

# Kings Mountain's '91 sports highlights

Kings Mountain teams didn't dominate the area sports scene in 1991 as they had in the past, but it was still a good year for individuals involved in athletics.

Kings Mountain High School, which had won eight conference championships the year before, slacked off to just three in 1991 - and all of those were in the so-called "minor" sports.

The Mountaineer wrestlers won the SWC and the Western Regionals for the second year in a row; the boys tennis team shared the SWC crown with arch rival Shelby; and the Mountaineer soccer team won its first-ever SWC championship.

Perhaps the sports highlight of the year was the fourth annual Sports Hall of Fame Banquet. Three former KMHS players and a beloved coach were inducted. Inductees were the late Coach John Gamble and former Mountaineer athletes Ken Baity, Jim Kimmell and Toby Williams. Terry Holland, former basketball coach at the University of Virginia and now athletic director at Davidson College, was the guest speaker.

A brief review of '91 sports:

## WRESTLING

Steve Moffitt's KMHS Mountaineers won the SWC with a perfect record. They also won the SWC tournament and the Western Regionals for the second year in a row.

Timmy McClain was MVP in the conference tournament and was named Wrestler of the Year. Eleven of the 13 KM grapplers made the all-conference team. They were McClain, Bill Foard, Mike Byers, Robbie Ruff, Bo Phongsang, D.J. Williams, Andy Hollifield, Victor Bell, Brandon White, Jeramine Grier and Tony Young.

The Mountaineers finished 14-3 overall and won their eighth title in 14 years. Moffitt was SWC Coach of the Year.

Five of the grapplers finished in the top six in the state and Bell, a 160-pound senior, became the first KM wrestler to win the state championship since Chuck Gordon in 1979.

## TENNIS

KMHS band director Chris Cole took over as tennis coach and led the Mountaineers to a share of the SWC title. He was named Coach of the Year.

Kevin Bess, Eric Hanks and Johnathan Jones were named to the All-Conference team and Bess earned a tennis scholarship to Gardner-Webb College.

Kings Mountain's girls saw their three-year domination of SWC tennis end in the fall when they finished second to Shelby.

Many tennis players had banner years as individuals. Twelve-year-old Jackie Houston won eight summer tournaments to qualify for the national tournament in Michigan; Steven Bell won the 16-year-old division in the Hickory Open/Novice Tournament; and Bryan Jones held down the #2 singles position for the North Carolina Tar Heels.

## SOCCER

In just their third year of soccer, the KMHS Mountaineers ran roughshod over the Southwest Conference. Dan Potter's booters were unbeaten in the conference and finished 13-4-1 overall. They broke all the school records in the process.

Sirimaha Rithiphong, a junior, was voted SWC Player of the Year and also became the first KM player to make the All-Region team. He was joined on the All-SWC team by Binh Davis, Thong Chanthaphang, Damon Putnam, Kevin Blalock, Ott Phonphet, and Stephen Fisher. Potter was coach of the year.

## BASKETBALL

Larry Sipe's Mountaineers finished second in the SWC after going to the state championship game a year earlier. The Mountaineers finished 18-6 and won a state playoff game over Lincolnton before bowing to Western N.C. champion T.C. Roberson in the second round.

Sophomore Marquize Williamson led the club in scoring with 17.5 points per game and was named to the All-Conference team along with teammates Darius Ross and Mark Byers. Byers, a 6-5 senior, earned a scholarship to Pembroke State.

The girls finished 10-11 but failed to make the state playoffs by one game. Suzette Fecmster led the

team in scoring and rebounding and was All-Conference along with Nicole Barnes.

Kings Mountain Boys Club enjoyed another banner season by having a record number of players compete in regular season action at the Central Gym. All of the all-star teams fared well in district and state play and the 14-year-old team finished second in the State Tournament at Wilkesboro to earn a trip to the National AAU Tournament in Hampton, Va.

Former Mountaineer coach Bob Hussey moved from Clemson to Virginia Tech as an assistant coach under Bill Foster.

Butch Blalock, former scoring whiz for the Mountaineers, assumed the head coaching duties at Hunter Huss High School in Gastonia.

## BASEBALL

Bruce Clark's KMHS baseball team slipped to a second place finish in the SWC after winning a state championship in '89 and a conference crown in '90.

The Mountaineers finished 13-11 overall but were bumped from the state playoffs because a team which finished lower than second (South Point) won the SWC tournament.

Only one player - designated hitter David Jenkins - was chosen for the All-Conference team.

Most of the same players made up the American Legion team in the summer. Post 155 finished seventh in the nine-team Western Division of Area IV to earn a playoff spot; however, the Mountaineers were disqualified from playoff competition because their birth certificates had not been turned into the commissioner's office by the deadline.

Pitcher Tommy Payne earned a scholarship to Warren Wilson College.

All of the local Dixie Youth teams fared well in district play. The 13-14 year old team won the district and competed in the state tournament in Whiteville.

Kings Mountain's Rusty Bumgardner made the Wake Forest baseball team as a walk-on after completing four years of football eligibility. He hit .250 for the Deacons after leading the team with a .400-plus average early in the year. He signed a pro contract as a first baseman with a new Florida Marlins.

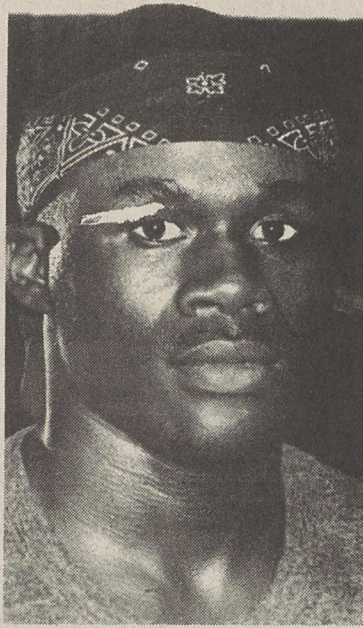
Former North Carolina prep home run king, Paul Brannon, sat out his second year of pro ball with injuries. Brannon was enjoying a banner spring training but was injured three days before the Seattle Mariners broke spring training.

Baseball cards paid big dividends for area collectors in '91. Grover School teacher Steve Wells found a Nolan Ryan signature card valued at \$900 and Johnny Cogdell found a Mickey Mantle signature card valued at \$1,500.

## GOLF

Kings Mountain High's golfers had a five-year unbeaten string broken in '91. The Mountaineers had won four conference titles, one state crown and 28 straight matches over the past four years. They won their first two matches in '91 before losing.

Still, they finished 6-1 in the SWC and third in the Western



VICTOR BELL  
State Champion

Regionals, qualifying for the state tournament for the third time in five seasons.

At Kings Mountain Country Club, Ronnie Wilson and Henry Jones won the Member-Guest and Stoney Jackson won the Club Championship.

Janet Tate scored a hole-in-one on the 17th hole at KMCC.

## BOWLING

Area duckpin bowlers continued to score big in '91. Two KM teams were first place winners in the 61st annual National Duckpin Bowling Tournament at the Bowlamara in Norfolk, Va. R.W. Hullender and John Dilling were members of the Carolina Killers, which won the Class A Men's division, and Hullender and Jack Barrett won the Men's Doubles.

Several bowlers topped the magic 400 figure in league bowling held each Tuesday and Thursday night at Dilling Heating.

## FOOTBALL

1991 was a year of near-misses for Kings Mountain's Mountaineers, who finished 4-6 overall and lost five games by a touchdown or less.

The Mountaineers were only out

of one game, a 27-0 loss to Lincolnton.

They defeated East Lincoln 15-13 on a last-minute field goal by Kevin Blalock, and they lost to South Point 14-12 on a last-second touchdown by the Red Raiders.

They fell to North Mecklenburg by 18-13, Burns 9-7 and Shelby 19-14 as the Lions erased a 14-2 deficit in the fourth quarter.

Impressive victories over North Gaston and East Rutherford in the last two games of the season made for a warmer winter for the players and fans.

Kings Mountain's Aubrey Hollifield completed his eligibility at Wake Forest. He started at nose guard after playing defensive tackle his sophomore and junior seasons.

Offensive guard Brent Bagwell helped lead N.C. State's Wolfpack to a Peach Bowl bid and Ryan Hollifield was a back-up quarterback at Appalachian State, which won the Southern Conference and competed in the Division II playoffs.

Andy Hollifield was a walk-on candidate at Appalachian and D.J. Williams was a walk-on at North Carolina. Both were red-shirted.

Calvin Stephens, who completed four years of outstanding play at South Carolina, was drafted in the third round by the New England Patriots. He was slated to start at offensive guard but was injured during the exhibition season and missed the entire season.

Tracy Johnson, who played his sophomore and junior seasons at KMHS before transferring to Kannapolis, helped the Atlanta Falcons to a division championship and a playoff berth for the first time since 1980.

Kevin Mack completed his eighth season in pro football as the leading rusher for the Cleveland Browns. Mack has led the Browns in rushing seven of his eight seasons.

Former Kings Mountain High athlete David Bolin coached his Hunter Huss Huskies to the Southwestern 4-A Conference championship. They went two

rounds in the state tournament.

Former KMHS football coach Dan Brooks helped coach North Carolina's Tar Heels to their second straight winning season.

Jimmy Littlejohn completed his 33rd year as a Pop Warner coach in Kings Mountain.

## SWIMMING

The high school swim program continued to improve in the second season under Coach Gordon Edwards. Seven Mountaineers qualified for the state meet in Chapel Hill. They were Lindsay Suber, Matthew Bunch, Ty Ross, Benji Davis, Aaron Allen, Jonathan Jones, and Todd Bell.

Dave Kienlen took over as coach of the Mountaineers in the fall. They were undefeated at the Christmas break.

## VOLLEYBALL

Regina Brown of Western Carolina University was named

volleyball player of the year in the Southern Conference and was given a tryout for the U.S. Pam American volleyball team in Colorado Springs, Col.

## RACING

Kings Mountain's Freddy Smith had one of his best years ever in short track racing.

The 26-year veteran of the tracks won the coveted Short Track World Championship and the \$50,000 check that went with it. He also won the \$12,000 Blue-Gray 100 at Cherokee Speedway in Gaffney.

## WILDLIFE

Kings Mountain's Tony Crawford, co-owner of Midway Lakes, caught a state record 61.02 pound Buffalo Carp at Lake Wylie.

Former Kings Mountain resident Joe Neisler was appointed to a two-year term on the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission.

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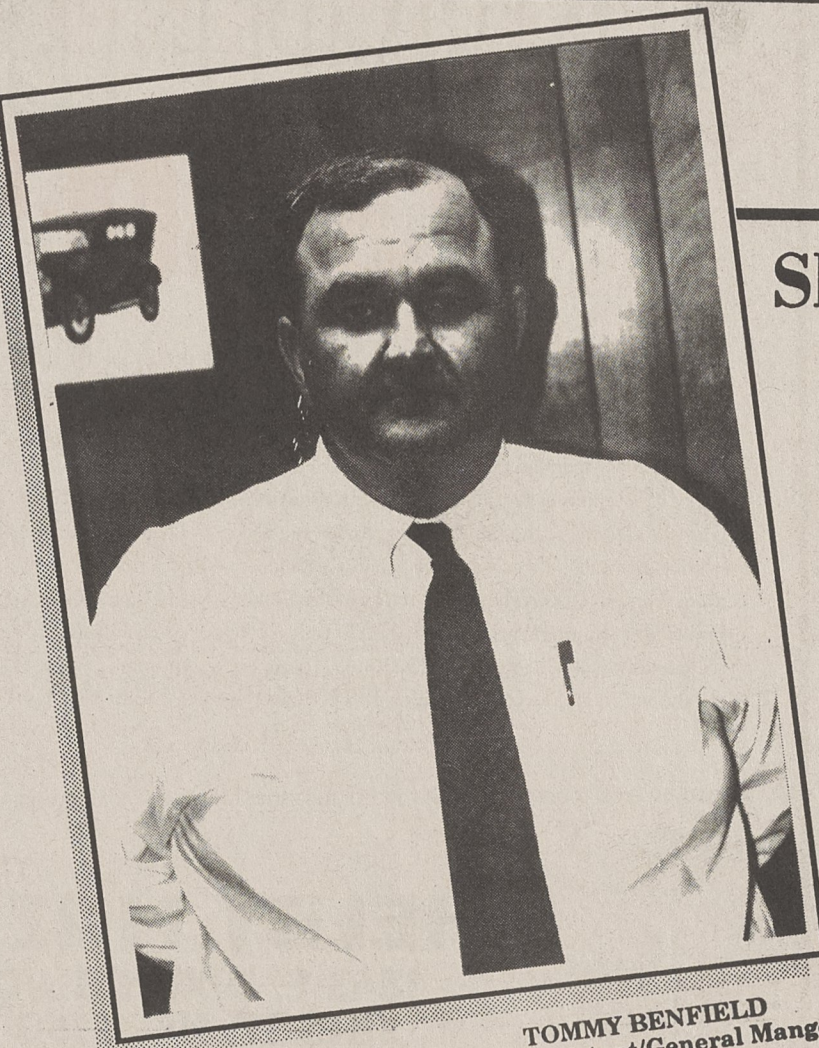
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