



HUSTLING PLAY - Chris Broome makes a diving return of a shot in fourth-fifth grade volleyball tournament action at Grover School Friday afternoon. The fifth graders won the annual tournament.

Bumgardner

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wanted to help in any way I could." Bumgardner later coached junior varsity football for several years and assisted Steve Moffitt with the KMHS wrestling program. Gibson and Bumgardner made a good combination for the Mountaineer baseballers, leading them to some of their finest moments on the diamond. They coached the team to the Southwestern 3-A Conference title in 1975 and 1980 and went to the state championship series in 1980, losing to Greene Central. "I guess that was my biggest disappointment in sports," Bumgardner said. "We had great talent but went down to Kinston for the state championship and many of our players got food poison and couldn't play. We lost out on Friday night and came back to Kings Mountain and my father died on Saturday." Bumgardner's father, Ed, was a big baseball fan and was at every Mountaineer game before his illness. Gibson and Bumgardner also coached together in legion ball, and Bumgardner and Bob Mantooth of Bessemer City coached the KM legion team one year before the KM players became a part of the BC program.

Bumgardner assisted two years in BC. Bumgardner got out of high school coaching for several years after the 1980 baseball season but still followed the Mountaineers. His son, Rusty, now a rising senior tackle at Wake Forest, was a star football and baseball player at KMHS. "I was never interested in coaching Rusty," he said. "It would have been tough for both of us. The only time I coached him was in legion ball at Bessemer City." Bumgardner trained horses, raised cattle and continued to teach welding during the eighties but in 1988 he had a series of health problems which left him disabled. He had surgery on his back three times and had part of a lung removed during an eight month period in 1988. Last year, new KMHS baseball coach Bruce Clark asked Bumgardner to help him out and Bumgardner agreed to do what he could. "I couldn't hit or anything like that, but I'd bring a chair to practice and the games and more or less advise them and offer tips to the catchers," he said. "I miss not being able to teach but maybe piddling around out at the ball field and doing what I can to help them can help me keep my mind off some other stuff."

Bumgardner said winning last year's state championship was his biggest thrill in sports. "You always want to win and you remember the good years, but during all those other years I helped out. We had some super kids to work with. I enjoyed all of them," he said. Bumgardner loves to win but doesn't pound winning into his players. "Everyone wants to win, that's human nature," he says. "But I think the way kids react is the main thing in sports. The players we have in baseball think they're never out of a game until the last ball is thrown and that's the way it should be. As long as you have kids like that you don't want to give up either." Bumgardner's friendly personality makes him a hit with players and fans, and even umpires. "That's my nature," he says. "Nowadays you try to get your point across any way you can. My nature is talking to kids and if it's something I can help them with, it will not only help them but it will help me. If it means being a little loose with them, I can be loose. Sometimes a head coach can't do it that way." Bumgardner says what coaching knowledge he has, he owes to Barry Gibson. "He was a super guy to work with," Bumgardner said. "Over the years we began to accuse one another of thinking alike. I don't know if that was good or bad. He

really taught me what the fundamentals of baseball were all about. His philosophy was not just to be a good baseball player but to be a good person. That's what Bruce Clark is trying to do too." Bumgardner looks forward to a big year this spring and hopes to see the Mountaineers go to the state playoffs again. "In sports everybody's after the number one man," he said. "All the teams will be out to whip us this year. It will be a long, hard road and we can't take anything for granted. But we've got a lot of potential." Although Bumgardner's coaching time will be limited, he says he'll do what he can to help continue the Mountaineers' winning tradition. "I'll just go out there and get a chair and sit in it for maybe an hour and then leave," he says. "It beats having to sit at home. It's something I enjoy. I just wish I could be more active in it." Looking back over his years as a volunteer coach, Bumgardner said he wouldn't change a thing. "I don't feel like at any time I've wasted my time doing this," he says. "I like kids and I especially like the people I've been associated with. The head coaches I've been associated with like Barry Gibson, Steve Moffitt, Bob Jones, Dan Brooks, Bruce Clark and Denny Hicks have all helped me a lot. I think the time I've spent with them has been very beneficial to me."

Baseball

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With that kind of talent on hand, a lot of opposing coaches and fans will be pointing to Kings Mountain as the team to beat in the Southwestern 3-A Conference, and possibly even in the state.

But Coach Clark doesn't plan to put that kind of pressure on his players.

"I want the players to go out there and have some fun this year," he said. "I'm not crazy enough to predict that we'll win it all again. It takes a lot of breaks to get where we got to last year and those breaks may not be there this year. I'm not going to put that kind of pressure on them. Just like last year, our goal is going to be to finish in the top three in the conference and hope to get in the state playoffs. If that happens we'll take our shot in the playoffs and see what happens."

Clark admits, though, that his team has a lot of potential. "Everybody is counting on us to be a good hitting ball club, and all honesty we should be," he says. "Since that is our strong point we're going to try to get even better at hitting the ball. We'll also be putting a lot of

time in our pitchers and catchers," he went on. "We believe that to be successful in high school you have to have good pitchers and catchers."

Clark will have a good mixture of left and righthanders this year. Of course, heading the list of prospects is Allen, a senior southpaw who has great control. Another southpaw joining the staff this year is junior Jeff Rogers, who is playing high school ball for the first time.

Twins Chris and Chad Plonk, who are also heavy hitters, hope to regain their pitching form after suffering arm injuries last year and righthander Tommy Payne, who pitched for the junior high two years ago but did not play baseball last spring, has also joined the staff.

"Allen is our only pitcher with experience," says Clark, "but all of our pitchers have done a lot of work in our weight program and swimming program and all of them are pretty decent pitchers."

"Chad and Chris Plonk went to a doctor in Charlotte who gave them some exercises and right now both of them are as good as they've ever been," Clark said. Tommy Payne was a real good pitcher at the junior high level and we hope he can help us out. Jeff Rogers has pitched a lot of summer league ball and he's a lefthander. Any time you can

throw from the left side and get the ball over the plate you can be successful."

Clark said he Mountaineers this year will put more emphasis on base-running, especially with the addition of speedsters like Darius Ross and Petie McNeal. Those two, along with Honeycutt, are on the basketball team right now and will be late joining the baseball team. Henson, a second baseman who hit .355 last spring, is involved in the state wrestling tournaments and will also be late coming out.

"Defensively, we'll have about eight positions where we have someone coming back that started at one time or another last year," Clark noted. "We're just going to try to solidify the defense and work hard on our hitting and see what happens."

Depth will also be a plus for the Mountaineers. Fifteen of the 19 players are seniors.

"In the outfield, we'll have six players that probably would start at any other high school," said Clark. "That's going to be a good situation for us because they'll all be pushing each other for a starting position and it will make all of them better players."

The Mountaineers will be shy on depth at shortstop and second base. Last year's backup shortstop, Kevin Whittington, transferred to Bessemer City and last year's starting third baseman, Dale Greene, graduated. Jon Reid, who started at third as a sophomore, will take over at the hot corner. Chris Plonk returns at shortstop.

Because of the abundance of seniors on this year's team, the Mountaineers plan to field a junior varsity team which will be coached by Ronny Funderburke. Most members of the team will be ninth graders.

"We plan to use the jayvee team as a building program for next year," said Clark. "We don't want the players to try to compare themselves to last year's team or this year's varsity, just try to find their own identity."

"The kids we've got were very successful at the junior high level, but it's a step up in competition and they'll be playing a lot of teams that the majority of their players

will be tenth graders. We're going to teach them the basic concepts that we do on the varsity and just try to get them some experience."

Clark said he'll assist Funderburke with the junior varsity as much as possible and junior high coach Tommy Wease will help out when he can.

Veteran Bud Bumgardner will return as catching coach and former Mountaineer hurler David Ray Robinson, who pitched for Western Carolina's Catamounts, will join the team as pitching coach.

The Mountaineers will scrimmage Chase on March 8 and West Lincoln on March 9, both at home, and will open their regular season on March 15 at home against Crest.

The Mountaineers will host the annual Gaston Neighbors Tournament April 26-28 and will host the semi-finals and finals of the SWC tournament in May. All regular season home games will be played at night, weather permitting.

THE SCHEDULE

- MARCH**
- 8 - Chase scrimmage, 4 p.m.
 - 9 - West Lincoln scrimmage, 4 p.m.
 - 15 - Crest (TBA)
 - 17 - at Ashbrook, 1 p.m.
 - 19 - at Huss, 4:30
 - 20 - at Shelby (TBA)
 - 23 - N. Gaston, 7:30
 - 26 - Huss, 7:30
 - 27 - at E. Ruth. (TBA)
 - 30 - S. Point, 7:30
- APRIL**
- 3 - Burns, 7:30
 - 4 - E. Lincoln, 7:30
 - 6 - at R-S Central, 4:30
 - 9 - at Crest, 4 p.m.
 - 12 - Gaffney, 7:30
 - 16-20 - Gaston Neighbors Tournament at KM
 - 24 - at N. Gaston, 7:30
 - 27 - E. Ruth, 7:30
- MAY**
- 1 - at S. Point, 7:30
 - 3 - at E. Lincoln, 7:30
 - 4 - at Burns, 4:30
 - 8 - R-S Central 7:30
 - 10 - Shelby, 7:30
 - 14-18 - Conference tournament (First round game at site of higher seeded teams; semi-finals and finals at KM.)
 - 22 - June 1 - state playoffs
- JUNE**
- 6-8 State championship series

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North

From Page 4-A

Friday, who scored 29 of her game-high 31 points in the second half, canned a three-pointer with 4:23 left to knot the game at 41-all. She intercepted a pass and scored again to make it 43-41 with 4:07 left and it was all North Gaston the rest of the way.

Kings Mountain had led 9-5 after the first quarter and 25-11 at intermission. North Gaston cut the difference to 37-29 going into the

Parker and Barrett Win Bowling Event

Janet Parker and Jack Barrett of Kings Mountain, with 1,014 pins, won the mixed doubles championship in the Tom Wilson Memorial Duckpin Bowling Tournament last weekend in Burlington.

Parker also won the women's singles handicap with a 512 score.

Several other KM bowlers finished high in the standings. Lib Cault and Jack Barrett were fourth and Bill and Janet Parker sixth in mixed doubles, and Barrett was sixth in men's singles.

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fourth quarter. Carmen Smith led the KM scoring with 21 points and Nicole Barnes added 10.

GIRLS GAME

KM (49) - Smith 21, Hardin 2, Ruff 8, Feemster 6, Roseboro 2, Barnes 10.
NG (52) - Best 4, Britton 2, Hope 8, Friday 31, Huggins 2, Dellinger 3, Rushing 2.

BOYS GAME

KM (84) - Honeycutt 34, Hollifield 8, Byers 10, Vaughn 7, Ross 14, Smith 3, Hager 4, McNeal 4.
NG (72) - Jackson 6, Mintz 3, Woods 19, Carter 21, Benton 18, Brooks 5.

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