and she didn't when she finished Tuesday. But when asked, she did admit that Sevierville's "Highlands" course was the toughest she's ever played.

"I had played two other courses that were in the mountains, but neither of them was as intense as this course," she said. "Walking definitely didn't help; there were some hills that were considered too steep for them to even cart us. The course layout is so long that they had 'party vans' to shuttle the players and spectators to the tenth hole, where I teed off both days. They had the tees really far back; we were hitting from the men's tee box or sometimes farther back.

By Ron Barry

"I'm not hitting my driver well right now, so instead I've hit a 7-wood basically all season. It normally puts me at the same place as the other girls, but here there were several holes where it was hard to get a good look at the pin. The greens were bent grass, which I had never putted on before, and a lot of the pins were placed on ridges which left little room for error. My putting is never the best but given the circumstances, I was pretty pleased with it."

Adding to the drama, near the end of her first day's round, the players were being carted to a hole when the driver took a turn a little too sharply and Crossnoe's range finder – the instrument players use to calculate their distances – fell out of her bag and into the nearby river.

"I had four or five holes left and at first I was in shock, but then I just laughed it off," she said. "I never would have had that reaction if I didn't forget my range finder last year at the district tournament and freak out over it. Over the years I've learned to trust that it will all work out and panicking isn't going to change anything. I learned that from my Dad; he's spent a lot of hours teaching me that the most important shot is the next one."

Crossnoe was very thankful for the support Crockett people showed her and for her entire career as a Lady Cavalier golfer.

"My favorite part about high school golf has to be the people from both Crockett and other schools," she said. "They are all really funny and encouraging. I started out as the only girl on the team and am so thankful for the teammates I've gained along the way.

"You spend so many hours talking to people while you play. It is always interesting to learn about their school or the other sports they play. Golf is such a universal sport it can be played by anyone; it has become a conversation starter with high school players, teachers, family, and many other people.

"I have had a lot of people tell me 'good luck' and text to see how I did this week. It really helped me keep a good mindset. Having Ms. Candy (Stallings) here helped me to remember it is just a game and if something goes wrong it's not the end of the world. Both she and Coach Pate (Randall) are very encouraging."



Above: It's been a terrific high school golf career for Rachel Crossnoe, who went from being the only girl on the team to leading this year's squad to its first-ever Region qualifying berth. (Photo by Ron Barry)

TSSAA Division I Class A Girls State Championships

Final Individual Standings After Round 2: (1) Elizabeth Prowse, Springfield 74-71-145; (2) Chloe Boyd, DeKalb Co 73-73-146; (T-3) Ann Marie Oliver, Eagleville 74-75-149; (T-3) Brylee Catron, Greeneville 76-73-149; (5) Marleigh Chicantek, So Gibson 75-75-150; (6) Hadlie Campbell, Summertown 77-74-151; (T-7) Alerra Strickland, Eagleville 81-73-154; (T-7) Paislee Campbell, Summertown 76-78-154; (T-9) Halle Busby, Summertown 74-81-155; (T-9) Kamryn Renner, Greeneville 79-76-155; (T-9) Ella Stone, Alcoa 78-77-155; (T-12) Ava Elrod, White Co 77-79-156; (T-12) Natalee Wyatt, Stewart Co 76-80-156; (14) Piper Heady, White Co 77-80-157; (T-15) Sophia Parsons, Alcoa 78-80-158; (T-15) Kylee Renner, Greeneville 81-77-158; (T-17) Isabelle Harris, Sycamore 80-79-159; (T-17) Ava Tabb, Springfield 78-81-159; (T-17) Emery Edgemon, Midway 79-80-159; (20) Emery Mitchell, Murfreesboro Central 84-76-160; (T-21) Lauren Powell, Murf Central 80-81-161; (T-21) Landyn Kent, Smith Co 83-78-161; (T-21) Maddison O'Dell, Signal Mtn 77-84-161; (T-21) Lenzie Golden, White Co 80-81-161; (25) Baylyn Rose, Volunteer 81-81-162; (26) Anna Powell, Murf Central 79-84-163; (27) Charlotte Knies, Kingston 82-82-164; (28) Sophie Ingle, So Gibson 84-88-172; (29) Ivey Collins, Gibbs 89-84-173; (30) Kinsley Wilson, Cumberland Co 94-81-175; (31) Haylee McCormick, Alcoa 91-85-176; (T-32) Ella Kelley, Signal Mtn 95-84-179; (T-32) Anna Highsmith, East Robertson 92-87-179; (34) RACHEL CROSSNOE, CROCKETT CO 90-91-181; (T-35) Anna Claire Hardin, So Gibson 94-88-182; (T-35) Hollan Gresham, Seymour 92-90-182; (37) Madisyn Hill, Community 98-90-188; (38) Whitlee Pratt, Riverside 100-90-190; (T-39) Millie England, Riverside 97-95-192; (T-39) Olivia Moody, Signal Mtn 97-95-192; (41) Lauren Ballentine, Kingston 96-97-193; (42) Kallie Haggard, Riverside 98-96-194; (43) Nora Manley, Madison Magnet 102-94-196; (44) Isabella Lax, Bolivar Central 102-103-205; (45) Taylor Burks, Ripley 103-104-207; (46) Neely Sims, Westview 107-112-219; (47) Camryn Hardison, Chester Co 112-111-223.



Above: Rachel Crossnoe hammers her opening drive on Day 2 of the TSSAA State Golf Tournament, where she finished 34th as the very first Crockett Lady Cavalier to ever make the field. (Photo by Candy Stallings)

By Ron Barry



Above: Nataly Amador displays the determination and hustle shown by the back row personnel that was a big factor in defeating Milan Tuesday night in Newbern. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Set #2 was finished off by a streak of service points from dependable Carmen Claybrooks. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Jentry Elmore was another Lady Cav defender willing to get on the floor to make a dig or a pass. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Below: This is the Wesley Thornton smash that put Crockett up 25-24 in the second set Tuesday, setting up the point that turned the match around. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Emilee Chandler (4) is celebrated by her teammates after a big Set #3 kill Tuesday. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Kira Bray (center) jokes with Lola Bailey (1) and Emilee Chandler after a putaway in Set #3. (Photo by Ron Barry)



By Ron Barry



Above: Lakyn Forsythe survived a crash into the scorer's table to continue to deliver reliable sets to Crockett's hitters, ... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Madi Collins gets a hand slap of congratulations from Lakyn Forsythe after belting another kill against Milan. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Lola Bailey contributed several kills and drop shots throughout the tournament semifinal match for the Lady Cavs. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: You can't see it, but somehow Addie Davidson kept the ball in the air for a teammate to pass while she tried not to break anything on the landing. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... such as this feed to Wesley Thornton for a smash. (Photo by Ron Barry)







Above: Human entertainment machine Tink Willis -- Crockett's energizer manager -- keeps her players pumped up at all times. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Wesley Thornton and company earned a berth in next week's Region & Tournament and will now head back to Newbern Thursday night to duel host Dyer County for the district title. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Negotiating a short pitch shot, Rachel Crossnoe prepares to go straight at the pin. (Photo by Candy Stallings)







Above: Rachel Crossnoe: Crockett's first-ever female TSSAA State Golf Championships participant. (Photo by Candy Stallings)