

Freak Army Accident Kept Gene Out Of Majors

During his high school and legion days during the late thirties, Gene Goforth had dreams of playing major league baseball.

And, though he's not bragging about it, the lanky Kings Mountain resident felt he had what it took to go to the top.

But, like many other fine ballplayers during his day, World War II came along and interrupted his career.

The War, in fact, is the very thing that kept Big Gene out of the biggies.

During his second hitch of what amounted to four and one-half years in the Army, Gene had a freak accident at Camp Edwards, Mass., where a truck transmission fell on the shoulder of his pitching arm.

"I didn't think there was much to it at the time," says Gene, "but it turned out to be much more serious than I thought."

Goforth and a buddy were working on a transmission under-

neath the truck when the accident occurred.

We had it sitting up on a jack," Gene recalls, "when a couple of hot-rodders came by in a jeep and hit the handle of the jack and knocked it off."

Gene got his discharge from the Army in the fall of 1945 and played the entire season of '46 in Portsmouth, Va., before calling it quits in '47.

He was playing service ball in France when he discovered he wasn't what he used to be.

"I still felt like I could play some prob all," he said, "but I couldn't throw the ball nearly as hard as I used to."

Goforth signed with the old Gastonia Cardinals in the late summer of '39 after playing high school and legion ball here.

"I pitched two ballgames for the Cardinals and won both of those," he said, "thanks to the good backing the team gave me."

Goforth played the next year with the Lenoir Reds but went into the Army in the fall of '40.

"I got out of the Army in September of '41 and the next spring I went down to Macon for spring training. I was signed and assigned to Winnipeg, Canada."

Gene enjoyed his best year at Winnipeg.

"That's where I played under the best manager I ever had... Ivy Griffin," he said. "I learned more baseball under that man than anybody I was ever associated with."

"I had a pretty good season there," he continued, "and Ivy thought I was a pretty good major league prospect."

But that fall, Gene was drafted back into the Army and didn't return to pro ball until '46... and after the accident which ruined his shoulder.

When he came back home, his contract had been sold from Winnipeg to Portsmouth, Va., of the old Tri-State League. His arm

continued to give him trouble and he was thinking seriously of quitting.

"I had a fair season at Portsmouth," said Gene, "but I was having a lot of arm trouble. I went to spring training at Pensacola, Fla., the next year and had a pretty good spring training but decided to quit."

"I got my release from Portsmouth and came back home," he continued, "but I couldn't stand sitting around so I went down to Rock Hill and signed with the Cardinal farm club there. I played there until the latter part of the season and then quit."

Gene can't help but believe that the Army accident ruined his chance at playing big league baseball.

"I believe I would have had a pretty good chance had it not been for that," he says. "In '42, I learned a lot of baseball under Ivy Griffin. He taught me how to pitch and I put on some weight in

the service.

"I had always had a real good fast ball," he added. "And while I was playing for Winnipeg, I developed a pretty fair curveball."

While at Portsmouth Goforth played against fellows that Dizzy Dean would call "pretty fair country hitters."

Gil Hodges and Chuck Connors, who later made it big with the Dodgers, were in the same league along with Bob Porterfield, Virgil Stalcup, Fred Hatfield, and others.

Connors, of course, made it big as a movie and television star after quitting pro baseball and Hatfield, after a couple of years with Detroit, made a name for himself as baseball coach at Florida State University.

Gene played all three major sports at Kings Mountain High School but says the teams here then didn't exactly set the woods on fire.

"My freshman year," he recalls,

"we won the conference championship in baseball. That team had an outstanding group of baseball players, including Jake Early, who later made it big with Washington. But after that group left we didn't have a whole lot of outstanding players."

Gene disagrees with many baseball followers who say players aren't as good as they used to be.

"Big players are getting better every year," he says. "They're just not dedicated as they used to be. Most of the super stars now are looking for the money. Back when I played, nobody was all that interested in money because they didn't know what it was anyway. They just wanted to play baseball. Now, some of the boys that really have a lot of power won't play unless they get a fabulous sum for signing."

Goforth says his interest in baseball hasn't declined a bit through the years. In fact, he's

more interested in it every day.

"Baseball has always been the number one sport for me and it always will be," he says. "I still enjoy watching it. I listen to the Braves on radio all the time and I watch baseball on television every chance I get."

"A lot of people say baseball is dull," he continued, "but it's not as dull as they think. They just don't understand it."

"Baseball's just like football or any other sport. You're not going to see a good game every time you go out there. But, in baseball, even if it's a shabby game, you'll see somebody give an outstanding performance. There's plenty of action in baseball if a person realizes how much ability it takes to play the game."

"Gene, of course, is an avid follower of the local high school and legion team. His son, Rocky, pitched Kings Mountain High to the state 3-A championship a few years ago. He and his wife, the

former Faye Moss, have two other children, 15-year-old Jeannie and 12-year-old Janice.

Goforth says pro baseball hasn't changed a whole lot through the years.

The teams are still going for the larger ballplayers, especially the pitchers," he says. "They want the guys who are big and fast."

"Back when I played pro ball, I saw a lot of small pitchers and some of them were real outstanding," he continued. "But most of the small fellows can go out and pitch a whole of a game for four or five innings and then just give out."

"Back when I played, they wanted you to go nine innings. They didn't do too much plabounging if they thought you could get anybody out, they'd keep you out there for nine innings. If you get into trouble, you had to pitch yourself out of it."

As his first love,

"I still love basketball," he says, "but this softball has really grown on me."

In his short stint as a softball player, Mitchem has picked up seven awards. He loves playing in tournaments.

"I'm really looking forward to playing in the World Series in Detroit later this month," he said. "We'll meet Little Caesar's, the national open champion, to see who's the top team in all of softball."

"I'm not happy at Pan American," he says, "but as far as I know I'll be back there next year. I would sort of like to transfer to Belmont Abbey, since it's close home and my high school coach, Bob Hussey, has taken over the coaching position there."

Mitchem admits that softball is rapidly replacing basketball



LOOKING OVER PAST — Gene Goforth of Kings Mountain looks over some old pictures and clippings here and recalls his days as a professional baseball player. A freak Army accident ruined Goforth's pitching arm and his chances of becoming a big league pitcher.

African-U.S.A. Track Meet Set For Duke Track

DURHAM, N. C. — Name four words to describe strong, potent, high-powered, dynamic and mighty.

Take the four words and add exciting and you have the Pan Africa - USA International Track Meet scheduled here July 16 and 17.

The competition will take place in Duke University's Wallace Wade Stadium which will seat 44,000.

The gathering of athletes will represent the most powerful sports contingent ever to perform in North Carolina.

Already, many track and field experts have hailed the American team as the "strongest" collectively to represent the United States.

The African team with three Olympic gold medalists — Kenya's Kipchoge Keino and Amos Biwot, and Tunisia's Mohamed Gamoudi — marks the first time that such a group has competed under the banner of the Supreme Council of Sport for Africa.

How strong is the U.S. team that will compete against the Africans? Four U.S. 1968 gold medalists did not make the squad. They were beaten in the recent AAU meet which decided the team.

The United States team will include two world record holders and one world co-record holder.

Rod Milburn of Southern University posted a 13.0 in the high hurdles to break the previous standard by two-tenths of one second. North Carolina Central University's Ron Draper will also compete in the high.

UCLA's John Smith, the world's premier quarter miler (44.5) and two-time AAU champ, and Charles Green of the U. S. Army, co-holder of the 100-yard world mark (9.1) will be in the meet. Green will compete on the 400-meter relay squad.

The high jump and pole vault offer interesting measuring sticks as to the calibre of the Pan Africa-USA performers.

The Atlantic Coast Conference starts its pole vault at 13 feet in the championship meet. The bar will start at 15 feet in the Pan Africa meet and chances are equal participants will pass to 16.6.

The two American entries, Jan Johnson of Chicago Track Club, and Dave Roberts of Rice University, have both been over 17 feet. Johnson's best mark is 17-7 1/2. Roberts, the highest vaulter for a left-hander, cleared 17-6 1/2 in winning the NCAA meet several weeks ago.

High jumper Reynaldo Brown has a 7-3 1/2 best leap. Brown, California International Track Club, was an Olympic performer as a pole vaulter. The bar will start at either 6-8 or 6-10 for the Durham meet as compared to a 6-0 start in the ACC.

One of the top American performers will be Dr. Delans Meriwether, Baltimore Olympic Club, the sensation of the indoor season. Meriwether continues to make track and field followers take note. He had a wind-aided 9.0, 100-yard victory in the AAU Meet.

The Pan Africa-USA International Meet will be run with the precision of a finely tuned watch. All events each day will be finals. The meet will start at 4 p.m. each day and will last approximately two-and-a-half hours. Men will compete in 17 events.

A premier gathering of women will also perform. The American women's squad will meet a "world team" composed of performers from Canada, Africa, Australia, New Zealand and other nations. Eleven women's events are on the schedule.

The Keino-Biwot-Gamoudi trio gives the Africans a powerful distance show. Right now Keino is ranked the top 1500 meter man in the world. John Louis Ravelomanantsoa from the Malagasy Republic will be entered in the 1000

Mitchem Making Noise For Reds

Ask 10 avid softball followers who is the finest hitter in the land and nine of them will say Jim Galloway of County Sports, N. Y.

Probably none of them will say Ken Mitchem of Pharr Yarns in McA onville, N. C. But in a few years, the muscular 20-year-old Kings Mountain native could easily be the best.

Mitchem, better known for his basketball abilities, is in only his second year as a Pharr Yarns performer but he's rapidly becoming one of the most-learned hitters in the game.

Last year, his first season over as a softball player, his booming bat helped lead the Reds to the Industrial national championship. And, you can bet when this year's event is staged in York, Pa. Big Ken and the Big Red Machine will be in the

mittens.

Mitchem has hit some shots to say the least. He consistently raps the softball well over 300 feet and he's had some to measure close to 400.

The longest shot of his short career came a week ago in the Louisville Invitational Tournament, where he slammed one 400 feet. However, it did not go for a home run. The Reds were playing in a baseball park and Ken's shot bounced over the centerfield fence for a ground-rule double.

"I love softball," comments the Pan American basketball standout. "I had never played any kind of softball before I joined the Reds but the sport is really growing on me."

Mitchem first became interested in the sport Christmas before last when he received a letter from Doug McDonald, Pharr Yarns manager.

"He said he remembered me from the night I hit a home run over the lights against his Gastonia legion team," Ken recalls. "He asked me if I'd be interested in trying out for them and I wrote him back and told him I would."

So, when Easter holidays came along, Mitchem went to McDonaldville for a tryout and he's history. He made a big impression on McDonald and other Pharr Yarns officials and Red fans couldn't wait until the "Big Stick" joined the club.

Ken played what amounted to only five weeks with last year's club. He was attending summer school at Pan American and would fly to McDonaldville for tournaments.

After school, however, he became a regular and went on to smash 50 home runs in 45 games.

Mitchem played very little baseball during his high school and legion days. He concentrated mostly on basketball, starting four years for the high school team and being a member of two conference championship clubs.

After high school, he entered Pan American and was the number two scorer and rebounder on the freshman team there. As a sophomore this past year, however, he saw little action and became distressed.

"I'm not happy at Pan American," he says, "but as far as I know I'll be back there next year. I would sort of like to transfer to Belmont Abbey, since it's close home and my high school coach, Bob Hussey, has taken over the coaching position there."

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Lenoir Rhyme To Play Davidson At Furman

HICKORY — Lenoir Rhyme College has entered into long-term football contracts to play Southern Conference teams Davidson and Furman, according to head coach and athletic director Hanley Painter.

The Bears also will play a 10-game schedule this fall, including six games in Hickory, he said. Winston-Salem State will be on the Lenoir Rhyme slate for the first time.

Painter said his staff has had a banner recruiting year in preparation for meeting Davidson at home in 1973 and with both teams in 1973. Furman, which will replace Winston-Salem State in 1973, also plays the first game with the Bears in Hickory.

The addition of Davidson to the Lenoir Rhyme schedule increases the number of opponents to 11 and erases an open date in the Bears' 1971 slate, he said. The college also is negotiating to reschedule Western Carolina in the near future.

The Bears open the 1971 season with non-conference opponents Gardner-Webb and Wofford in Hickory on Sept. 11 and Sept. 18 before traveling to Clinton, S. C., to face defending Carolina Conference champion Presbyterian on Sept. 25.

Newberry, another conference foe, visits Hickory on Oct. 2 and the Bears meet arch-rival Appalachian State, which recently joined the Southern Conference, in Boone on Oct. 9.

Gallford entertains Lenoir Rhyme in a conference game in Greensboro on Oct. 16, then the Bears get a week off before journeying to Jefferson City, Tenn., for a non-league battle with perennially strong Carson-Newman on Oct. 30.

The Bears wrap up the season with Winston-Salem State and Carolina Conference rivals Elon and Catawba in Hickory on Nov. 6, 13 and 20.

All home games begin at 8 p. m., except the Homecoming date with Elon which starts at 2 p. m.

Freddie Smith Winner Again At Carolina

Freddie Smith of Kings Mountain continued to rack up wins at Carolina Speedway, edging Hayward Plyler of Kannapolis in a tremendous battle Friday night in the 40-lap Late Model Sportsman race.

Smith led the first four laps, before Plyler took over and led until the 25th lap. Then Smith eased ahead and took the checkered flag.

Plyler and Smith split the two 10 lap heat races.

In the 25 lap hobby race, J. C. Humphries won in 56 Ford, followed by Troy Saffit of Concord. Each driver won one of the heat races.

In well over half of all accidents involving a motorcycle and a car, the operator of the car is at fault—usually because he did not see the motorcycle.

Stewart's Rites Conducted

Funeral rites for James Ross Stewart, Jr., 48, of Bessemer City, formerly of Kings Mountain, were held Wednesday at 4 p. m. from Gamble Hill Baptist church, immediately following in Mountain Rest cemetery.

Mr. Stewart died at 7:25 a. m. Monday in the Veteran's Administration hospital in Salisbury.

A native of Cherokee County, S. C., he was son of the late James R. and Lillie Porter Stewart and a retired staff sergeant with the U. S. Air Force.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Von Mae Harris Stewart; five daughters, Misses Kathy, Georgiana, Beeky, Claudette and Lynn Stewart of the home; one sister, Mrs. Ethel Jones of Bessemer City; one brother, John Stewart of Hendersonville; and two half brothers, Conrad Latham of Glenn Springs and James Latham of Hendersonville.

Rev. Gene Frady and Rev. R. C. Franks officiated at the final rites.

Junior Golf Win Junior Golf Event At KMCC

Jimmy Jolly, Parks Neisler and David Neisler will represent Kings Mountain Junior Golf Tournament championships at the KM Country Club Friday.

Jolly, a sophomore basketball and golf standout at Kings Mountain High, won Division A which was comprised of golfers 15 and 16 years of age.

Jolly had a 54-hole total of 221, four over par, to win by a wide margin over Scott Neisler and Dennis Trout, who tied for second with 259 scores. Jolly had rounds of 75, 74 and 72.

Parks Neisler, a member of the Gaston Day School golf team, won Division B with a score of 235. He had rounds of 79, 79 and 77. Tommy Tate captured second place in the 13-14 age group with a score of 255.

In Division C, for golfers ages 11 and 12, David Neisler won by one stroke over his brother, Hayne Neisler. David had a 27-hole total of 137, while Hayne had a 136. Third place went to Mike Howze, who shot a 158.

Junior Golf Tourney Winners Are Announced

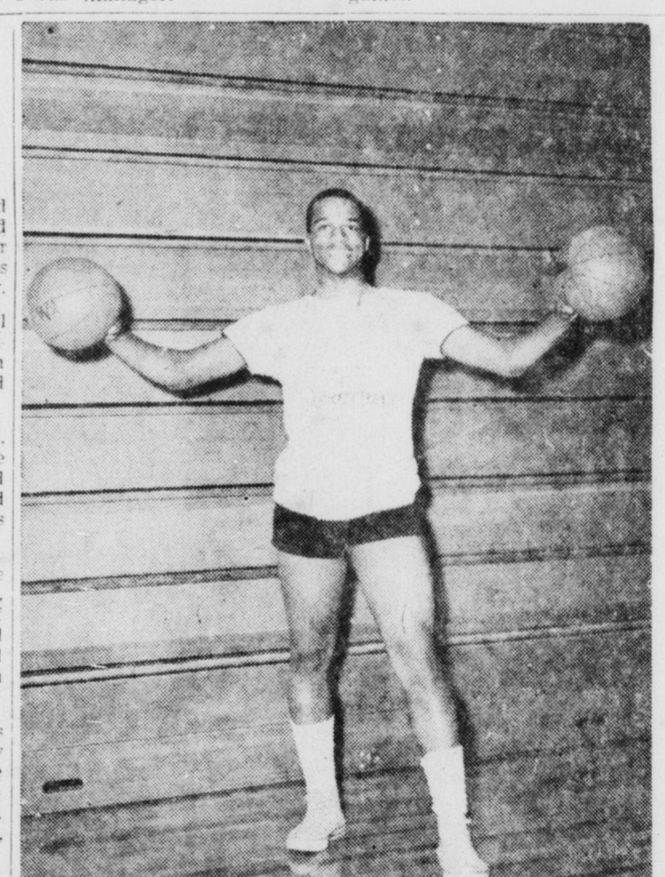
The second annual Kings Mountain junior golf tournament was held this past week at Kings Mountain Country club. Division A and B's defending champions Jimmy Jolly and Parks Neisler successfully defended their championships. Jolley who won in a playoff against Mike McDaniel last year, shot excellent rounds of 75, 74 and 72 for a 54-hole total of 221. In division A behind Jolly were Dennis Trout and Scott Neisler at 259. Bob Maner finished third at 260.

In division B Parks Neisler fired a 79, 79, and a 77 for a total of 235. In second place was Tommy Tate at 255. Third place was captured by Kevin McInnis at 273 and fourth by Gary Howze at 280.

Division C proved to be the closest as David and Hayne Neisler battled it out. David played pressure golf and captured the Division C title at 137. Hayne Neisler finished second at 138. Third place was captured by Mike Howe.

More than 2,740,000 North Carolina citizens—more than 54 per cent of the total—were licensed to drive motor vehicles in the state in 1970.

(Continued on Page Four)



FUTURE SUPERSTAR? — Former Kings Mountain High athletic standout Ken Mitchem is making big noise as a softball performer for the World Champion Pharr Yarns Reds. An outfielder, Mitchem is hitting in the high 600's and is averaging over a home run per game.

Short, Wilson And Eaker Win Tennis Titles

Claude Short, Monty Wilson and Mark Eaker will represent Kings Mountain in the North Carolina Jaycees Junior Tennis Tournament in Hickory July 20-22.

They won the right to do so last week in the Kings Mountain Jaycees Junior Tournament at City Park.

Short won the title in the 15-and-under division, defeating Terry Franks in the finals, 6-4, 7-5.

Wilson and Eaker won the 16-and-under doubles crown by defeating Kim Bumgardner and Franks in the finals, 4-6, 6-2, 6-1.

There were no entries in the 18-and-under boys' division and the 16-and-under girls' division.

He says his only personal goal is to elude as many round-rippers as he can.

"Every time I go up to the plate," he says, "I go for the home run. I never go for a base hit unless it's a time game or if we're playing in a baseball park."

What about the possibility of being another Galloway?

"I don't know about that," he says. "I saw Galloway in last year's Dixie Classic in Meadenville and he's a horse. Everything he hits is hard and long."

"I've hit some shots," he continued, "but it'll take some doing before I can compare with Galloway."

Jaycees Spectacular At Hickory Saturday

HICKORY, N. C. — The fourth annual "Jaycee Spectacular" 200 lap National Championship race scheduled for Saturday, July 17 at Hickory Speedway is drawing entries from some of NASCAR's biggest names in the Late Model Sportsman division. Early entries include national champ Red Farmer, and Reds Kagle, who has won the hearts of race fans everywhere for his tremendous come back after losing a leg in the 1961 World 600 at Charlotte.

Kagle has won seven features so far this year, and is currently the hottest driver running at tracks around the nation's capital. His leg was sheared off in a freak accident during the running of the 1961 World 600 when a piece of guard rail reportedly mounted wrong came through his car.

Farmer won his last outing at Hickory last fall when he took the checkered flag in the first annual "Winners Invitational". He will be favored to become the first Ford winner at Hickory this year.

A total purse of \$6,400 is posted for the Jaycee sponsored program, which includes \$400 lap prizes, and races for Limited and Rookie drivers. Drivers running in the first three positions will be paid lap money at every 10 lap interval with the driver leading getting \$10, second \$6, and third \$4.

Track Manager Ned Jarrett said Honeycutt of Oakboro; Ralph Medlin of Charlotte and many more.

Racing at Speedworld gets underway Friday, at 8 p.m. and the Saturday Concord special event is listed for an identical starting time.

the lap prize incentive should make for a lot of lead changes. He has been boasting about having the best field of Sportsman cars running anywhere, and he says, "When you add drivers like Farmer and Kagle, there will be no doubt about having the best competition in the land."

Of fourteen features run at Hickory this year, there have been seven different winners. Those winning so far are: Jack Ingram (4), Bob Prossley (3), Ned Setzer (2), Harry Gantt (2), Bosco Lowe (1), Roy Trantham (1), and Bobby Allison (1). All excepting Allison will be in the field Saturday.

The Jaycee race will be limited to the fastest 24 qualifiers. Time trials will be held from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m., the race starts at 8:30.

Bumgardner Has Camaro Ready For Concord Race

CHARLOTTE—Charlottean Gary Galloway was finally pushed out of winner's circle at Concord Speedway this past weekend.

The busy Mustang driver has won 15 races this season and was well on his way to his 16th before developing mechanical difficulties which forced him to finish in 13th position.

Salisbury's Tony Therrell was the culprit who snipped Galloway's string, but the Charger Division automobile to be beaten is still a Ford. Therrell chauffeurs a '68 Fairlane.

Chuck Piazza continues to battle the Supersports drivers on the NASCAR circuit which sanctions racing at Charlotte's Speedworld and Concord Speedway.

Piazza rushed to his 10th top payday and the Camaro pilot will be the man everyone chases during the coming weekend.

The Friday night Speedworld program still remains a regular card, 40-laps for Supersports and 25-laps for Chargers, but one of

Rotary Wins Pair

Rotary defeated Optimist 5-1 and C & C Metal 6-2 to remain on top of the Little League standings 111 in Little League action during the week.

Parker pitched a two hitter against Optimist, striking out 10. Bell was the leading hitter for Rotary, slamming two home runs and driving in five.

Bell pitched another win against C & C Metal, a no-hitter. Leading hitter was Tansley with a single and three walks. He scored three runs. Bell and Wilson doubled. Parker, Valentine and Riddie singled.