

Cagers Open Season Against R-S Central

Kings Mountain High's basketballers open their 1976-77 Southwestern Conference campaign Wednesday night at home against R-S Central.

Game time for the opening girls contest is 6:30 p. m.

Both R-S Central teams will present tough tests for the optimistic KMHS clubs. Both the Hilltoppers and Lady Hilltoppers are regarded as SWC contenders.

KMHS remains at home Friday night to host East Gaston, another pair of SWC contenders, in Parents' Night.

The KMHS coaches, John Blalock of the Mountaineers and Kathy Brooks of the Mountaintettes, have settled on a starting lineup but both are expected to

play a lot of players.

Blalock says he'll start transfer student William Lockhart at center, veteran William Thompson and sophomore Glenn Ellis at forwards, veteran Eddie Ingram at the point guard and newcomer Larry Smith at the wing. Smith, a junior, has never played varsity basketball but is progressing well.

Coach Blalock, who feels his club could surprise a lot of people, is counting on several other players, including Vernon Bell, Alan Cloninger, Steve Boggan, Jeff Prescott and Everett Burris.

Bell, a sophomore, was scheduled to be a starter but has been nursing an injured knee and is not back to full strength.

"We feel we can go eight or nine deep and not be hurt," says Blalock. "Our strong point seems to be our inside game with William Thompson. He's experienced there and moves real good. We're expecting Bobby Odoms to help out a lot in there."

Blalock plans to go mainly with the man-to-man defense, switching occasionally to the 1-3-1 zone.

Blalock said he's eager

to get the season underway and tabs Shelby and Crest as the teams to beat.

"But," he says, "R-S Central's got everybody back so they'll be plenty tough for us Wednesday night. They had some of the best players in the conference last year but just couldn't put it together."

Coach Brooks' starting lineup will include three returnees, one part-time starter from last year and one player that played last year with the junior high.

Leading scorer Susan Mitchem returns for her fourth year as a starter and she'll be joined by last year's number two point producer, Gayla Roberts, last year's leading

SPORTS

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Keith Huffman, right, Leroy Blake clerk in grocery store in their spare time

Local Gridders Help Blacksburg Win Title

Kings Mountain football fans can lay some claim to Blacksburg High School's championship year on the gridiron this fall.

Two residents of the Dixon Community — my neck of the woods — helped lead Coach Bob Blanton's Wildcats to the Conference Three 1-A title.

And, come Friday night, the Wildcats can add the state championship to their growing list of honors when they host McCracken High in an 8 p. m. contest.

They copped the Upper State title last Friday night, defeating a good North High team, 15-13.

Keith Huffman, a junior offensive tackle, is one of the team's best blockers and senior defensive end Leroy Blake is one of Blanton's top defenders.

Several other persons in the area have had a big hand in the team's success, also.

Flanker Robin Bolin, guard George Hardin, end-defensive back Scott Love, guard Dean Borders and halfback Randy Patterson — all of Grover — have had outstanding seasons.

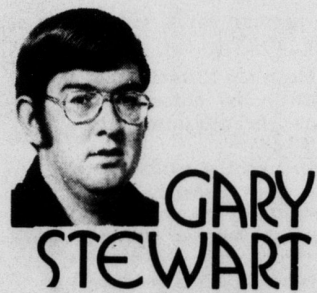
The Kings Mountain ties also go into the coaching and administration at Blacksburg.

Blanton, a former football standout at Gaffney High School and McNeese State College in Louisiana, is married to a Kings Mountain girl, Susie West. She was a standout guard on Grover's undefeated girls basketball team in 1957. That team featured Francis Carroll, who averaged 45 points per game and once scored 72 points in a single game.

Blacksburg's assistant principal, Jim Leigh, is a former Kings Mountain High School and American Legion baseball standout. He helped lead the Mountaineers to the Southwestern Conference baseball crown in 1963.

Blanton, who has been head coach at Blacksburg for 13 years, says this is one of his better teams.

"Attitude has been the big key to our success," he says. "All the boys hustle and work hard. They've done everything we've asked them to do. They have a lot of heart."



GARY STEWART

The Blacksburg eleven peaked late in the season, and Blanton said that's been another big key to their success.

"Our defense was our strong point during the first half," he noted. "Then our offensive line came along during the last half and that caused our offense to start moving."

"Coaches always try to plan when to peak," he continued, "but a lot of times they don't have any control over it. We've improved every game."

Blanton calls Blake and Huffman two of his better ballplayers.

"Blake has been a starter since his sophomore year," recalled Blanton. "He has a lot of desire and a lot of natural ability. He's strong, agile and loves to hit. And he doesn't mind playing injured. He's played his whole career with a bad knee and a bad shoulder."

Huffman, a 280-pounder, reminds some of the older Blacksburg fans of his father, Clyde, who was a standout lineman there in the 50's.

"He's real strong," noted Blanton, "especially on one-and-one situations. He started the last half of last year and all this year and has developed into one of our better linemen."

Winning is nothing new to the Wildcats and Blanton, who served as assistant for one year at Blacksburg before taking over as head mentor. In 13 seasons under Blanton, they've won the conference championship three times and have been runner-up eight times.

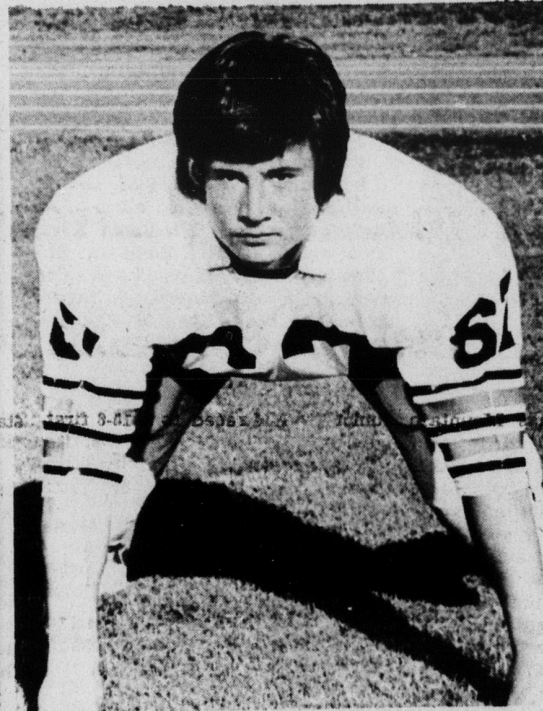
But a victory Friday night would put the clincher on the school's best season ever.



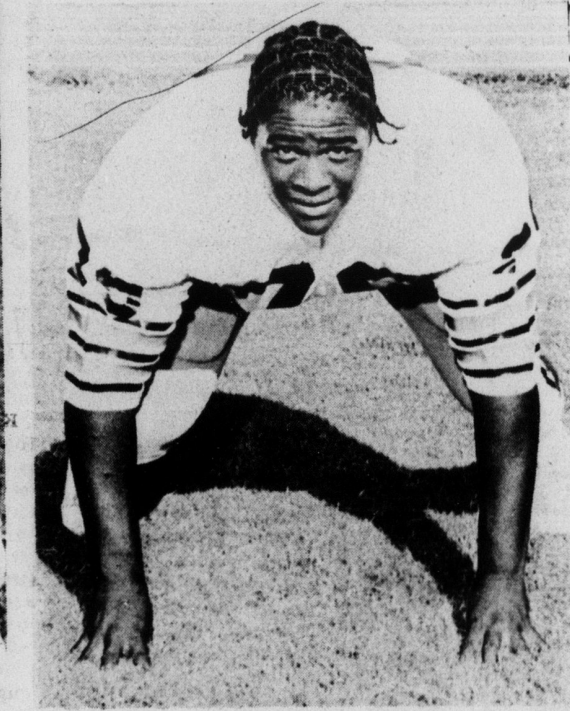
Bobby Jones
Third, Coach Of Year



Bruce Valentine
All-SWC Center-LB



Kelly Land
All-SWC Guard



David Gordon
All-SWC Tackle

Valentine, Gordon, Land All-Conference

Kings Mountain High players won five positions on the All-Southwestern Conference football team, announced today by W. C. Clary, executive secretary of the Western N. C. High Schools Activities Association.

Bruce Valentine was the leading vote getter for offensive center and defensive linebacker and also finished second in voting for player of the year. That honor went to Chase's Keith Crenshaw, the only 1,000 yard rusher in the SWC. Shelby's Anthony Webber and David Devine tied for third place.

David Gordon was named at both offensive and defensive tackle, and Kelly Land was named to the offensive team as a guard.

KMHS coach, Bobby Jones, who had his best

THE OFFENSE

POST.—PLAYER

- E—Steve Buff
- E—Ricky Smith
- E—Jerry Clubb
- T—David Devine
- T—DAVID GORDON
- G—KELLY LAND
- G—Kevin Oates
- G—Kenneth Gregory
- G—Ricky Millwood
- C—BRUCE VALENTINE
- QB—John Devine
- QB—Ricky Ledbetter
- HB—Keith Crenshaw
- HB—Dennis Isles
- FB—Alan Burrus

THE DEFENSE

POS.—PLAYER

- E—Timothy Greene
- E—Bryan Ferres
- T—DAVID GORDON
- T—David Devine
- G—Ronald King
- LB—BRUCE VALENTINE
- LB—Jeffrey Yelton
- LB—Tony Greene
- LB—Scott Padgett
- HB—Keith Crenshaw
- HB—Anthony Webber
- HB—Derrick Harris
- HB—Steve Camp

SCHOOL

- Cherry.
- E. Ruth.
- S. Point
- Shelby
- KMHS
- Burns
- Chase
- E. Ruth.
- KMHS
- Cherry.
- RSC
- Chase
- S. Point
- Shelby

SCHOOL

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- Shelby
- Chase
- E. Ruth.

season (8-2) ever here, finished third in voting for coach of the year behind Chase's John Keeter and Shelby's Gerald Allen.

All three KMHS all-SWC representatives are juniors and return next year as the Mountaineers and the other SWC schools enter the North Carolina High School Athletics Association.

The three KMHS linemen were key figures in the school's success on the gridiron. They helped lead the Mounties to the top ranking defensively in the SWC until the eighth game of the year, and a final ranking of third among the 12 SWC schools.

Valentine served as co-captain along with senior quarterback Mike Bumgarner and also was the team's placekicker. He hit on 18 points-after-touchdown.