

KM Edges R-S For SWC Title

Mounties Edge Raiders 78-74

Kings Mountain's Mountaineers came from behind for the sixth time in seven games to defeat South Point's Red Raiders 78-74 in their final regular season game Tuesday night at South Point.

The victory was the 21st in 22 games overall for the Southwest Conference champion Mountaineers and the 11th in 12 conference games.

The Mountaineers will now be idle until the second round of the conference tournament next Thursday at Gardner-Webb College. KM will meet the winner of the South Point-North Gaston game. All other SWC schools have regular season finales Friday night.

Kings Mountain got off to a quick start Tuesday, building a 6-0 lead but the Red Raiders, behind the hot-shooting of N.C. State-bound Migjen Bakalli, came back to tie the game at 16-all at the quarter break. South Point then built an 11-point lead early in the second quarter and still led by nine, 36-27, at the half.

The Raiders went back up by 11 early in the second half before the Mountaineers started their comeback.

Daniel Honeycutt, who was held to one point in the first half, scored 16 in the second half, as did Era

Vaughn, who finished with a game-high 24 points.

Another big key for the Mountaineers was the defensive play of reserve Petie McNeal, who held Bakalli to six points in the second half. Bakalli scored 15 in the first half, giving him 21 on the night.

"Our offense seemed to just stand around in the first half," said KM Coach Larry Sipe. "But in the second half it was the same story that it's been for the last several games. We seemed to turn it up defensively and got our running game going."

The Mountaineers outscored the Raiders 29-20 in the third period to tie the game at 56-all going into the final eight minutes.

"Our comeback this time was kind of quiet," Sipe said. "We usually knock it off in big chunks but this time we'd score and they'd score. Daniel had a great second half. He started taking the ball to the basket and Petie did a great job on Bakalli."

"Ryan Hollifield continued to give us some quality minutes off the bench, and Quan Smith came off the bench and had seven points and several big rebounds. He really

See Raiders, 7-A

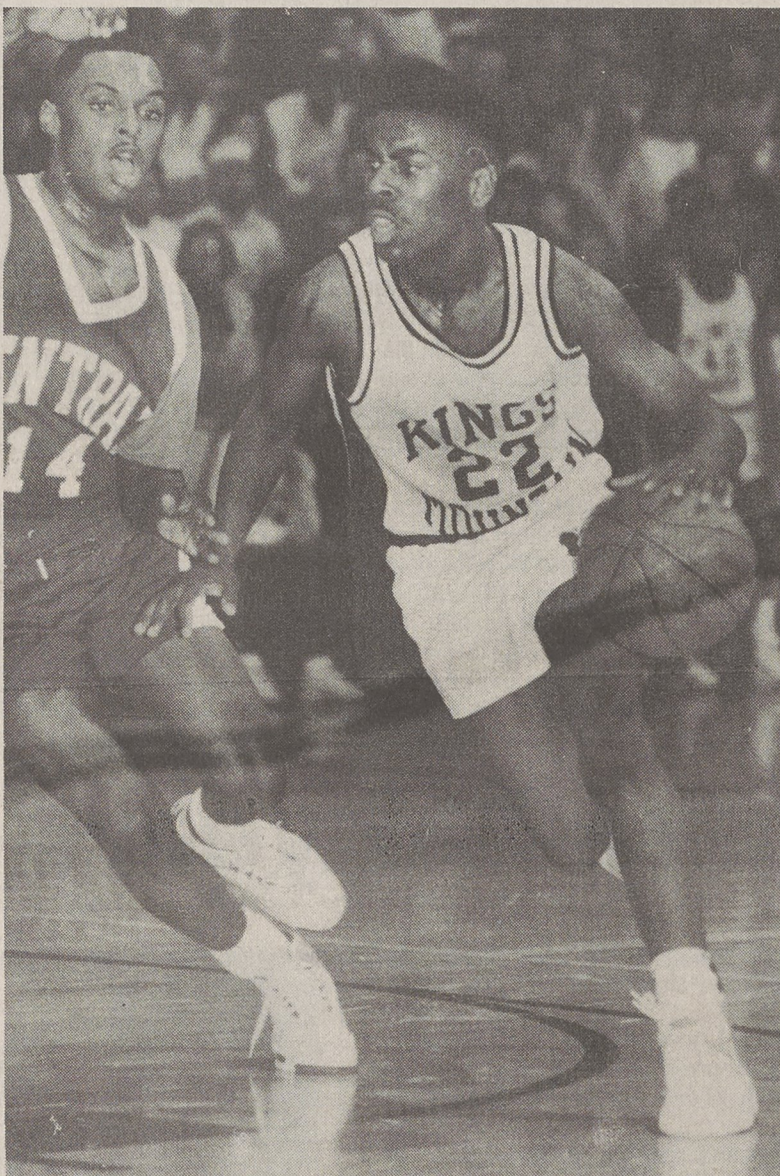


Photo by Dieter Melhorn
DRIVING ON R-S - Kings Mountain point guard Rogerick McClain (22) drives past R-S Central defender Todd Harris (14) in Friday's Southwestern 3-A Conference basketball game at the KMHS gym. KM came from behind in the fourth quarter to win 75-72 and nail down their first conference title since 1982.

Ryan Hollifield and Daniel Honeycutt each hit two straight foul shots in the final 34 seconds and R-S Central's Brian Wilkerson missed a three-point field goal attempt with three seconds left as Kings Mountain's Mountaineers edged the Hilltoppers 75-72 Friday night at the KMHS gym to clinch the Southwestern 3-A Conference title.

The victory gave KM its first SWC title in seven years under Coach Larry Sipe and broke an eight-year championship drought. KM's last conference championship was in 1982.

"Our guys never quit," said Coach Sipe, who also got his 20th win of the season against only one loss. "I just can't say enough about our players. When one is down, there's always someone else to pick up the slack. Tonight it was Ryan Hollifield and I was glad to see him have such a good game."

Hollifield, a starter his sophomore and junior years but a reserve this year because of a serious knee injury suffered during the football season, scored a season's high 26 points to lead the Mountaineer offense.

"Not many players who have been used to starting would stick with it like Ryan has," Sipe said. "He's told me many times this year that he knows what his role is now, and he's played that role out to perfection."

Hollifield entered the game early due to Honeycutt and Darian Hager getting into foul trouble and it was his spark that enabled the Mountaineers to erase a 10-point deficit and get back into the game by halftime.

But it was the fourth quarter that Hollifield really took charge, hitting eight straight foul shots. His final two, with 34 seconds remaining, put KM on top for good, 73-72.

R-S Central elected to hold for a last shot but with 14 seconds left, the Hilltoppers' 6-6 center Lamont Davis thought he saw an opening for the basket and drove the baseline. However, Hager, who had been inserted into the lineup for defensive purposes after Hollifield's foul shots, stepped in front of Davis and drew a charge.

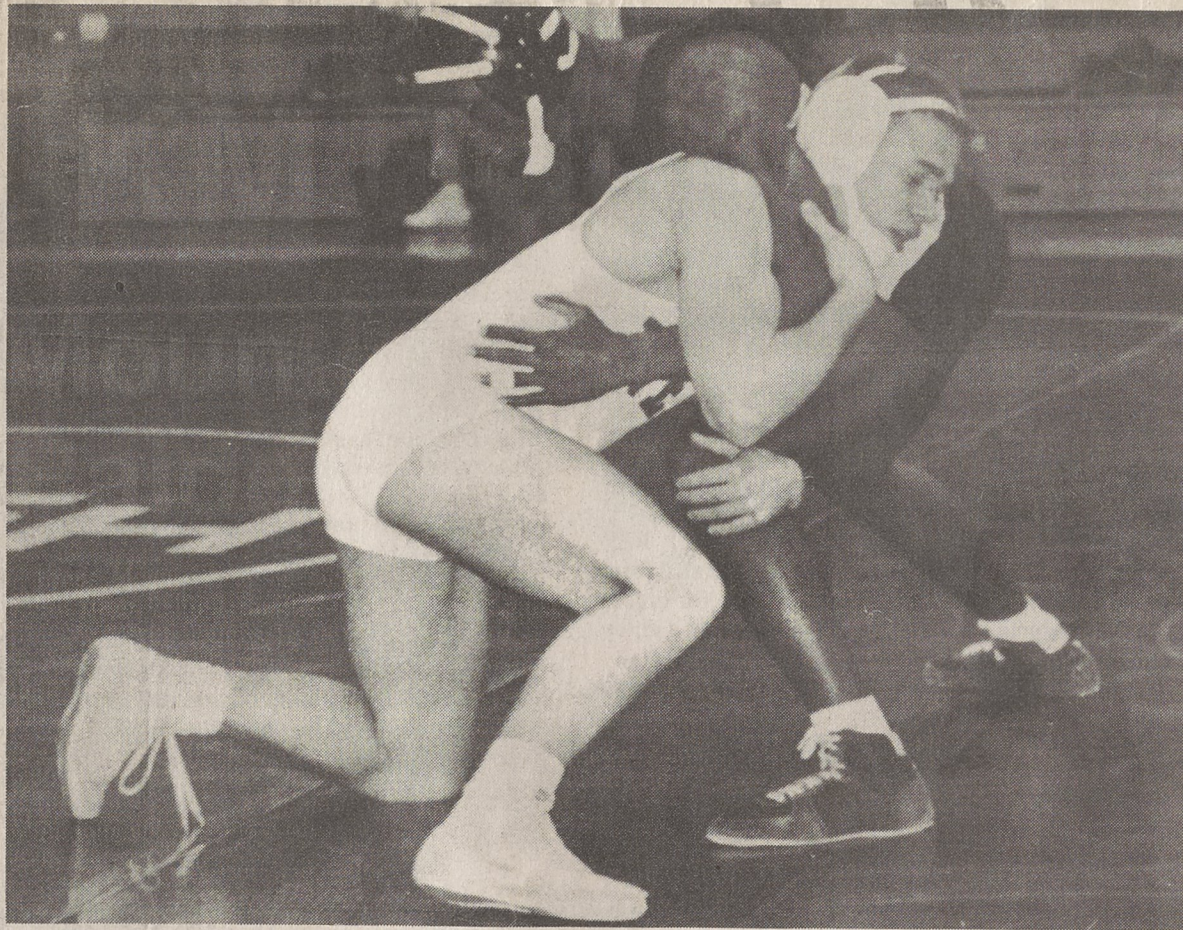
When KM threw the ball in-bounds, Honeycutt was fouled immediately and sank two pressure free throws to make it 75-72. R-S held for a last-second shot and Wilkerson's 20-foot jumper bounced high off the back of the rim. After a scramble underneath the basket, Hager came out with the rebound as the buzzer sounded.

Sipe called the contest a typical KM-R-S battle. Both teams had their fast break going and both were shooting well as a packed KM gym cheered every play.

After early KM leads of 2-0 and 4-2, R-S went on a shooting exhibition that resulted in leads of as many as five points in the first period. KM got a late surge that cut the difference to one but the Hilltoppers scored the last two baskets of the quarter to take a 20-15 lead.

R-S immediately went up by 22-

See R-S Central, 5-A



BATTLES STATE CHAMP - Kings Mountain's Victor Bell (dark uniform) battles state champion Kyle Kuykendall of West Henderson in a 160-pound match in Tuesday's state tournament wrestling match at the KMHS gym. Bell took an early lead against Kuykendall but the West Henderson senior came back to win on a decision. Kings Mountain won the match, though, and will advance to the second round Friday at the Greensboro Coliseum.

KM Wrestlers Advance

Kings Mountain High's wrestlers defeated West Henderson 40-22 Tuesday night at the KMHS gym in the first round of the state dual team tournament.

The Mountaineers, 16-1 in dual matches and unbeaten against 3-A teams, will go to Greensboro Friday to wrestle the winner of last night's T.C. Roberson-West Caldwell match.

All of the remaining matches in the single-elimination state event will be held at the Greensboro Coliseum. The Mountaineers must win four more matches to win the state championship.

Kings Mountain fell behind 10-6 Tuesday night against West Henderson but quickly took control when Robbie Ruff scored a quick first period pin over West Henderson's Scott Vaughn in the 125-pound match. KM won four of the next five matches to take a 28-13 lead before Victor Bell lost the 160-pound match to state champion Kyle Kuykendall 14-7. That made the score 28-16.

Bell led the state champ early in the first period but Kuykendall grabbed a 3-2 lead at the end of the

McClain Second, Bell Fourth In State Individual Tourney

Kings Mountain's Timmy McClain finished second and Victor Bell fourth in the State High School Individual Wrestling Tournament Saturday at High Point Andrews.

McClain, a 152-pounder, led 2-0 before losing the title match to Brian Moore of Northeast Guilford 9-2.

Bell, a 160-pounder, lost in the consolation finals to Todd Eagle of Northeast Guilford on a pin.

Kings Mountain's Chris Henson

placed fifth in the 145-pound class, losing an 8-3 decision to Jon Chambers of Northeast Guilford in a consolation round match. Henson earlier defeated High Point Central's Bernard Morgan 10-0 for his 65th career win, a new KMHS record.

High Point Andrews finished first in the team standings with 86 1/2 points, followed by D.H. Conley with 81 1/2 and Northeast Guilford with 80 1/2. KM was 12th with 34 1/2 points.

period and never lost the lead.

Kuykendall's victory kept the Falcons within striking distance entering the final three matches, but KM senior Scott Belcher put the victory on ice for the Mounties in the 171-pound match. Belcher and Brett Corn battled on almost even terms before Belcher took a 4-2 edge in the second period. Less

than a minute into the third period Belcher pinned Corn to give KM a 34-16 lead.

THE RESULTS

103 - Tee Cole (KM) pinned Charles Hemphill 1st; 112 - Chris Kirtley (WH) pinned Bill Board

See Wrestling, 6-A

Sipe: First Title Feels Great

By GARY STEWART
Editor of the Herald

As an assistant basketball coach at Washington High School in eastern North Carolina in the 1970s, Larry Sipe helped fine tune the skills of current Atlanta Hawks star Dominique Wilkins and helped coach the Washington team to two state championships.

But those accomplishments don't even compare to the feeling Sipe experienced last Friday night when his Kings Mountain Mountaineers won their first Southwestern 3-A Conference championship in seven years under Sipe's guidance.

"Being a head coach and having a great group of players like we've got this year and seeing them go out and win a conference championship gives you a good feeling," Sipe says. "I'm very excited about it as a coach but I'm even more excited for our players."

Sipe, who has never coached a loser at KMHS, came close to winning the conference in 1985, going 20-7 and finishing second in the SWC to state champ R-S Central. In 1986, the Mountaineers finished fourth in the regular season but came on strong late in the year and advanced to the finals of the Western Regionals and came within one game of going to the state championship.

But this year's team is special. Eleven of Sipe's 12 players have varsity experience and from top to bottom, he says, it's the most talented group of players he's been associated with.

"Some coaches don't like to have that many talented players in one

year," he says. "They like to play six to eight players a game. But we've played a large number of kids and all of them have contributed to our success."

Sipe said he's had no dissension whatsoever and all of his players have accepted their roles.

"Before the season we were hoping to finish in the top four and qualify for the state playoffs," he recalled. "North Gaston had four starters back from a 20-7 team, and South Point, R-S Central, East Gaston and Burns all had a lot of talent. We knew we'd be competitive but we didn't think we could go 11-1 in the conference."

Sipe doesn't take the credit for the team's success. He simply says he has a lot of talent. But, much of the credit has to be given him because he has built a system over the years that allows all of his players a chance to get some playing time.

"All but one of our players has been in our program for years," he says. "It's just a matter of going out and executing. Along with that, if our players weren't such good competitors the outcome of many of our games could have been different."

Sipe's players have never-quit attitudes and have come from behind to win many games. In fact, in four of their last five games they trailed at halftime but came back to win in the second half.

The Mountaineers play together as a team, as pointed out by their balanced scoring and rebounding averages. Their season-long scoring leader has been senior Daniel Honeycutt, who is averaging 18 points per

See Larry Sipe, 5-A



LARRY SIPE
Cheers KM On To Victory