

## KM HALL OF FAME REPORT

# Jim Kimmell KM's 'Natural'

(The Kings Mountain Sports Hall of Fame Banquet will be held April 22 at 7 p.m. at the Kings Mountain Community Center. Jimmy Kimmell, Ken Baity, John Gamble and Toby Williams will be inducted. Tickets are on sale for \$10 each at the Kings Mountain Chamber of Commerce, Kings Mountain Herald, McGinnis Department Store and from any member of the Hall of Fame committee).

By GARY STEWART  
Editor of the Herald

Anytime Kings Mountain High sports fans get together and the talk turns to the best athletes in the school's history, the name Jimmy Kimmell is always one of the first to be mentioned.

Like most kids in the "old" days, Kimmell played all three major sports--football, baseball and basketball. Those were the only sports offered for many years.

But, unlike most athletes, Kimmell excelled in all three. In fact, during his high school years of 1949-53, he started in all three sports for four years in a row, winning 12 varsity letters and making All-Conference in all three his junior and senior years. He was an All-State football player.

After graduating from KMHS in the spring of '53, he went on to Lenoir-Rhyne College and played football and baseball for the Bears. He was a backup tailback to All-American Walt Cornwell in football and was an All-Conference infielder and leading hitter for the Bears in baseball.

Kimmell played only three years of baseball at L-R because he graduated in just 3 1/2 years. After that he went into the teaching and coaching profession and put a lot of the techniques he learned in high school and college into practice during a successful 24-year coaching tenure in the Palmetto State.

Kimmell was a four-time Coach of the Year in football at various South Carolina 3-A schools. In 1962 and '63 he was an assistant coach on Saluda High's state championship football teams. He served Newberry, Chester and Latta high schools as head football coach and at each of those stops he turned perennial losers into championship teams. He is now principal of Latta Primary School.

Kimmell still makes occasional trips to Kings Mountain to visit his father-in-law, Howard Ware, and other relatives. The Kimmells and Wares will be in attendance at the fourth annual Kings Mountain Sports Hall of Fame Banquet on April 22 to see Jim Kimmell, Ken Baity, Toby Williams and Coach John Gamble inducted into the Hall of Fame.

The humble Kimmell said receiving such an honor comes as a shock.

"You're talking about some super athletes," Kimmell says. "There are kids that have come through Kings Mountain for many, many years who excelled in sports and I'm unworthy of it, really. But I'm no fool. I'm not going to turn it down. I'm really and truly thrilled."

Kimmell credits sports for taking him off the "mill hill" and giving him an education. The son of Harry and Pauline Kimmell, now deceased, Jim grew up near the Pauline Mill and as a youngster was able to see some of the true greats of Kings Mountain sports.

"Jake Early is still my idol," Kimmell said of the catcher who played on Kings Mountain's first championship baseball team of 1935 and later played 10 seasons in the major leagues.

"When I was a kid, right after World War II, the Kings Mountain Vets were playing," Kimmell recalled. "Don Parker was my hero. He was a pitcher. John Henry Moss started that team, and even though it's been a long time I think Aaron Moss was the manager."

"Charlie Ballard was the first baseman and he could hit the ball a long way," he added. "I used to love to go watch those people play baseball."

"When you start talking about inducting people into the Hall of Fame, I think of those people," he said. "I look back and I see Bill Cashion playing fullback for the high school. He was a bull and was a heck of a football player. He just ran over people."

"The best football player I ever played with was Guy Fisher at Kings Mountain. He was an interior lineman and went on up to Lenoir-Rhyne and played there. In tackling practice I was often paired with Guy

and he'd hit you so hard he'd make you gun shy. He was a tremendous hitter in practice and on the football field.

"So, you're taking in a lot of territory," he said. "It's a real honor. I look back over just my lifetime and I remember many good athletes before me, and know of a lot of good ones that came after me. Kings Mountain has had a super program in a bunch of sports. They've won state championships in a lot of sports. I've always tried to keep up with them in football and they were always real representative in football. They've won a lot of championships and a lot of good athletes have come through the program."

During Kimmell's era at Kings Mountain, the Mountaineers didn't win a conference championship. But the teams of the early fifties were making considerable progress and were beginning a tradition which in just a few short years would provide the school's fans with their brightest moments.

"I was the last of the single-wing tailbacks at Kings Mountain," Kimmell recalled. "The year after I left Coach Shu Carlton installed the T-formation and Ollie Harris was the first T-formation quarterback." Just two years later, in 1955, Carlton and his Mountaineers brought the school its first conference championship in football and a year after that Mountaineers won the Western North Carolina championship, which was as far as a school in the Western N.C. High School Activities Association could advance.

"As I think back I cannot even tell you what our won-lost records were," Kimmell said. "But we had some good athletes."

Kimmell, who excelled on both offense and defense, was well on his way to becoming the school's first 1,000-yard rusher his senior year but went down with an injury after running just four plays in the sixth game of the season against Lincolnton. Still, he finished the season with 542 yards rushing in 121 carries and led the team in scoring with 46 points. After Kimmell's injury, Harris took over the tailback position and Coach Carlton saw his outstanding passing ability and began thinking of switching to the T-formation.

Some of Kimmell's brightest moments in football at Lenoir-Rhyne came during his freshman season.

Cornwell, who is a L-R football legend, went down to injury midway of the season and Kimmell took over at tailback and led the Bears of Coach Clarence Stasavich to four straight victories--20-14 over Guilford, 21-20 over Western Carolina, 21-7 over Emory and Henry and 27-13 over Elon.

Kimmell lettered all four years at L-R and was happy with his back-up tailback role on one of the nation's



**VERSATILE ATHLETE** - Jim Kimmell did it all for Kings Mountain High's football teams from 1949-52. He was not only the team's starting tailback all four years, leading the Mounties in rushing and scoring, but also stood out on defense and handled the kicking chores. Kimmell will be inducted into the KM Sports Hall of Fame April 22 at 7 p.m. at the Community Center.

top small college single-wing football teams.

But, baseball was another story. Kimmell wasn't a backup. In fact, he was an instant success. His freshman year he led the North State Conference in hitting with a .438 batting average and he hit over .300 in each of his three seasons with the Bears.

"At Kings Mountain, I played high school baseball under Coach Carlton and American Legion baseball for Buddy Lewis," he recalled. "Lewis had played for many years with the Washington Senators and the

young kids were really impressed with having a big league coach. We learned a lot from him."

"We didn't have any long ball threats," he remembered, "but we had a lot of guys who got good wood on the ball. I don't think we even had enough power to hit one on the bank at City Stadium. But Coach Parker came down a lot to work with us and he was always hitting them on the bank. I think he just did that so we'd have to go get them."

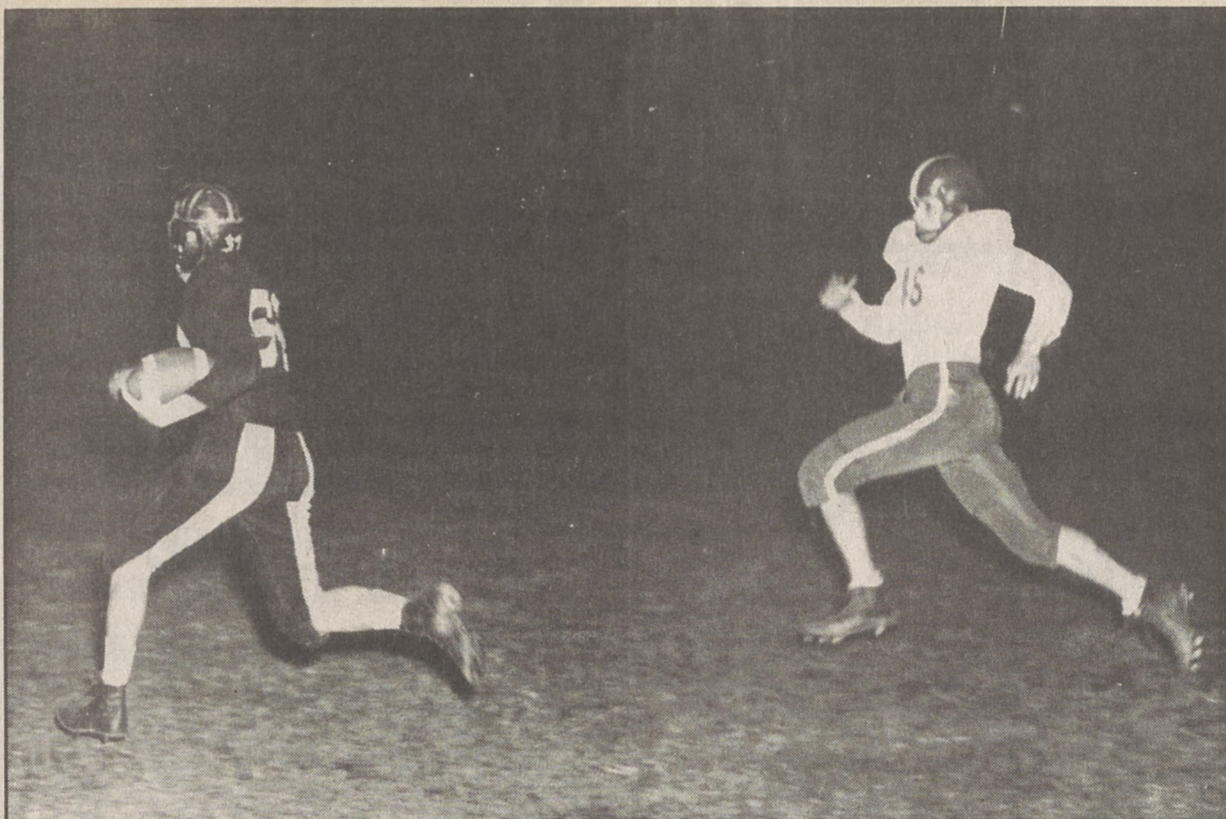
"I played second base and shortstop," he recalled. "We had Cubby Cobb, Charles Guyton, Ollie Harris and some others. In legion ball kids from Bessemer City would play with us and Bobby Wells came up from Grover and played with us. He was a real good ballplayer."

In basketball, Kimmell was a sparkplug. He played guard, usually scored around double figures, and did a good job of running the team.

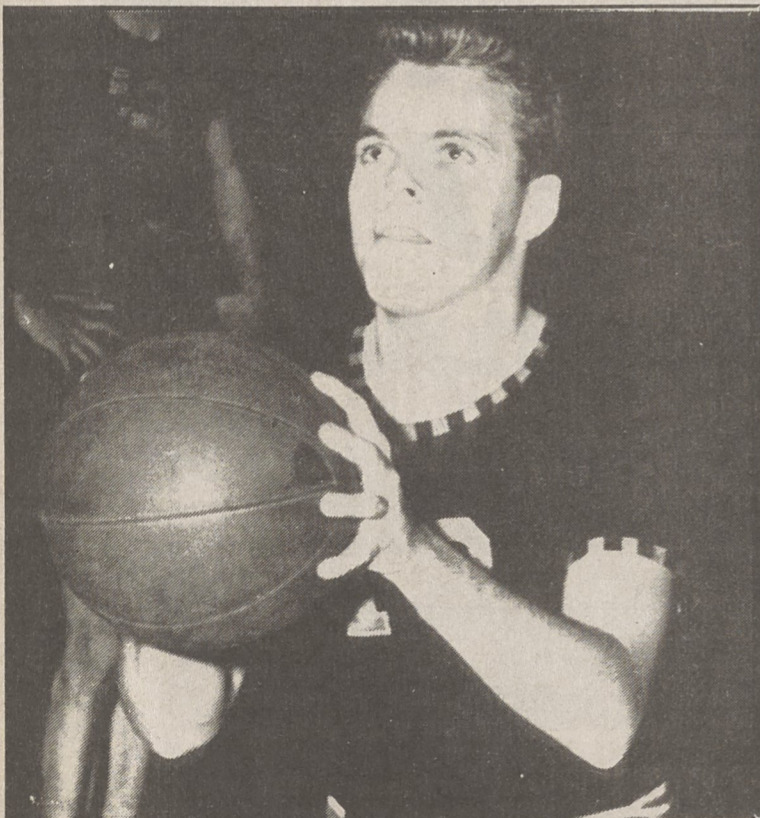
"We had a lot better basketball players than I was," he says. "Fred Tate was big. I guess he was about 6-2 or so. Now he'd be small. He was red-headed, a real aggressive type individual and he dominated the boards for us. All I did was to try to get the ball to him and let him score."

Kimmell said he used a lot of the coaching techniques taught him by Carlton and Parker in his 24 years of coaching in South Carolina. In addition to building successful programs in football, Kimmell also coached some basketball and won two conference championships.

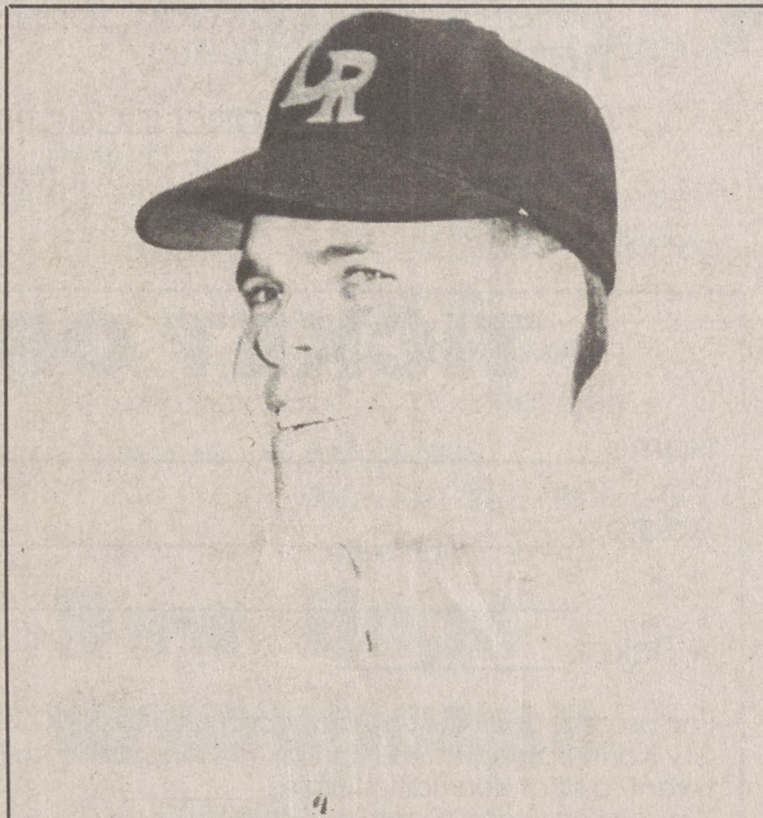
"I never worried about won-lost records," he said. "I feel like you must do the best job you can possibly do and let the winning take care of itself. I have no idea how many games Coach Parker won or lost, but it doesn't make any difference. He had more influence on the people in the community than anyone could possibly have. It wouldn't have made any difference if he'd never won a ballgame. I would think he's one of the most respected people that's ever been in Kings Mountain. I know I love him. He really meant a lot to me. I don't think there's a day that goes by that I don't think about him."



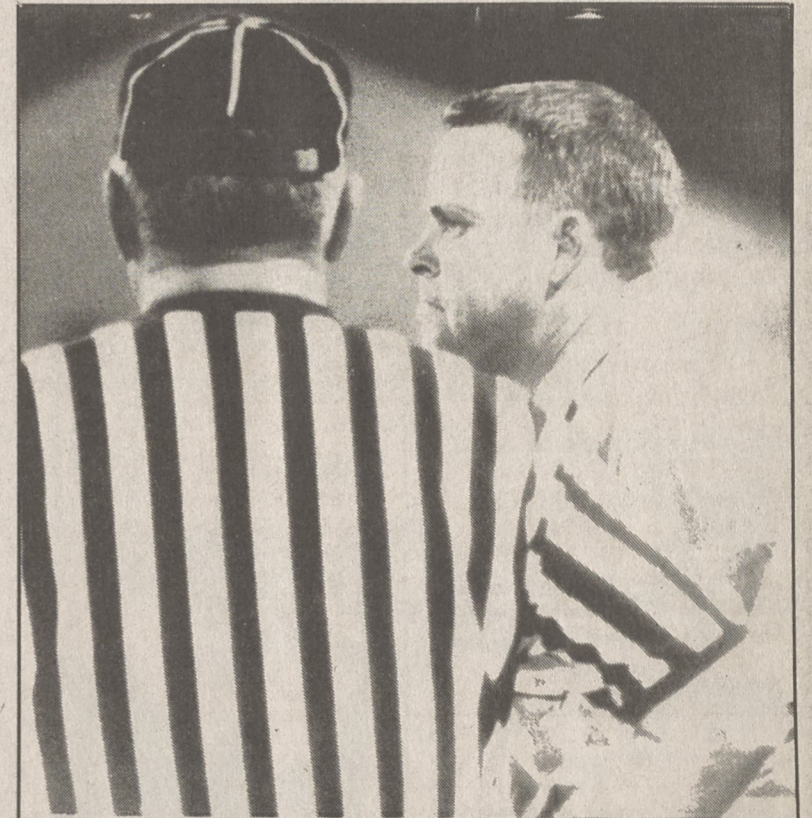
**ON WAY TO TOUCHDOWN** - Jim Kimmell (60) is loose and on his way for a touchdown for Kings Mountain's Mountaineers in 1952. Despite missing the last four games with an injury, Kimmell still led the Mountaineers in rushing with 542 yards and scoring with 46 points.



**BASKETBALL STAR** - Jim Kimmell started four years in basketball at KMHS. A guard, he was a floor leader and one of the top scorers for Coach Don Parker's teams. Kimmell put a lot of Coach Parker's philosophy to use in turning out a pair of conference championships as a basketball coach in South Carolina schools.



**L-R BASEBALL STAR** - Jim Kimmell was also a baseball star at Kings Mountain High School and Lenoir-Rhyne College. As a freshman at L-R he led the team in hitting with a .438 average and was named to the North State Conference all-conference team. He played four years of high school and legion ball in Kings Mountain.



**FOOTBALL COACH** - Jim Kimmell coached football for 24 years in South Carolina before getting into administration. He was an assistant on two state championship teams at Saluda and then turned out some outstanding teams as head coach at Newberry, Chester and Latta high schools.