

Champion Contracting

Defending National Champs Eyeing Another Big Season

With spring nearing, Champion Contracting of Kings Mountain, coached by Belmont insurance agent Art Shoemaker and sponsored by Kings Mountain contractor Carl Champion, is gearing up for another big softball season.

It will be hard to top last year's record, climaxed by a national tournament win.

The team's five All-Americans recently received their new jackets from national tournament sponsor Lancaster Chewing Tobacco Co.

The All-Americans receiving jackets were first baseman Joe Shepherd, outfielders Christy Rodri, Don Gibson and Chris Champion, and second baseman Brian Stewart.

Champion Contracting won the 1987 Industrial National Championship in the Independent Softball Association last year in Gastonia with a sweep of five straight games over Maryville, Tenn., Dothan, Ala., Danville, Va., and Duke Power Co.

In addition to being named to the All-America team, Shepherd, a Belmont resident and the head basketball coach at Ashbrook High School, was named the tournament's most valuable player after collecting 20 hits in 27 at-bats and hitting four home runs (the home run limit per game was two).

Rodri hit .710, Gibson .653, Champion .600, and Stewart .500. Joey Barrett added three home runs. Champion led the team in tournament home runs with five. Gibson had four, Rodri three and Stewart two.

The closest game came in the finals when Champion Contracting edged Duke Power 10-9. They had beaten Maryville 12-7, Dothan, 18-16, Danville, 23-4, and Duke Power in the winners' bracket finals, 10-6.

Singles by Mike Doyle, Shepherd and Champion preceded the game-winning hit by Christy in the seventh inning in the 10-9 title win over Duke Power.

Shepherd and Gibson each had 4 for 4 in that game. Shepherd had two key home runs.

Special Berth

Champion contracting was extended a special berth in the tournament as the host team. This enabled the team to make three additions to the squad for the tournament - Shepherd, Gibson and Barrett.

"These were important selections, as those picked needed to not only have exceptional ability, but also be able to play several positions," Shoemaker said. "They fit in with the present team members and were very coachable."

Team sponsor Carl Champion, a long time softball enthusiast, has had previous teams to be state and regional champions and competed in various national tournaments.

The highest finish until last year was third place in the open division behind Howard's Furniture of Denver and Jerry's Catering of Miami, Fla.

"The team came together well during the tournament," Shoemaker said. "I noticed improvement in each game. There was more hustle, better execution, and a strong desire to be a champion was developed by the team. The end result was a national championship."

Shoemaker has coached many outstanding teams in the past. This was one of his best.

'In The Right Place' Shepherd, a University of North Carolina graduate and

three-sport star at South Point High School, said of his winning the tournament's most valuable player award, "I was in the right place at the right time."

"It was the best softball team I've played on. It had good togetherness, a lot of enthusiasm, and we went after it all the way."

"I was glad to be a part of it. It just so happened that the ball was hit to me where I was able to make some good defensive plays in key situations, and was able to come to bat in key situations."

"I feel that any of several players on our team could have been named the most valuable player."

Shepherd normally goes for the base hit. He was in a groove during the tournament and wound up hitting some long home runs.

In addition to playing first base in the tournament, he played some shortstop and pitched some.

Shoemaker gave Randy Becktol, intramural athletic director at N.C. State, credit for molding the team.

"He was really the coach, because he handled them all year long," said Shoemaker.

"You might say I was an advisor and ran the show during the national tournament. But Randy worked hard all season and deserves most of the credit."



WITH LANCASTER ALL-AMERICANS - Coach Art Shoemaker (left) and team sponsor Carl Champion (right) are pictured with three of the five Champion Contracting Independent Softball Association All-Americans wearing their new Lancaster Chewing Tobacco Co. Jackets. Lancaster sponsored the ISA national tournament last

August in Gastonia and the Kings Mountain-based team won the tournament in unbeaten fashion. The players are (from left), Don Gibson, Brian Stewart and Chris Champion. An All-American not pictured is Christy Rodri. All-American and Tournament MVP Joe Shepherd is pictured elsewhere on the page.

Boys club basketball

(Kings Mountain Boys Club Basketball League results).

TUESDAY (10-Under)

Jazz 38, Bulls 34
Jazz - Steve Boyce 10, Scott Powers 8.
Bulls - Steve Falls 12, Mike Smith 11.

Spurs 29, Nets 20
Spurs - Lance McClain 10, Maurice Tate 10.
Nets - Albert Perkins 13, Daniel Bell 6.

(12-Under)

Hawks 40, Rockets 38
Hawks - Jerry Black 30, Calvin Whitner 6.
Rockets - Derrick Roberts 15, Shannon Johnson 12.

Lakers 44, Pistons 33
Lakers - Sheldon Thompson 16, Sharee Hopper 11.
Pistons - Sajad Roberts 11, Maurice Davis 10.

THURSDAY (12-Under)

76ers 51, Celtics 49
76ers - Rodney Falls 27, Mike Roberts 15.
Celtics - Stanker Williams 30, Rodney Guinn 15.

Pistons 68, Rockets 49
Pistons - Calvin Whitner 12, Derrick Roberts 12.
Rockets - Mike Smith 14, Rodney Clinton 10.

SATURDAY (10-Under)

Sonics 41, Cavs 33
Sonics - Carey Leach 15, Ralph Williams 12.
Cavs - Reggie Turner 11, Emory Bess 6.

(12-Under)

Celtics 42, Pistons 39
Celtics - Stanker Williams 18, Rodney Guinn 12.
Pistons - Freddie Adams 20, Derrick Roberts 10.

Lakers 69, Rockets 41
Lakers - Sheldon Thompson 25, Sharee Hopper 15, Lance McClain 10.
Rockets - Sherman Witcher 18, Mike Smith 10.

76ers 46, Pistons 45
76ers - Rodney Falls 32, Mike Smith 10.
Pistons - Freddie Adams 23, Derrick Roberts 12.

76ers 93, Hawks 85
76ers - Rodney Falls 42, Mike Roberts 30, Randy Williams 11.
Hawks - Jerry Black 26, Alfred Wright 20.

The Boys Club teams will play in the Gastonia YMCA tournament this weekend.

Players of the Week - Rodney Falls and Jerry Black.



The brown Indian muntjac, or barking deer, barks like a dog when excited. The buck is 30 inches tall and has two-tined antlers, about four inches long.

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KINGS MOUNTAIN FEDERAL CREDIT UNION WILL HOLD IT'S ANNUAL MEETING
At 7:30 P.M. - Thursday, March 10, 1988
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