

# Mounties top Foard in first SWFH game

By GARY STEWART  
Editor of The Herald

Kings Mountain posted an impressive 60-49 win over State-ranked Fred T. Foard in the opening Southwestern Foothills 3A Conference game Friday night at Donald L. Parker Gymnasium.

But the win was bitter-sweet for Danny McDowell and the Mountaineers. They found out that their tallest and one of their most talented players, 6-6 sophomore Gabe Blair, will be moving to Virginia over the Christmas holidays.

Although he was not a starter, Blair had his "coming out" game recently when he scored 23 points and grabbed 15 rebounds to lead a non-conference win over Hunter Huss.

"He's a good kid and that's going to be a tough blow," McDowell said. "We're going to miss him. I don't know who's going to take those minutes.

Somebody's going to have to step up to the plate." McDowell said Blair was good enough to start, but had been more effective coming off the bench because he was versatile enough to play every inside position.

"It's not every day you get a super sophomore like that," McDowell said. "We don't play again until January 3 so between now and then we're just going to be in there beating the walls down trying to find someone to take his minutes."

Although Foard was scrappy and kept the game close most of the way, the Mountaineers led the entire game against the team many were considering, along with Hickory, to be the teams to beat in the SWFH.

A 3-point field goal right

off the bat by Derrick Smith got the Mounties rolling. Kings Mountain's outside shooting was exceptional, with Dashawn Young leading the way with 18 points and Smith adding 17.

Brandon Houze, Blair, D.J. Byrd and Dominique Odems did an outstanding job on the boards for the Mounties.

"That was a big win for us," McDowell said, "one of the biggest ones this year."

"It's always nice to get that first conference win under your belt, especially against a team that's going to be one of the challengers for the conference. The kids just played well. I was so proud of those guys for the way they attacked Foard and did the things that we did."

The Mountaineers built a 15-point lead in the second half.

"What was good about this win was that their parents and coaches came down on the floor after the game and talked to us and said they were shocked that we beat them that handily," McDowell said. "But we know when we go up there it's not going to be easy."

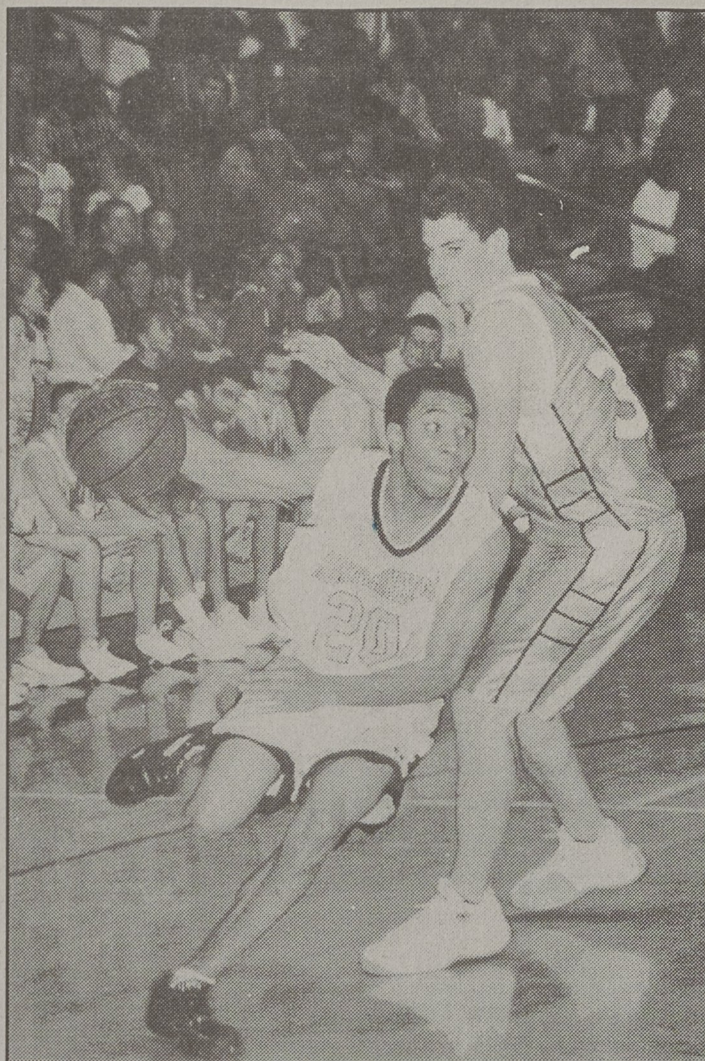
The Mountaineers return to action on January 3 at Burns against a tall and talented Bulldog team that is also being considered a conference contender.

"They have a great team," McDowell said. "It's going to be a challenge for us to stop the big Gash (Paul) kid. He's one of the best players in the conference."

### BOYS GAME

Foard (49) - Brands 18, Hartford 13, Johnson 4, Gallete 4, Lutz 2, Todd 2, Safrit 3.

KM (60) - Young 18, D. Smith 17, Houze 9, Odems 5, Blair 5, Byrd 4.



Kings Mountain's Derrick Smith (20 right photo) drives the baseline on a Fred T. Foard player in Friday's Southwestern Foothills basketball game at Donald L. Parker Gymnasium. Right, KM's D.J. Byrd (55) finishes off a KM fast break with a lay-up. Mountaineers won 60-49.



Kings Mountain's Brandon Houze (33) fires a jumper from the lane in Friday's basketball game with Fred T. Foard at Donald L. Parker Gymnasium. Kings Mountain won 60-49.

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