

Mountaineers share first place in Southwestern Conference

Bell's FT gives Sipe 200th win

Joseph Bell's free throw with five seconds remaining gave Kings Mountain's Mountaineers an important 61-60 victory over Burns in Southwestern 3-A Conference play Friday at Burns.

The victory was important in that it kept the Mountaineers (3-2, 9-6) in the thick of the battle for the SWC championship and a state playoff berth, and also because it gave Coach Larry Sipe his 200th career victory.

Sipe, 200-150, is in his 14th season as Mountaineer coach. Only one other basketball coach in KMHS history, Don Parker, has topped the 200-victory total. He was 247-139 in 24 seasons from 1943-67.

The Mountaineers had to overcome some adversity to hold off the Bulldogs, but Bell, a versatile, junior was a cool take-charge guy with the game on the line.

Kings Mountain led by 13 points in the first half and by 11 points in the fourth quarter. But the Mountaineers' starting point guard and leading scorer, Marcus Smith, had to leave the game with an injury with six minutes remaining and the Bulldogs started a comeback bid. Alex Burris took over at the point, but fouled out as Burns tied the score at 60-all with a minute to play.

Sipe moved Bell from forward to the point guard, and he did a masterful job of handling the basketball under pressure and working for a final shot.

Finally, with five seconds remaining, he drove hard to the basket and was fouled. He missed the first foul shot, but hit the second for the winning point.

The time period between the first and second foul shot, though, seemed like an eternity to Bell and the Mountaineers. After Bell missed the first shot, the Bulldogs called time-out to let him think about the second one. Before the time-out ended, a fight broke out in the gym lobby and the Burns clock operator left the scorer's table. Bell had to stand at the free throw line while the officials found the clock operator.

The end of the game was a big relief for Sipe, because the 200th victory was finally behind him and the Mountaineers were able to win on the road against one of the best teams in the league.

"It (the victory) is going to go a long, long way as far as this conference race," said Sipe. "Burns is not to be taken lightly. They had beaten Shelby at their place. We got some good outside shooting from Marlon Byers, and that's something we have to have to stay competitive. We have to hit the jumpers, and he's played some really big games for us lately."

Byers finished as the Mountaineers' leading scorer with 24 points, half of them coming from 3-point range, and Bell scored 12 points. Bryan

Odums grabbed eight rebounds.

"You've got to get some wins on the road," Sipe said. "We talk about winning at home and stealing a few on the road, but then if you turn around and lose at home you cancel out that one you steal on the road. Really, there's not a lot of difference between number one and number seven in this league."

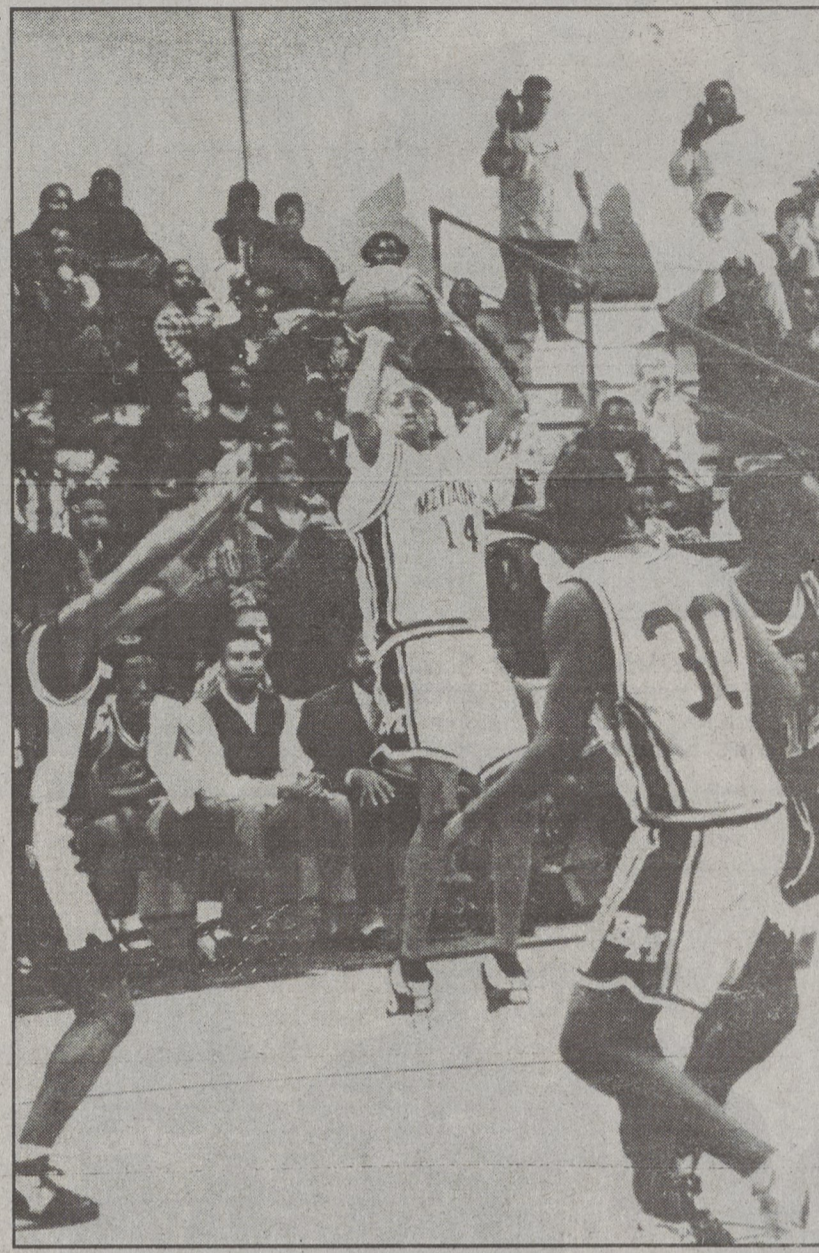
Sipe said the 200th victory is a testament to his longevity as coach, and nothing more, but he's glad it's behind him.

"It's in the back of your mind, but not something you dwell on," he said. "We're looking to finish in the top four. But it got to where the players were talking about it. I just didn't want them to dwell on it. It just means I've been here a long time. You look back and Kings Mountain High School has always had good athletes. Anybody could come in here and run a good program and be fair to everybody, and the wins will come."

"But we've still got our goal in front of us - and that is to finish in the top four and get in the playoffs. That's what the kids are excited about, and me too."

The Burns girls held onto a share of first place in the opening game with a 52-29 victory. The loss left the KM ladies with a 2-3 conference and 3-12 overall mark.

See Burns, 7-A



GUNNING FROM DOWNTOWN - Kings Mountain's Marlon Byers scored 24 points - half of them from 3-point range - to lead the Mountaineers to a 61-60 victory over Burns Friday night. KM begins second half of Southwestern Conference play Friday at home against R-S Central.

Mounties knock off East 81-79

Kings Mountain's Mountaineers won their third straight game Tuesday night at East Rutherford, and North Gaston's Wildcats won their second straight at Shelby, to force a four-way tie for first place in the Southwestern 3A Conference.

Heading into the final six games of the season, KM, Shelby, East and North Gaston all have 4-2 records. The Mountaineers, 10-6 overall, play four of their final six contests at home, including games Friday against R-S Central and Tuesday against South Point.

The Mountaineers built an 11-point first quarter lead Tuesday night at East but had to hold on for an 81-79 victory. North Gaston upset Shelby 64-59 in overtime in Shelby.

Kings Mountain grabbed an 18-7 first quarter lead at East but saw the Cavaliers come back to tie the score at 57-all going into the fourth quarter. The Mountaineers hit 81 percent of their foul shots to clinch the victory in the fourth quarter.

Five players scored in double figures for Larry Sipe's charges. Point guard Marcus Smith returned from his injury last week to lead with 18 points. Alex

See East, 7-A

KMHS girls first in 3-team meet

Kings Mountain's girls finished first and the boys were third in a non-conference swim meet with Salisbury and South Caldwell Tuesday at Neisler Natatorium.

The girls edged South Caldwell 127-114, with Salisbury finishing third with 76 points. Salisbury won the boys meet with 113 points, followed by South Caldwell with 95 and KM with 93.

The KM girls were led by double winners Wendy Neisler and Elise Mayse.

Kings Mountain was scheduled to host the annual Southwestern 3-A Conference meet Wednesday. They will compete in the Iron Man Meet at Skyland Saturday from 1-6 p.m., and swimmers with qualifying times will compete in the Western Regionals February 7-8 at Davidson College. The state meet will be held February 15 at the Mecklenburg Aquatic Center in Charlotte.

Girls results

200 medley relay - Neisler, Jimison, Mayse, Haynes second; Ely, Bentley, Chan, Green fifth.

200 free - Elise Mayse first, Kristen Miller second, Bethany Jimison, Blake Clary.

200 IM - Wendy Neisler first, Josephine Chan fourth.

50 free - Elizaeth Mauney first, Megan Haynes fifth, Deana Green, Meline Miller.

100 fly - Chan fourth, Elizabeth Bentley fifth.

Diving - Tiffany Ely first, Abby Haynes second.

100 free - Green third, A. Haynes fourth, Stephanie Saucier, Blair Cannon.

500 free - Mayse first, Clary fifth.

200 free relay - Neisler, Jimison, Mauney, Mayse first; Gore, Branham, Saucier, Haynes fourth.

100 back - Neisler first, K. Miller fourth, Branham.

100 breast - Jimison second, Mauney fifth, Bentley, Mindy Belt.

400 free relay - Green, A. Haynes, K. Miller, Mauney third; Clary, Cannon, Belt, Ely fifth.

Boys results

200 medley relay - J. Angeles, D. Angeles, Nishyama, Thomas third; Poole, Clayton, Johnsonbaugh, Frye fourth.

200 free - Obbie Clayton fifth.

200 IM - Naoki Nishyama second, Paul Johnsonbaugh sixth.

50 free - Drew Thomas third, Jordan Angeles fifth, Wes Frye, Steven Bentley.

100 fly - Nishyama.

100 free - Thomas third, Poole sixth, Marty Goforth.

Diving - Will Mauney first, Tim Schwantes second, Goforth.

500 free - Johnsonbaugh fourth.

200 free relay - Nishyama, Angeles, Frye, Thomas second; D. Angeles, Goforth, Clayton, Schwantes third.

100 back - J. Angeles third, Poole fourth.

100 breast - D. Angeles third, Clayton fifth.

400 free relay - Schwantes, Goforth, Johnsonbaugh, Poole third.

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