

Baseball Team Top '80 Story

The year 1980 was one of records and near misses for sports teams and individual athletes in Kings Mountain.

A number of Kings Mountain High School athletic teams came within an eyelash of winning state championships, as did several individuals.

Some of the ones who missed out on state championships set personal or school records.

Probably the top story maker in 1980 was the Kings Mountain High baseball team, which won the Southwestern 3-A Conference championship and advanced to the state 3-A championship game before losing to Greene Central.

The Mountaineers compiled a 20-4 overall record, two of those losses coming to Greene Central in the best-of-three state championship series, which was played in Snow Hill, N.C. The only team to defeat the Mountaineers in the SWC was East Rutherford, which whipped the Mounties 1-0 in a non-conference game and 1-0 in a regular season contest.

The team had several individual standouts, but the leader was Tim Leach, a tall, left-hander who compiled a 13-1 record and set school records for strikeouts and victories. He was named the SWC Player of the Year and shared the KMHS Athlete of the Year Award with football star Kevin Mack, and basketball standout Debbie Apple.

Joining Leach on the All-Conference team were catcher Lyn Hayes, who was the team's top RBI man; first baseman Eric Dixon, who led the team in hitting; second baseman Ricky Chapman, one of the team's top defensive players; third baseman Alan Van Dyke, a big clutch player; and outfielder Mark Schuman, who led the team in runs scored and stolen bases.

Other starters included Tony Boyce at shortstop, Eric Moore in centerfield and Jeff Cloninger in rightfield. Ricky Proctor and Todd Blalock joined Leach in forming one of the top mound staffs in the state.

The Mountaineers defeated Burns and South Point in the SWC playoffs, and then won state playoff games over Moorsville, Erwin High of Asheville, and South Rowan to reach the finals against Greene Central.

Leach received a full grant-in-aid to pitch at Wingate College, where he enjoyed a good fall season and is expected to be one of the aces this spring. Schuman joined the Wingate team as a walk-on candidate.

Coach Barry Gibson was honored as the SWC Coach of the Year for the second straight year and the fourth time in his career, more than any other coach in the conference.

The only other team championship at KMHS went to the Mountaineer wrestlers, who ran roughshod over their conference opponents to win their second title in three years under Coach Steve Moffitt.

The Mountaineers added the Southwestern Sectional title to their list of honors, defeating several strong 4-A teams from the Mecklenburg County area for that honor.

The Mountaineers' Johnny Ross was the SWC Wrestler of the Year and finished second in the State Tournament. Moffitt was selected SWC Coach of the Year.

Maurice Jamerson also represented KMHS in the State Tourney.

Another near-miss in state competition was track star Kevin Mack, who finished third in the 100-yard dash at Raleigh's Carter Stadium. He won the SWC championship and finished second in the regionals after pulling a muscle near the finish line.

Mack, who had enjoyed a superb football season in the fall of '79, went on to play football at Clemson University, where he helped the young Tiger team to a 6-5 season under Danny Ford. Mack, although hampered most of the season with an ankle injury, saw action as a reserve tailback and kickoff return specialist.

The KMHS girls softball team

won its division title in the spring, but lost the SWC championship in a best-of-three series with Chase. Both clubs qualified for the state tournament, but the Mountaineers lost out in the first round.

Kings Mountain's girls tennis team, which finished second to Shelby again in the SWC, qualified its top doubles team, Bridget Glass and Kim Moss, for the state tournament, but they also lost out in the first round. They were the first girls from KMHS to qualify for a state tennis tournament.

The championship seasons by the baseball and wrestling teams, and other good marks by the girls softball, tennis, golf and other teams, enabled the Mountaineers to finish second to East Gaston in the race for the SWC All-Sports Trophy, which is given each year to the school which has the best overall record in the conference. The Mounties lost by one point for the second straight year.

The high baseball finish also enabled KMHS to place 10th in the state in the running for the coveted Wachovia Cup, which is given each year by Wachovia Bank to the school which has the best overall athletic program in North Carolina.

For the basketball and football fans, 1980 wasn't a good year but as the year draws to a close, the Mountaineer cagers show signs of returning to the throne in the SWC.

The boys team finished with a 12-12 record for 1979-80, but are off to a fast start in 1980-81, taking a perfect 8-0 record into the 1981 portion of their schedule.

The girls team finished 8-12 under first year coach David Brinkley and have a 4-4 record heading into the New Year portion of their current season.

The year saw a number of former KMHS athletes active in college sports and high school and college coaching.

As previously mentioned, Kevin Mack enjoyed a good freshman season of football at Clemson. Other former Mountaineers on college rosters included Chuck Gordon, a defensive starter at Appalachian; Kelly Land, starting offensive guard at Lenoir Rhyne; Avery Smith, reserve running back at Gardner-Webb, and Henry Hager, a tackle who was red-shirted in his first year at N.C. Central. Tennis star Tim Riddle helped Presbyterian College win the District 6 championship.

Chris Johnson, a former Mountaineer defensive back who had a big career at Gardner-Webb, was an assistant coach with the Bulldogs last fall.

Mike Ware, a lineman here in the late fifties and early sixties, coached still another conference champion at Newberry High School. Jerry Adams coached East Gaston's football team to a 6-4 record, Jim Kimmell coached football at Latta, S.C., and Darrell Van Dyke took over the coaching chores of the East Gaston baseball team.

Bobby Hussey, former KMHS basketball coach, coached his Belmont Abbey Crusaders to its second straight 20-victory season and the finals of the District 26 tournament.

One Kings Mountain athlete had the honor of setting a world record.

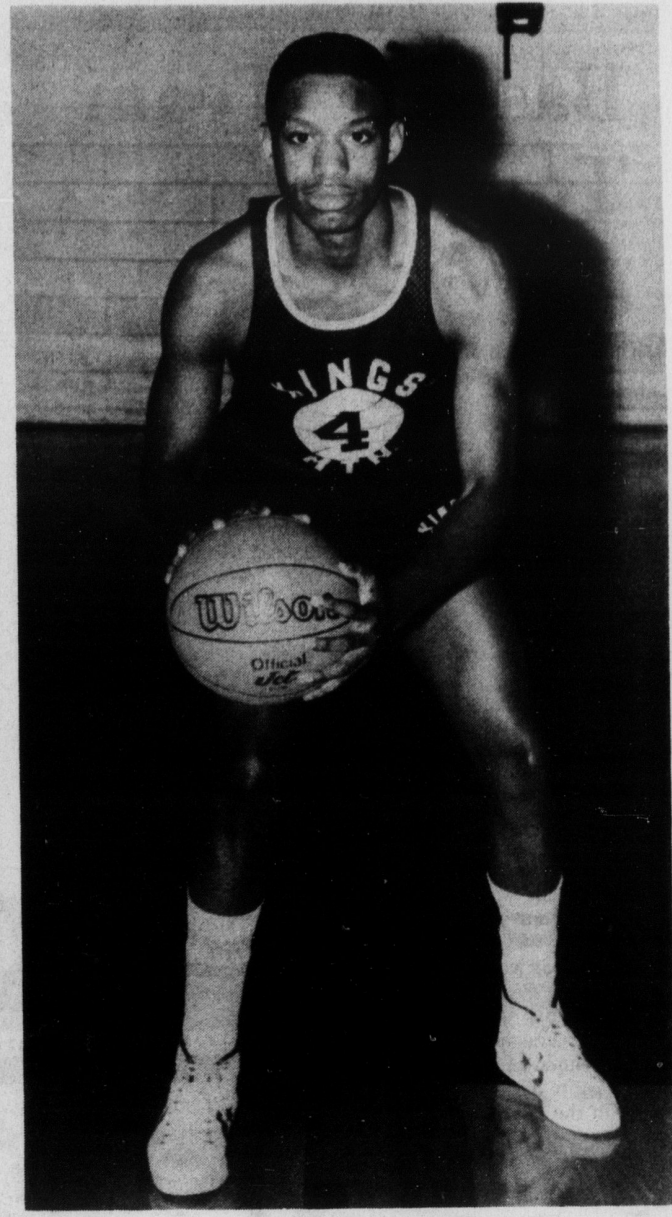
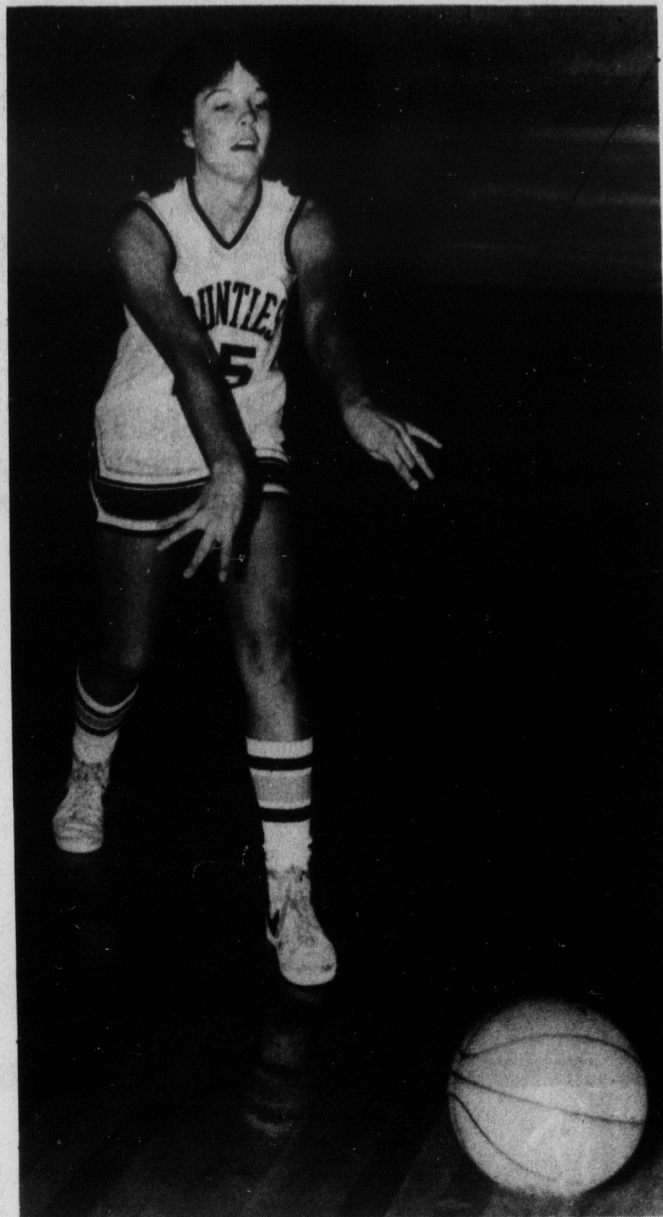
Freddy Smith, veteran stock car driver, set the world speed mark on a dirt track when he toured the half-mile oval in Rome, Ga., at better than 115 miles per hour.

Smith continued his winning ways on area dirt tracks and also had a banner year on the National Dirt Track Racing Association tour.

The year was another good one for city recreation as more people than ever participated in programs sponsored by the Kings Mountain Parks and Recreation Department.

All-Star teams in Little League, Babe Ruth and other sports, performed well, but missed out on state championships. The 13-year-old Babe Ruth team went to the finals of the state tournament at Grover before falling to a strong Union County team.

(Turn To Page 2-B)



Photos by Gary Stewart

MOUNTIE LEADERS - These two veteran performers will help lead Kings Mountain High's cagers into holiday tournament action Friday and Saturday night. Tammy Bolton, left, and the KMHS girls will be competing in the Holiday Tournament at West Mecklenburg High School in Charlotte and Terrence

Blalock, right, and his Mountaineer mates will be the favorites in the annual Cleveland County Tipoff Tournament at Burns High School. The KMHS teams resume Southwestern 3-A Conference action Tuesday night at home against R-S Central.

KM Cagers Compete In Holiday Events

Area teams return to action this week as the world of prep sports cranks back up after a brief Christmas break.

Both Kings Mountain High School basketball teams will be in action this weekend in Holiday Tournaments.

The Mountaineers, 6-0 in the Southwestern 3-A Conference and 8-0 overall, will be the favorites in the annual Cleveland County Tipoff Tournament set for Friday and Saturday at Burns.

The Kings Mountain girls, 3-3 in the conference and 4-4 overall, will participate in the Holiday Tournament at West Mecklenburg High in Charlotte, also scheduled for Friday and Saturday.

The Mountaineers will face Burns Friday at 8 p.m., following a 6:30 opener between Shelby and Crest. Friday's losers

meet at 6:30 Saturday for third place and the winners play for the championship Saturday at 8 p.m.

The Kings Mountain girls play West Mecklenburg Friday at 8:30. Shelby faces South Mecklenburg in the opening game at 6:30.

Directions to West Meck are as follows: Take I-85 North to the Little Rock Road exit. At the bottom of the exit ramp, turn left and go to the first traffic light. Turn left again. The school is about one-half mile on the right.

The Mountaineers will be seeking their third championship of the Cleveland County event. Coach John Blalock's charges are off to their fastest start in 10 years, and their fastest ever under Blalock, and have had only three close games to date. They played a pair of close non-

conference games against 4-A power West Charlotte and took a three-point victory over arch-rival Shelby in an early-season SWC game. In their last outing, the Mounties bombarded East Rutherford 100-48.

In an earlier meeting with Burns, the Mountaineers played probably their best game of the year in claiming a 76-54 victory in the KMHS gym. But Coach Blalock expects the Bulldogs to be much tougher on their home floor.

The Kings Mountain girls have been an up-and-down team. They have established a pattern of winning one and losing one. They split non-conference matches with West Charlotte, and in SWC play defeated East Gaston, North Gaston and Chase, and lost to Shelby, Burns and East Rutherford.

The two KMHS teams resume

conference play at home next Tuesday night against R-S Central. The R-S boys, defending state 3-A champions, have won 40 games in a row going into a Holiday Tournament this weekend in Morganton, and the Hilltoppers are rated the 10th best high school basketball team in the nation.

Kings Mountain High's wrestlers, defending SWC champions, return to action Monday night at the KMHS gym against South Point's Red Raiders.

The Mountaineers, in a rebuilding year under Coach Steve Moffitt, are 2-0 in the SWC and tied for the league lead with East Gaston, another team which is said to be rebuilding.

The Mountaineers edged North Gaston and Shelby in their first two conference outings.



Photo by Gary Stewart

NEAR PIN - Kings Mountain High wrestler Keith Pressley is pictured above on his way to a pin over Shelby's Richard Canipe in the heavyweight bout of a recent match at the KMHS gym. Pressley's pin enabled the Mountaineers to win

their second straight Southwestern 3-A Conference match, 31-21. The Mounties resume action Monday night at home against South Point.