CAVALIER GRIDDERS PUT HOMECOMING BEATDOWN ON JACKSON NORTH SIDE 42-7



Above: Crockett quarterback Ben Burgess -- who completed 5-of-9 passes for 120 yards and 3 TDs -- sets up behind his offensive line of (left to right) Brody Jones (11), Sebastian Garduno (63), Ittai Fry (57), Carson Bridger (obscured), and Jayden Young (60), as Squirt Pickens (3) and DK Woods (32) flank him in the backfield. (Photo by Ron Barry)

It's common knowledge that many schools try to schedule their weakest opponent for their Homecoming festivities, mainly because they want everybody to go home happy – except that opponent.

Crockett County didn't do that this season. In fact, some felt Jackson North Side might be the best foe the Cavaliers might face this year before the playoffs begin.

Few – if any – anticipated the 42-7 beatdown that Crockett slapped on the visiting Indians Friday night. Cav head coach Kevin Ward sure didn't.

"That is a very good football team that we beat tonight," he said afterward, "and I couldn't be prouder of the way our guys played. That was championship football tonight. I was especially pleased with the way we ran to the ball defensively. I don't think we missed very many tackles at all. And on offense, Coach (David) Barker dialed up some big plays and we executed them. This is a big, big Region win that our guys should celebrate."

But not for too long, he said. He told his team that although next week's game is not a Region affair, it IS a rivalry game: Dyersburg. And it's on the road. The game has been moved up to Thursday (October 1), so it's also a shorter week of practice. And the Trojans are currently riding a four-game win streak in which they've been averaging a staggering 62 points a game. They clobbered Obion County Central 70-14 Friday night.

But North Side was touted to have a high-powered, speedy offense too, and – except for one 94-yard kickoff return for a touchdown when Crockett already led 35-0 – the Cavs basically shut the Indians down. The speedsters only managed 58 yards on 28 rushes, and the most telling statistic in the passing game is this one: Crockett returned two interceptions for as many yards (45) as North Side gained by catching seven of quarterback Wade Lowe's tosses.

Two other factors helped the Cavalier cause. A handful of Lowe's passes were flat-out dropped by his receiving corps, and the Indians repeatedly shot themselves in the foot by being penalized nine times. While the total yardage assessed was only 55 yards, several of the infractions negated the visitors' longest gains of the night.

"They were penalized a lot, but they were legitimate penalties," Ward said. "It's hard to defend passes when half the offensive line members are downfield blocking before the ball has been thrown. We pride ourselves in being disciplined enough to avoid things like that, and so far this year we've been good at it. But if a team keeps doing things like sending linemen downfield on pass plays or lining up too many men in the backfield, the officials have to call it."

Interestingly, Crockett played much of the contest with running threat DK Woods on the sidelines, who was dealing with a combination of cramping and the cumulative effects of gang tackles on his early carries – since that's generally what is required to take him down. To adjust, quarterback Ben Burgess threw touchdown passes to three different receivers and handed off to Woods' backups Squirt Pickens and Khalan Thomas for scoring runs of 22 and 27 yards, respectively.

But the game really turned at the 9:46 mark of the second quarter, with the Cavs leading only 7-0 at the time. Brody Jones sacked Indian quarterback Lowe for a five-yard loss on a third-down play, and North Side's Tyland Richmond was back in punt formation after the Indians' regular punter Alex Gomez had already hooked his first two punts of the game out of bounds for 15 and 17 yards.

The line of scrimmage was the North Side 21. The snap from center bounced three times before it reached Richmond, and by the time he tried to boot it, he had plenty of Cavalier company.

"Khalan rushed him from straight up the middle," said Crockett special teams standout Rylan Redding. "The punter picked up the ball and saw him coming, and managed to side-step him. But when he did, he stepped right into my path. I don't think he ever saw me."

Redding – who contributed strongly as a freshman to Crockett's state baseball championship run last spring – blocked Richmond's punt straight back into the Indian end zone, where Thomas jumped on it for the touchdown. The statistical rules of football credit Redding with a block and Thomas with a 21-yard punt return, and Noah Mayfield's extra point made it 14-0.

The play left the visitors a bit shell-shocked, and even after the Cavs coughed up a fumble back to them after forcing a punt, Lowe threw a pass that was tipped by Jones just past the line of scrimmage and was picked off by Crockett's Mason Dennis, who returned it 39 yards to the North Side 48. On the fourth ensuing play, Pickens – who had scored the game's first touchdown when he made a juggling catch of a 13-yard throw from Burgess – broke off his 22-yard scoring gallop, and Mayfield's extra made it 21-0 with 3:28 still to play in the opening half.

With the Indians visibly reeling at this point and Crockett still with all three of its timeouts left, the Cavs went for the kill defensively and it paid off when Dennis sacked Lowe for a six-yard loss at the Indian 40. Lowe nervously threw into traffic on a subsequent attempt and Jones intercepted and made a six-yard return.

Barker then called for a play-action pass and Burgess saw Cav track standout Titus Luten sprint past the Indian secondary. The senior quarterback unleashed a bomb that Luten snared between the 10 and the five, and wrestled his way through a tackler to reach the end zone for a 42-yard tally. Mayfield was true again, and the Cavs carried a 28-0 edge into the break.

Crockett scored on its first possession of the third quarter, with a 20-yard keeper by Burgess preceding a 12-yard throw to Luten and then a 23-yard touchdown to tight end Jones – his first reception of the entire season. Then, after allowing North Side's Braydon Weldon to run the kickoff back 94 yards for the Indians' only score, the Cavs struck again when Thomas ran for 10 and 11 yards, Burgess threw another 30-yard gain to Jones, and Thomas shot straight up the middle for the final 27 yards to the end zone on the first play of the fourth period.

"If we can get to where we play like this consistently, good things are going to happen with this football team," Ward said. "We'll work on shoring up what happened on that kickoff return; we've been very good against that all season, so we'll try to fix that. But our guys were very good tonight on knowing their responsibilities and being where they were supposed to be, and that's what it takes to win ballgames."

Crockett is now 5-1 overall and 3-1 in Region 7-4A, currently good for second place. Top seed Lexington drilled Jackson South Side 72-14 Friday night, and South Gibson County edged Dyer County 38-33 in the other Region game that was played.

Friday, September 25
Game Statistics: Crockett 42, Jackson North Side 7
Total Offense (Plays-Yards): CC 44-314; NS 45-103.
First Downs: CC 13; NS 8.
Penalties-Yards: CC 2-10; NS 9-55.
Punts-Yards-Avg: CC 3-116-38.8; NS 6-151-25.2.
Fumbles-Lost: CC 3-2; NS 1-0.
CC Rushing (Carries-Yards): Khalan Thomas 5-63 (1 TD), DK Woods 8-57, Squirt Pickens 3-40 (1 TD), Ben Burgess 15-32, Mason Dennis 1-5, Titus Luten 2-2, bad snap 1-(-5), Team 35-194 (2 TDs). NS Rushing: Kaden Currie 12-39, Troy Jeter 6-28, Xavier Davis 2-16, Braydon Weldon 3-(-6), Wade Lowe 5-(-19), Team 28-58.
CC Passing (Completions-Attempts-Yards-Interceptions): Ben Burgess 5-9-120-0 (3 TDs). NS Passing: Lowe 7-17-45-2.
CC Receiving (Catches-Yards): Titus Luten 2-54 (1 TD), Brody Jones 2-53 (1 TD), Squirt Pickens 1-13 (1 TD). NS Receiving: Weldon 4-17, Tyland Richmond 2-17, Jeter 1-11.
CC Pass Interceptions (Int-Yards): Mason Dennis 1-39, Brody Jones 1-6, Team 2-45. NS Pass Interceptions: none.
CC Fumble Recoveries: none. NS Fumble Recoveries: Isaiah Burton 1-0, unidentified 1-0, Team 2-0.
CC Kickoff Returns (Returns-Yards): Mason Dennis 1-13. NS Kickoff Returns: Weldon 1-94 (1 TD), Richmond 1-16, Jeter 1-10, Kariyah Fulgem 1-4, Currie 1-0, Team 5-124 (1 TD).
CC Punt Returns: Khalan Thomas 1-21 on a blocked punt by Rylan Redding(1 TD), Titus Luten 2-16, Team 3-37 (1 TD). NS Punt Returns: Jeter 1-8.
CC Scoring (TD-2PC-FG-XP-Points): Squirt Pickens 2-0-0-0-12, Khalan Thomas 2-0-0-0-12, Titus Luten 1-0-0-0-6, Noah Mayfield 0-0-0-6-6, Brody Jones 1-0-0-0-6, Team 6-0-0-6-42. NS Scoring: Weldon 1-0-0-0-6, Alex Gomez 0-0-0-1-1, Team 1-0-0-1-7.
The Linescore:
NS 0 0 7 0 - 7
CC 7 21 7 7 - 42
Crockett – Squirt Pickens 13 pass from Ben Burgess (Noah Mayfield kick)
Crockett – Khalan Thomas recovered punt block by Rylan Redding in end zone (Mayfield kick)
Crockett – Pickens 22 run (Mayfield kick)
Crockett – Titus Luten 42 pass from Burgess (Mayfield kick)
Crockett – Brody Jones 23 pass from Burgess (Mayfield kick)
NS – Braydon Weldon 94 kickoff return (Alex Gomez kick)
Crockett – Thomas 27 run (Mayfield kick)
Season Statistics: Record 5-1 (Region 3-1)

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Total Offense (Plays-Yards): CC 201-1,811; OPP 259-829.
First Downs: CC 55; OPP 46.
Penalties-Yards: CC 22-190; OPP 43-3161.
Punts-Yards-Avg: CC 6-228-38.0; OPP 25-579-23.2.
Fumbles-Lost: CC 11-4; OPP 14-5.
CC Rushing (Carries-Yards): DK Woods 54-582 (10 TDs), Khalan Thomas 10-132 (3 TDs), Squirt Pickens 6-122 (2 TD), Ben Burgess 41-117 (4 TDs), Chris Vance 13-99 (1 TD), Messiah McCurry 8-92 (1 TD), Mason Dennis 8-63 (1 TD), Jeremiah Young 4-54 (1 TD), Chris Mann 5-23 (1 TD), Roman Barker 4-15, Kris Phillips 3-10, Titus Luten 2-2, bad snap from center 2-(-19), Team 160-1,292 (24 TDs). OPP Rushing: 187-504 (4 TDs).
CC Passing (Completions-Attempts-Yards-Interceptions): Ben Burgess 25-40-503-1 (11 TDs), Roman Barker 1-2-16-1 (1 TD), Team 26-42-519-2 (12 TDs). OPP Passing: 31-72-325-9 (3 TDs).
CC Receiving (Catches-Yards): Titus Luten 9-280 (5 TDs), Kris Phillips 5-103 (3 TDs), Brody Jones 2-53 (1 TD), Squirt Pickens 3-27 (1 TD), Mason Dennis 2-19, Davis Porter 1-16 (1 TD), DK Woods 2-13, Ian Greenberg 1-5 (1 TD), Jeremiah Young 1-3, Team 26-519 (12 TDs). OPP Receiving: 31-325 (3 TDs).
CC Pass Interceptions (Int-Yards): Mason Dennis 3-85 (1 TD), Ian Greenberg 1-58 (1 TD), Squirt Pickens 1-27 (1 TD), Kris Phillips 1-13, Brody Parlow 1-8, Brody Jones 1-6, Chris Mann 1-0, Team 9-197 (3 TDs). OPP Pass Interceptions: 2-40.
CC Fumble Recoveries: Nolen Turner 1-16 (1 TD), Brody Parlow 1-0, Rylan Redding 1-0, Peter Bosco 1-0, Davis Porter 1-0, Team 5-16 (1 TD). OPP Fumble Recoveries: 4-0 (includes an onside kick recovery).
CC Kickoff Returns (Returns-Yards): Titus Luten 2-162 (2 TDs), Squirt Pickens 1-22, Mason Dennis 1-13, Jeremiah Young 1-10, Ian Greenberg 1-2, Team 6-209 (2 TDs). OPP Kickoff Returns: 34-541 (1 TD).
CC Punt Returns: Squirt Pickens 6-72, Khalan Thomas 1-21 (1 TD) from end zone recovery after punt block by Rylan Redding, Titus Luten 2-16, Team 9-109 (1 TD). OPP Punt Returns: 2-23.
CC Scoring (TD-2PC-FG-XP-Points): DK Woods 10-0-0-0-60, Titus Luten 7-0-0-0-42, Noah Mayfield 0-0-0-34-34, Squirt Pickens 4-0-0-0-24, Ben Burgess 4-0-0-0-24, Khalan Thomas 4-0-0-0-24, Kris Phillips 3-0-0-0-18, Mason Dennis 2-0-0-0-12, Ian Greenberg 2-0-0-0-12, Brody Jones 1-0-0-0-6, Chris Vance 1-0-0-0-6, Jeremiah Young 1-0-0-0-6, Messiah McCurry 1-0-0-0-6, Chris Mann 1-0-0-0-6, Davis Porter 1-0-0-0-6, Nolen Turner 1-0-0-0-6, Dontavious Forrest 0-1-0-0-2, Landeyn Catalan 0-0-0-1-1, Team 43-1-0-35-295. OPP Scoring: 8-0-0-6-54.



Above: The Cavs took an early lead when Ben Burgess floated this 13-yard toss over the linemen ... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... and into the grasp of Squirt Pickens, who made a juggling catch at the back of the end zone. (Photo by Ron Barry)





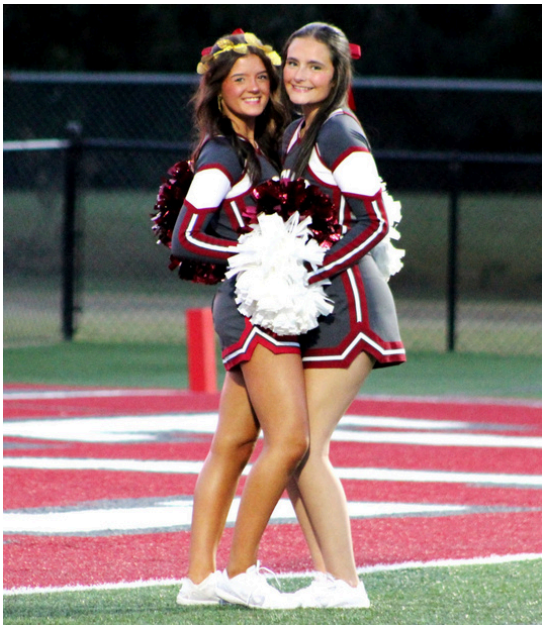
Right: Senior cheerleader Kaylei Porter was crowned Homecoming queen during pre-game ceremonies. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Titus Luten made two of the biggest plays of the night for the Cavs, first breaking up this long pass intended for Tyland Richmond with a last-second leap fitting of his high jump prowess, ... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... and then snaring a 42-yard scoring bomb from Ben Burgess, after which he was congratulated by Ryder Williams (85) and Ian Greenberg (2). (Photo by Ron Barry)





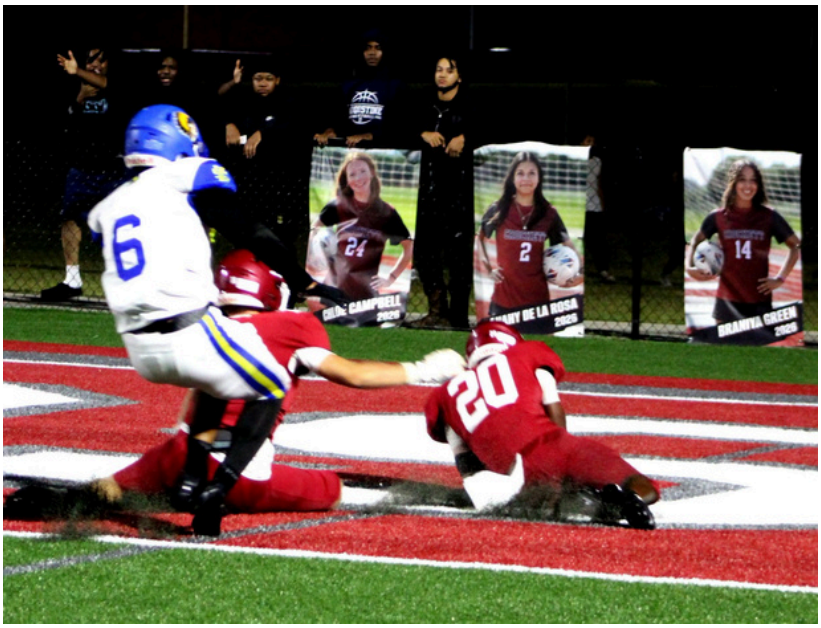
Right: ... of teammate Rylan Redding (18), the actual blocker of the kick and the lead celebrator after the fact. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Left: Even though the oppressive September heat has finally subsided, Cav cheerleaders Allyssa Ward and Lillian Ray apparently are still stuck together from the previous games. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: The toga theme was being played out throughout the stadium by the Crockett student body. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: The turning point in the game early in the second quarter when Khalan Thomas (20) jumped on this blocked punt in the North Side end zone for a touchdown, just ahead ... (Photo by Ron Barry)







Above: Coach Kevin Ward especially praised the way Crockett's defenders ran to the ball, as on this early play when Nolen Turner's pressure on North Side quarterback Wade Lowe eventually turned him into the grasp of Carson Bridger (79) for the sack. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: That pursuit of the ball is also featured here as Brody Parlow (5) puts a hit on an Indian back while teammates Mason Dennis (7), Titus Luten (4), Squirt Pickens (3), Ian Greenberg (2), and Carson Bridger (79) surround him for support. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: The toga people were everywhere! (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: On a later play, Dontavious Forrest (33) pressures quarterback Wade Lowe -- as do Carson Bridger (79) and Jacob Howard (52) -- forcing him to throw across his body weakly, ... (Photo by Ron Barry)





Left: ... allowing Brody Jones to make an interception. Jones (11) then caught his first two passes of the season as a tight end, including this 23-yard touchdown -- and he's congratulated by the other two receivers who caught scoring passes against the Indians, Squirt Pickens and Titus Luten. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: During a timeout, Ian Greenberg talks over some strategy with an assistant coach on the sidelines. (Photo by Ron Barry)



By Ron Barry



Above: Khalan Thomas (20) ran hard all night, when he had blockers -- like this -- and ... (Photo by Ron Barry)

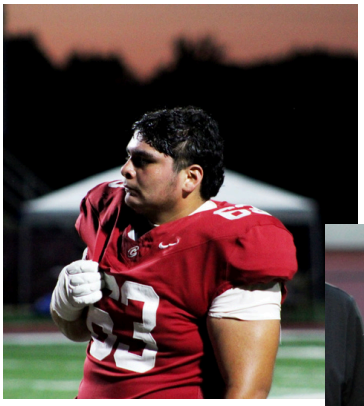
Below: ... even when he had escaped the line traffic and moved into the open. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Noah Mayfield (25) -- kicking out of the hold of Kris Phillips -- had his best performance of the year, nailing all six of his extra points high and true through the uprights. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Carson Bridger continues to be a mainstay in the Cavalier line despite a broken wrist. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Sebastian Garduno takes a breather during an injury timeout as the setting sun reddens the sky behind him. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Kinlee Moore and Sophia McGowan helped crown Homecoming queen and fellow cheerleader Kaylei Porter, ... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: ... who's pictured here with her court. (Photo by Ron Barry)



