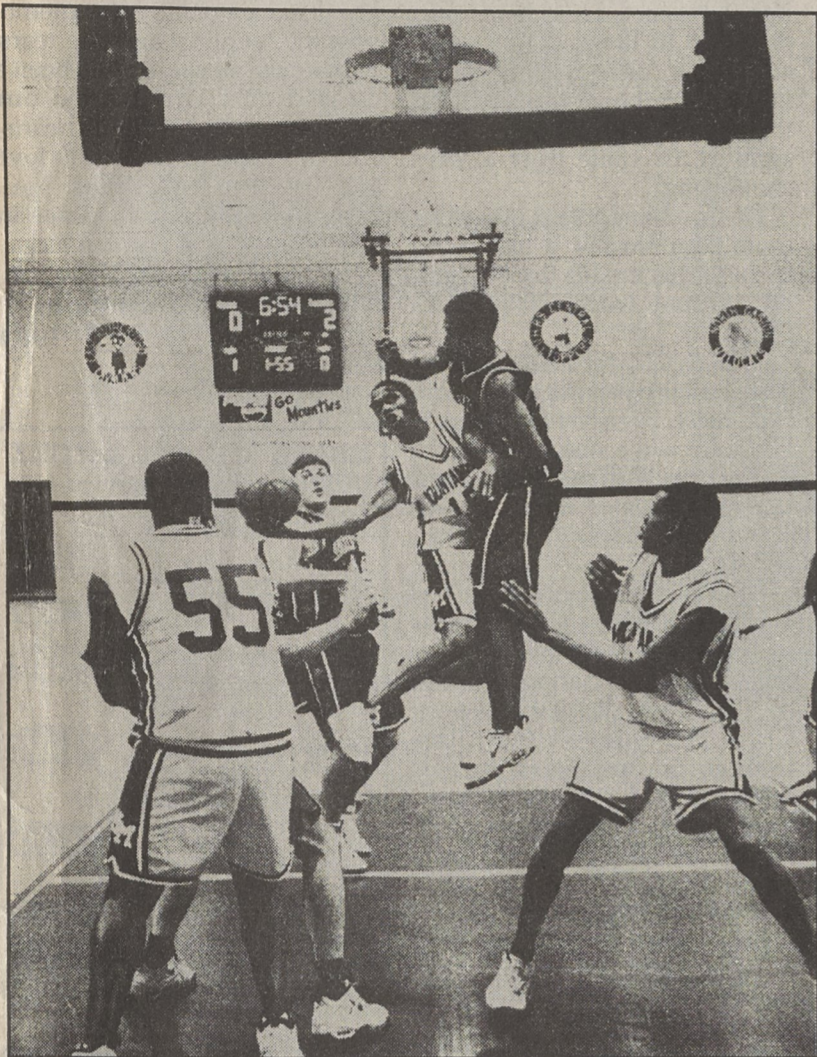


# SPORTS



**THE BIG SCOOP** - Kings Mountain's Joseph Bell tries to scoop the ball underneath South Point's Koren Robinson in Friday's SWC tournament championship game at the KMHS gym. KM won 70-62.

## Mountaineers win tournament, play in Sectional at Kannapolis

With the Southwestern 3A Conference regular season and tournament championships tucked away, Kings Mountain's Mountaineers head north on I-85 Thursday to begin their quest for the Sectional Championship and a berth in the final eight in North Carolina prep basketball.

Larry Sipe's Mountaineers defeated Burns 75-63 Thursday night and South Point 70-62 Friday to claim their first SWC tournament crown since 1993.

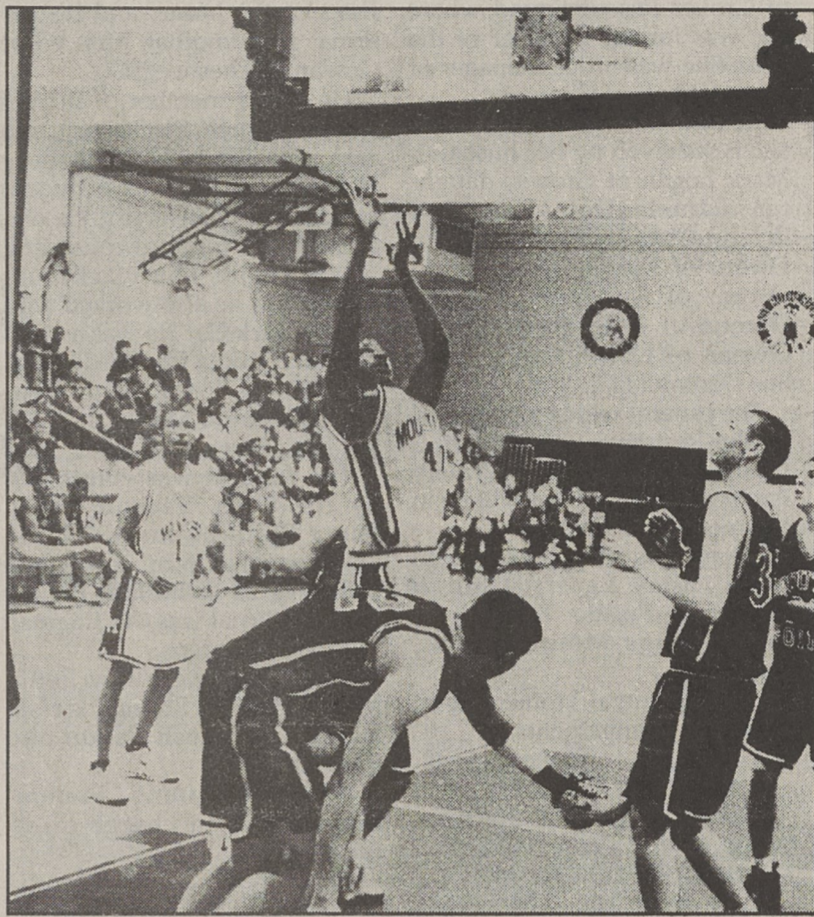
The Mounties play at 8:30 Thursday at A.L. Brown in Kannapolis against the winner of Tuesday's game between Trinity and Harding. A victory would put KM in the Sectional championship game Saturday at 8:30. The Sectional champion advances to the Western N.C. Regional Tournament next week at Hickory High School, and the winner there goes to the State Championship game in Chapel Hill.

Friday's victory over South Point at the KMHS gym gave the Mountaineers their first SWC regular season and SWC tournament title in the same year under Sipe, who is completing his 14th season as head coach. But during those 14 years the Mountaineers have claimed nine championships on the conference, Sectional and Regional level.

While Sipe has had some championship teams with more impressive won-lost records than this year's 13-11 outfit, he has had few teams to make as big a turnaround. Heading into conference play the Mountaineers had a 4-8 record against strong non-conference opposition.

"You couldn't ask more of a team than what we've gotten," Sipe said. "Our record wasn't that outstanding but we really played some excellent competition just to get ready for the conference season."

Sipe, who has always stressed the team concept, said all 10 of his players accepted their roles and worked hard to achieve team success.



**DRIVING FOR BASKET** - Kings Mountain's Ke'lee Thompson (40) drives through the South Point defense for a lay-up in Friday's SWC tournament championship game at the KMHS gym. KM won 70-62.

though the Bulldogs forced 10 KM turnovers in the fourth period.

In the championship game against South Point, the Mounties started slow and didn't lead until Turner's lay-up at the first quarter buzzer gave them a 9-7 lead. They never trailed after that but couldn't break the game open against the scrappy South Point five.

Byers again led the scoring with 29 points, with 22 of them coming in the middle two periods. Campbell had 18 points and 11 rebounds and Bell scored 14.

The regular season championship assured the Mountaineers of a bye in the first round of the state playoffs, which opened Tuesday at various sites across the state. When Sectional play begins Thursday, there will be only 32 teams left with a shot at the state title.

"Sometimes you don't know how you'll react to a bye," Sipe said. "Whether we play Trinity or Harding they will already have a game under their belt. They'll be about like us. They've played good competition and have been in tough leagues. Harding finished third in the regular season (South Piedmont Conference) but knocked off West Rowan (the state's #2 ranked 3A team) in their conference semifinals, so they've got a good team. Trinity is around the High Point/Greensboro area so you know they've played good competition."

"But what we've accomplished nobody can take away from us. This is an exciting part of the year. Now we're just going to see how far we've come since November 1."

### THURSDAY GAME

Burns (63) - Baxter 24, Jeter 12, Phelps 7, Howell 7, Petty 4, Logan 5, Bradshas 2, J. Geter 2.

KM (75) - Byers 31, Turner 18, Goode 13, J. Bell 9, K. Bell 4.

### FRIDAY GAME

South Point (62) - Blair 17, Beck 13, Robinson 7, Dye 6, Mitchell 6, Thornton 4, Lowery 3, Hannon 2.

KM (70) - Byers 29, Campbell 18, J. Bell 14, Turner 4, Bess 2, Thompson 2, Goode 1.

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## Mountaineers to open baseball season

Kings Mountain High's baseball team opens its regular season Monday at 4:30 at Crest and will probably be without the services of its top pitcher, Hunter Suber.

Suber, who was looking for a banner senior season after being one of the team's top winners last year, injured his knee over the weekend and will be out indefinitely.

Suber pitched the first two innings in last Thursday's scrimmage game at North Mecklenburg and was very impressive. He didn't give up a run, and the David Clark, who pitched the last two innings, gave up only one run.

But the Vikings got to KM's

middle men, juniors Eric Boyd and Joey Proctor, for six runs and scored a 7-5 victory over the Mountaineers.

Kings Mountain will host Canton Pisgah in a scrimmage Saturday, with JV players taking the field at 12 noon and the varsity playing at 2 p.m.

"Hunter did a real good job at North Mecklenburg, and David Clark looked strong," said KM Coach Tony Leigh. "North Meck touched Eric and Joey for six runs, but both of them worked hard and got valuable experience."

Overall, Leigh said, he was not pleased with the Mounties' performance but he expects them to get better.

"I thought we did some good things, but as far as being totally satisfied, I was not," he said. "We have to work a little harder defensively."

Leigh said he was impressed with several players.

"Joey Proctor did a good job in centerfield and swung the bat real well," he said. "He had a triple and scored our first run."

"Robin Perkins, our leadoff man, did his job. He was on base twice. David Clark hit the ball well, Toby Sims did a good job for us. We moved Brandon Putnam to first base since Andy (Leigh) was injured, and he did a good job."

The Mountaineers have three games next week, playing at Crest Monday, at East Gaston Thursday and at home against Shelby on Friday. All games start at 4:30.

With Suber doubtful and southpaw Seth Denton still involved with the basketball playoffs, Leigh

said it's uncertain what his pitching rotation will be.

"Seth has been throwing on the weekends," Leigh said. "Whenever he gets through with basketball he'll be ready to step right in. Right now I'd say we'll probably start David Clark at Crest, probably look at Proctor and Boyd against East Gaston, and then go back with Clark or Denton against Shelby."

### THE SCHEDULE

**MARCH**  
9 - at Crest 4:30; 12 - at E. Gaston 4:30; 13 - Shelby 4:30; 17 - at R-S Central 4:30; 18 - Huss 4:30; 20 - Burns 4:30; 24 - at S. Point 4:30; 27 - E. Ruth. 4:30; 31 - N. Gaston 7.

**APRIL**  
1 - at Huss 7; 3 - R-S 7; 7 - at Burns 7; 10 - S. Point 7; 13-17 - Easter Tour. at Huss; 20 - at E. Ruth. 7; 22 - at N. Gaston 7; 24 - at R-S 4:30; 28 - Burns 7.

**MAY**  
1 - at S. Point 7; 5 - E. Ruth. 7; 7 - N. Gaston 7.

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