

First Legion Baseball Season A Huge Success

The success of American Legion baseball in Kings Mountain this summer will have far-reaching effects, says Coach Bruce Clark.

Post 155 compiled a 17-10 overall record and advanced to the Area IV Western Division finals in its first season back in baseball after a five-year absence.

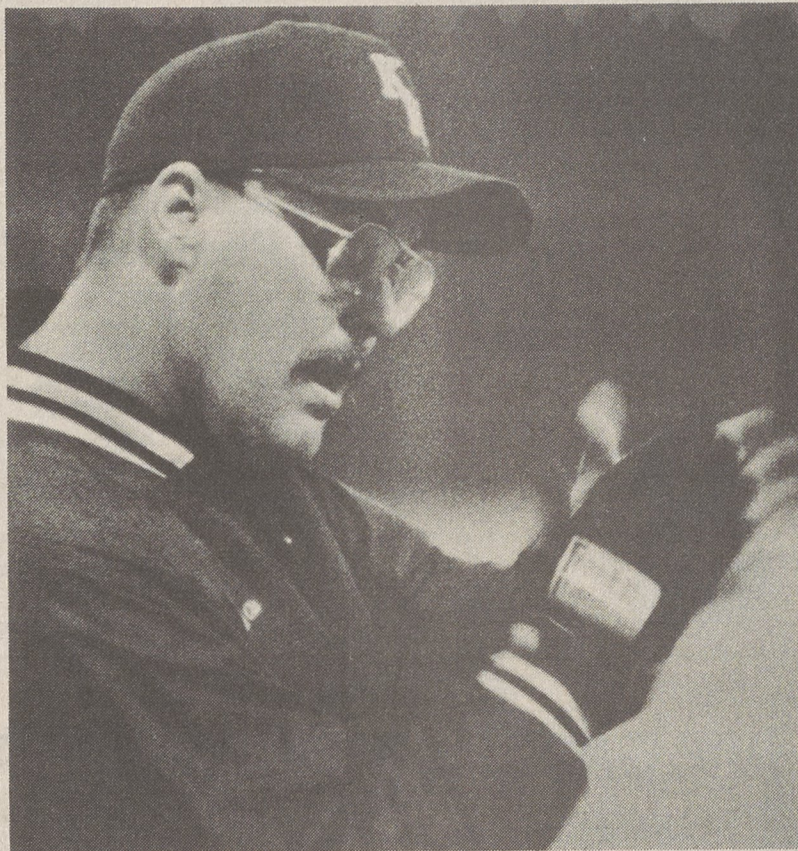
Kings Mountain's program was successful on the field and financially, and Coach Clark feels the experience younger players gained in legion play will pay big dividends for his Kings Mountain High School team in the future.

Post 155 accomplished its outstanding record despite the fact that it drew from only one high school (KMHS) and, for the most part, was competing against teams that drew from at least three high schools.

"We really didn't know what to expect going into the season," Clark said. "It was a new experience for the coaches and the players because the majority had never played together in summer ball. It was a dramatic change for me because of nine-inning games. I just didn't know how I'd use my pitching rotation."

Clark admitted it took a while to adjust. Because of a long high school season in which his KMHS team advanced to the third round of the state playoffs, the Juniors got a late start. Most of the other teams had already played a handful of games and Post 155 had to play 17 games in 18 days to get their first round schedule in.

"It took a couple of weeks to settle down after the loss to North Gaston in the high school playoffs," Clark said. "But after that I thought we played the best baseball we had played all year. I think a lot



HAPPY WITH SEASON - Bruce Clark, pictured here cheering on his team in a Post 155 American Legion baseball game, said he was happy with the first season back in Area IV competition and looks for an excellent future in the sport.

of that had to do with the amount of extra effort we had to find due to the loss of Paul Brannon."

Brannon, the Mountaineer catcher and state home run king, played four legion games before signing a pro contract with the Seattle Mariners.

"That was a tremendous void to fill," said Clark. "But I think the players realized that and for that reason began to play with a little more aggression on their part instead of just sitting back and wait-

ing for Paul to hit a home run."

Several Post 155 players hit the long ball and also hit for a high batting average. Chad Plonk led Area IV in home runs with 11 and his twin brother Chris hit six. Several other Post 155 players also carried high averages, including Chris Henson, Chip Cash, Ken Crook, Chris Bullock and Daniel Honeycutt.

A pleasant surprise for Clark was his pitching staff. Despite playing teams like Caldwell

County, Hickory, Burke County and Taylorsville, which drew players from all over their counties, the KM hurlers held up well.

Keith Allen, who was 11-0 in high school, continued his steady play and compiled a 4-2 mark. Tommy Payne, who saw limited action during the high school season, and Donald Bell also won four games each. Chad Plonk won three and Bullock two.

"Tommy Payne had an excellent year," Clark said, "and David Jenkins probably grew up more during the summer than he has in a long time simply because of the level of competition. We found out just how good Donald Bell can be on the mound and at the bat."

"Those three will probably be our pitching rotation for next year, and I feel like they all can do a good job for us," he said. "We're hoping Scottie Hopper and Jeff Rogers, who did not play legion ball, will come back out for the high school team next year and give us five good pitchers."

Clark will miss his seniors, who gave him 44 victories in 55 decisions the last two years in high school and 61 wins in two years including legion.

"I can't say enough about those guys and what they've meant to this program, and to the community," Clark said. "They have created a winning atmosphere through the entire athletic program and I think they made the people here believe that state championships can be won."

"I don't know if we'll ever have the amount of talent again, player for player, that we've had the past two years. From a power hitting, base-running and good baseball

knowledge standpoint, it'll be tough to find another group like this one. But we have a great deal of talent coming up."

Clark said playing legion ball this summer gave many of the players an opportunity to work on areas of their game that needed improvement.

"Legion baseball helped us more than we'll ever know," Clark said. "I think our players realized that we can compete with anybody even though we draw from only one school. We basically took a high school baseball team and made it to the championship round, and that's a tremendous accomplishment for this town and the legion program."

Kings Mountain legion officials caught some flak earlier in the season for fielding a team. KMHS players in the past several years had played for Shelby and Bessemer City.

"I haven't heard anything but good comments about the program from our legionnaires and people in the community," Clark said. "I think that it's probably going to help us a whole lot more ways than people realize."

Clark said at least three players will be playing college baseball because of the extra exposure they got during the legion season. Eric Peppard recently signed with

See Season, 4-B



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Getting the lead out

According to the FDA, new test evidence shows that even very low levels of lead absorbed from ceramic dishes can affect children's growth and intelligence. The lead comes from glaze commonly used to make ceramics smooth.

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Jackson KM Golf Champion

Stoney Jackson fired a record 66-69-135 to win the Western Carolinas Invitational Golf Tournament Saturday and Sunday at Kings Mountain Country Club.

marked the first time a golfer has fired sub-70 rounds on both days of a KMCC event. Jackson won by eight shots over John Gamble, who had a 69-

74--143. Mitch Howze was third with a 69-75--143.

Mickey Powers won the championship B flight with a 75-73--148. Gerald Putnam and Hayne Neisler both shot 76-75--151 with Putnam taking second place in a playoff.

Don Teague won the first flight with a 77-75--152. Larry Davis was second with a 78-76--154 and Rusty Bumgardner was third with a 77-78--155.

Robbie Wilson shot a 80-77--157 to win the second flight. Bo Ballard was second with a 83-76--159 and Chris Roseboro was third at 81-82--163.

Dennis Hicks won the third flight in a playoff over Mike McDaniel. Hicks shot 84-82--166 and McDaniel had 85-81--166. John Van Dyke was third with 84-85--169.

Houston Wolfe won the seniors division with a 82-84--166. Lloyd Champion was second at 96-82--178 and Gene Timms third at 92-94--186.

The next tournament at KMCC is the members only Ray Barnes Tournament July 21-22. It will be flighted and have a regular and seniors division.

Pro Wrestling At KM Armory

Professional wrestling returns to the Kings Mountain National Guard Armory Tuesday, July 31, at 8 p.m.

In the main event, the Italian Stallion will battle the Russian Assassin in a hair vs. mask event. If the Stallion loses, he must cut his long, curly hair and if the Russian loses he must remove his mask.

In another key match, Gorgeous George South will battle David Taylor in a no disqualification match.

Several other matches are scheduled, including an appearance by the popular Hillbilly.

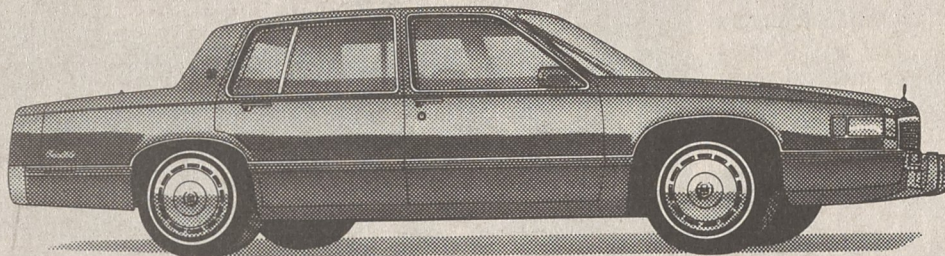
Tickets are \$7 in advance and \$8

See Wrestling, 4-B

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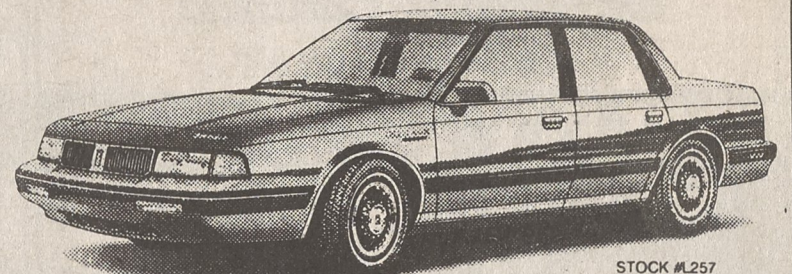
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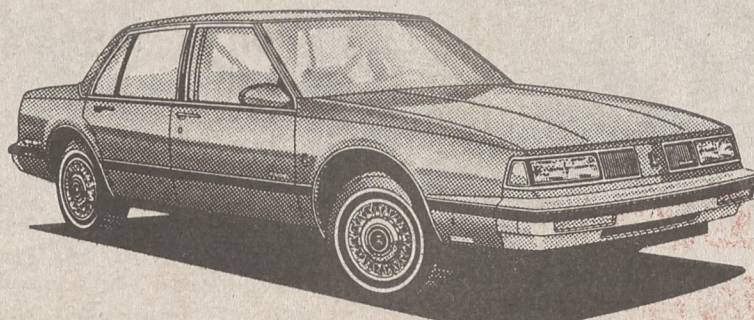


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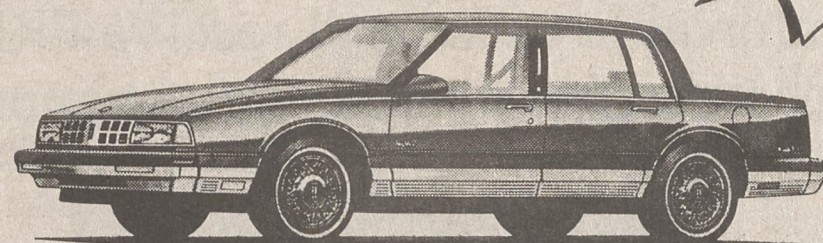


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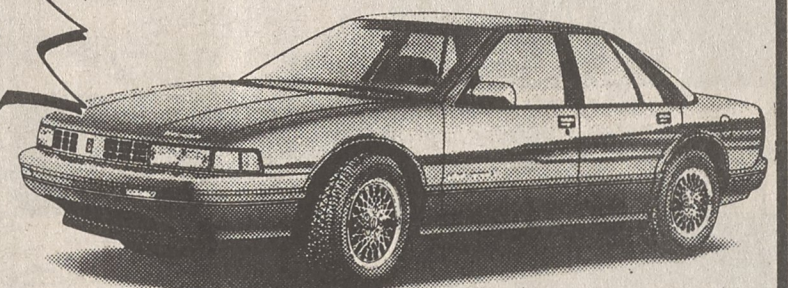
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