

HERALD SPORTS

By GARY STEWART



Looking Back On The Good And Bad Spots Of The '72 Grid Year

Looking back on the disappointments and the exciting moments of the 1972 Kings Mountain High School football season:

The Mountaineers could have easily finished 8-2 or 9-1 but Coach Bobby Jones isn't entirely disappointed over his team's 6-4 record.

"At one time I thought we could have been better," he said. "When you look back, you can always see games that you should have won. But we can also look back at a couple of games we could have lost."

The games Kings Mountain could have won were R-S Central, Crest and possibly South Point. "But," noted Jones, "we could have lost that game Friday night at Lincolnton and we could have lost at Burns the week before."

"Overall," he continued, "6-4 is a pretty, good indication of the way we played. But I'm not satisfied with that kind of record."

The Mountaineers this year accomplished great strides in that they handed the school only its second winning season since the last championship year of 1964. The Mountaineers had finished 7-3 in '70, when the seniors on this year's club were sophomores. Thus, the 13 seniors on this year's team were mainly responsible for both of KM's winning years in the past eight seasons.

Kings Mountain got off to a great 3-0 start and appeared headed for a spot in the WNCSSAA playoffs. But the Mountaineers hit a dry spell during the middle part of their schedule and lost four of five games before ending the year with victories over Burns and Lincolnton.

The Mountaineers had some serious injury problems but the main reason for their losing streak of four out of five games were senseless mistakes.

Kings Mountain's best showing probably came in the third game of the season when the Mountaineers stopped the unbeaten East Rutherford 14-7. The next week KM's losing streak began when the Mounties lost to pass-happy South Point 28-19.

The most disappointing losses were the 12-7 homecoming setback to R-S Central and the 22-14 loss to Crest in the home finale... both games given away on mistakes.

But, like Jones said, the Mountaineers could have easily lost to Burns and Lincolnton. But fans never look at the games you could have lost. They only remember the ones you should have won.

—Elementary Program Needed

So much for this year. Let's look at the downfall of Kings Mountain football and kick around a few hints that might help bring the program back.

Since 1964 when KM captured its last SWC title with a perfect 10-0 record, the Mountaineers have had a record of 40 wins, 38 losses and four ties. In conference play, however, that record stands at only 30 victories, 35 defeats and four ties.

The year-by-year record reads like this: 1964, 3-7; 1966, 5-5; 1967, 3-6-1; 1968, 5-5; 1969, 5-4-1; 1970, 7-3; 1971, 4-4-2; 1972, 6-4.

The downfall of Kings Mountain football apparently started in 1964, that final championship season. That year, the school board elected to discontinue the elementary school football program.

Back in the heyday of KMHS football, every elementary school in the system (Grover, East, West, North) had a football team and those schools competed on a city basis. Each team played the other twice in a seven-game season.

When the elementary football program was in effect, there were approximately 320 boys playing football in Kings Mountain. Kings Mountain High School had three teams of its own, a ninth grade team, a junior varsity squad and the varsity outfit.

Now, kids do not play football until they get in the eighth grade, their attention is turning from football to other things.

The main reason given for discontinuing the elementary school program in 1964 was that the coaches handling these boys were not trained coaches and were teaching them bad football habits. If the school board would do it, it could re-organize an elementary program and assign qualified teachers to coach these elementary teams.

I only ask the board of education to look around. Every nearby town whose high school is annually strong in football has a sound elementary program. I give you Shelby, Gastonia, Belmont, and others.

When a football team is suffering through losing seasons, the majority of the fans put the blame on the blame on the coach. But the fans here can't honestly blame on Coach Bobby Jones. He has been here only two years and the Mountaineers were losing long before he came.

The board of education and other school officials should take a long look at the overall football picture here.

There are currently seven assistant football coaches at KMHS: Bill Cashion, Bo Goforth, Tommy Pruitt, Steve Baker, John Blalock, Blaine Froneberger and Allen Dixon. There are three other coaches at Central, Porter Griggs, Barry Gibson and Jimmy Owens. The school board cannot truthfully tell the football fans of Kings Mountain that there are no qualified coaches here to lead an elementary program.

Gaston Teams Voted Into SWC, Association

By GARY STEWART
Herald Sports Editor
MOORESVILLE — Four new teams were unanimously voted into the Western N. C. High Schools Activities Association here Wednesday but a fifth school's request for admission was set aside for a two-week study.

East Gaston, North Gaston and Bessemer City high schools were voted into the Southwest Conference, giving that league 13 teams. Hibernia of Lenoir was voted into the Northwest Conference, giving that loop 11 members.

Trinity High School has applied for admission into the South Piedmont Conference but WNCSSAA President Mal Brown of Shelby appointed a committee to consider that request. Trinity did not

apply until Monday and the SPC schools felt they needed more time for study. The committee is to report its findings to WNCSSAA executive secretary W. C. Clary within the next two weeks.

St. Stephens High School of Hickory had applied along with Hibernia for admission into the NWC but withdrew its request. Clary, who had earlier been given authority to draw up new schedules for the entire association, said he would have those new slates within two weeks. He had already drawn up the schedule but will now have to revise it due to St. Stephens' withdrawal and the possibility of Trinity joining the SPC.

Another factor which entered into the delay of scheduling was an error Clary made in the SWC

schedule. He had East Rutherford playing both Kings Mountain and South Point on the same date.

As a result of the three new schools joining the SWC, Kings Mountain will face at least two new opponents next fall. The Mountaineers will play East Gaston and North Gaston and drop Crest and RS Central.

If Clary can't come to a mutual agreement with Kings Mountain, East and South Point on the schedule mixup, there's a possibility that the Mountaineers will play one of three NWC teams in a non-conference game. Those clubs include Newton-Conover, Hudson and Lenoir. If KM plays a NWC team, East will be dropped from the schedule.

South Point has expressed a desire to meet Kannapolis of the

SPC in a non-conference game so both Coach Bobby Jones of Kings Mountain and Grady Pope of East Rutherford are hoping that can be arranged. Jones noted that the Mountaineers would rather continue to play East than to travel to one of the NWC cities.

Kings Mountain's 1973 schedule, as of now, shapes up like this:

August 25, at Bessemer City; Sept. 2, at North Gaston; Sept. 9, Lincolnton home; Sept. 16, open date; Sept. 23, at Burns; Sept. 30, East (or NWC team) home; Oct. 7, at East Gaston; Oct. 14, Chase home; Oct. 21, South Point, home; Oct. 28, at Cherryville; Nov. 4, Shelby home.

Next season will probably mark the first time ever that the Mountaineers have played Shelby in the season's finale. The season

opener against Bessemer City will count as a non-conference game if East remains on the schedule. However, if the Mounties play one of the NWC teams, the Bessemer City game will count in the conference standings.

The association members had to revise two rules in order to accept the three new teams in the SWC. The WNCSSAA voted to delete the rule stating that no conference can have more than 11 members; and dropped the rule requiring every team in a conference to play every other conference member.

The SWC schedule will be revised every two years with each school taking on two new opponents.

At the end of each season, the two teams with the best confer-

ence records will meet in a playoff game to determine the league's representative in the association playoffs. Originally, the league was split into two divisions but that plan was killed after strong opposition by Kings Mountain, Shelby, South Point and Lincolnton.

Other items on Wednesday's agenda dealt with changes in rules governing track, golf and tennis.

It was agreed that the association golf tournament would be a two-day, 36-hole event, instead of a one-day tournament as has been the case in the past. All-Conference teams will also be named in golf.

The schools also voted to allow girl tennis players to play in the girls association tournament.
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Mounties Cut Out Mistakes, Top Pack 24-13

Young Quarterbacks, Entire Line Lead Mounties To Winning Season

Lanny Thornburg, Kings Mountain High defensive tackle, was talking to line coach Bill Cashion last week after learning that the Mountaineers' first two quarterbacks, Chris Johnson and Tony Falls, had been ruled academically ineligible for the season's finale Friday at Lincolnton.

"That will make it tough," Thornburg told Cashion, but the veteran mentor came back with this statement: "It might be the best thing that's happened to us. The line will just have to do a better job of blocking."

In a way, Cashion turned out to be quite a prophet. The line, both offensive and defensively, played its best game of the year and as a result the Mountaineers claimed a 24-13 victory and a winning season.

Sophomore Chuck Austin, who had appeared in only one game, KM's season opener against 2-A Bessemer City, and freshman Steve Southwell, who was called up from the jayvee team Thursday, ran the show at quarterback and played well. The Mountaineers lost a pair of fumbles and had two passes intercepted, but the team cut down on their untimely mistakes that cost them victories against Crest, RS Central and South Point.

"These quarterbacks didn't make nearly as many mistakes as our other two had been making," commented Coach Bobby Jones. "They didn't bobble the

ball around any, whereas we had been bobbling the snap from center at least three or four times a ball game."

Jones wouldn't single out anybody, but noted that everybody gave a superb effort.

"We knew we would have to do a better job of blocking," he said. "And our defense played a great ball game. The new quarterbacks were real pleasing. They cut down on our mistakes instead of making more like we thought they might do."

Jones pointed out that the Mountaineers were penalized only 25 yards and had only one illegal procedure penalty. "Usually, when you change quarterbacks, you'll have lot of penalties. But these new kids weren't nervous and did a good job."

Austin quarterbacked all but four plays, but young Southwell got the Mountaineers in scoring position once and also had a hand in the clinching touchdown, an 80-yard run by sophomore half-back Johnny Byers.

The Mountaineers put two quick touchdowns on the board in the second period to build up a 14-7 halftime lead. After Lincolnton cut it to 14-13 in the third period, the Mountaineers put 10 points on the board in the final chapter to break the game open.

The Mountaineers blew three other scoring chances. After Southwell tossed a 32-yard pass to end Harlee Davis on his first play as a varsity performer, he fumbled at the five yard line.

However, the Wolves fumble the ball right back on their second play of the ensuing series and Marcus Floyd scampered in on a handoff from Austin to put the Mountaineers ahead. John Bridges booted the first three straight points after touchdown for a 7-0 lead.

The Wolves were penalized 15 yards on the kickoff for unsportsmanlike conduct and Bridges' boot was downed in the end zone for a safety. The Wolves came out passing and Davis picked off an aerial at the Lincolnton 19 and romped untouched into the end zone for a 14-0 cushion.

Lincolnton drove 25 yards following a KM fumble late in the first half to cut the difference to 14-7. Fred Darymble scored from the one on fourth down and Larry Lindsay booted the point-after.

The Wolves got on the board again early in the third quarter when Billy Murphy broke off tackle and went 54 yards to make it 14-13. Lindsay's PAT attempt was wide to the right and for a while it appeared that miss might be the difference.

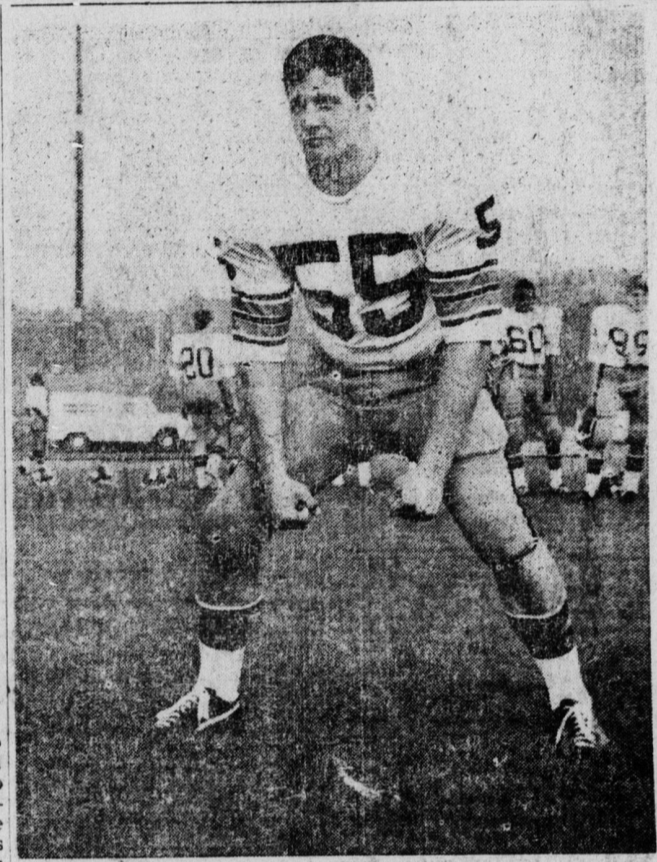
Eyers, who was the game's top rusher with 137 yards in 13 carries, took an option pitch from Southwell with seven minutes remaining and romped around Kings Mountain's left end for an 80-yard touchdown and Bridges' booted his third PAT for a 21-13 cushion.

Mark George, who played another great game despite an injury, intercepted a pass at mid-field with two minutes remaining and returned it to the Lincolnton five to set up KM's final three points, a 20-yard field goal by Bridges.

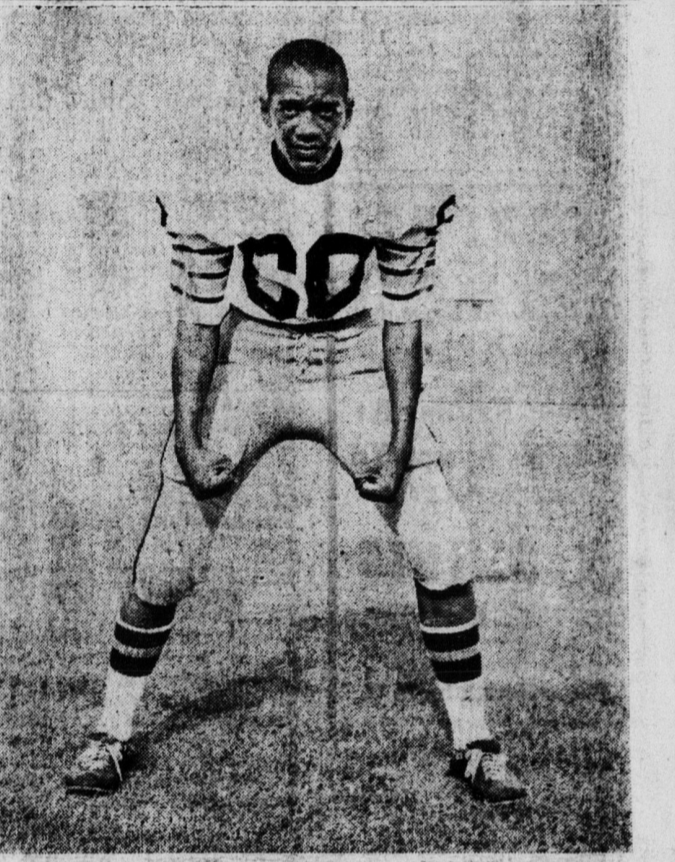
George, Dennis Hogue, Thornburg, Jerry Valentine, Tommy Shirley and Larry Hamrick sparked the KM defensive charge while the entire line blocked well on offense.

The Mountaineers outgained the Wolves on the ground, 262 yards to 211 yards, and through the air, 37 to 34.

	KM	Line
First Downs	7	8
Yards Rushing	262	211
Yards Passing	37	34
Passes Att.	7	21
Passes Comp.	3	4
Passes Int. By	2	2
Fumbles Lost	2	1
Punts	3-33	4-36
Yards Penalized	25	15



LINEBACKERS SPARK FINAL WIN — Linebackers Mark George, left, and Dennis Hogue helped spark Kings Mountain's Mountaineers to their 24-13 victory and a winning (6-4) season Friday night at Lincolnton. George, a senior, wound up a great



three-year career by intercepting a pass on his final play of the game and returning it to the Lincolnton five to set up a 20-yard field goal by John Bridges. Hogue, a two-year starter, will return next year to bolster the Mountaineer line.

KMHS To Ask Tri-County To Waive Rule

Kings Mountain High School is asking the Tri-County Junior High Conference to waive its freshman eligibility rule so Steve Southwell can continue to play freshmen sports.

A Tri-County rule currently states that if an athlete plays one varsity sport, he is ineligible to play another freshmen sport.

Young Southwell was called up to the varsity football team for its season's finale at Lincolnton after regular quarterbacks Chris Johnson and Tony Falls were ruled academically ineligible for sports for the next nine-week grading period.

Unless the Tri-County Conference waives its rule, Southwell will have to play varsity basketball and baseball.

"I don't think playing these varsity sports will hurt him," said KMHS head football coach and athletic director Bobby Jones. "He's good enough to play varsity baseball and could see a lot of action in basketball."

Jones drew some unnecessary criticism from some fans and parents after calling young Southwell up to the varsity team.

"We had no choice," said Jones. "I think Southwell proved to everybody that calling him up was a good decision. He played well and helped us have a winning season."

The Southwest Conference has no rule prohibiting freshmen to play varsity sports. In the SWC, freshmen are eligible for varsity play if the high school they attend includes a ninth grade.

Jayvee Drills Begin Monday

All tenth graders planning to try out for the Kings Mountain High School junior varsity basketball team are asked to meet in the gym Monday afternoon at 5:30 for the first practice session. Coach John Blalock will again head the jayvee program. He coached his team to a 16-4 record last season.

Little Mounties Beat Southwest In Finale

Kings Mountain High's freshmen footballers ended their second straight winning season under Coach John Blalock Thursday at City Stadium, blanking Southwest of Gastonia 12-0.

The Little Mountaineers, who played their final game without the services of starting quarterback Steve Southwell, finished with a 4-3 record. In two years under Blalock, the Little Mountaineers are 10-4.

Tommy Manning, an end, was converted to quarterback after coaches Blalock and Steve Baker learned that Southwell would be called up to the varsity for the Mountaineers' season finale at Lincolnton. Manning responded to the call by throwing a 75-yard touchdown pass to Chris Johnson.

Kings Mountain's other score came on a 25-yard run by Jimmy Thompson, who was the game's leading rusher with 86 yards. Other ground gainers for KM included Donnie McDevitt with 48 yards, Wendell Jackson with 38 and Manning with three.

Coach Blalock cited Jackson, McDevitt, Johnson, Thompson, Jacky Wray, Joey Ormand, Cleveland Mackie, Jeff ones and Kenny Burreis for their defensive play.

Thompson finished the year as the team's top ground gainer and scorer. He gained 434 yards in

Wright Wins Final Contest

A former Kings Mountain high school All-Conference football player is the winner of the Herald's final football contest of the 1972 season.

Leonard Wright, a KMHS All-SWC guard in 1956 under Shu Carlton, tied with five other players with only one incorrect guess but came closer to the tie-breaker score of 37 points in the Kings Mountain-Lincolnton game.

Wright, who missed on Georgia Tech's upset loss to Duke, predicted a tie-breaker score of 35 points. He'll receive \$15.

John Cobb and Pat Sipe, who also missed the Duke-Tech game, tied for second and third place with a tie-breaker guess of 54 points. They'll split second and

Thornburg Is Player Of Week

Senior defensive tackle Lanny Thornburg is Fulton's final player of the week for the 1972 Kings Mountain High football season.

Thornburg gave a strong defensive effort last Friday night as the Mountaineers defeated Lincolnton 24-13 for a final record of six wins and four defeats. The Mountaineers were 5-4 in Southwestern Conference play.

As a result of being named the week's top player, the 196-pounder will receive a free gift from the men's department of Fulton's Department Store.

Other players of the week this year were Jake Bridges, Tony Falls, Mark George (twice), Harlee Davis, Alfred Ash, Jerry Valentine, Dennis Hogue, Johnny Byers and Chris Johnson.

Champion's Landscaping To Back Local Semi-Pro Football Outfit

Several persons here are making plans to enter a team in the semi-pro Dixie Football League in the fall of 1973.

Thirty-five interested players, including three former college standouts, attended an organizational meeting Monday night at the Kings Mountain Community Center and another such meeting is planned for Monday of next week. Other interested players are urged to attend that meeting.

Bud Medlin, a former All-Conference performer at Kings Mountain High School, will be head coach of the team and Champion's Landscaping, whose slowpitch softball team copped the state championship last summer, will sponsor the team.

According to Medlin, players will perform on a volunteer basis until the team can realize a profit of \$5,000, the approximate cost of entering the league and outfitting 40 players.

This marks the second time in recent years that Medlin and other persons here have attempted to organize a semi-pro football team. In 1968, a team was organized but moved to Gastonia after the sponsor backed down on the deal.

"That won't happen this time," Medlin noted. "Carl Champion of Champion's Landscaping is behind us one hundred percent. All he asks is that we have enough players who are dedicated enough to stick this thing out until we get out of the hole."

Medlin said the team will hold at least a one-week spring training session next March and will begin summer practice in August. The KM team, which will probably be called the Bears, will compete in the Northern Division of the Dixie League along with Greenville, Charleston, and others.

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