

TRI-COUNTY RANKING

Rank	Record	Last Week
1 - South Point	11-0	1
2 - Crest	9-1	2
3 - Shelby	7-2-1	3
4 - Forestview	8-2	4
5 - Kings Mtn.	6-4-1	5
6 - North Gaston	7-4	6
7 - Ashbrook	5-6	7
8 - Chase	6-4	9
9 - E. Ruth.	6-5	10
10 - E. Gaston	5-6	8
11 - RS Cent.	3-7	11
12 - Burns	3-8	12
13 - C'ville	3-8	13
14 - B. City	1-10	T14
14 - Huss	1-10	T14

Last Week's Results

Kings Mtn. 46, N. Gaston 33
S. Point 16, RS Central 9
E. Ruth. 21, Burns 12
Ashbrook 26, Huss 7
N. Meck 63, E. Gaston 10
Chase 66, West Lincoln 27
Lincolnton 41, B. City 26
Maiden 58, Cherryville 24
Crest 33, Alexander Cent. 14

This Week's Games

(NCHSAA Playoffs)

HP Andrews at S. Point
Forestview at Ragsdale
Ashbrook at Davie County
Crest at Greensboro Grimsley
Norwood at Shelby

PREP STANDINGS

Southwestern 3A

Teams	Conf. W-L	All W-L
South Point	6-0	11-0
Forestview	4-2	8-2
Kings Mtn.	4-2	6-4-1
East Ruth.	3-3	6-5
North Gaston	2-4	7-4
Burns	1-5	3-8
R-S Central	1-5	3-7

Last Week's Results

Kings Mtn. 46, N. Gaston 33
S. Point 16, RS Central 9
East Ruth. 21, Burns 12

This Week's Games

(NCHSAA Playoffs)

HP Andrews at S. Point
Forestview at Ragsdale

ME-GA 7 4A

Teams	Conf. W-L	All W-L
Olympic	5-1	7-4
Ashbrook	4-2	5-6
North Meck	4-2	8-3
East Gaston	4-2	5-6
Vance	3-3	7-4
Hunter Huss	1-5	1-10
West Meck	0-6	1-9

Last Week's Results

Ashbrook 26, Huss 7
North Meck 63, E. Gaston 10
Olympic 52, West Meck 6

Vance 46, Harding 0

This Week's Games

(NCHSAA Playoffs)

Myers Park at Olympic
Ashbrook at Davie County

S. Piedmont 1A/2A

Teams	Conf. W-L	All W-L
Shelby	6-0	7-2-1
Maiden	5-1	8-2
Chase	4-2	6-4
Cherryville	2-4	3-8
Lincolnton	2-4	4-7
W. Lincoln	1-5	2-9
Bess. City	1-5	1-10

Last Week's Results

Lincolnton 41, B. City 26
Maiden 58, Cherryville 24
Chase 66, West Lincoln 27

This Week's Games

(NCHSAA Playoffs)

Norwood at Shelby
Murphy at Maiden

Northwestern 4A

Teams	Conf. W-L	All W-L
Freedom	5-0	11-0
Crest	4-1	9-1
Alexander	3-2	6-5
East Burke	2-3	5-6
McDowell	1-4	2-8
Watauga	0-5	3-8

Last Week's Results

Crest 33, Alexander 14

This Week's Games

(NCHSAA Playoffs)

Crest at Greensboro Grimsley
Alexander at Richmond Co.
Butler at Freedom

SPORTS

Herald/Times

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Section B, Page 1

He's the Man

Hillman finishes prep career with 5,618 yards, 396 points

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

One of Kings Mountain's all-time great football players went out in style Friday night.

Senior Anthony Hillman completed his three-year prep career as the leading rusher and scorer in KMHS and Cleveland County history, plus became just the second player in school history to have his jersey retired.

Head Coach and Athletic Director Ron Massey presented Hillman with his jersey during a special half-time ceremony during the Mountaineers' 46-33 season-ending victory over North Gaston at John Gamble Stadium.

Hillman joins retired Cleveland Browns running back Kevin Mack as the only KM players to ever have their jerseys retired. Mack's #20 was retired following his record-breaking senior season of 1979 when he led the Mountaineers to an 8-2 season and gained 1,585 yards rushing.

Mack's single season rushing total was one of the many records Hillman smashed during a three-year varsity career which saw the Mountaineers win two Southwestern 3A Conference titles, one Western North Carolina championship, and post a combined won-lost figure of 30-11-1.

During that stretch Hillman gained 5,618 yards, a figure that almost doubled the previous career rushing record of 3,089 yards, set by Shrine Bowl star Ken Baitly from 1955-57.

Hillman broke Baitly's record during last season, when he had his best single season with 2,510 yards rushing. Included in that total was another school mark of 298 yards rushing in a 27-21 win over Kannapolis in the third round of the state 3A playoffs.

Hillman's two touchdowns Friday night broke his existing school record of most points in a single season. He finished with 162 points, compared to last year's high of 156 points. For his three-year career, he scored 66 touchdowns and 396 points.



Anthony Hillman, with Coach Ron Massey looking on at left, has his jersey retired at halftime of Friday's KM-North Gaston football game at Gamble Stadium.

While Hillman's bruising style of running is far different from Baitly and Mack's more explosive, burning speed style, most fans who have seen all three say there's no question Hillman is the best running back to wear the Kings Mountain Black and Gold.

Head Coach Ron Massey, who has had at least one 1,000 yard rusher in each of his five seasons here, said that's obvious.

"His endurance over the past three years has been unbelievable," said Massey. "He's such a great competitor. I think that's what separates him from being a very good back and being a great offensive back. He's just a competitor."

Hillman reaped almost every honor imaginable over his first two varsity seasons, including All-Southwestern 3A Conference, SWC Player of the Year, and All-State.

Although this year's all-star teams won't be announced until after every SWC team is eliminated from the playoffs, it's a sure-bet he will repeat those previous honors.

Kings Mountain fans - and Coach Massey, too - feel like he's also worthy to be the first KM back to make the Shrine Bowl since Baitly in '57.

"If they don't pick him in the Shrine Bowl I'm going to be extremely upset and disappointed," Massey said. "I can't think of another fullback-type runner that can match him."

Hillman is also catching the eye of college recruiters, and although some folks say his speed in the forty yard dash is not good enough for the Division I level, Massey says his speed is deceptive and because of his heart and strength he would make someone See Hillman, 2B

KM outguns 'Cats in finale, 46-33

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

Bruised and banged up and minus some key players who were injured in the game with South Point a week earlier, Kings Mountain's Mountaineers battled back from adversity to defeat North Gaston's Wildcats 46-33 in their final football game of the season Friday night at John Gamble Stadium.

The victory left Ron Massey's charges with a 6-4-1 overall record and in a tie for second place in the Southwestern 3A Conference. But because of an early-season loss to Forestview, the Mountaineers did not qualify for the state playoffs for the first time in Massey's era as coach.

Still, considering the four losses and the tie came against some of the top teams in North and South Carolina, Massey was pleased with his team's effort during the season, and especially in the final game.

"I was proud of our kids for

being able to come back and win against a very good North Gaston team," he said. "North Gaston has probably one of the best teams they've had in a long time."

"I thought we showed a lot of resiliency. We had to play a lot of kids on defense that were really banged up, and I thought some of the kids we put in did an admirable job."

The final game saw the end of an era in Kings Mountain football. The school's all-time leading rusher and scorer, Anthony Hillman, who had his #45 jersey retired in a halftime ceremony, gained 170 yards in 29 carries and scored two touchdowns to bring his final career numbers to 5,618 yards rushing and 394 points - both Cleveland County records.

It also marked the end of the prep careers of 24 other seniors who helped lead the team to an overall 35-11-1 mark, two SWC championships and one Western North Carolina title

See Game, 2B



Kings Mountain's Kelly Littlejohn (3) tries the left side for some running room in Friday's Southwestern 3A Conference game with North Gaston at John Gamble Stadium. Mountaineers won 46-33 to end their season with a 6-4-1 overall record.

Mounties can be proud of their success

Kings Mountain High football coaches, players and fans may be disappointed at present because the Mounties did not make the state playoffs, but down the road all will be able to look back with pride to a good season that produced many exciting moments.

The Mountaineers' 6-4-1 record was their worst in five years under Coach Ron Massey, but when you consider the caliber of teams they lost to you have to admit it was another outstanding year.

All of KM's losses (and the tie

with Shelby) came against teams that are in the state playoffs. Three of those teams (Caffney, South Point and Shelby) have legitimate shots to win the state championship. A fourth team, Crest, is a very good football team but is in the same playoff bracket with national power Richmond County. The fifth, Forestview, probably won't go far in the playoffs but the Jaguars are still a very good football team.

Even though they're sitting at home for the playoffs, the Mountaineers accomplished a lot. In their five years under Coach Massey, they have broken almost every offensive record in a football history dating back to 1922.

Massey has produced at least one 1,000-yard rusher in each of his five seasons, and on two occasions the Mounties had two

1,000-yard rushers in the same backfield. He has had seven 1,000-yard rushers in five years. In the 73 years prior to Massey's arrival, the school had only eight 1,000-yard rushers.

He has had two quarterbacks to break the all-time school career passing record, and his most recent running star, Anthony Hillman, smashed all of the school and Cleveland County rushing and scoring records.

This year's team, in only 11 games, almost broke the school scoring record of 448 points set last year when the Mountaineers played 16 games. The '99 outfit scored 422 points, including 264 over the last five contests. The team topped the 50-point mark four times. In the previous 77 years, they had topped the 50-point mark only five times.

The Mountaineers have had some excellent coaches and some outstanding teams over the years, but except for a brief period in the 1950s their football programs were mediocre at best before Massey's arrival.

Massey's winning percentage (75 percent) is far greater than any other KMHS coach, and the Mountaineers' five-year win total under Massey (47 games) is by far the best of any other five-year period in the school's history.

Massey is 47-15-2 in his first five years here, and is the only coach to have a winning season in each of his first five years. Shu Carlton, a North Carolina coaching legend who is a member of five different Halls of Fame because of his success on the football field, was 16-23-5 in his first five years. John Gamble was 31-14-5, Bill Bates 31-18-2,

Bob Jones 26-20-4, Dan Brooks 25-25, and Denny Hicks 31-24.

The Mountaineers went to the state playoffs four years in a row from 1995-98, and in the previous years 73 years combined went to the playoffs only six times ('55 and '56 under Carlton, '64 under Bates, and '85, '86 and '89 under Hicks).

Perhaps the best indication of just how far the KM football program has come under Massey is to look at the 15 losses and two ties over the past five years. Sixteen of those 17 opponents went to at least two rounds in the state playoffs. Three of them (Crest, Kannapolis and Winston-Salem Carver) won the state championship. During the Chargers' state championship season in 1996, the only blemish on their

See Gary, 2B