

SECTIONAL

From 6A

exceptional games."

The Smith brothers didn't practice with the team on Tuesday. McDowell took them home from school when he was notified of Frank Smith's death.

Tuesday afternoon's practice wasn't easy for anyone, he said.

"I took their jerseys and hung them on the bleachers, just like they were there," he noted. "The other kids just rallied behind them. It was unbelievable."

It was evident all the players were putting too much pressure on themselves to perform well in Wednesday's game with East Gaston. After building an early 13-6 lead, the Mountaineers found themselves in a 19-19 tie at half-time and trailing 31-27 going into the fourth quarter.

That's when Derrick Smith, the team's point guard, took charge. He had two thunderous dunks in the final two minutes as KM came from six points down to win. After the first dunk, the emotion was so strong he broke down in tears under the basket and was consoled by his brother Courtney as Mountaineer fans poured onto the court. After the second dunk McDowell took him out of the game to a standing ovation by the capacity crowd.

Derrick Smith finished with 17 points. Guard Dashawn Young scored 18. Blake Stoddard led East Gaston with 21.

While Smith's dunks "were fantastic" and brought the house down, according to McDowell it was defense and rebounding that once again saved the Mountaineers.

Kings Mountain garnered 61 rebounds, including 33 on the offensive end. Dominique Odems had 12, Gabe Blair 11 and Brandon Houze 9.

Even though Stoddard ripped the nets for a game-high 21 points, the Mountaineers held the Warriors other players under double figures and forced the Warriors into 25 turnovers.

"I felt good about holding their other big scorers down," McDowell said. "Our defensive pressure has been carrying us the last couple of weeks."

Friday night's game against Forestview was very similar to the East Gaston game. Again, the Mounties grabbed an early lead only to find themselves trailing by 18-17 at the half and 29-27 going into the fourth quarter.

But again, they got a spectacular performance from Derrick Smith on offense



GARY STEWART / HERALD
KM's Dominique Odems (24) ventures into the land of the giants in Wednesday game with East Gaston

and defense, and a tremendous rebounding effort inside. Smith scored a game-high 19 points and held Forestview's leading scorer Brad Hoyle to just three - a 3-point field goal in the fourth quarter.

The Mountaineers grabbed 61 rebounds, including 34 on offense. Blair led the way with 16, Houze had 13 and Odems 11.

Just like Wednesday night, the Mounties hit less than 50 percent of their foul shots and less than 30 percent from the field.

"It was the same song," McDowell said. "We shoot the ball below par and win by seven points. And what was so special about it was it was another emotional game. Brad Hole came in here averaging 19 points a game and Derrick held him to three points. I think he went 1-for-9 from the from the field. Chris Rayfield, their second leading scorer, managed only five points. Brandon Houze said he wanted him, and he took it as a personal challenge to hold him down. I have to applaud those two guys for their defensive effort."

"The whole team played well defensively," McDowell added. "If we shoot the ball well in either of those games the score wouldn't have

been that close. We were down to Forestview by five points with 2:08 left and went on a 14-2 run to end the game and win by seven. The guys just refused to quit."

KM 53, E. GASTON 46
KM - Young 18, D. Smith 17, Blair 6, Odems 5, Roebuck 3, Byrd 2, C. Smith 2.

EG - Stoddard 21, Forney 6, Helms 6, Moore 6, Bridges 3, Wilkinson 2, Brown 2.

KM 49, FORESTVIEW 42
KM - D. Smith 19, Odems 9, Blair 6, Byrd 6, Young 5, Houze 4.

FV - Miller q4, Forley 12, Adams 6, Rayfield 5, Hoyle 3, Willis 2.

REGIONAL

From 6A

before falling to Ashbrook.

McDowell, whose club carries a 21-5 overall record and a share of the SWFH championship into the Regionals, credits the two graduating seniors off last year's club - All-Conference standouts Josh Gash and Brandon Roberts - with giving the Mountaineers the advice they needed to take their game to another level this year.

"We got to the Sectional finals last year and lost," McDowell noted. "After the game they told our returning players if they would come back and work really hard and

be dedicated, they could win the Sectional championship this year."

McDowell built on that advice on the first day of practice this year. When the players came into the gym they saw all kinds of big banners on the gym floor. McDowell had printed out items such as last year's records and accomplishments, then took a pair of



KM's Heath Walker gets off a short jumper in Sectional Tourney.

scissors and cut them up. He threw them in the trash can and told the players "they don't mean anything anymore," and laid a banner of a big question mark in the middle of the floor and told them "you answer that question this year."

"I'm just real proud of them for what they've accomplished," he said. "We

were picked to finish fourth in the conference because we had lost two all-conference players. But our kids didn't believe that!

"The good thing about this team now, is that we don't start but one senior," he added. "I'm real proud of them whether they win another game or not. They've meant a lot to the program here. They've done the school well and they're a class bunch of young men."

Winning the Regional Tournament would be a monumental task for the 10th-ranked Mountaineers. All four of the teams in the top ten most of the season. Union Pines just recently fell out of the top ten.

West Rowan, which has won three of the past four State championships and has won 58 games in a row, is ranked #1 in the State and T.C. Roberson, which is undefeated, is ranked #2.

"It's getting pretty big right about now. They're all tough," says McDowell.

"There are no cupcakes. That's why we play that tough non-conference schedule - to get ready for what we're doing now."

STOP CLEANING GUTTERS!

SAVE \$300
off our already low off-season rates!

Someday you'll decide to take gutters off your list of worries. And when you compare all the no-dog gutters - the awkward add-ons, the flimsy systems - chances are you'll choose GutterGuard™. Most people do.

Because it's good enough to offer the strongest guarantee in the business:
If it ever rains, we'll clean it. Period.

Buy GutterGuard™ now and you'll save \$300 off our already low off-season rates. Just present this ad after your free quote.

To schedule a free consultation, call
704-869-0454 or 1-877-637-1790
or visit www.gutterguardnc.com

Guarantee:
If your GutterGuard™ system EVER clogs, WE'LL clean it.

K GUARD
Serving All Counties Surrounding Charlotte

GutterGuard™
America's Choice for Clog-free Gutters

Diamond Sale

For Your Anniversary
Or Any Occasion

<p>FOR HIS PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.</p> <p>1/4 Carat..... \$379 1/2 Carat..... \$499 1 Carat..... \$1,395</p>	<p>THREE BRILLIANT ROUND CUT DIAMONDS</p> <p>14K 1/4 Carat..... \$199 1/2 Carat..... \$599 1 Carat..... \$995</p>
---	--

1/4 Carat
Reg. \$149
Sale \$89

GENTS SOLITAIRE

10K
1/10 Carat... \$249
3/8 Carat... \$995

5/8 Carat Diamond Bridal Set
SILH-3
Sale \$995

Diamond Solitaires

Round
Princess

1/10 Carat... \$139
1/4 Carat... \$399
1/2 Carat... \$999
3/4 Carat... \$1,499
1 Carat... \$2,999

Available in Yellow or White Gold

"The Diamond Leader"

ARNOLD'S
Jewelry & Gift Gallery

226 S. Washington St. • Shelby • 704-487-4521
Hours: Mon.-Sat. 9am-5:30pm • Fri. 9am-6pm

A COMMITMENT TO *You*

Here Today...
Here Tomorrow

In 1874, the roots of a great tradition were planted in Cleveland County. That tradition continues to grow at First National Bank, a bank that is customer focused and community minded.

You can count on Your Hometown Bank being here for you today... and tomorrow.

FIRST NATIONAL BANK
Hometown Banking Since 1874
www.ibankatfnb.com

MEMBER FDIC