

Mounties Experiencing Best Year Ever

Wrestlers Making Moffitt's Dreams Come True

By GARY STEWART
Sports Editor

Kings Mountain High School's young wrestling coach, Steve Moffitt, is a man with a lot of dreams. And his first team at KMHS is making some of them come true.

The Mountaineers recently tied Shelby and East Gaston for the title. KM's only hope for a share of the prize was to beat Shelby and then have the Lions knock off East Gaston. That's exactly what happened.

The KM-Shelby match, held at the KMHS gym, was a classic, reminiscent of some of the Mountaineer-Lions football game of old... a match that went down to the wire.

It was so close, in fact, that the Mountaineers trailed by five points going into the final bout. That means KM's unbeaten heavyweight, David Gordon, had to pin his opponent in order for the Mountaineers to win by a single point.

"I felt good at that point," Moffitt recalled, "because earlier in the day I told David that I hoped it would boil down to his match. Anytime a match boils down to David, you can expect to win it."

Gordon, though, said it would suit him just fine if matches were settled a lot earlier... in KM's favor, of course.

"Talk about headache," said Gordon. "When it came my time and I knew I had to pin my man, I didn't know anything else to do but pray. He must have heard me."

Moffitt feels the leadership shown by his seniors, Gordon, Norman Phillips and Robert Ingram, played a big role in the team's success.

"All of our men did a super job," he said. "To be honest, the season was a bit more that

I expected. I expected we'd end up at .500 or a little better, depending on how the sophomores did. We had some good young talent and I figured they'd come through for us. But I didn't know they'd do that well. The way they wrestled this year, I feel we should really be a contender for the next two years."

Most of the members of this year's team wrestled for Moffitt at the junior high, which Moffitt feels has been a valuable asset to the high school program.

"The exposure in junior high gives them something like 30 matches under their belts before they ever get to high school," he said. "If we didn't have a junior high program, everyone would be starting from scratch."

"We're starting eight sophomores," he pointed out, "and most of them won first places in individual tournaments when they were in junior high. The last three years I took my junior high wrestlers to the tournament in Rock Hill and we had the most valuable wrestler two of those three years. One year, out of the 12 places, we had eight in the finals and seven of them won."

Another goal Moffitt would like to accomplish at KMHS is to form a summer wrestling club. It would provide the opportunity for young men here to wrestle in out-of-state summer tournaments and also participate in the junior olympics.

"It's legal," says Moffitt, "and that's what it's going to take for us to be state champions. It really gets the kids interested in wrestling. That's why Sullivan Junior High and Rock Hill have been so successful. They've taken some to the junior olympics and last year they had a heavyweight to finish first. They have really improved

their program by having this. If you don't have a wrestling club you can't practice in the summer. High school kids have tennis tournaments in the summer. I don't see why you can't have a wrestling club."

Moffitt is not new to summer wrestling. A former high school wrestler at Asheville, for the past several summers he has worked in some of the south's top wrestling camps and has supervised camps in the local schools.

"I've always been interested in wrestling and I always wanted to coach wrestling," he says. "Luckily, I've gotten the chance here and I've got a good situation here. Everybody works with me. Dan Brooks and Bud Bumgardner have really helped me a lot."

Looking to the upcoming sectional, regional and state tournaments, Moffitt feels several of his men will stand good chances of placing high. Of course, he, like many others, feels Gordon could win the state championship.

"I think Gordon will win the sectionals this weekend in Charlotte," he said, "and I feel like he will meet the Watauga boy (Bobby Cooper) for the regionals next week in Hickory." Cooper, a 6-6, 320-pound giant, is the same man that defeated Gordon for the Western N. C. High Schools Activities Association title last winter.

"I think Gordon can beat him," Moffitt noted. "Gordon really moves good now and he works on his pinning combinations and controlling his man more than he did last year. I figure if he beats the Watauga boy he can win the state championship."

Gordon, many feel, is the best wrestler in KMHS history. He currently sports a 44-5 record and needs three more victories to tie the school

record of 47 wins. Hal Glass was 47-10 during his four-year career. Gordon's 15-0 so far this year, was 18-1 last year and 11-4 as a sophomore.

"I think we have several others that can place," said Moffitt. "Those include

Sammy Bell, Johnny Ross, Robert Ingram, Maurice Jamerson, Mike Womic and Norman Phillips."

"I think the main thing about the upcoming tournaments is that we can't afford to look past an opponent," Moffitt noted. "Even though some of our men may have better records than their opponents, you can't always

go by records. We haven't wrestled the same competition. The guys are going to have to be up for every single match. But if they prepare themselves mentally, a lot of them could place or win."

"I'm really looking forward to the tournaments," he went on. "I've enjoyed this year. Sharing the conference has been a big step."

SPORTS



EYE TOURNAMENTS — Coach Steve Moffitt, left, discusses upcoming sectional, regional and state wrestling tournaments with the four senior members of the KMHS team.

which is experiencing its best season in history. Team members, left to right, include Ponder Sherrill, manager; Robert Ingram, Norman Phillips and David Gordon.



TRI-CHAMPIONS — Here's the Kings Mountain High wrestling team which finished 9-3 this winter to share the Southwestern 3-A Conference title with Shelby and East Gaston. Front row, left to right, Maurice Jamerson, Johnny Ross, Sammy Bell, Robert Ingram and Miles Boyce. Second

row, Darryl Brown, Jeff Guyton, Lanny Guyton, Jeff Rowell and Monte Rhea. Back row, Coach Steve Moffitt, Kenny Womic, Norman Phillips, Mike Womic, David Gordon and Ponder Sherrill, manager.

KM's Gordon Top Seed For Sectional

Kings Mountain High's unbeaten heavyweight David Gordon is seeded first for the sectional wrestling tournament which will be held Friday and Saturday at Independence High School in Charlotte.

The top three finishers in each weight division will advance to the Western Regionals Tournament next Friday and Saturday at Hickory High School. The top eight finishers in each class there will qualify for the state

tournament the following weekend in Winston-Salem. Gordon, who is closing in on Kings Mountain High's all-time record for victories, takes a 15-0 record into the sectionals. Most of his regular season wins came on first period pins.

Several other KMHS grapplers are seeded second in the 132-pound class, Sammy Bell, 13-2, is seeded third at 121 pounds, Maurice Jamerson 10-2, is seeded at 145 pounds, and Norman Phillips, 11-4, is

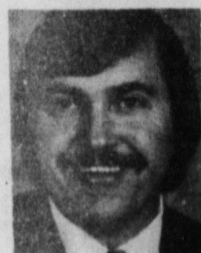
seeded third at 167.

Mike Womic, 7-3, is seeded fifth at 155 pounds, Robert Ingram, 11-4, is seeded sixth at 138 and Jeff Guyton 6-4, is seeded seventh at 114.

Other KMHS grapplers competing will be 105-pound Miles Boyce, 126-pound Monte Rhea, 185-pound Kenny Womic and 195-pound Darryl Brown.

The tournament gets underway Friday at 1:30 p. m. and runs through Saturday night.

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