Burns for the '97 Southwestern

Although the players, coaches and fans are disappointed

3A Conference title with a 9-1 overall record but lost a drawing for a playoff berth.

that the Mountaineers did not

qualify for the state playoffs

this year, we should not lose sight of the big picture: that

Kings Mountain coaches and

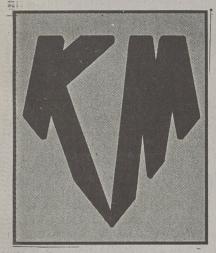
North Carolina, and they've

done it will a lot of class.

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players have established a tra-

dition of championship football that ranks among the elite in



## POSTGAME

PLAYERS OF THE GAME



HILLMAN ASH

KM - Anthony Hillman, RB, 29-170 rushing, 2 TDs. Matt Ash, QB, 13-106 rushing, 2 TDs; 4-7-46 passing, 1 TD. NG - Josh Butler, RB, 14-132

rushing, 2 TDs. Adrian Grier, QB, 9-21-137 passing.

#### PLAY OF THE GAME

On the first play of the fourth quarter, Kings Mountain quarter-back Matt Ash hit slot back Kelly Littlejohn with an 18-yard touchdown pass to give the Mountaineers the lead for good, 39-

#### BY THE NUMBERS

6 14 13 0 -33 7 10 14 15 -46

#### FIRST QUARTER

5:48 - NG - Adrian Grier 4 yard run. 81 yard drive, 15 plays. 5:29 - KM - Stanley Whitesides, 88 yard kickoff return (Evan Osteen

#### SECOND QUARTER

7:52 - NG - Josh Butler 29 yard run. 53-yard drive, five plays following KM fumble. 6:47 - KM - Matt Ash 6 yard run.

(Osteen kick). 64-yard drive, four

plays. 6:32 - NG - Randy Thompson, 87 yard kickoff return (Duane Buchanan pass from Grier).

0.6.5 - KM - Osteen 27 yard field

goal. 82-yard drive, 13 plays. Key plays 18 yard run by Hillman, 14 yard run and 11-yard reception by McClain, and 9-yard reception by

## THIRD QUARTER

9:18 - KM - Ash, 5-yard run (Osteen kick). 53 yard drive, six plays. Key plays 18-yard run by Kenny Moore on third and fourth, and 28-yard run by Ash to the six.

7:15 - NG - Butler 25 yard run (Robbie Hunter kick). 67 yard drive, six plays, aided by pass interference. Key play 20-yard recep-

tion by Thompson. 2:54 - KM - Anthony Hillman, 3 yard run (Osteen kick). 68 yard drive, 10 plays. Key plays 20-yard run by Ash and runs of 11, 9 and 17 yards by Hillman.

2:24 - NG - Duran Hill, 55 yard pass from Butler. 78 yard drive, 3 plays.

## FOURTH QUARTER

11:53 - KM - Kelly Littlejohn, 18-yard pass from Matt Ash (Osteen kick). 71 yard drive, 7 plays. Key plays 18 yard runs by Hillman and

4:55 - KM - Hillman, 10-yard run (Osteen kick). 60-yard drive, 9 plays following NG fumble.

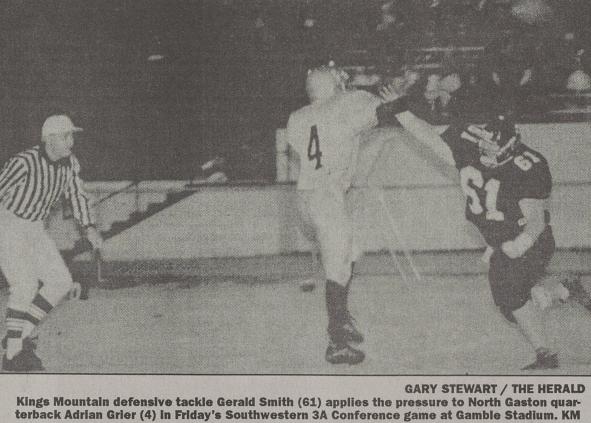
## NOTABLE

Kings Mountain running back Anthony Hillman had his #45 jersey retired during a special half-time ceremony. Hillman finished his prep career with 5,618 yards rushing and 396 points.

## **OUOTABLE**

"He's such a great competitor, and I think that's what separates him from being a very good back and being a great back. He's just a competitor."

> RON MASSEY Kings Mountain Coach on Anthony Hillman



# JV Mounties finish 7-2-1

Kings Mountain High's JV football team capped off one of its best seasons in years Thursday night with 23-0 victory at North Gaston.

The Mountaineers finished 7-2-1 overall and were undefeated in the Southwestern 3A

Conference.

Over the course of the season, the Mountaineers tied Gaffney, lost to Shelby by two points, lost to Crest by two touchdowns, edged East Rutherford 7-6 in overtime, and defeated

East Gaston, Forestview, Burns, R-S Central, South Point and North Gaston by huge margins.

Aquino Reynolds scored on runs of five and 65 yards, Cortney Smith scored on a 45 yard run, and Pablo Peralta kicked a 26-yard field goal.

# **GAME**

over the past three seasons. "It was nice for us to be able to send our seniors out winners," Massey said. "The win will give us something to build

The contest was a wide-open affair from the get-go, but it took the Mountaineers a while to get their offense in gear because North Gaston controlled the ball for the entire first quar-

The Wildcats ran 25 plays in the first period to only three (all one-yard runs by Hillman) for the Mountaineers. Still, KM held the lead at the end of the first quarter, 7-6, thanks to an 88-yard kickoff return for a touchdown by Stanley Whitesides, and Evan Osteen's extra point.

North Gaston, which finished 7-4 overall and fifth in the SWC, drove the opening kickoff 89 yards to score on a four-yard option keeper by quarterback Adrian Grier. But the 'Cats missed their extra point at-

After Whitesides' kickoff return, the Wildcats drove to the KM 10 before losing the ball on

After that - except for a couple of turnovers by both teams the lead changed hands on almost every possession. The Wildcats chalked up 471 yards total offense, and the Mountaineers finished with 439. Quarterback Matt Ash joined Hillman in the 100-yard club with 106 yards rushing on MOUNTAINEER

## GRIDGRAPH

First downs 269 393 Yds. rushing 4-7-0 Passes 14-24-1

Yds. passing Fumbles lost 202 46 Yds. penalized 25 RUSHING KM - Hillman 29-170, Ash 13-106, Littlejohn 5-28, McClain 4-55,

Moore 2-34. NG - Butler 14-132, Grier 10-76, Thompson 11-61.

<u>PASSING</u> KM - ASH 4-7-0-46. NG - Grier 9-21-1-137. Butler 2-2-0-65.

RECEIVING KM - Littlejohn 1-18, Leach 1-9, McClain 2-19. NG - Butler 3-31, Smith 1-15, Thompson 3-69, Grier 1-10, Neely 2-24, Hill 1-55.

## I would like to thank each person who cast a vote for me on November 2, 1999.

I am humbled by the support that I received. I will do my best to serve the children, the teachers, the staff and our community.

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Stella N. Putnam

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16 carries and two touchdowns,, and 4-of-7 passing for 46 yards and a touchdown.

The Wildcats took advantage of a KM fumble to take a 12-7 lead in the second period. After picking up the loose ball, the Wildcats marched 53 yards in only five plays, with ace running back Josh Butler zig-zagging through the KM secondary for a 29-yard touchdown run.

The Mountaineers came back with a 74-yard scoring drive, sparked by Hillman's 28-yard burst down the visitor's sideline. Kelly Littlejohn rambled 29 yards around left end to set up a six-yard touchdown run on which Ash faked to Hillman and kept the ball around right end while the entire North Gaston defense was swarming Hillman.

The lead was short-lived, however, as North Gaston's Randy Thompson returned the ensuing kickoff 87 yards for a touchdown. Grier passed to tight end Duane Buchanan for a two-point conversion which put North back on top 20-14.

After an exchange of punts, the Mountaineers drove from their own 18 to the North Gaston 10, and with time running out in the first half, had to settle for a 27-yard field goal by Osteen to cut the Wildcats' lead to 20-17 at intermission.

The Mountaineers drove the second half kickoff 53 yards in six plays, with Ash scoring on a five-yard run around left end to put KM on top 24-20.

The teams traded touchdowns again, with Butler scoring from 27 yards out for a 27-20 North Gaston lead, and Hillman going over from three vards out to put KM back on North Gaston's offensive co-

ordinator, Bruce Clark, a former

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KM assistant, went to his bag of tricks and had Butler throw a 55-yard halfback pass to Duran Hill to give the Wildcats a 33-31 lead with just 2:24 remaining in the third period.

But that lead was short-lived, also, as the Mountaineers marched 71 yards with Ash hitting a streaking Kelly Littlejohn over the middle for an 18-yard touchdown on the first play of the fourth quarter, giving KM the lead for good, 39-33.

Even though the KM defense took a beating over the last half of the season against some explosive SWC powers, it did come up with two crucial stops in the fourth period to put the game on ice.

With North driving at the KM 40, Jason Feemster keyed on Butler and threw him for a oneyard loss, and after an incomplete pass Bryan Thornburg dropped Grier for no gain to force a fourth and 11 pass, which fell incomplete.

Kings Mountain then drove 60 yards in nine plays, with Hillman scoring from 10 yards out to put the Mounties up 46-33 with 4:55 remaining

North Gaston drove downfield again. Gene Neely caught a big pass, and 20 yards in penalties against KM (offside and face mask) put the Wildcats on the Mountaineer 30. Linebacker Lee Rhodes picked off a Grier pass and returned it to the 27.

The Wildcats' defense held KM to three and out, but Bryan Thornburg got off a high, 48yard punt with 1:55 left which backed the Wildcats up to their own 30. After Chris Hogue dropped Butler for a five-yard loss on a screen pass, the Mountaineers leveled Grier with a jarring hit which separated Grier and the ball, and KM's Torrey Cureton recovered.

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"Somewhere, somebody's going to see past all these physical things they look at and see what he does on the football field and know that he's a winner and a competitor, and they're going to get one of the finest running backs around," Massey says. "I feel like he's got a great future in front of him. If he does what he needs to do to be successful, then he will be."

GARY

record was a 28-28 tie with

season of '98 the only blemish

Of the 17 opponents who have either beaten or tied KM

over the past five years, only

playoffs, and that was East

HILLMAN

an exceptional running back.

From 1B

one team did not make the state

Rutherford which tied KM and

on the Lions' slate was a 7-6

Kings Mountain, and in Shelby's state championship

loss to Kings Mountain.

Hillman, who is not a man of many words, has never been one to seek attention but has instead given the credit for his success to his offensive line.

"He's appreciated our offensive line every year that he's rushed," Massey said. "The line always enjoyed blocking for him because he is always appreciative of the job they did. They get excited watching him run over people."

Massey said a lot of colleges have already shown interest in Hillman, and with the college season winding down he expects the recruiting process to really heat up soon. Hillman is likely to look to Massey and his other coaches for advice in his

choice. Hillman has said he would like to stay close to home, but he'll be looking at the best opportunity athletically

and academically. "I think we'll just sit down and look at what's the best situation for him to be in, and we'll go from there," Massey said. "I don't think there's any preference. A lot of people would hope he would stay around, but we have to see what's best for him and what's going to open up the most doors for him academically and athletically.

"We've got some other kids that a lot of schools are looking at, too," he added. "Nobody's made any legitimate offers yet. We've still got some kids that are taking the SAT. For the colleges, recruiting is a year-long process but they're going to start narrowing down their list and start making strong bids probably in late November and early December."

For Hillman, it will be an exciting time and the fans who have marvelled at the accomplishments of KM's all-time greatest back over the past three years hope that the best for him is still ahead.

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