

KM Sports

Mountaineers Bomb R-S Central, Crest

JV Team Wins Two SW Games

Kings Mountain High's junior varsity baseball team won two games last week against Southwestern 3-A Conference opponents.

The Mountaineers blanked Burns 7-0 Wednesday and defeated R-S Central 4-1 Thursday.

Coach Ronny Funderburke got strong pitching performances from righthanders Stephen Fisher and David Jenkins.

Fisher hurled a four-hitter in Wednesday's victory and threw only 60 pitches in the seven-inning contest. He retired the Bulldogs on three pitches in the second inning.

Mike Smith and Rick Marr led the KM plate attack, each with a single and double.

Jenkins hurled a two-hitter and struck out 15 Thursday at R-S Central. He also slammed a home run, scored two runs and drove in two.

Jenkins had a perfect game going into the fifth inning before issuing his only walk of the game. He kept the no-hitter going until the bottom of the sixth.

Fisher led the KM plate attack with 2-for-4.

The KM team was scheduled to host East Rutherford Wednesday night at Lancaster Field. KM will play at Burns next Monday afternoon.

Leigh To Coach KM Girls

Tony Leigh added another sport to his coaching duties last week when he was named head girls basketball coach at Kings Mountain High School.

Leigh replaces Ronny Funderburke, who held the post for two years.

Leigh, who is head girls softball coach and assistant football coach, said he looks forward to the challenge of coaching girls basketball here. He served as head girls coach at Bessemer City year before last and he was assistant coach at Canton Pishgah for four years prior to that.

"I hope the girls can come in and accept me and my philosophy," he says. "We're just going to try to start from the ground floor and work on fundamentals."

Leigh said he is working on a two-week summer camp in which the girls can get familiar with his coaching style.

"We'll introduce them to what we're going to do," he said. "We want them to get their hands on the basketball during the summer months. Then, when they come in during the season they'll have an idea of what we're going to do. All we'll have to do is refresh them."

See Leigh, 8-A

Kings Mountain Girls Defeat Canton Pishgah

Kings Mountain High's girls softball team won two games from Canton Pishgah in non-conference action Tuesday afternoon at the KM Junior High field.

In a junior varsity game, the KM ladies won 11-6 behind the pitching of Tandra Leftwich. Leftwich also slammed a two-run homer.

Jennifer Carroll went 2-for-3 and hit a home run to highlight a five-run first inning for Coach Tony Leigh's ladies. Nicole Barnes had two doubles in four trips to the plate.

Kings Mountain scored four runs in the second inning and three in the fifth to win the varsity game, 7-5.

Carmen Smith hurled the win. Velma Degree was 2-for-2 with two triples and two RBI, Leftwich was 2-for-2 with a home run and two RBI and Holly Goforth was 1-



Photo by Dieter Melhorn
SIGNS WITH WAKE FOREST-Paul Brannon, seated, senior at Kings Mountain Senior High School, signs a baseball scholarship with Wake Forest University Wednesday morning as his father Dean Brannon, standing, Coaches Bruce Clark, Ronny Funderburke and Bud Bumgardner and his mother, Mary Brannon, look on.

Brannon Signs With Wake

Kings Mountain High's Paul Brannon signed a baseball scholarship with Wake Forest Wednesday morning at the KMHS principal's office.

Wake's head coach, George Grier, was in KM to ink the senior catcher who set a state home run record while leading the Mountaineers to the state 3-A championship last year.

Brannon had earlier given a verbal commitment to UNC-Chapel Hill but changed his mind after visiting the Wake Forest campus.

"Paul's the kind of athlete that you coach and hope to have many more like him, but you know there will be very few of them," said KMHS Coach Bruce Clark.

"To the delight of some and the agony of others, Paul dedicated himself solely to baseball this past year," said Clark. "It was because he really felt like he would have this opportunity. All I can say is that I'm super proud of him. He's been a class person for three years here. For the two years that I've been around him it's been nothing but commendable performances both on and off the field."

Brannon played football his sophomore and junior seasons for the Mountaineers, starting on the offensive line.

In baseball, he played first base his sophomore and junior years. He hit over .300 and slugged five home runs his sophomore season. Last year, he hit .474 with 20 home runs, setting a state record for homers in a single season (20), a career (25) and in eight consecutive games. He hit home runs in his last seven games last year and his first game this year.

for-3 with two RBI.

"We defeated a good ball club," said Coach Leigh, who formerly coached at Pishgah. "They scored only one earned run off of us because we committed three errors in the fourth when they scored four of their five runs. Other than that one inning, we played as good as we can play. Pishgah is a playoff-caliber ball team."

The KM girls, now 7-1 overall and 3-1 in the Southwestern 3-A Conference, will be idle until Friday, April 20 when they travel to Shelby.

KM 8, R-S Central 5

Kings Mountain High's girls softball team closed out its pre-Easter conference schedule last Thursday with an 8-5 victory at R-S Central.

See Softball, 8-A

KM's Darian Hager Signs With Wingate Wednesday

Kings Mountain High basketball standout Darian Hager signed a college scholarship with Wingate College Wednesday afternoon at the KMHS coach's office.

Coach John Thurston of Wingate was in town to ink the 6-6 standout who helped lead the Mountaineers to a 26-3 overall record and to the state championship game.

Coach Larry Sipe had high praise for Hager, who played only two years of high school ball after having foot surgery which forced him out of action his freshman and sophomore years.

"Hager was much improved over his junior year," Sipe said. "I've never coached a kid that improved so much from one year to the next. A lot of coaches have commented on his improvement and feel like

He was moved to catcher this year by Coach Clark and has responded well. His strong throwing arm has gunned down many base runners and he's continued his heavy hitting, swinging at at almost .500 clip with four homers already. He has also been intentionally walked on many occasions.

Clark continues to see great days ahead for his slugger.

"He's having another outstanding year for us, and my prediction is that he'll be very successful at Wake Forest," Clark said. "Down the road, he'll have an opportunity to make it in the pros. He definitely

has the bat for it, and with Coach Grier working with him at Wake he'll have the opportunity to improve defensively. I really look for good things to happen for him."

Grier, who is in his third year at Wake Forest, has coached some 15 big leaguers in various summer collegiate leagues. Two of the better known stars he's worked with are catcher Gary Carter and outfielder Jose Canseco of the Oakland A's.

"I think Coach Grier is doing a great job at Wake and I look for Paul to really benefit from going there," Clark said.

Hager averaged nine points and seven rebounds per game for the Mountaineers, who had perhaps their most balanced team in years. He was All-Southwestern 3-A Conference and Most Valuable Player in the Western Regionals Tournament, where he led the Mounties in both scoring and rebounding in victories over West Rowan and Concord.

"Darian made a good choice in going to Wingate," Coach Sipe said. "Coach Thurston is a good coach and runs a class program."

Thurston coached at James Madison before taking over the Wingate program.

Mounties To Host Easter Tournament

Things are looking up for Kings Mountain High's defending state baseball champions as they prepare for the stretch run of the 1990 season.

After dropping two straight games to East Rutherford and Hunter Huss a couple weeks ago, the Mountaineers have put together three games that are reminiscent of last year's state title run, beating Burns, R-S Central and Crest by big margins.

At the Easter break, the Mountaineers, 5-1 in the conference and 7-3 overall, find themselves tied for first place in the Southwestern 3-A Conference with East Rutherford, which lost its first game Tuesday night to North Gaston, 4-0. North Gaston, 3-3, is in third place.

The Mountaineers will host Gaffney, S.C., in a non-conference game Thursday at 7 p.m. at Lancaster Field and then will host the Gaston Neighbors Tournament Tuesday through Saturday of next week. Kings Mountain, Bessemer City, Shelby, Cherryville, North Gaston, East Gaston, South Point and Hunter Huss will compete.

A junior varsity game between Kings Mountain and Shelby, beginning at 4 p.m., will precede tonight's varsity game.

After that, the Mountaineers will resume conference play, hoping to win their first conference championship since 1980.

"It's nice to see our bats come back and to score some runs," Clark said after seeing his team whip R-S Central 17-11 Friday and Crest 17-3 Monday.

"R-S Central has a good baseball team when it comes to putting the ball in play," he said. "They're free swingers and had us on the ropes early."

"But we came back strong. I was very pleased with our offensive performance and the pitching of Keith Allen."

Allen had perhaps his worst pitching performance of the season, giving up 11 hits and fanning only seven. But his teammates made four errors behind him. For the year he has a 5-0 record, 41 strikeouts in 29 innings, and a 2.86 ERA.

The Mountaineers collected 14 hits off R-S Central's Ray Baynard. R-S grabbed a 4-2 lead in the first and still led 4-3 after two, but KM scored four runs in the third to take a 7-4 lead. R-S scored a pair in the fourth to make it 7-6 but KM scored four in the sixth and six in the seventh to break the game open.

First baseman Jon Reid, who has carried a hot stick of late, slammed a pair of home runs, two singles and six RBI to lead the KM plate attack. One of his homers was an exciting inside-the-park homer which hit the top of the fence and bounced away from centerfield Troy Harris of the Hilltoppers.

Chris Plonk also went 4-for-4, Paul Brannon was 2-for-4 with a home run and five RBI, and Chad

Plonk had a home run and two RBI.

Reid's blast over the left field fence sparked the four-run third inning rally which put the Mountaineers on top for good. Brannon homered in the sixth, when KM scored four runs, and Plonk and Reid homered in the six-run seventh inning.

"Reid and Chris Plonk are our seventh and eighth place hitters and between them went 8-for-8," Clark said. "When they can do that we're going to be in fine shape."

Monday afternoon, the Mountaineer bombed Crest again in non-conference action as Chad Plonk, Chris Plonk and Jeff Rogers combined for a four-hitter. KM collected 12 hits off a pair of Crest pitchers and also took advantage of five Charger errors.

The game was called after six innings. In two six-inning games against Crest this year, the Mountaineers scored 40 runs and collected 29 hits.

Chris Henson went 3-for-3 with two RBI, Chip Cash was 1-for-1 with three RBI and two sacrifice flies, Chris Bullock was 2-for-4 with four RBI, Chris Plonk 2-for-4 with two homers and four RBI, and Eric Peppard 1-for-2 with three RBI and a home run.

"It was just a matter of us coming out and hitting the ball," said Coach Clark, whose club scored eight runs in the top of the second to take a 9-0 lead.

"We just caught Crest in a year when they're just not a good team," he said. "We played very good baseball. We made a lineup adjustment, playing Reid at first, Chris Plonk at third, Bullock at shortstop and Bryan Dellinger and Daniel Honeycutt in left field. It's been a real good move for us. We talked about it earlier in the season and didn't use it, but since we've gone to this lineup it's been very good to us."

Clark said the last four games have been important for the Mountaineers, who have played great baseball since losing to East Rutherford 10-0 and Hunter Huss 4-3.

"A lot of people were doubting our team after those two losses, and it was rough on the players," Clark said. "But our kids just fought back and have outscored the opponents tremendously in the last four games. We're beginning to play like the old Mountaineer team."

"It's been a fun four games for us," he went on. "We look for the next couple of months to be real exciting for this town."

Kings Mountain will play its first game in the Gaston Neighbors Tournament Monday at 5:30 against North Gaston's Wildcats.

Action gets underway Monday at 3:15 with East Gaston facing Bessemer City. Cherryville meets South Point at 8 p.m.

See Baseball, 8-A



Jennifer Gibson (left) Forces Pishgah Runner

KM Golfers Run Record To 24 In Row

Kings Mountain High's golf team defeated Burns, North Gaston and South Point in a Southwestern 3-A Conference match Thursday at Lakewood Golf Course in Cramerton.

Kings Mountain finished with a 309 team score, followed by North Gaston and Burns at 331 each and South Point with 334.

The Mountaineers, who have won all three of their matches this year and 24 in a row over the past four years, were led by Robbie Wilson with a one-over-par 72. Ryan Broadwell shot 74, Brady Goforth 80 and Matt Heavner 83.

The Mountaineers will go to Riverbend near Shelby today to battle Shelby, North Gaston and R-S Central.