

## Mounties Can Win Title Friday Night

### Mounties Edge North Gaston, Girls Barely Miss Big Upset

Kings Mountain's Mountaineers almost blew a 25-point lead before defeating North Gaston's Wildcats 84-72 in Southwestern 3-A Conference basketball action Friday night at North Gaston.

Kings Mountain's girls, trying for their third straight SWC upset, blew a 19-point lead as North Gaston came from behind in the fourth quarter for a 52-49 lead which kept them tied for first place with Shelby.

The Mountaineers, aided by South Point's 81-79 victory over R-S Central, were able to open a 1 1/2 game lead in the boys race. The Mountaineers host R-S Friday night in a game which could give KM Coach Larry Sipe his first conference championship as a head coach.

"North Gaston is the type team that is capable of beating anybody," Sipe said after his team's 18th victory in 19 games. "We got a great effort from all of our players. They were really relaxed coming over here."

The Mountaineers built a 24-15 lead after the first period and were on top by 51-32 at halftime. They increased the lead to 25 points early in the third period before North Gaston started a comeback bid that cut the margin to five points halfway through the fourth quarter.

"We got a great effort from our bench," Sipe said. "Darius Ross and Ryan Hollifield did a good job in reserve roles and when we lost the lead Rodgerick McClain came back in and got us back under con-

trol. I was pleased with the way we handled it down the stretch."

Daniel Honeycutt led the KM offense with 34 points, his career high. Ross scored 14 in a reserve role and Mark Byers added 10. Era Vaughn grabbed 13 rebounds for the Mounties. Jason Carter scored 21, Shawn Woods 19 and Larry Benton 18 for North Gaston.

The Wildcats cut the big KM lead to five points (71-66) with four minutes to play but couldn't come any closer. Honeycutt hit a stop and pop off a fast break to make it 73-46 and the Mounties were able to increase the lead back to double figures after a pair of Vaughn free throws and another Honeycutt basket.

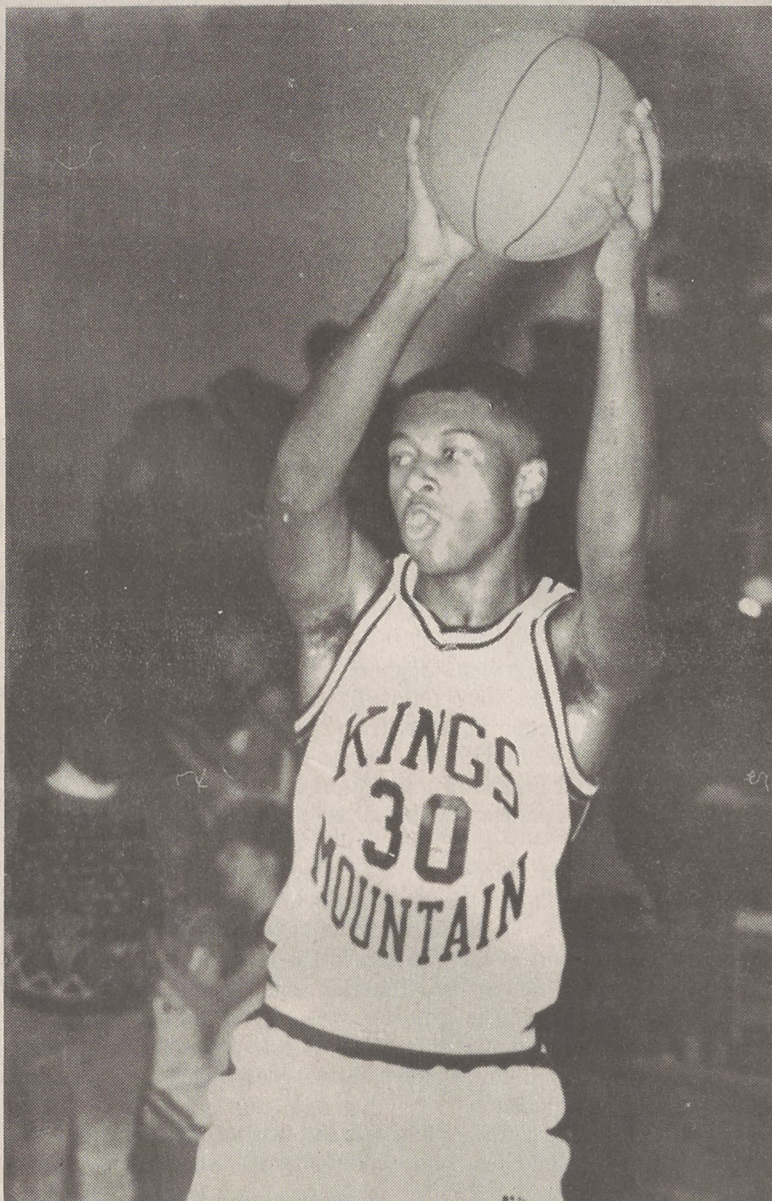
Kings Mountain built the big first half lead on Honeycutt's shooting clinic and a dominating inside game led by Vaughn, Byers and Darian Hager.

"It was the first time in the last three games that we've scored a three-point goal and the first time in three games that we've gone into halftime with the lead," Sipe said. "We're really relaxed now. It's been a great season and we just hope it continues."

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Kings Mountain's girls held a 19-point lead with less than three minutes remaining in the third quarter but couldn't stand up to North Gaston's pressing defense and the hot-shooting hand on Chastity Friday in the fourth quarter.

See North, 6-A



**HELPS LEAD KM WIN - Marcus Byers gets off a shot against Shelby in Tuesday night's Southwest Conference basketball game at the KMHS gym. The Mountaineers had to come from behind in the fourth quarter to win 65-58. KM hosts R-S Central in a first place showdown Friday night.**

### Mounties Come From Behind Tuesday To Edge Shelby 65-58

The first place Kings Mountain boys and Shelby girls both had to fight off upset bids in Southwestern 3-A Conference basketball action Tuesday night at the KMHS gym. Both teams came from behind in the fourth quarter to win, the Shelby ladies by a 44-37 margin and the KM boys by 65-58.

The Mountaineers, 8-1 in the conference and 19-1 overall, will face their toughest test of the season Friday when R-S Central comes to the KMHS gym. It's the last regular season home game for the Mountaineers and "Senior Night" is planned. Kings Mountain closes out the regular season next Tuesday night at South Point.

The Mountaineers can clinch their first conference championship of the Larry Sipe coaching era by defeating R-S Friday. The Hilltoppers come into the game with a 7-2 conference mark and must defeat the Mountaineers to have a chance of winning the title. R-S handed KM its only loss earlier in the year at R-S.

Shelby, 1-8 in the SWC and 2-18 overall, almost cast a new light on the R-S Central-KM showdown Tuesday night. For most of the first 3 1/2 quarters the Golden Lions held the lead over the taller and more experienced Mountaineers, but in the end Kings Mountain's quickness was the difference.

Kings Mountain led 9-2 during the early going but Shelby came back to go ahead by as many as three. Ryan Hollifield and Darius Ross came off the bench to give

KM a late first quarter spark which resulted in three consecutive baskets and a 19-16 lead at the quarter break.

The Lions came back to lead by 35-33 at intermission and built an eight point lead (45-37) less than three minutes into the third quarter following a three-point field goal by their leading scorer, Chad Ross.

Shelby held a 47-43 edge going into the fourth quarter but the Mountaineers, who began to clear the boards and get their transition game going, finally grabbed the lead (50-49) on a jumper by Mark Byers with 5:39 left.

The rebounding of Byers and Vaughn and the offensive quickness of Ross and Petie McNeal were too much for Shelby in the final four minutes. Vaughn scored off an assist by McNeal to give KM a 53-49 lead with 4:10 left. Ross hit a 15-foot jumper, assisted Honeycutt on a layup and then hit a pair of free throws as the Mountaineers stretched the lead to 59-53 with 1:53 left.

After a timeout by Shelby, the Mountaineers went into a delay game and forced the Lions into a fouling situation. McNeal hit five of six free throws and Ross added another to put the game on ice.

McNeal finished with 16 points to lead the KM scoring. Vaughn added 12, Honeycutt 11 and Ross 10. Byers had a game-high 10 rebounds and Vaughn added six.

Chad Ross led the Shelby attack with 22. Chad Lavender added 15 and Eric Wilson 14.

See Shelby, 5-A

## Wrestlers Regional Champions

Kings Mountain High's wrestlers won their first Western Regional championship Saturday at Enka, edging the host Jets in the 15-team event.

The Mountaineers scored 179 points to 164 for Enka. Following those two were R-S Central with 126 1/2 points, Brevard 92 1/2, West Henderson 86 1/2, East Henderson 86, T.C. Roberson 59 1/2, Pisgah 56, North Buncombe 48, Shelby 48, West Caldwell 41, Burns 20, Smoky Mountain 18, Hibriten 11 and Franklin 0.

Kings Mountain placed seven men in the finals and four of them won their weight class. Eight KM wrestlers qualified for this weekend's state individual championship meet at High Point Andrews.

"All of our guys did a great job," said KM Coach Steve Moffitt, whose club earlier won the Southwestern 3-A Conference regular season and tournament titles.

"After the second round, we still had all 13 of our guys in it but Enka came back and really gave us a run for the championship," Moffitt said. "We had seven in the finals and Enka had five. I told our kids that we couldn't worry about what Enka was doing, that we just had to go out there and do our best

See Champs, 5-A



**AARON ALLEN**  
KM swimmer wins conference title

## KM Swimmers Qualify For Regionals

Kings Mountain's boys finished third and the girls fourth in the Southwestern 3-A Conference swim meet Wednesday afternoon at Neisler Natatorium.

The boys compiled 49 points. East Rutherford won the event with 134 points, followed by Shelby with 35. After KM came R-S Central with 39 and South Point with 31.

Shelby won the girls title with 95 points, followed by East Rutherford 85, South Point 63, KM 50 and R-S 30.

The top swimmers from KM

will go to Lenoir-Rhyne College Friday and Saturday for the Western Regional meet. Top finishers there will advance to the state championship February 26 at Chapel Hill.

Aaron Allen won the only conference championship for the Mountaineers, finishing first in the 100 yard free style in 54.67 seconds.

By finishing first, Allen earned All-Conference recognition. Two KM girls who finished second also made All-Conference. They were Paula Eckard in the 200 individual

medley and 500 free style and Marie Mayse in the 100 breast stroke.

Third place finishers for KM included the boys 200 medley relay team (Benji Davis, Jonathan Jones, Allen and Todd Bell), the boys 400 free style relay team (James Goad, David Stout, Jones and Bell), and Benji Davis in the 100 back stroke.

Finishing fourth were the girls 200 medley relay team (Gail Hardin, Mayse, Eckard and Emily Campbell), Hardin in the 100 back

See Swim, 5-A

## Excitement Starts To Build As Baseball Practice Begins

Only 12 people turned out for Kings Mountain High's first baseball game last season. There will probably be more than that at the team's first practice session Thursday afternoon.

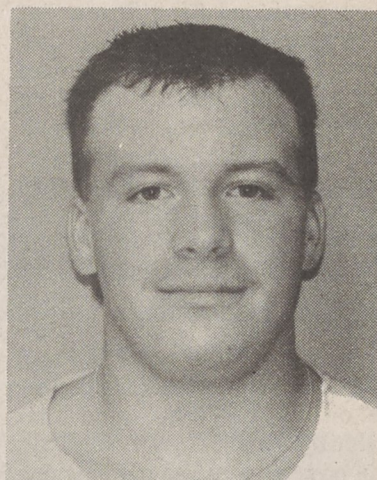
Second-year Coach Bruce Clark Bruce Clark expects an enthusiastic group when his Mountaineer nine opens pre-season practice at 2:45 at Lancaster Field.

Clark has 13 players back from last year's team which won the school's first-ever state 3-A championship and hit a state record 51 home runs.

Heading the list of returnees is the state's all-time home run king, Paul Brannon, who hit 20 round trippers last spring and has 25 in two years. Brannon was voted most valuable player in the state championship series and hit at least one home run in his last seven games.

Brannon, who made news statewide last year with his 20 dingers and team-leading .474 batting average, will be an early news maker this year. The all-state first baseman plans to make a big switch to the catcher's position as Coach Clark and his staff try to plug the few positions left vacant by graduation.

"Our only other catcher is Raymond Couch, a sophomore, and he's probably a better defensive catcher than Paul," says Coach



**PAUL BRANNON**

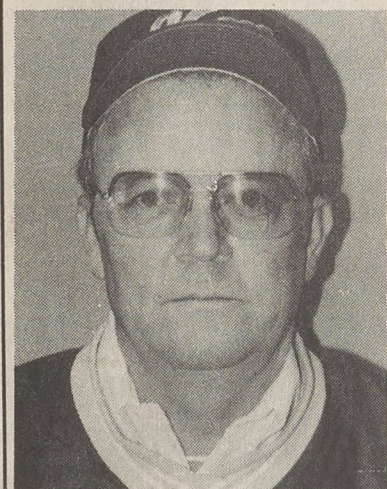
Clark. "But physically, he has a weaker arm. Paul hasn't caught in a long time but it should be an easy transition for him."

Other returning players include pitcher Keith Allen, the winning pitcher in the state championship 10-0 win over Rockingham County last year; second baseman Chris Henson, shortstop Chris Plonk, third baseman Jon Reid, outfielders Chris Bullock, Brian Dellinger, Eric Peppard, Daniel Honeycutt, Chip Cash, and Shane Sessoms, and designated hitter Chad Plonk.

Newcomers include Darius Ross, Scottie Hopper, Petie McNeal, Jonathan Hicks, Jeff Rogers, and Tommy Payne.

See Baseball, 6-A

## SUPERSPORT



**BUD BUMGARDNER**

# This Bud's For The Mounties

By GARY STEWART  
Editor of the Herald

When Kings Mountain's Mountaineers open baseball practice this afternoon at Lancaster Field, one of their biggest fans and friends will be there to cheer them on, give them tips and do what he can to make their season an enjoyable one.

Bud Bumgardner, who is a volunteer assistant coach in Bruce Clark's program, has loved baseball

since he was a tot and he's never felt comfortable away from the game.

Bumgardner's not a trained coach but anyone who has been associated with him through the years will quickly tell you he's one of the keys in the successful Mountaineer program.

Bumgardner has always been an outgoing, fun-loving person and he carries that attitude over into his coaching. It helps keep the players loose, helps keep him young and

brings a pleasant atmosphere to the Kings Mountain side of the field.

Bumgardner played high school and legion ball here in the fifties. He said he was fortunate to play under two good coaches, Fred Withers at the high school and ex-major league catcher Jake Early in the legion program.

"Jake was a super guy," he recalled. "He really looked after his players. He really helped me a lot as a catcher. I was on the first legion team that Jake coached here,

and the things he taught me were probably responsible for me having my best year in high school ball the following year."

Bumgardner said he didn't have the size to further his sports career but he managed to stay associated with sports as a player from 1952 until 1972. He played fast pitch softball for several years and then switched to slow pitch as it became more popular in this area.

Bumgardner said it was an old-timers legion baseball game in

1965 that resulted in his becoming a high school coach.

"I had known Barry Gibson for years, but we played in that old-timers game and got to know each other better," he said. "In 1975, when I began teaching welding at the high school and he was the head baseball coach, I went and asked him if I could help out. There wasn't any money allocated for an assistant baseball coach and I didn't really expect any. I just

See Bumgardner, 6-A