

# Mounties open baseball season Monday at Crest

Kings Mountain High's baseball team will open its regular season Monday afternoon at Crest.

Tony Leigh's Mountaineers will warm-up for the Chargers today at 4:30 p.m. with a scrimmage against North Mecklenburg at KM's Lancaster Field.

Leigh, beginning his fourth year as head coach, has been impressed with his team in pre-season drills and is looking for one of his best seasons.

"This is probably the best group that I've ever been associated with as far as attitude and practice habits," Leigh said. "We've had two good weeks of

practice and I feel like we're fairly sound at every position defensively. As far as hitting the ball, the fellows will get better each day."

Leigh has a veteran player at almost every position, and has two of his top pitchers back in senior lefty Seth Denton and senior right-hander Eric Boyd.

"Joey Proctor (a southpaw) will come in as our number three pitcher, and Matt Biddix, a junior right-hander, and Derek Dixon, a sophomore right-hander, will also see a lot of action," Leigh noted.

There are only two positions where the Mountaineers will have to start a new player.

Sophomore Tyler Falls will handle the catching duties, and Jason Bridges, who started on the JV team last year, takes over at second base.

"Tyler Falls is a tenth grader but he's a little bit better than a tenth grader," Leigh said. "He has legion experience from last summer, and he's doing a good job behind the plate."

Senior Andy Leigh, a returning All-Conference player, and junior Bryan Thornburg give the Mountaineers two of the best first basemen in the Southwestern Conference. Because of his experience, Leigh will probably draw the starting assignment but Thornburg will also see a lot of action in the field as well as a designated hitter.

"Both of them are hitting the ball well and doing a good job in the field," Leigh said.

Bridges brings good defense to second base, and pitcher Matt Biddix will also see some action there.

Boyd will start at shortstop when he's not on the mound, and when he's pitching sophomore Matt Bridges will play shortstop. If his good hitting continues, Leigh said it will be difficult to keep Boyd out of the lineup.

"He's really doing a good job swinging the bat," Leigh said. "As long as he swings it like he's been doing he'll probably be the starter."

Senior Brandon Putnam returns at third base, and he'll be backed up by sophomore Derek Dixon, who will also see action on the mound and behind the plate. "He's going to be a versatile player for us," Leigh said.

The Mountaineers have one of the most talented outfields around with veterans starting at every position.

Fourth year starter Kendrick Bell will hold down the center field position, and he should be in for a banner season. He's a two-time All-Conference choice and has hit over .300 in each of his three varsity seasons. Torez Leach will back him up.

Chad Jones returns in right field, and when he's not on the mound Seth Denton will play some there, too.

Robin Perkins, a three-year starter, returns in left field, but Joey Proctor could draw the starting nod there when he's not pitching.

Shane Short is Leigh's bullpen catcher and will also see action on the field from time to time.

"All of these guys understand that if they can swing the bat and play defense I'm going to find a place for them to play," Leigh said. "There's probably going to be different lineups at different times. There won't be a set lineup that goes out there every time."

Kings Mountain's first home game is Wednesday, March 10 against East Gaston. It will be a JV/varsity doubleheader with the JVs playing at 4 p.m. and the varsity at 7.



**TRI-COUNTY CHAMPIONS** - Kings Mountain Middle School's Patriots won the Tri-County Conference this year with an 11-1 record. They lost their first game of the season to Shelby and then came back to win 11 in a row, including the conference championship game against Burns. Front row, left to right, Micah Burris, Derrick Smith, Orlando Curry, Joram Young. Second row, Manager Chad Young, Sedrick Young, Grayling Elliott, Warren Shirey, Adrian Parker, Chris Jacobs, Tyler Deaton, Coach Monty Deaton. Back row, Caleb Williams, Brandon Houze, Aquino Reynolds, Courtney Smith.

## KM women's softball team hopes to make run for title

By GARY STEWART  
Editor of the Herald

With all but two players returning from last year's team which finished second in the Southwestern 3A Conference, Kings Mountain High's women's softball team expects to make a serious run for the championship this year.

The Lady Mountaineers gave perennial champion East Rutherford a run for their money last spring, becoming the first KMHS team to qualify for the state playoffs in fast-pitch, but Susie Hughes' ladies fell to Enka 6-1 in the opening round of the state playoffs.

With the biggest team she's ever had - 20 players - and also one of the most talented, Hughes hopes to see her players take their game to a higher level this season.

"We have a very good group and they all seem to work well together," says Hughes. "All of them can play."

Hughes will look to four returning All-Conference players to give her some solid play and leadership.

Heading the list of returning players is two-time All-SWC catcher D Chapman. Other All-SWC standouts are first baseman Julie Robbins, second baseman Kate Pascoe, and outfielder Toni Loftin who made All-SWC last year as an infielder.

Other returning players are third baseman Csheria Coleman, shortstop Anna Ramey, utility player Amanda

Johnsonbaugh, and outfielders Christi Worcester, Emily Ballard, Jennifer Towery, Beth Bumgardner, Laura Propst and Hannah Ware.

Hughes has a good group of ninth graders, including pitcher-infielder Kristen Hardin, infielder Ashley Leigh, and outfielders Megan Spicer, Cari Brinkley, Miranda Dixon, Lindy Johnson, and Sheena Grigg.

Hardin and Bumgardner are looking good on the mound for the Lady Mountaineers, and Brinkley, Loftin and Grigg could also be called on for mound duty.

Although the pitchers are young, they'll be throwing to the most experienced catcher in the SWC in Chapman, and that should help them tremendously as they develop their skills.

Kings Mountain's infield should be solid defensively.

Hughes calls Ramey one of the most "fundamentally sound" players she's ever had, and she said Coleman has shown a lot of improvement and is playing with more confidence.

Loftin will be a "vital" part of the team in centerfield, Hughes said, but the other outfield positions are up for grabs right now.

"We're looking at quite a few people," Hughes said. "Nothing is written in stone yet. The younger girls are giving these other girls a run for their money. I've been real impressed with them. They came in here with some good skills."

The Mountaineers will see their first action today at home with a scrimmage against North Henderson, and they will compete in an all-day multiple scrimmage Saturday at Crest. They open the regular season Monday at Ashbrook.

## SOCCER

From 1B

played the game," Potter said. "It's like a crash course."

Potter said he's getting good leadership from Naphaphone Ratsavong, a sophomore who played on Kings Mountain's state championship volleyball team, and another player off the volleyball team, junior Abby Haynes, also looks strong.

"These volleyball girls have some real good work ethics and leadership skills," Potter said.

Meredith Ware, a sophomore, has soccer experience and will also play a big role for the Mountaineers.

In the midfield, Potter said he will look for good play from his daughter, Meghan, a ninth grader, Heather Kubu, a ninth grader, and Heather Causby, a sophomore.

"Up front we're going to have a lot of different people playing, and a lot of different combinations," he said. "A lot of them haven't worked with each other too much, but I imagine we'll have some scoring come out of people like Meredith Ware, A'me Mauney and Lauren Causby."

Other members of the team are Kerri Brutko, Alecia Dahl, Georgia Dawson, Katrina Eagle, Bess McGinnis, Emily Owens,

Lee Owensby, Maria Peralta, Erin Wilson and Jordan Wollak. Managers are Tiffany Ely and Elizabeth Mejia Villar.

Kings Mountain's first three games will be away against Huss, East Gaston and West Iredell, all teams with established programs.

Kings Mountain's first home game is Thursday, March 18 at 4 p.m. at John Gamble Stadium.

"In some ways it's good to be playing our first three games away," Potter said. "It will give the kids a chance to get their feet on the ground before they come home in front of their own friends."

### THE SCHEDULE

**MARCH**  
8 - at Huss 4 p.m.; 11 - at E. Gaston 5 p.m.; 15 - at W. Iredell 6 p.m.; 18 - Huss 4 p.m.; 22 - E. Gaston 5 p.m.; 26 - at Crest 7 p.m. 27 - Shelby and Ashbrook at Crest (TBA).

**APRIL**  
1 - at Shelby 5 p.m.; 13 - N. Gaston 6 p.m.; 15 - W. Iredell 6 p.m.; 16 - Crest 7 p.m.; 20 - at Forestview 6 p.m.; 22 - S. Point 6 p.m.; 26 - at Ashbrook 6:30; 27 - at R-S Central 6 p.m.

**MAY**  
3 - at N. Gaston 6 p.m.; 6 - Forestview 6 p.m.; 10 - at S. Point 6 p.m.; 13 - R-S Central 6 p.m. 18 - State playoffs begin (TBA).



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