

# KM Junior High Wins League Crown

## SPORTS

Kings Mountain Junior High's basketballers put the wraps on their second straight Foothills Conference championship season Thursday with a 37-38 victory over a tough West Lincoln club.

The victory gave the Patriots a final record of 11-3. They've now compiled a 25-3 mark over the past two campaigns.

The Patriots trailed most of the ballgame, but Eric Dixon intercepted a pass on the West Lincoln end of the court, went down and hit a layup with seven seconds left to swing the victory.

Dixon finished as the game's top scorer with 16 points. Kenny Gwinn added 11 points and eight rebounds and Dennis McGill nine points and 10 rebounds.

It was probably KM's poorest showing of the season, but Coach Ken Napier said he was proud of the way his Patriots kept their poise.

"The officiating was the worst we'd had all year," noted Napier. "I don't usually complain about the officials."

"But I was proud of the way our kids performed

under adversity. We've taught them that sometimes you have to play under adversity and they really kept their heads out there."

West Lincoln led 18-15 at halftime and 28-25 going into the fourth quarter. The Patriots were down by five with three minutes to play but Gwinn, Todd Friday and Dixon came up with some key steals to cut it to 36-35 with 23 seconds to play.

Dixon came up with his key interception with 13 seconds left, headed for the KM basket but was overtaken by a West Lincoln defender. The KM southpaw dribbled behind his back, went around the defensive man and hit the game-winning layup with seven seconds left.

"We're calling Eric the Ice Man now," said Napier. "I wouldn't have believed that play if I hadn't seen it myself."

Napier played all 11 of

his players and he said all of them performed well.

"I was proud of the way he handled all the adversity," he said. "That's the true sign of a champion."

Looking back on the championship season, Napier said it was more satisfying than last year, when the Pats were loaded with talent.

"This year was more of a coaching task," he said. "Last year, we had a lot of talent and were supposed to win the championship. This year, the players knew they had to defend the title, played with guts and a lot of pride and went out there and did the job."

"This was one of the finest groups of kids I've ever been associated with," he continued, "and I'd have to say that Eric Dixon is the best all-round player I've ever coached."

Dixon finished the season with a 16-point per game scoring average to

lead the team in that department. He was especially effective in tight game situations, when the Pats took advantage of his ballhandling ability to insure several victories.

Gwinn led the club in field goal accuracy, hitting 55 percent of his shots, and McGill, an eighth grader, led in rebounds with 12 per game and also averaged 12.5 points per contest.

"With McGill coming back, plus the players off this year's fine jayvee team, we should be in good shape again next year," Napier said.

The players on this year's team included Dixon, McGill, Gwinn, Friday, Jeff Cloninger, Eric Moore, Anthony Perkins, Andrew Burris, Bobby Bell, Robert Bradley and Mike Spears.

KM's jayvees copped their eighth straight Thursday, 46-25, to finish with an 8-3 record and second place in the conference race.

Chris Wright scored 10 points and Carl Smith and Vince Roseboro eight apiece to lead the KM scoring. Craig Champion had eight rebounds and Wright seven.



KMERS AT ERSKINE - Erskine College baseball coach Harry Stille, left, is depending on these three Kings Mountain products to bring his Flying Fleet a

winning season in '77. Players from left include pitcher John McGill, second baseman Steve Southwell and pitcher Scott Ledford.

## KMHS Products Key Flying Fleet Team

Three Kings Mountain High School products will be key performers on the Erskine College baseball team, which opens 1977 play Thursday at home against Susquehanna University, Pa.

Lefthand pitcher John McGill returns for his junior season with the Flying Fleet and newcomers on Coach Harry Stille's roster are freshmen Steve Southwell and Scott Ledford.

All three are former high school, American Legion and Babe Ruth standouts here.

McGill, who began his college career at Davidson, then transferred to Erskine for his sophomore season, should be one of the key members of Stille's mound staff.

McGill helped lead the Flying Fleet to a second place finish and an 18-13-1 record in District Six play last year. His best outing was a four-hit, 3-2, 3-2, inning victory over South Carolina power Francis Marion. He allowed only one earned run and five hits in 15 innings of work.

Southwell, who was the most valuable player on the KMHS team last spring, might crack the starting unit at second base. Senior Tim Whipple, who started at second last spring, is still involved

with the Erskine basketball team and will have a hard time winning his position back.

Southwell was an All-Southwestern Conference performer and hit over .300 for the Mountaineers last spring.

Ledford will add depth and strength to the Erskine pitching staff, which posted a 2.38 earned run average last year. That mark was good enough for a 10th place rating in the NAL.

Ledford, a righthander, could be used as a relief pitcher or a starter. He was the ace of the '76

KMHS team and one of the key figures in KM's second place finish in Division One of the Southwestern Conference race.

Ledford and Southwell were both starters on the '75 KMHS nine which swept the SWC title. McGill is the son of Dr.

and Mrs. John C. McGill, Ledford's parents are Mr. and Mrs. Carol T. Ledford and Southwell is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Bob Southwell, all of Kings Mountain. Erskine's '77 schedule includes such national powers as Clemson, Virginia and Toledo.



FOOTHILLS CHAMPS - Here's the 1977 Kings Mountain Junior High basketball team which last week copped its straight Foothills Conference title with an 11-3 record. Front row, left to right, are cheerleaders Beth Bates, Melissa Smith and Myra Jenkins. Second row,

Coach Ken Napier, Bobby Bell, Jeff Cloninger, Todd Friday, Eric Moore, Andrew Burris and Coach Danny McDowell. Back row, Mike Spears, Jeff Young, Robert Bradley, Dennis McGill, Eric Dixon, James Miller and Kenny Gwinn.

### Qualifying Is Underway For Member-Member

Qualifying has begun for the fourth annual Kings Mountain Country Club Member-Member Golf Tournament.

The two-man team tournament qualifying runs through March 27. The match play event will begin on March 30 and will consist of two eighteen rounds.

Defending champions are Mickey Powers and Dr. George Plonk. Other contenders include the teams of John Howze and Al Grigg and Stoney Jackson and Larry Dunn.

Other upcoming tournaments at KMCC include the fourth annual Rotary Club Scholarship Tournament on April 30-May 1 and the third annual KMCC Invitational on May 14-15.

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