

Kicking Lady Mountaineers edge Ashbrook, Forestview, host Hickory in first conference game Wednesday night

Kings Mountain High's soccer team opened its regular season last week with impressive nonconference victories over Ashbrook and Forestview.

The Lady Mountaineers were scheduled to open Southwestern Foothills Conference play Monday night against pre-season favorite St. Stephens, but the game was called off because the St. Stephens coach was experiencing health problems. The game will be made up later in the season.

Despite very cold weather, the Lady Mountaineers completely dominated a good Ashbrook team on Wednesday

night and won 3-1.

Freshman Blair Heffner got the scoring under way off a super assist from senior midfielder Emily Owens. Lesley Potter later found the net off an assist from Heffner to make the score 2-0 at the half.

Ashbrook came out of the extended 20-minute half and scored directly off a corner kick to cut the margin to 2-1. The goal fired up the Mountaineers and they responded immediately with a goal from outside midfielder Jenni Wilson.

"Between the temperature at game

time (30 degrees) and the wind that gusted up to 25 to 30 miles per hour the rest of the game was a matter of surviving the elements," said KM Coach Dan Potter. "I have never been associated with a game in which the water in the cooler froze up. The top of the cooler was frozen as well as the spout. This game showed the kind of character these young ladies have."

Kings Mountain completely dominated last year's Southwestern 3A Conference champion Forestview Friday night but came away somewhat disappointed after winning by only 2-1.

The Jaguars handed the Lady Mountaineers three of their four losses last year.

Kings Mountain's stifling defensive effort held the Jaguars to only three shots in the first half. Kings Mountain had numerous scoring opportunities but had to settle for a lone goal by Blair Heffner and a 1-0 halftime lead.

The scoring opportunities kept coming in the second half, but the Mountaineers couldn't convert and their frustration built. Heffner finally scored on a penalty kick for a 2-0 lead, and the Jaguars finally penetrated the

KM defense with one minute remaining in the game to score on a direct kick.

"Although we played a super match, there was a feeling of disappointment as the final score did not reflect the level of domination that our girls experienced," Potter said. "This match was a really good indication of just how talented this team is."

KM was scheduled to play Newton yesterday, and goes to Charlotte Catholic Friday. They travel to East Rutherford Monday and open SWFH play against Hickory here Wednesday.

SEASON

From 6A

"To go 10-2 in our conference was unbelievable," McDowell said. "When you sit in a pre-season coaches meeting and they're all saying 'Kings Mountain lost four starters and two all-conference guys. They're going to be last' what can you say? If I'd been voting I'd picked me last too."

McDowell said he set three goals for the team before the season, and wrote all the players a letter to explain the goals. They were to win the conference, make the State playoffs, and win the State championship.

"Two out of three's not bad considering how young we are," he said.

McDowell said the players were responsible for the big turnaround this year.

"We're always talking about reaching for the stars and shooting for the moon, and they exceeded all of my expectations," he said. "But these young guys did it themselves by working on their own all summer. They went out and worked to make themselves better shooters, because last year we couldn't shoot a lick. The whole team worked on their own and that's the kind of dedication it takes. We knew coming in if they did what we expected of them we'd be okay even if nobody else gave us a chance."

"It was a great year and a fun group of kids to work with," he added. "I told them in the locker room every day that we didn't have any high school All-Americans or Division I players, but I wouldn't want to be coaching any team other than the one sitting in there."

"We always talked about heart, hustle and desire, and they gave it to me every time they walked on the court. We didn't listen to those people that said we were going to be last."

McDowell credited his four seniors - Brandon Roberts, Josh Gash, Matt Hardin and Chris Burris - for providing the leadership in practice and in the games. As soon as the team got back home Saturday night after losing to Ashbrook, the seniors as they were waiting on their rides home told the underclass-

men that they needed to start getting ready for next year.

"I heard them telling the underclassmen that they need to go out every day and shoot a hundred shots, and that they need to run and work on their own," McDowell said. "Today I saw some of the younger guys at lunch and they were saying 'coach, open the gym, we want to play together one last time.' How many kids are that dedicated?"

"The relationship we had was just unbelievable. People coming to see the games don't understand the rapport that we have with these kids every day. Whether it's in class or on the basketball floor we check on them and make sure they're doing the right things. I wish I could just wrap them up and keep them for another year. The love we have for each other is unbelievable."

McDowell said another key to this season was playing a very tough nonconference schedule. They hosted a scrimmage that included some of the top public and private schools in the State, and faced other top powers like Ashbrook and East Gaston.

"That got us to where we could play with these big boys," he said. "We could have played a bunch of patsies and probably had eight more wins, but that doesn't do anything for you."

With this year's success and 11 players coming back, it's safe to assume SWFH coaches won't be picking the Mountaineers last next year.

"We had different people starting at different times," he said. "The good thing about us is that we don't depend on one man to lead us to the promised land. We always talked about we had to do it by committee."

The Mountaineers didn't have a player average more than 12 points per game, but all of the players played their role to perfection.

Three members of the team were named to the All-SWFH team, including seniors Josh Gash and Brandon Roberts and sophomore point guard Derrick Smith.

"We didn't depend on one man," McDowell said. "That's the great thing about this team. They worked hard and knew what was expected of them to be a Mountaineer."

Gaffney's two-hitter stops Huskies 2-1

Hunter Gaffney hurled a complete game two-hitter and Kings Mountain's Mountaineers posted their second straight victory Friday afternoon at Hunter Huss, 2-1.

The Mountaineers' scheduled home opener with East Gaston on Monday was changed to Wednesday because of cold weather. The Mountaineers will return to Hunter Huss Friday for a 4 p.m. contest and will host Shelby Tuesday at 4:30.

Gaffney had a no-hitter going until the sixth inning. He gave up a single in the sixth and another in the seventh. He struck out four.

Kings Mountain broke a 1-1 tie which had existed since the first inning by scoring the win-

ning run in the top of the fifth.

With two outs, Brad Goforth reached base on an error, moved to second on a passed ball and scored on a single by Josh Patterson.

The Mountaineers had taken a 1-0 lead in the top of the first. Ross Ellis led off the game with a double, moved to third on an infield hit by Trent Hopper, and scored on an error.

Hunter Huss tied the game in the bottom of the first on a walk, sacrifice, wild pitch and fielder's choice.

Kings Mountain managed only five hits with Ellis getting two and Hopper, Patterson and David Brinkley adding one apiece.

"Basically we got good pitch-

ing out of Hunter, and some fine defensive plays," said KM Coach Tony Leigh.

"We didn't muster but five hits but we did hit the ball pretty good. We just hit it right at

some people. We only had four strikeouts so we put the ball in play pretty well. We're getting better with the bat and we're getting strong pitching and good defense."

JV Mounties beat Huss for second straight win

Kings Mountain High's JV baseball team posted its second straight victory Friday against Hunter Huss, 13-3 in five innings.

Brad Deaton went 4-for-4 with two runs batted in for Channon Vogel's Mountaineers. Weston Taylor went 2-for-2 with two walks and one RBI.

Josh Hendricks pitched three innings for the Mountaineers. Deaton hurled one inning and Josh Melton two.

Kings Mountain was scheduled to play at East Gaston Wednesday. The Mountaineers host Hunter Huss Friday at 4 p.m. and travel to Shelby Monday at 4:30.

Kidney Association golf tourney slated

The National Kidney Foundation will hold its second annual Asheville Cadillac Invitational Golf Classic at the Country Club of Asheville on August 2.

For information on participating as a corporate team or becoming a member of a local tournament planning committee, call Chris Riegel at 800-356-5362.

KM-Asheville Box

KM (72) - Roberts 16, D. Smith 23, Burris 3, Gash 11, S. Blair 2, C. Smith 3, G. Blair 4, Houze 8, Roebuck 2.

Asheville (69) - Gash 25, Hugenschmidt 5, Hines 12, Phillips 10, Whiteside 7, Kirchner 8, Ramsey 2.

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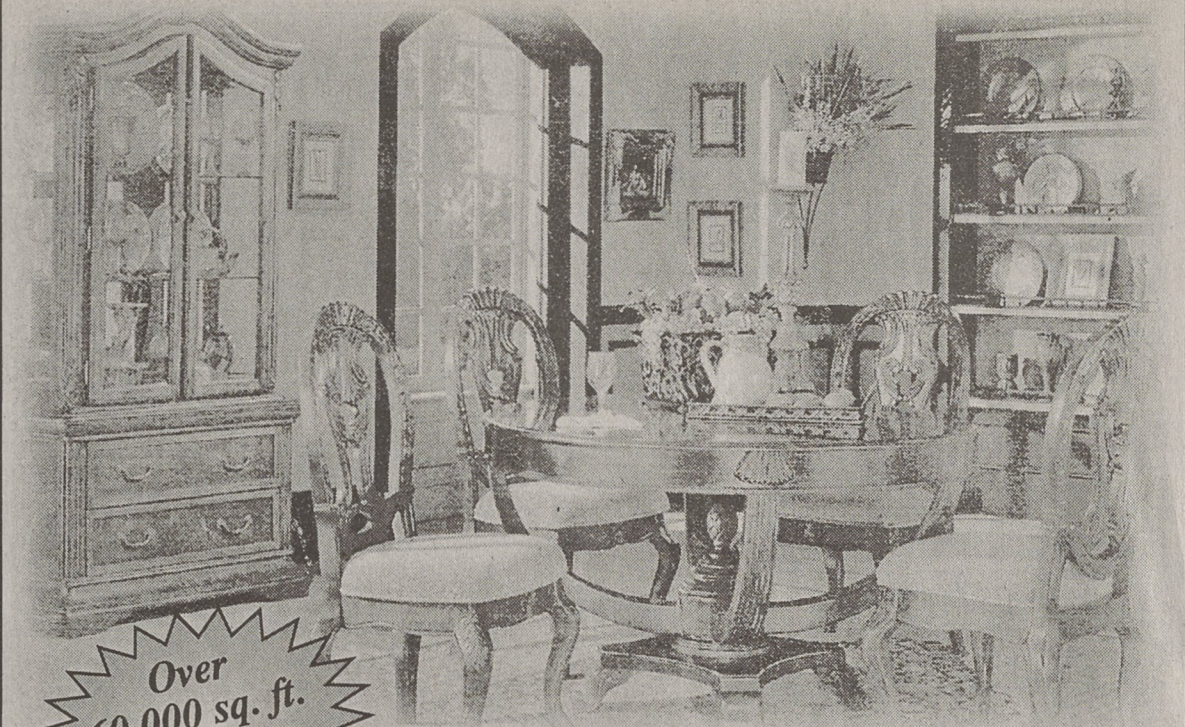
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