

Sports

KM At Pisgah Friday

Game Matches Bears' Size, KM's Speed

Kings Mountain's Mountaineers will open their 1990 football season Friday night at 7:30 at Canton Pisgah.

It's the first of four straight non-conference games for the Mountaineers and could be one of their toughest games of the year. The Bears are predicted to be one of the best 3-A teams in the state this year.

Pisgah defeated the Mountaineers 35-7 last year, taking advantage of several early Mountaineer mistakes to turn the game into a rout. Pisgah went on to win its conference championship and KM rebounded to finish second in the Southwestern 3-A Conference.

"They're no different than last year," says KM Coach Dennis Hicks, whose club is one of the favorites to win the SWC. "They're extremely big up front. They're a very good offensive team, solid as a rock. They come off the ball well up front and do a lot of different blocks and traps. They do a great job of blocking, as good as anybody in our league.

"If we go up there like we did last year, like going on a picnic, they'll come out after us pretty good. We have the ability to play with them. We'll have to keep it tight and try to create a winning situation."

The Mountaineers will put one of the best backfields in the area on display. Hicks has veterans at every backfield position with Timmy McClain at quarterback, Victor Bell and D.J. Williams alternating at tailback, and Jeff Lockhart at fullback.

The Mountaineers will be without the services of their all-time leading receiver, Darius Ross, who dislocated his ankle in last week's scrimmage with West Caldwell and will be out six to eight weeks. "It will be his decision whether he tries to come back," said Hicks. "He's quite an athlete and did a lot of things well for us. We've got a 34-man squad now so we can get the ball in the endzone some other way."

Ross, a senior, led the SWC in scoring his freshman year. Despite being bothered by injuries which put him on the sidelines part of his sophomore and junior seasons, he still led the team in receiving both years.

He was also an explosive return man and, since the Mountaineers are going more to a running game this year, that's where he'll probably be missed the most.

"One of his greatest assets was his ability to return kicks and punts, if not for scores then at least to put us in good field position," Hicks said. "D.J. Williams and Diron Bell will have to take up the

See Football, 10-A

GARY STEWART

Editor



This Could Be Mounties' Year

The ride to Canton Friday may be long, but it may be refreshing for Kings Mountain's football team and fans as they open another season Friday night against Pisgah's Bears.

Here's hoping the mountain air is much cooler than it is here. The Mountaineers have practiced in almost 100-degree heat this week, and with the humidity high also, it has been almost unbearable.

With a new season also comes another column of predicting the winners of the Southwestern 3-A Conference and Atlantic Coast Conference races, although we're still a few weeks away from the start of both of those.

Kings Mountain and other SWC teams will play four non-conference games before beginning conference wars, and the Mountaineers will also have an open date between the non-conference and conference schedules.

Picking the winner in the SWC is usually easy, because Shelby usually wins it. Most years you can pick the Lions first and North Gaston last, fill in the blanks between them and it's pretty close. That could be the case this year, too, but if there has ever been a year that the time is right for someone other than Shelby to win, it's this year.

At least four teams--Shelby, Kings Mountain, Burns and East Rutherford--have the talent to win the conference. Shelby and East Rutherford suffered heavy graduation losses. KM and Burns lost some good ones but also have some good ones coming back.

The race for the three state playoff berths should be as exciting as last year, when they weren't decided until the final playing date. Shelby, Kings Mountain and Burns all had a chance for a share of first place until the final night, but KM fell to East Rutherford and had to settle for second place.

Here's the way I see the SWC:

1 - KINGS MOUNTAIN - The Mountaineers have as much backfield talent as they've had in a long time with quarterback Timmy McClain and running backs Victor Bell, D.J. Williams and Jeff Lockhart returning for their senior season. The offensive line is young, but it is also very talented. If the Mountaineers can get their option attack going good early, they should be on a roll by the time conference play begins. The Mountaineers haven't won a SWC title outright since 1964 (they shared the crown with Shelby and East Rutherford in 1986). This will be the year.

2 - BURNS - If Kings Mountain falters, Burns will be right there waiting to take home the championship trophy. In fact, the best SWC game of the year could be on October 12 when the Mountaineers travel to Burns. Burns has several starters back from last year's 9-3 team which lost to KM twice. (The Bulldogs will be remembering those games!). Like KM, the 'Dogs have to rebuild in some key areas but they have the talent to do it.

3 - SHELBY - The Lions have won or shared the last five SWC titles and won back-to-back state crowns in 1987 and '88. They went to the Western finals last year after head-to-head battles with KM in the regular season and state playoffs. Shelby won both games by a touchdown or less. Shelby returns only one full-time starter and didn't have that great of a JV team. But Coach Jim Taylor and staff always manage to put a very good team on the field. This year's team will get better as the season goes along, and if KM and Burns don't do the same, Shelby will be right there in first place again.

4 - EAST RUTHERFORD - The Cavaliers lost 23 seniors off what had to be the best fourth place team in the state last year. East lost three games by a combined total of 11 points. The final night of the season, when they man-handled KM 48-14, they could have beaten any high school team in North Carolina, and probably the University of North Carolina too. The Cavaliers will have one of the best running backs in the league in fullback Robert Gray, but overall they're going to be very young.

5 - SOUTH POINT - The Red Raiders lost Shrine Bowl star Willie Strain, and a lot of other good players, but new coach Phil Tate has some young players who show a lot of promise. If they survive a rugged non-conference schedule without having too many players hurt, they could contend for a playoff berth.

6 - R-S CENTRAL - The Hilltoppers have one of the best quarterbacks around in senior Todd Harris, who can run and throw with the best of them. But Jack Huss suffered some very big losses up front, including Shrine Bowl star Warren Forney. Huss had three linemen to sign major college scholarships and small schools don't replace that kind of talent. Still, with Harris leading the show, they'll give everybody a tough game.

7 - NORTH GASTON - The Wildcats will be much improved but don't look for them to have a winning season. They'll have a shot at winning a few of their non-conference games, and if South Point and R-S Central suffer injuries, they could even move up a notch or two in the conference race.

See ACC, 7-A



SCRIMMAGE ACTION - Kings Mountain's Mountaineers looked good in their scrimmage Thursday night at John Gamble Stadium against West Caldwell, the perennial champion of the Big Six 3-A Conference. Kings Mountain scored twice and the good KM defense kept West Caldwell out of the endzone. Photo at left shows KM fullback Jeff Lockhart picking up some good yardage and photo at right shows the KM defense closing in on the West Caldwell quarterback. The Mountaineers, one of the favorites in the Southwestern 3-A Conference this year, open their season Friday night at 7:30 at Canton Pisgah.

Volleyball Begins Thursday

KM Girls Defending Champions

Kings Mountain High volleyball coach Dianna Bridges is rebuilding her team after winning the Southwestern 3-A Conference championship four years in a row.

Bridges lost most of the players off last year's championship team. The KM ladies open their season Thursday at Enka against Enka and Franklin. They play at R-S Central August 27 at 4:30 p.m. and host Country Day August 28 at 5 p.m.

"We have an extremely good team and can't go anywhere but up," says Bridges. "But we looked very good in our two scrimmages."

Bridges' only returning players are seniors Suzette Feemster and Angie Whitaker and junior Tandra Leftwich. Feemster was a full-time starter last year and Whitaker saw limited time. Leftwich was a starter

See Volleyball, 10-A



COACH DIANNA BRIDGES, SUZETTE FEEMSTER, ANGIE WHITAKER AND TANDRA LEFTWICH, LEFT TO RIGHT, LOOK FORWARD TO VOLLEYBALL SEASON.



MITCH HOWZE, RIGHT, WON CLEVELAND COUNTY GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP IN SUDDEN DEATH PLAYOFF WITH STONEY JACKSON, LEFT.

Kings Mountain Golfers Dominate Cleveland County Golf Tournament

Kings Mountain golfers dominated the Cleveland County Golf Tournament last weekend, taking three of the first four places.

Mitch Howze parred the fourth hole of a sudden death playoff Sunday at Kings Mountain Country Club to win the championship over fellow KM Country Club golfer Stoney Jackson. Brad Wilson, another KMCC golfer, tied Trip Boinest for third place but lost in sudden death.

Howze finished with a 70-73-72--215 in the three-day event played at Woodbridge, Pine Grove and KMCC. He was the first round leader and was tied with Jackson after the second round. Jackson shot 73-70-72--215. Howze was the first KM golfer to win the county tournament.

Howze sank a six foot birdie putt on the 18th hole to force the sudden death with Jackson, who

had a four-shot lead after 10 holes.

Jackson barely missed birdie putts on the second and third holes of sudden death. Then, on the fourth hole, Jackson came up short of the green on his approach shot. He chipped on and missed a six-foot par putt. Howze hit the green in two and two-putted.

Boinest, a former champion, shot 76-69-71--216 to tie Wilson, a Campbell College golfer, who had a 75-70-71--216. Former champion Terry Abercrombie was fifth with a 73-70-74--217.

Several other Kings Mountain golfers played well. Gerald Putnam shot 74-78-77--229; Brady Goforth shot 79-74-79--232; Hayne Neisler 82-74-77--233; Robbie Wilson 75-79-80--234; John Howze 80-74-83--237; Ryan Broadwell 74-82-83--239; and Bo Ballard 81-77-91--249.