



GARY STEWART

# Patriots Clinch Foothills Crown

Things Have To Get Better

For Blalock And Mountaineers

The dust has hardly settled on Kings Mountain High's basketball season, but already Mountaineer head coach John Blalock is looking forward to next season.

He figures things can only get better for the Mountaineers.

Blalock, in his first year as coach, saw his Mountaineers go through a miserable 5-17 season this year and that mark represents one of the worst records in KMHS basketball history. It also marked the first time in 16 years Blalock had coached a loser.

"It really hurts," says Blalock. "It's hard sitting on that bench knowing you're playing these tough teams and just don't have the players to compete with them."

The Mountaineers had the outside shooting talent, but their inside game suffered. Their two inside threats had a combined average of less than 10 points per game.



JOHN BLALOCK

Blalock figures if the Mountaineers are to return to their winning ways next season, he'll have to come up with a good point guard and a dominant inside player... one that can reach the high teens or twenties in both points and rebounds.

"For us to have a good year next year, William Lockhart will have to come through for us inside," noted Blalock. "He began to get the rebounds for us late in the year but we still need 15-20 points per game out of him."

"Eddie Ingram came along at the point for us the last three or four games, so we're going to miss him," Blalock added. "I hope Steve Boggan can step in and do the job for us there. Another possibility is Eric Dixon, who has been a solid player for the junior high this year."

## Need Guard, Big Man...

The Mountaineers lose only three players, William Thompson, who was dismissed from the squad late in the year for disciplinary reasons, Ingram and Bobby Odums.

Sophomore Vernon Bell, who averaged 12 points per game, and Everette Burris, who worked his way into the starting lineup late in the year, will give Blalock a strong outside scoring punch.

"If we get a point guard that can really play under pressure, and a big man inside that will really play some tough basketball for us, we're going to be pretty good next year," says Blalock. "We'll set our goals much higher than we did this year."

Blalock said he actually felt like his team could be a winner this past season. "But," he said, "after we dropped those first four or five ballgames, the roof really caved in on us. After we lost Thompson, we really started to play good basketball. And most of the guys we were playing were sophomores and juniors, so we should really be in the thick of it next year."

The Mountaineers played the Southwestern Conference's top three teams — Crest, Shelby and North Gaston — three of their toughest basketball games late in the year. They lost to North Gaston on the road by one, led Shelby the entire game before falling by three, and dropped a tough 10-point decision to the then-unbeaten Chargers.

Blalock will be looking to several junior varsity players to plug some holes and he's already trying to talk a 6-6 sophomore who has a lot of potential into coming out for the team next year.

## ...And Winning Tradition

"The jayvee team had three or four players that can do a good job for us," he said. "Darryl Friday will help us out a lot at the point guard and Stan Scruggs and Terry McClain should help us a lot. Dennis Dukes did a marvelous job with that jayvee team."

Blalock said several of the current junior high players also show a lot of promise.

"We're going to try to keep all the sophomores on the jayvee team," he says, "unless they are really good players and can start for us. If they can't help us right off the bat, we're going to keep them on the jayvee team and give them experience."

"We're going to have to re-establish a winning tradition here," he went on. "We're beginning to get the kind of players we want from the junior high and jayvee programs. They have good attitudes and as long as we continue to get those kind, our program is going to improve."

Blalock says he's enjoyed all 16 of his years in coaching, even this past season, but he'd rather not go through another 5-17 campaign.

"We tried everything," he said, "and nothing seemed to work. But we did get a lot of improvement out of them and all the kids got experience."

That experience, Blalock feels, will pay big dividends next year. But he'd still like to see some big tall superstar come out.

Anybody know of one?

Kings Mountain Junior High's Patriots wrapped up their second straight Foothills Conference basketball title Monday at home with a 54-49 victory over Shelby.

The victory gives Coach

Ken Napier's charges a 10-3 record heading into today's season's finale at West Lincoln. The Pats can do no worse than tie for the championship as Burns is the only club within a game of the Pats with a 9-4

record.

Should Burns win its game today and KM lose to West Lincoln, the two teams would be declared co-champions. But if KM wins today, the Patriots will be the undisputed champions for the second year in a row.

The Patriots fell behind 4-0 early in the first quarter Monday, but then reeled off 17 straight points for a 17-4 lead. They went on to lead by 19-6 after the first period and Shelby was never again able to get within five points.

KM's leading scorer, Eric Dixon, got into foul trouble early in the second period, and the Pats' leading rebounder, Kenny Gwinn, began to tire, and when Coach Napier gave both a rest the Blue Devils began to come back.

Shelby cut the score to 33-28 at halftime but the Pats padded their lead to 46-36 after three quarters and held a 10-to-12 point lead until the final four minutes when Shelby took advantage of several KM turnovers to cut the final margin to five.

Dixon finished with 14 points, Dennis McGill added 13 and Jeff Cloninger 11. Gwinn grabbed 10 rebounds and McGill eight.

The Patriots had one of their best shooting nights of the year, hitting 21 of 43 (49 percent) from the floor and 12 of 16 (75 percent) from the foul line.

"It was a big win for us," noted Napier, who coached the Pats to a perfect 14-0 season a year ago. "There were a lot of festivities at school before the game, and I was wandering if we'd be up for the game. But playing Shelby always seems to bring out the best in our players."

"We did a real good job rebounding," Napier continued. "We knew we had to block them off the boards because they were a lot bigger than we were. We also did a good job in the first half against their zone defense and our 7-5 zone press really made the difference in the first half."

Napier singled out McGill and Gwinn for their steady play on the boards and Dixon for his outside shooting, which played a big part in the Pats' first quarter surge.

"Todd Friday ran the offense real well," he added, "and Jeff Cloninger had one of his better offensive games. He did a good job helping to break the press."

"We don't have all that much talent," Napier said, "but we have a scrappy bunch of kids. I think they've gotten used to being called number one."

Kings Mountain's jayvees won their seventh straight in the opener, 42-29 to run their record to 6-3 in the conference and 7-3 overall.

Ricky Proctor scored 19 points and Vince Roseboro nine to lead the offense and Chris Wright had 10 rebounds to key the defense. Carl Smith dished out seven assists.

"We showed a lot of desire," noted Coach Danny McDowell, whose club still has an outside shot at the title. Lincolnton is 7-2 and KM could achieve a tie should the Wolves lose their finale today.

"Even if we don't win the title, I'm really proud of our players for the way they've come back after those three early losses," McDowell said.



Photo By Gary Stewart

DRIVING LANE — Kings Mountain's Eric Dixon (43) drives the lane on way to two of his team-leading 14 points in Monday's 54-49 junior high victory over Shelby.

The Patriots claimed their second straight Foothills Conference title. They end their season today at West Lincoln.

# SPORTS

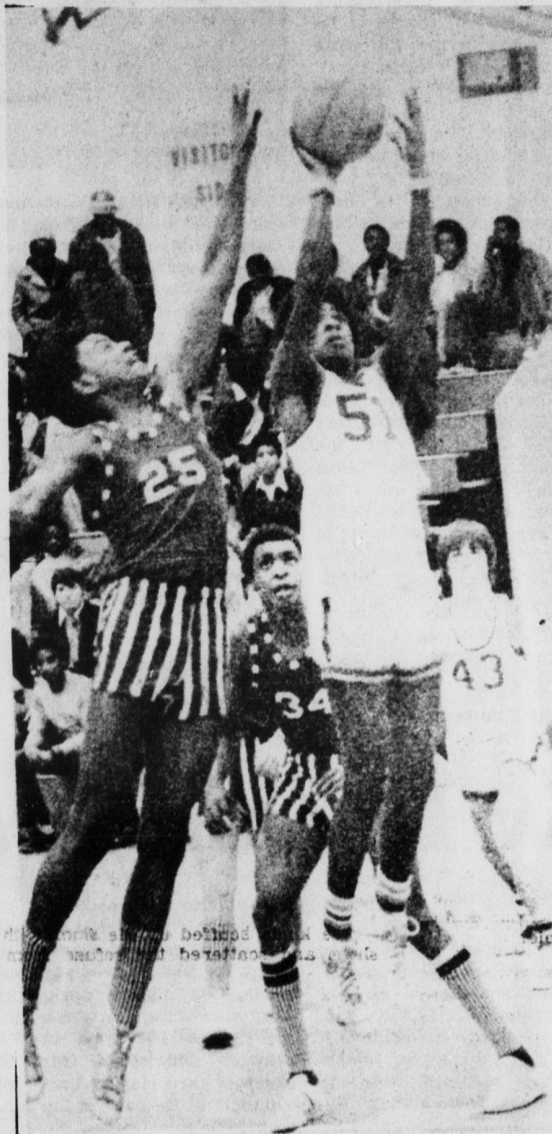


Photo By Gary Stewart

HITS LAYUP — Kings Mountain Junior High's Dennis McGill (51) scores from close range in Tuesday's Foothills Conference game with Shelby at the KM gym. The Patriots won 54-49 to claim their second straight league title.

## KMHS Spring Sports Slates

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>GOLF MARCH</b><br>10, at Cherryville<br>17, at Chase<br>24, at Shelby<br>31, at B. City   | <b>BASEBALL MARCH</b><br>8, at R-S Central<br>11, R-S Central<br>15, at Burns<br>18, Shelby<br>19, Burns<br>22, Crest<br>24, at Crest<br>29, at B. City                          |
| <b>APRIL</b><br>7, Cherry., Crest, E. Gaston<br>21, at Burns<br>28, Crest, R-S, Shelby   | <b>APRIL</b><br>1, at N. Gaston<br>4, Cherryville<br>12, S. Point (N)<br>16, at E. Gaston<br>19, N. Gaston (N)<br>22, at Cherry. (N)<br>26, E. Gaston (N)<br>29, at S. Point (N) |
| <b>MAY</b><br>5, at R-S Central<br>9, Conf. at Shelby<br>16-17, Assn. at Shelby  | <b>BOYS TRACK MARCH</b><br>17, at Burns<br>14, at R-S Central<br>31, at Shelby   |
| <b>BOYS TENNIS APRIL</b><br>7, at Shelby<br>11, Crest<br>14, at Cherryville<br>18, at E. Ruth.<br>21, R-S Central<br>25, at Chase<br>28, Burns | <b>APRIL</b><br>14, at R-S Central<br>21, at Burns<br>28, at S. Point  |
| <b>MAY</b><br>2, at S. Point<br>12-13, Bl-Conf. at Shelby<br>19-20, Assn. at Shelby  | <b>MAY</b><br>5, Pre-Conf. at Crest<br>13, Conf. at Crest<br>19-20, Assn. at Crest   |
| <b>GIRLS TENNIS MARCH</b><br>31, at R-S Central  | <b>GIRLS TRACK MARCH</b><br>17, at Shelby<br>24, at S. Point<br>31, at R-S Central   |
| <b>APRIL</b><br>4, S. Point<br>7, Cherryville<br>11, Watauga<br>14, at Burns<br>18, Crest<br>21, at E. Ruth.<br>25, at Shelby                  | <b>APRIL</b><br>14, at Shelby<br>21, at R-S Central<br>28, Pre-Conf. at Shelby   |
| <b>MAY</b><br>2, at Wilkes Central<br>5, Lenoir<br>12-13, Bl-Conf. at Shelby<br>19-20, Assn. at Shelby   | <b>MAY</b><br>5, Conf. at Shelby<br>12, Assn. at Davie Co.   |

## Wrestling Scheduled Saturday At Center

Mid-Atlantic wrestling comes to the Kings Mountain Community Center Saturday night at 8:15 p. m.

The feature match of the evening will be a single bout between the Mighty Igor and the Super Star.

A big tag team match features the Hollywood Blondes, Jerry Brown and Buddy Roberts, against Johnny Eagle and Red Bastien.

Other matches pit Danny Miller against Jacques Goulet, Bill White against Frankie Lane and Two Ton Harris against Francisco Flores.

Advance tickets are on sale at the community center.

Mid Atlantic Championship

# WRESTLING

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Danny Miller -VS- Jacques Gouley

Bill White -VS- Frankie Lane

Two Ton Harris -VS- Francisco Flores

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