

Mountaineers Sweep Cougars For State 3-A Championship

Brannon Adds To Records, Allen Hurls Shutout

By GARY STEWART
Editor of the Herald

Kings Mountain's Mountaineers swept Rockingham County 8-6 and 10-0 Wednesday and Thursday night at Lancaster Field to win their first-ever North Carolina High School Athletic Association baseball title.

The victories gave the Mountaineers a final record of 23-7.

Well over a thousand fans packed Lancaster Field for each playoff game. Fans came as early as two hours before game time to get a good seat and on Thursday night, the fans chipped in to help coaches and players get the field in playing shape after it was covered in water from two afternoon thunderstorms.

The championship game Thursday finally got underway at 8:35 p.m. It began drizzling in the fourth inning with KM ahead 10-0 and Mountaineer fans began to wonder if the two teams could get in a complete game. But the rain was never heavy enough to stop play and by the sixth inning it had stopped.

The Mountaineers fell behind 6-1 in Wednesday's opening game but scored seven runs in the fourth inning to nail down the win. Todd McDaniel came out of the bullpen to stop Rockingham County's six-run second inning explosion and pitched one-hit ball the rest of the way to get the victory.

"Going into the game, we knew very little about Rockingham County," said Coach Bruce Clark. "We knew they were third in the Triad Conference but we had also talked to some coaches who said that they were on a tremendous roll. They were hot, nobody was getting them out and everything was going well for them."

"Our game plan was to jump on them in a hurry and try to burst their bubble. As it turned out, they hit us with a three-run homer and all of a sudden they had us down 6-1. But our kids were so confident that I didn't feel like that would effect as much as it would have earlier in the year."

Righthander Stuart Spires, 11-2, was the victim of the Cougars' early uprising. He had put them down in order in the top of the first and KM's record-setting first baseman Paul Brannon clubbed his 18th



OUT ON CLOSE PLAY - Kings Mountain's Chris Morris is tagged out at the plate by Rockingham County catcher John McCargo in Thursday's championship game of the State 3-A baseball tournament at Lancaster Field. Morris was on third base and tagged and tried to score on a short fly ball to rightfield. KM won 10-0.

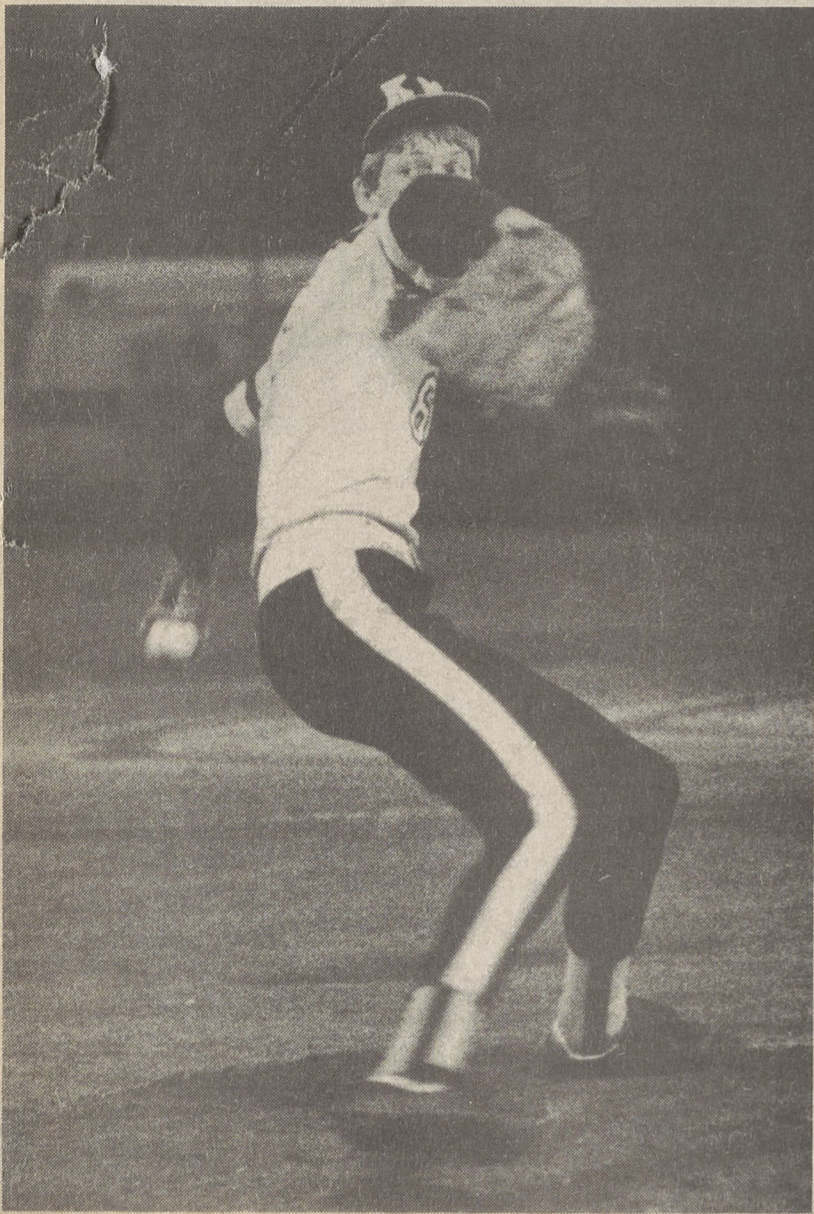


Photo by Gary Stewart
DOCTOR K - Kings Mountain's Keith Allen works on a four-hit shutout of Rockingham County in the championship game of last week's State 3-A baseball tournament at Lancaster Field. Allen, a junior, struck out 10 and didn't walk any.

Six Mountaineers On All-Conference

Kings Mountain High placed six players on the All-Southwestern 3-A Conference baseball team which was announced today.

In addition, Kings Mountain's first-year head coach, Bruce Clark, was selected by SWC coaches as Coach of the Year. South Point catcher Corey Broome was named Player of the Year.

Mountaineers making the All-SWC team were pitchers Stuart Spires and Todd McDaniel, infielders Dale Greene and Paul Brannon, outfielder Toby Deaton and designated hitter Chad Plonk.

Others named to the team were pitchers Jason Sutton and Shane Lay of South Point, catchers Dale Collins of Burns and Corey Broome of South Point, infielders Scott Payton of North Gaston, Doug Merritt of Burns, Jeff Huber and Chris Hamrick of East Rutherford, Chad Holbrook of Shelby and Charlie Foster of South Point; outfielders Jeremy Harrill and Terry Wright of East Rutherford, Shane Lay and Mike Young of South Point, and Jody Baker and Chad Brown of North Gaston, and designated hitter Jason White of North Gaston.

South Point won the conference with a 12-2 record, followed by KMHS 11-3, East Rutherford 9-5, North Gaston 8-6, R-S Central 6-8, Chase and Shelby 4-10, and Burns 2-12.

Spires and McDaniel combined for 21 of KM's 23 victories this year. Spires finished with a 11-2 record and McDaniel was 10-4. Spires won all seven of his conference decisions and won 11 straight games after dropping two early-season non-conference games.

Spires' best performance during the regular season came against Shelby, when he hurled a two-hit shutout. But perhaps his best overall effort of the year came against Statesville in the Western state finals, when he held the Greyhounds to three hits in a 3-1 Mountaineer victory which sent them into the state championship series.

McDaniel won his first five games, two of them on four-hitters. Later in the year, he became the team's relief ace. Late in the regular season and throughout the state playoffs he entered just about ev-

ery ballgame to save a Mountaineer victory.

In addition to his outstanding pitching performance, McDaniel also hit .333 on the season.

Brannon re-wrote all of the state home run records in his junior season. Kings Mountain's leading hitter with a .474 average, Brannon clubbed 20 home runs and hit at least one home run in each of the last seven games. His 20 season home runs, 25 career dingers, and homers in seven consecutive games are all state records which

See All, 2-B



BEGINNING OF THE RALLY - Kings Mountain's Chip Cash slides head first into home plate to score on an error in fourth inning of Wednesday's opening game with Rockingham County in the State 3-A baseball championship series. The Mounties trailed 6-1 going into the inning. Cash's run cut it to 6-2. After another run scored when Ken Crook was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded, Toby Deaton cracked a grand-slam home run and Paul Brannon followed with a solo shot to give the Mounties an 8-6 win. Catcher for the Cougars is John McCargo.

homer of the year in the bottom of the first to give the Mountaineers a 1-0 lead.

But, in the top of the second, things went sour for Spires. Mark Young beat out an infield hit, and the throw from Chris Plonk was wide at first base and Young took second. Another KM throwing error on an infield grounder put runners on first and third, and Jason Pruitt slammed a three-run homer to give the visitors the lead.

A single, hit batsman and walk loaded the bases, and all three runners scored when Wayne Hamilton's single to left field went through the legs of KM leftfielder Chris Bullock.

At that point, Coach Clark called McDaniel in from the bullpen. He gave up a single to Rodney Chilton but Bullock redeemed himself for

the earlier error by gunning Hamilton down at the plate. Catcher Ken Crook caught Chilton off first and threw to Brannon for a double play.

McDaniel retired the side in order in the third and fourth frames, fanning five of the six batters he faced.

"Stuart just wasn't real sharp, but Todd came in and did a great job," said Coach Clark. "After getting them out in the second, he just gave up one hit the rest of the way. Our batters just continued to get timely hits and before you knew it we had come back and were ahead."

Just as suddenly as Rockingham County had struck in the second, the Mounties did it in the fourth, scoring seven runs to take an 8-6 lead which held the rest of the game.

Dale Greene started the rally with a sharp single up the middle and Chad Plonk followed with a

Bullock fanned on a strikeout. base on an error, scoring seven runs and Chris Plonk walked to load the bases. Ken Crook was hit by a pitch, forcing in Plonk to cut the margin to 6-3.

Toby Deaton, who hadn't hit a home run all year and had struck out his last seven times at bat, cracked a 2-1 pitch over the left-center field fence for a grand slam homer which put KM on top 7-6, and an out later Brannon smashed a long blast over the center field fence to close out the scoring. The homer was Brannon's 24th of his career, breaking the state record of 23 set by Tommy Greene of Whiteville, who is now a pitcher in the Atlanta Braves organization.

There were still a few anxious moments for the Mountaineers but some heads up defensive play saved the game for them.

See Champs, 3-B

Never Say Die!

Rockingham 6
Kings Mountain 8

Rockingham	K. Mountain
ab r h bl	ab r h bl
Hamln ss 2 2 1 2	Deaton cf 3 1 1 4
Chilton 2b 3 0 1 0	Henson 2b 3 0 0 0
Perdew lf 4 4 1 0	Bmon 1b 4 2 2 2
Young 1b 4 1 1 0	Green 3b 3 1 2 0
McCargo c 4 1 0 0	CdPind dh 3 0 1 0
Pruitt rh 3 1 1 3	Pepprd pr 0 1 0 1
Olivo dh 3 1 1 0	Bullock lf 3 0 1 0
Gallwy cf 1 1 0 0	Cash rf 3 1 1 1
Jones 3b 2 1 0 0	CSPink 2 1 0 0
	Crook c 2 0 0 0
	Hnycut cr 0 1 0 0
Totals	26 6 5

Rockingham 060 000 0 -- 6
Kings Mountain 100 700 X -- 8

E - Chris Plonk, Dale Greene, Toby Deaton, Todd McDaniel, Chris Henson, Wayne Hamilton, LOB - Rockingham 5, Kings Mountain 4, DP - Kings Mountain 1, HR - Rockingham, Jason Pruitt; Kings Mountain, Paul Brannon 2 (19), Toby Deaton (1).

Rockingham	IP H R ER BB SO
Brad Everetts (L,6-5)	5 8 8 7 1 6
Ben Strader	1 0 0 0 2 1

Kings Mountain	IP H R ER BB SO
Stuart Spires	1 3 6 4 1 2
Todd McDaniel (W,9-4)	1 6 3 0 0 4

HBP - Lonnie Galloway (by McDaniel), Ken Crook (by Everette).

Hey, Doctor K!

Kings Mountain 10
Rockingham Co. 0

Kings Mtn.	Rockingahm
Deaton 3 2 2 4	Hamlnss 3 3 0 0
Hnycut cf 1 0 0 0	Chilton 2b 3 0 0 0
Henson 2b 3 1 1 1	Perdew lf 3 0 0 0
Dligr ph 1 0 0 0	Young 1b 3 0 1 0
Brann 1b 3 1 1 3	McCrgo c 3 0 1 0
Giene 3b 4 0 1 0	Revis cr 0 0 0 0
Reid 3b 0 0 0 0	Pruitt rf 2 0 0 0
CdPinkdh 4 1 3 1	Moore ph 0 0 0 0
Couch pr 0 0 0 0	Olivo dh 2 0 0 0
Bullock lf 3 2 1 0	Mtthews ph 1 0 1 0
Cash rf 3 1 0 0	Jones 3b 2 0 1 0
Spires ph 1 0 0 0	
Sessms rf 0 0 0 0	
CSPink ss 3 0 0 0	
Pepprd pr 1 0 0 0	
Crook c 2 1 0 0	
Morris ph 1 0 0 0	
Totals	33 10 9 9
Totals	25 0 0 4

Kings Mountain 300 340 0 -- 10
Rockingham County 000 000 0 -- 0

E - Lonnie Galloway, Kevin Jones, Wayne Hamilton, Joh McCargo, LOB - Kings Mountain 7, Rockingham County 5, 2B - Chad Plonk, Jones, Chris Bullock, HR - Paul Brannon (20), Toby Deaton (2), Chad Plonk (11), SB - Bullock, Chip Cash, Eric Peppard, DP - Kings Mountain 1, Rockingham County 1.

Kings Mountain	IP H R ER BB SO
Keith Allen (W,3-0)	7 4 0 0 0 10

Rockingham Co.	IP H R ER BB SO
Jaso Lawrence (L,4-3)	4 1 0 0 0 4
Ben Strader	0 1 3 1 3 0
Jason Pruitt	3 1 0 0 0 4

WP - Lawrence, PB - McCargo, Ken Crook, HBP - Scott Moore (by Allen), A - 1,300 (Est.)