

Todd Stephenson of West Iredell is safe on a close play at third base in Wednesday night's state 3-A playoff game against Kings Mountain's Mountaineers at Lancaster Field. Mountaineer third baseman Rick

Marr applies the tag while the West Iredell coach gets low to make sure his man is safe. KM won 3-2.

Mounties bow out of state

The late-inning rallies never materialized and Kings Mountain's Mountaineers were eliminated by West Henderson 4-0 in the third round of the state 3-A baseball playoffs Tuesday night at Lancaster Field.

In two previous state tournament outings against West Iredell and St. Stephens, the Mountaineers spotted their opponents a first inning lead but came back to win.

Tuesday night, the visiting Falcons from the Western Athletic Conference grabbed a 2-0 lead with two unearned runs in the top of the first. But, this time, the Mountaineers couldn't break the scoring ice against a pair of outstanding pitchers, right-hander John Hill and southpaw Anthony Lindsey.

Coach Bruce Clark's Mountaineers appeared to be staging a rally in the bottom of the seventh when an unusual call by the umpires abruptly ended the game. With runners on first and second with just one out and big David Jenkins, KM's leading hitter on deck, Mike Smith hit a ground ball

to second. The runner on first -- Stephen Fisher -- was forced at second base. Smith beat the throw to first but the umpires said Fisher interfered with the shortstop's throw to first, and Smith was ruled out also.

Even though Mountaineer fans thought the final call was costly, Coach Clark said he couldn't blame the loss on one particular play. The Mountaineers threatened on several other occasions but didn't come through with the key hit at the right time.

Although they had 22 victories between them this year (Anthony has a 16-2 mark and Hill is 6-1), the talented West Henderson pitchers retired the Mountaineers in order only once. Kings Mountain loaded the bases in the second but couldn't score, and the Falcons pulled double plays to get out of two jams.

West Henderson, which collected only four hits off David C. Jenkins and Robert Wingo, scored in every inning in which they got a hit. They got the only run they needed with two out in the first inning when lead-off hitter Rhett Ingerick, who had singled, scored when Alex Tolbert's fly ball to centerfield was dropped. Tolbert then scored on a single by Lindsey.

The Falcons increased their lead to 3-0 in the third when Jeff Nordello walked and later scored on a passed ball; and the visitors closed out the scoring in the fifth when Nordello walked and scored when Tolbert reached base on a fielder's choice.

The victory moves West Henderson into the Western North Carolina championship game Friday night at home against the winner of the Kannapolis-South Rowan game. The Mountaineers, who posted their third 20-win season in four years under Coach Clark, finished 20-5.

Score by innings:	R-H-E
WH 201 010 0	4-4-1
KM 000 000 0	0-6-1

John Hill, Anthony Lindsey (5) and Alex Tolbert. David C. Jenkins, Robert Wingo (3) and Rick Marr. WP - Hill (6-1), LP - Jenkins (4-2).

Mounties win two squeakers

Smith's hit tops W. Iredell

Mike Smith singled home the winning run in the bottom of the seventh inning to lift Kings Mountain over West Iredell 3-2 in the opening round of the state 3-A baseball playoffs Wednesday night at Lancaster Field.

The hit which scored Robbie Ruff with the winning run ended an outstanding pitchers' duel between Kings Mountain's Stephen Fisher and West Iredell's Kevin Martin.

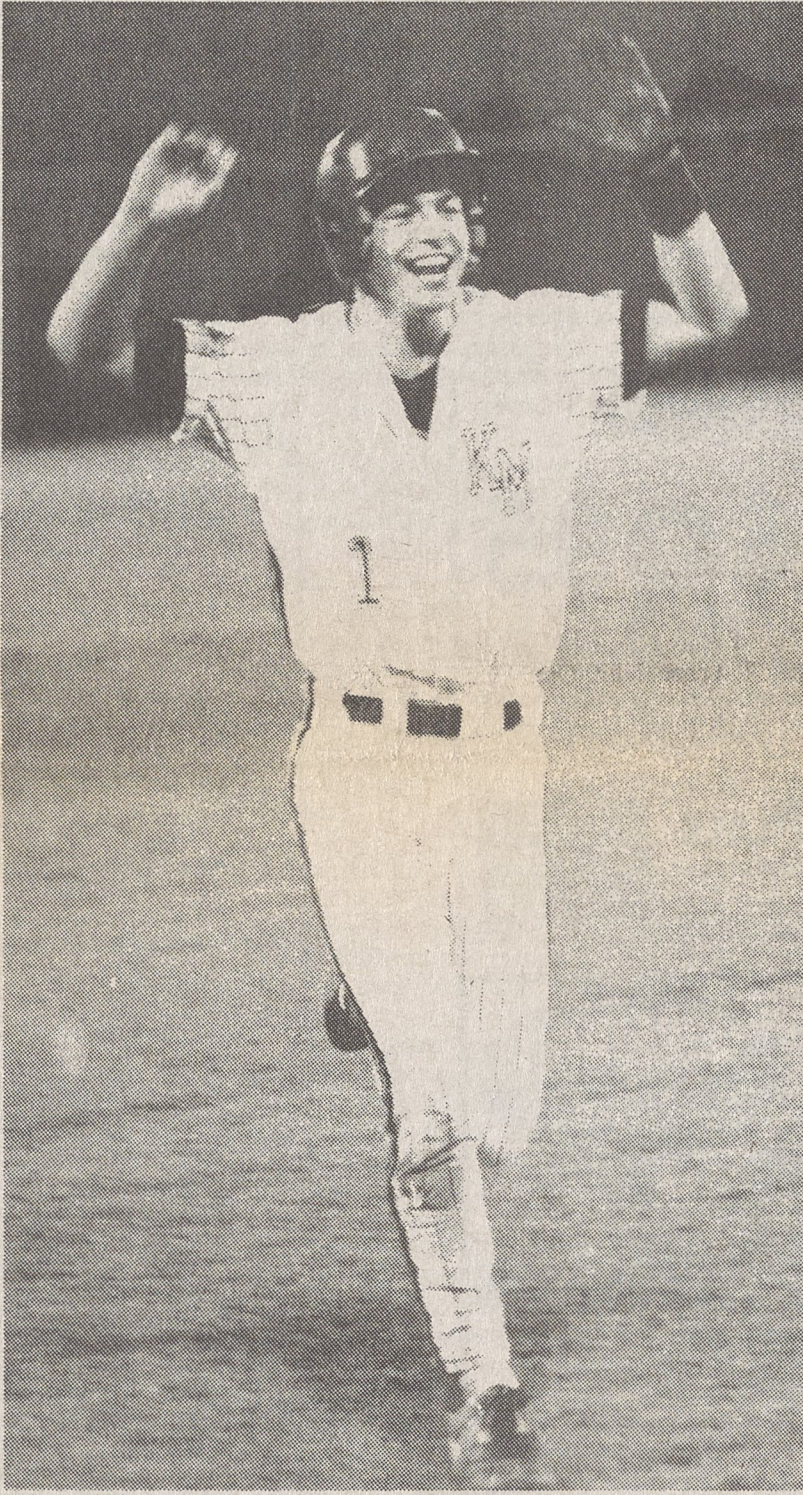
Martin, who has already signed a baseball scholarship with the University of North Carolina, slammed a two-run home run in the first inning to give the visiting Warriors a 2-0 lead, but Kings Mountain kept battling the big right-hander and finally tied the game after six innings.

Rick Marr hit his first high school home run in the third inning, and Smith singled and scored on a wild pitch to tie the game in the bottom of the sixth. It looked like the Mountaineers might win the game in the sixth as they loaded the bases with no outs, but after Smith scored Martin tagged pinch-runner Doran Moore out at the plate on a close play when Moore tried to score on a wild pitch; then, Martin buckled down to retire two batters on force plays to end the inning.

Ruff walked to lead off the seventh inning and was sacrificed to second by Fisher. Smith laced a slicing line drive into right field to drive in the winning run.

"I was real proud of Mike Smith," said Coach Bruce Clark. "He was kind of scrutinized in the finals of the conference tournament for not coming through in the squeeze situation but he did remarkably well by standing in there and shooting that line drive to right field and winning the game for us. We know we've got that kind of capability and character from the whole team, but it was sure nice to see Mike be able to come through. He took it real hard at Shelby."

Clark said West Iredell's early power surprised him but he felt



Kings Mountain's Mike Smith was a happy young man after getting the game-winning base hit in Wednesday's 3-2 victory over West Iredell in the opening round of the state 3-A baseball playoffs.

like Martin's home run was a blessing in disguise.

"We knew their pitcher and catcher had both signed with UNC, and we knew going in that they were a major concern for us," he said. "But I think we underestimated them from a coaching standpoint as far as their hitting ability. I

was impressed with the way they hit the ball, but at the same time I was impressed with the way Stephen and our defense reacted after the two-run home run in the first inning.

"We made some excellent plays

See Smith, 7-A

Fisher fans 13 in Monday win

Stephen Fisher singled home Chris Rider with the winning run in the top of the ninth inning Monday night at Granite Falls to lead Kings Mountain to a 2-1 victory over St. Stephens in the second round of the state 3-A baseball playoffs.

It was the second straight come-from-behind victory for the Mountaineers, who are attempting to win their second state championship in four years under Coach Bruce Clark.

Fisher, who appears to improve with every game, pitched his best game of the season to earn his 12th straight victory. He went the full nine innings, allowing just four hits while striking out 13 and not walking any.

"That was probably one of the best pitched high school baseball games I've ever seen," said KM Coach Bruce Clark after the contest. "Stephen was in total control."

St. Stephens grabbed a 1-0 lead in the bottom of the first when they scored an unearned run on Josh Peg's single, a Mountaineer error and a passed ball.

"But, Stephen seemed to say 'that's all you're going to get' and he took the team on his back and carried us all the way through," Clark said.

The Mountaineers, who seemed for a while to be destined to get all their hits with two outs, battled back to tie the score at 1-1 in the fifth on Fisher's single and a double by Damon Putnam. The Mountaineers had left two runners on base in the second and one each in the third and the fourth.

Kings Mountain won the game in the ninth the same way St. Stephens jumped ahead in the first -- with an unearned run. Rider led off by hitting a pop fly behind the pitchers' mound, which Reid dropped for an error. Todd Ware sacrificed him to second and an out later, Fisher ripped a hard single to center to drive him in with the winning run. The Mountaineers proceeded to put runners on first and

third but St. Stephens catcher Seth Earnhardt picked pinch-runner Robert Wingo off third to end the inning.

St. Stephens appeared to be back in business in the bottom of the ninth when the first two batters reached base on errors. But the Mountaineers pulled a short to second to first double play, and then Fisher got Michael Hinson to fly out to Caja Ormand in right to end the game.

Except for the first and ninth, St. Stephens had little activity going on the base paths. Fisher retired the Indians in order in the second, fourth, fifth, and eighth innings and the only men to reach base in the third and sixth were gunned down trying to steal second base.

"I thought that maybe this was the game we had to have if we're going to win the big one," said Coach Clark. "We felt that way going into the West Iredell game, but it's been so long since we played them that we had to get those first round jitters out of us again. I really feel good about our chances, because I think this team plays better the more it plays. We're very proud and very excited to be where we're at."

"I was very proud of David R. Jenkins, Damon Putnam and

See Fisher, 7-A

Legion baseball begins

Kings Mountain's American Legion Juniors were scheduled to open their season last night with a makeup game against Gaston Post 23 at Hunter Huss High School.

The Juniors are competing in the Central Division of Area IV this season with Bessemer City, Shelby, Cherryville, Gastonia, Stanley and Belmont.

Golf tourney suspended

The White Plains Shrine Club golf tournament scheduled for last Saturday at Kings Mountain Country Club was suspended because of the weather and will be completed July 11.

Only nine teams completed play last week. The remaining teams

Several games which were postponed while Kings Mountain High was involved in the state 3-A playoffs will be made up in the next several days.

As far as regularly-scheduled games are concerned, Post 155 is slated to travel to Cherryville Thursday and will play its first home game next Tuesday at Lancaster Field against Stanley.

will play at 1 p.m. on July 11.

"We apologize for any inconvenience we caused the golfers," said Gene Stone of the Shriners, "but we appreciate their understanding and look forward to having an outstanding tournament on July 11 for the benefit of crippled and burned children."



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