

# Mountaineers open season Friday night at East Gaston

Kings Mountain's Mountaineers open what they hope will be another highly-productive football season Friday night at 7:30 when they travel to East Gaston to face a rebuilding Warriors club.

Both East Gaston and Kings Mountain posted impressive 8-3 records a year ago, with the Warriors winning the ME-GA 7 Conference and the Mountaineers finishing second to Shelby in the Southwest 3-A. Both teams lost in the opening round of the state playoffs.

While the Mountaineers have a number of starters returning, the Warriors lost 21 seniors and have many new faces on board, including players and coaches. Long-time assistant Tom Adams has taken over the head coaching reins from veteran Earl Lingafeldt, who retired.

The Mountaineers go into the game heavily favored to defeat the Warriors for the 11th time in the 16-game series which dates back to 1973 when East Gaston was a member of the SWC. After the Warriors went 4-A in 1985 the teams stopped their rivalry for nine years but renewed it in 1993.

Kings Mountain has won every game since the series was renewed, by scores of 59-0 in 1993, 28-7 in '94 and 34-14 last year. East Gaston posted its five wins over the Mountaineers during the last eight years of its affiliation with the SWC.

Mountaineer Coach Ron Massey looks for the Warriors to play with a lot of enthusiasm, but Kings Mountain's experience and size should win out in the end.

"They're young this year," he said, "but they're a team that's going to play with a lot of emotion. They're coming off a great season and that's going to have some carry over for them."

"They've got an enthusiastic coaching staff," he added. "They feel like they're going to have to play very hard to win. If we don't get ready for the challenge we're going to have problems."

Massey hopes to see some improvement by his team over



**KMHS COACHING STAFF** - Kings Mountain High's coaches have their Mountaineers primed and ready for victory in Friday night's season opener at East Gaston. Kneeling, left to right, are John Bumgardner, Ron Massey and Rick Fortner. Standing, Aubrey Hollifield, Alfred Ash, Dave Farquharson, Chris Johnson, Tony Leigh and David Ballenger.

its showing in last week's scrimmage with Spartanburg Dorman in the Gaffney Jamboree.

"I think defensively we've got to be more aggressive as a unit," he said. "We have to play Mountaineer defense. Last year we thrived on getting people to the football, being aggressive and being physical. I was a little disappointed in that."

"Offensively, I was just very disappointed in our execution. We're younger on defense and we'll get a lot better, but offensively we have a lot of experience and we shouldn't be making the kind of mistakes we made."

Massey said many of the mistakes were his fault because the team had not concentrated enough on certain areas in practice.

"I thought we gave a pretty good effort," he said. "I don't know if we went in a little uptight or nervous or what. I

thought we wouldn't this year, but I felt we played a little uptight early. I felt like this was a good challenge for us. I don't think we accepted the challenge like I was hoping we would, but I think our kids understand what it's going to take for us to get better and I feel confident that they're going to work hard in practice to get better."

East Gaston, which got on a roll after falling hard to KM in last year's opener at Gamble Stadium, have only one starter back on offense and has to replace a number of All-Conference standouts, including quarterback Jason Helton and 1,000-yard rusher James McDowell.

Senior Nathan Cobb, a returning starter in the defensive secondary, takes over the quarterback slot in the Warriors' power-I attack. The only returning starter on offense is junior

tackle Josh Rick.

Senior Mark Currence, who sat out last season, takes over McDowell's tailback slot, and 175-pound Donald McCorkle, who played for Mount Holly Junior High last year, moves in to the fullback slot. His twin brother, 210-pound DeAndre, will start at tight end and defensive tackle.

If the Warriors go to the air, their likely target will be senior flanker Todd Hildebran and Christian Bowles, a transfer from East Lincoln.

Adams has a 38-man roster which includes only 10 seniors. "With the loss of so many seniors, it's a learning process for many of our guys," he said. "Even some seniors on our roster haven't played much football. But our players and our coaches have worked hard, and everybody's anxious to get started."

## Mountaineer kickers beat Huskies

Kings Mountain High's soccer team opened its season on an impressive note Monday with a 6-2 win over Hunter Huss in the opening round of the Gaston County Tournament at Gaston Day School.

The victory moves the Mountaineers into a semifinals match-up Thursday at 4 p.m. against defending Southwestern 3-A Conference South Point, a highly-skilled team that is expected to run roughshod over its opposition again this year.

If the Mountaineers win today, they will play for the tournament championship Saturday at 4 p.m. If they lose, they will play at 2 p.m. for third place.

Although it's a monstrous challenge, KM Coach Dan Potter welcomes the meeting with South Point.

"What we expect to do Thursday is learn," said Potter. "This is a free opportunity to learn when it doesn't hurt us in the conference. And I anticipate our guys coming out and being a little intimidated at first, but realizing how much better we are than last year and then giving them a pretty good game."

Potter said he was well pleased with Monday's effort.

"We started out a little slow, and I think part of it was the weather: conditions and part of it was nerves. Huss had a couple of good scoring opportunities early in the game, but our goal keeper Collin Goforth kept them out and kept us in the game."

After that, the Mountaineers began working the ball well and by halftime had a 3-0 lead on two goals by Wesley Bridges and one by Kanya Phaengkhamhak.

"I thought they would come out and challenge us in the second half, but they never did which is a real credit to our players," Potter said.

The Mountaineers got second

half goals by All-Conference Jordan Angeles and first-year players Robin Perkins and Evan Osteen.

"Evan is just a freshman, and Robin didn't play last year but he's going to be a player and a half."

Potter was able to play all 19 of his players at least 25 minutes, which he said is very good for this early in the season.

The Mountaineers feared they wouldn't get their game in as heavy rains drenched the area early Monday afternoon, and the game was played in a steady drizzle.

"I've never been around on an August day when we were playing soccer in the afternoon and end up cold," said Potter, "but it was a good feeling to have. As soon as our game end-

ed the sun came out and it was real steamy for the next game."

Potter said Monday's effort gives the Mountaineers a good reason to be optimistic as they begin regular season play. They play at Huss next Tuesday.

"The kids really played well," he said. "They played better than I thought they would and I think they impressed themselves, too."

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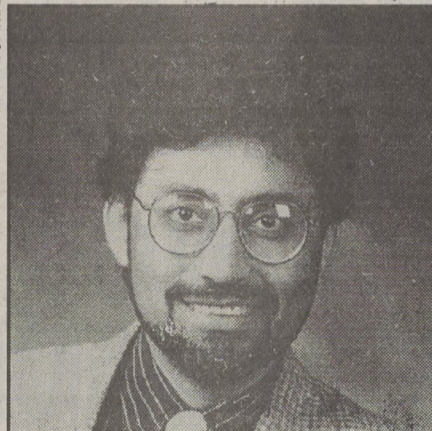
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