

GARY STEWART / THE HERALD

Kings Mountain's Anthony Hillman (45) plowed through the East Rutherford defense for 256 yards and three touchdowns Friday to lead the Mountaineers to a 54-20 Southwestern 3A Conference win. The Mountaineers go after a share of their fourth straight SWC title Friday night at South Point.

Moving on Up

Gardner-Webb University Board approves move to Division I

The Gardner-Webb University Board of Trustees Thursday voted to reclassify the institution from NCAA Division II to NCAA Division I. Under NCAA by-laws, GWU has until June to notify the NCAA's executive director of its intentions to reclassify. Following notification of this intent, GWU then would have

two years to bring all aspects of its athletics program under compliance with Division I standards. Gardner-Webb President Dr. Chris White described the move as one that will affect the entire institution. "While the focus will be on athletics as we compete on the Division I level, we cannot discount the impact this

move will have on every aspect of our university's existence," said White. "The quality of life on our campus will certainly improve, as will our visibility and our ability to make a broader impact on this region. Gardner-Webb has grown by leaps and bounds over the past decade, both physically and programmatically. This, therefore, was a natural progression for us."

clarification that the Runnin' Bulldogs football team would compete on the Division I-AA level.

Burch said, "We are looking forward to the challenges that this move presents to the entire athletic department. I'm confident that our coaches will make the necessary preparations to ensure a successful transition to NCAA Division I competition."

If all goes according to plan, GWU will be eligible to compete as a Division I institution during the 2002-2003 academic year. As soon as 2001-2002, NCAA Division I institutions that agree to compete athletically against Gardner-Webb can count the university as a Division I opponent.

He added, "Gardner-Webb has enjoyed an outstanding relationship with the South Atlantic Conference and its member schools. Although we will miss the rivalries that have developed over the past 25 years, we are very excited about the changes that are soon to take place."

Chuck Burch, GWU vice president for athletics, added

Gardner-Webb currently features 20 men's and women's intercollegiate sports.

BIG GAME

From 1B

yardage and touchdowns. But, Devine says, even though both teams have given up a lot of points it doesn't mean they don't have strong defenses.

"Kings Mountain has given up a lot of yardage, but they've also been ahead a lot of games 50-7," he said. "It's hard to keep up your intensity when the score's like that. As bad as we'd like to, realistically you're going to see a letdown, and that's natural. When you get ahead like that you sort of relax and give up a cheap touchdown here and there."

Both head coaches are impressed with the other's line and backs, and both say they'll have to hold onto the football to win.

"Offensively, they are as explosive as anybody we've played in a long time," Massey said of the Red Raiders. "They do an excellent job at their schemes. They're running the option and just putting a lot of pressure on you to maintain your responsibilities. Anytime you play an option team it's tough. A lot of times you know the other team has one or two people that can hurt you and you can work harder to take them away. But South Point has four kids (quarterback Devon Lowery, and running backs Chris Stowe, Jeremy Jackson and Jarren Jackson) that can hurt you. You have one breakdown and one of those kids can go all the way."

"Kings Mountain has been playing awful good football here lately," Devine said. "They had that one slip up (20-15 loss to Forestview) where they had some turnovers, but I've seen enough film and know enough of the kids that they have back. They not only have Anthony Hillman, but their line is coming on strong. They have a good running back in Antonio McClain, and it seems like Joe Williamson has been playing over there for 50 years. They've got a great ball club. They put a lot of points on the board, they play good defense, and it's going to be all we can handle. I don't see how we can stop them, but we have to try to slow them down a little bit."

Massey says people have overlooked South Point's offensive line, which he says is the best around. "They come off the football quick and do a great job," he said.

Massey and Devine agree that the team that eliminates mistakes will come out on top. "We're going to have to hold onto the football and run some time off the clock," says Massey. "They're extremely quick and they use their quickness to their advantage. With that speed, and their special teams, they have the ability to make the big plays."

"You have to eliminate yourself as an opponent," said Devine. "That's the first thing you have to do to win a ball game. As long as you can eliminate your mistakes and turnovers, then you have a chance to beat your opponent." Both coaches look forward to

the opportunity to face off in a game that could decide the last conference championship of the millennium.

"If we win we can control our destiny a little bit better," says Massey. "We could lose and then win next week and be in a three-way tie for the second playoff spot, but the best thing we can do is try to go out and win this football and get into the playoffs that way."

It's a much simpler scenario for the Raiders. Even if they lose to Kings Mountain, all they have to do to claim a share of the conference championship and earn a state playoff berth is win their final regular season game against last-place R-S Central. But, Devine and his Red Raiders aren't looking to share the SWC title with anyone. They're going all out to win it outright.

"It's going to be a great football game," says Devine. "We're looking forward to it."

EAST

From 1B

The Mountaineer offense then marched 86 yards in 11 plays, eating up most of the third quarter clock in the process. Hillman scored from a yard out with 3:01 to play, giving the Mountaineers a 34-14 lead and taking the Cavaliers out of the game.

McClain scored on a 13-yard run around left end, and Ash added another 17-yard run on an option keeper to run the score to 47-14 with 8:19 left in the game. Stanley Whitesides' pass interception set up Ash's score.

Michael Sheppard, who led the Cavaliers in rushing with 148 yards in 19 carries, broke loose on a 54-yard touchdown run around right end to make the score 47-20, and then Hillman closed out the scoring with a 41-yard run down the KM sidelines with 3:18 left.

Dominating the Cavaliers on their home field was pleasing to Coach Massey, whose offense has put 166 points on the board in the last three games.

"I thought the kids played a good, physical football game," he said. "I was a little disappointed with some of the 15-yard penalties we received. We need to address that, but our effort was very good. I thought we played better defense in the second half, and that helped."

The Mountaineer defense was dealt a severe blow early in the second half when one of its leading tacklers, Karl Burch, went down to injury. But sophomores Justin Early and Daniel Hardin filled in well.

Massey stressed to his team following the game that this was "just another step" in their quest for a possible SWC championship and state playoff berth.

"We're still in the same boat we've been in the last three weeks," he said. "We've got to win every game. Hopefully we gained some confidence and the kids will be ready to come back and get ready for this week."

"We had a great crowd up there, and that really helped our kids," he added.

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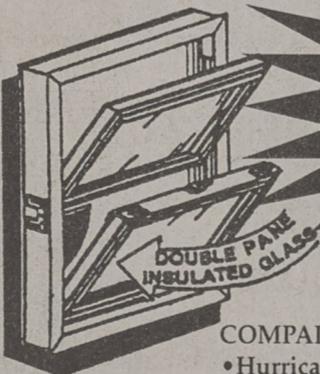
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