

Mounties Can Still Make State Playoffs

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15, but again the Chargers held tough and forced the Mounties to give up the ball on downs. Crest then began its only drive of the night, with quarterback Kelly Russ connecting with Leroy Spikes on a 40-yard pass to the KM 40.

It was on the next play that a close call by the officials led to Crest's second TD, which broke the Mounties' will. Russ tried to find Spikes on a bomb, but KM cornerback Thomas Putnam intercepted at the goal line. It appeared that Putnam's momentum carried him into the endzone, but the officials spotted the ball at the one-foot line rather than the 20, the spot it would have been spotted had the play been ruled a touchback. One third down from the one, sophomore quarterback Roderick Boyce of the Mountaineers lost the handle on the ball and Spikes recovered for the Chargers in the endzone for a 14-0 lead.

The Mountaineers drove back into Crest territory twice during the early stages of the fourth quarter, but the Chargers came up with interceptions to stop those marches. One interception almost resulted in a touchdown for the Chargers, but Pressley ran the Crest player down at the five, and the KM defense held on downs.

Crest's final touchdown came with just over three minutes left after the Mounties gambled and lost on a fourth and nine at the 20. After losing five yards on two running plays, Poston threw a halfback pass to Oundray Petty to make it 21-0.

Kings Mountain came right back following the kickoff and marched to the Crest five, but penalties pushed them back to the 17 and a fourth down pass fell incomplete.

Coach Hicks praised the defense for keeping the Mounties in the game, and was pleased with the offense's performance in the open field.

"The defense really kept us in the game," Hicks said. "Even as late as the beginning of the fourth quarter, we were in a position to win the ball game."

"I felt like Brad Reynolds and David Parker played their best games of the season on defense, our inside linebackers played well and Curt Pressley did a good job at safety. Our two

down tackles, Steve Falls and Jeff Stokes, gave a real good effort.

"It just all boiled down to the fact that when we got down close, we couldn't give a winning effort. We had to bow our necks and just didn't do it."

Hicks said the second Crest touchdown should never have been "because Putnam's momentum carried him into the endzone and the ball should have come out to the 20. Usually, you think of an interception being a plus for you and this third touchdown because the KM defense was looking for the run. "We thought that with a 14 point lead and three minutes left, they'd sit on it," he said. "But they had to pour some salt into the wound."

The Mountaineers still have a good shot at gaining a share of the SWC title, but being realistic, Hicks said it's doubtful the Mountaineers could make the Class A State Playoffs. To do that, Crest would have to lose two games because the rules state that if two teams tie for first place the one that defeated the other during regular season play will advance to the playoffs.

But Kings Mountain has a golden opportunity to advance to the Class B State tournament, which is held for second place finishers in the 3-A ranks. The Mountaineers also have a shot at having the best won-lost record of any KMHS team since 1964, when the team was 10-1 and won its last SWC title. Since '64 the best record for KMHS was 8-2 in 1979.

"We have a good football team and we still have the opportunity to prove it," Hicks said. "This will be a big week for us. We have the opportunity to come back and win our last five ballgames and get into the division two playoffs, which would be no disgrace. We could still end up with a good, solid record."

"We're disappointed but we lost to a real good football team," he went on. "We'll have to re-establish ourselves. If we can win the last five and make the division two playoffs, we can still get some good playoff experience that the juniors could carry over until next year."

The Mountaineers will travel to North Gaston Friday to take a Wildcat term which is much-improved. They are 2-2 in the conference with tough losses to

Chase and Shelby, the two teams that are tied with the Mountaineers for second place. North Gaston's victories came over good teams from East Gaston and South Point.

"Their offense is much like ours, with two outstanding running backs," Hicks said. "Their tailback, Buster Benton is the best running back we'll face. He runs the ball a lot of times and we'll have to contain him. He has 4.6 speed and is being highly recruited."

"Their fullback, Edward Clemmer, has had several 100-yard games. We'll have to concentrate on Benton but we'll have to stop both of them."

"Offensively, we'll have to concentrate on being stronger inside the 30," he said. "You have to work too hard to get down next to the goal line and not get something out of it. The big half of our season is coming up. Good things can still happen."

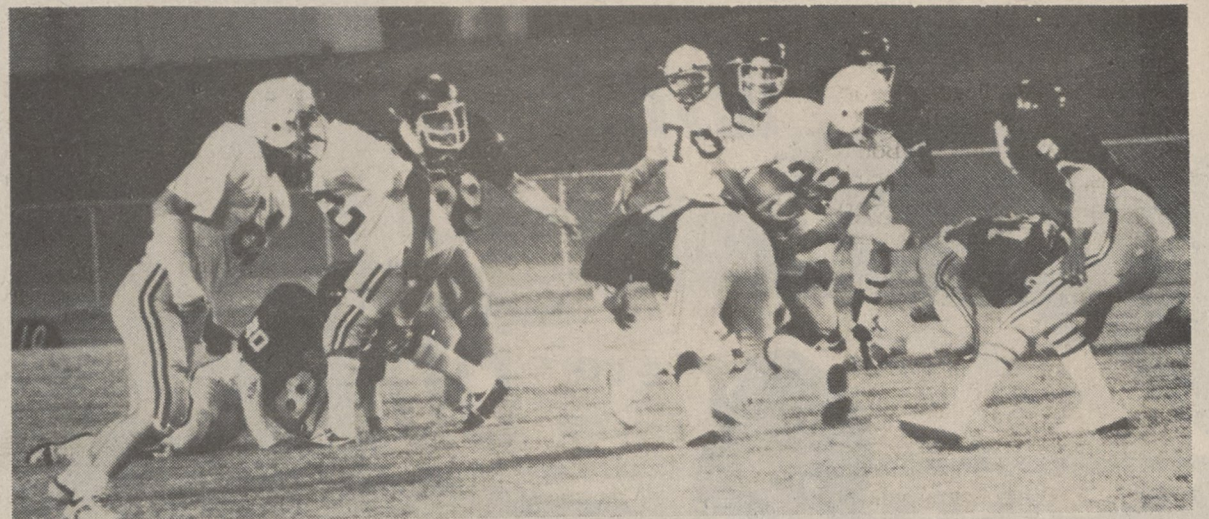


Photo by Gary Stewart

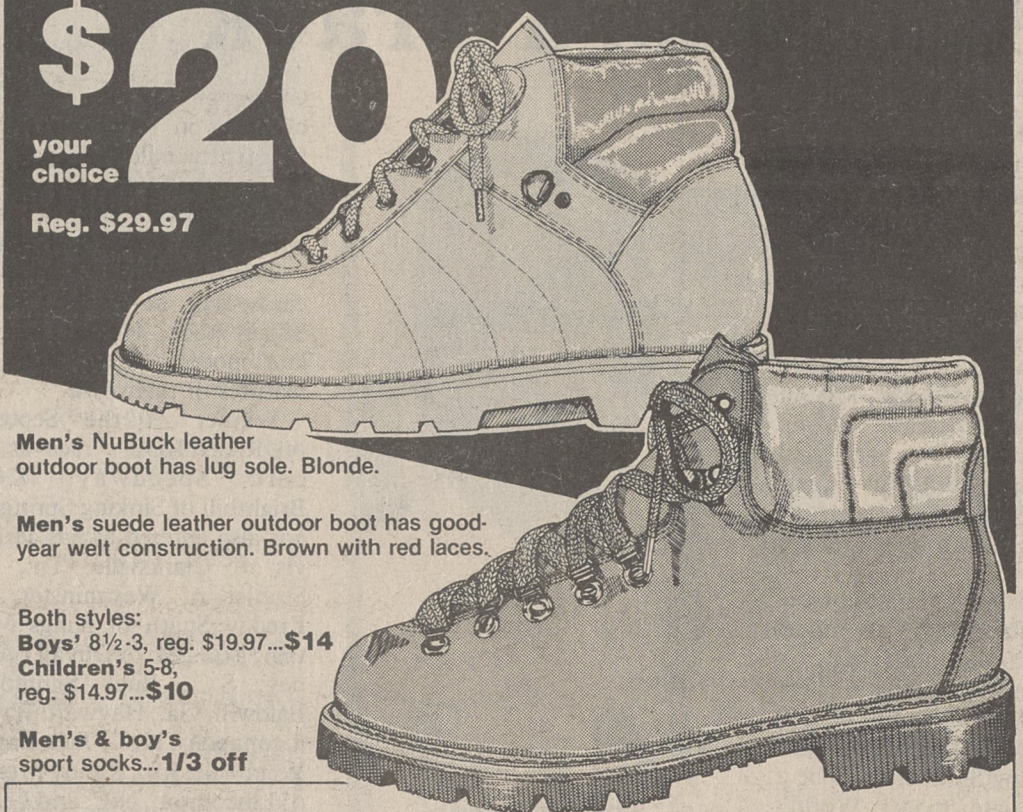
GOOD HIT - Kings Mountain linebacker Kevin Sabucco puts the shoulder into an unidentified Crest runner in Thursday's game at Gamble Stadium. Crest won a 20-0 decision to run its record to 5-0.

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