

Great job by Mounties, McDowell

Congratulations to the Kings Mountain High



Gary Stewart
Editor

men's basketball team, which last week became the first KMHS basketball team to win three straight conference champi-

onships.

Kings Mountain began playing basketball in 1921 and at no previous time in history have they won more than back-to-back championships.

Don Parker's 1966-67 and Bob Hussey's 1967-68 teams won two straight Southwestern 3A Conference crowns. Those teams featured George Adams, who was a three-time All-American at Gardner-Webb and played in the ABA, and Ken Mitchem, who played college basketball at Pan American.

The '68 team also featured Otis Cole, who played on the 1972 Florida State team that lost to Bill Walton and UCLA in the NCAA championship game, and Charles Barnes, who went on to play at Appalachian State.

John Blalock's Mountaineers won back-to-back titles in 1981 and '82. Those teams featured Carl Smith, who went on to break Dr. J's (Julius Erving) assist record at the University of Massachusetts. Blalock's son, Terrence, and Demetris Goode also went on to play college ball.

The tremendous accomplishments of the past three Mountaineer teams should pay off when the Southwestern Foothills Conference passes out post-season awards in a couple of weeks.

Based on how the new conference has chosen teams in the past, all five Mountaineer starters should stand an excellent chance to make All-Conference.

Danny McDowell should be a shoo-in for Conference Coach of the Year. He has built one of the strongest programs not only in the conference, but in Western North Carolina, but his efforts of the past two seasons went unnoticed by the conference coaches.

Kings Mountain's senior point guard Derrick Smith, who started as a freshman and has been a key part of all three KM championship teams, should be a leading candidate for Player of the Year honors.

Three-peat



Kings Mountain players Darik Gary (25) and Derrick Smith (20) apply the pressure in Mountaineers' full-court press. The Mountaineers defeated Crest Thursday night to become the first basketball team in school history to win three straight conference championships. The Mountaineers were scheduled to host Fred T. Foard last night in the second round of the Southwestern Foothills Conference Tournament, and will enter play in the State 3A Tournament next week.

KM Mountaineers make history with third straight league crown

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

Kings Mountain's Mountaineers were without their Byrd man, but it didn't keep them from soaring to their goal of being outright Southwestern Foothills Conference champions.

With their number two scorer and rebounder D.J. Byrd out of action with a knee injury, the Mountaineers went into Crest's Ed Peeler Gymnasium and flew past the Chargers 71-56 in their final regular season game Thursday night.

In a game in which a Crest win would have created a tie for first place and given the Chargers top seed in the playoffs, the win gave the Mountaineers a final 11-1 SWFH mark and their third straight conference championship. The Mountaineers had shared the regular season crown with Hickory in 2001-02 and Burns in 2002-03.

The outcome was never in serious doubt. Dashawn Young's 3-point field goal on the first shot of the game ignited an early 9-2 KM run and the Mountaineers never trailed.

Even though they've played spectacular at times, it was really the first game that the Mountaineers have dominated from start to finish.

"It was just one of those nights that we played four quarters for a change," said Coach Danny McDowell, who becomes the first KMHS basketball coach to win three straight championships.

In recent games the Mountaineers have started slowly before using their full-court press to force opponents into turnovers and turn the momentum in KM's favor, but this time McDowell expected things would be different. He could sense from Wednesday's practice that his team would play well and rebound from Tuesday night's loss at Hickory.

"We watched film Wednesday afternoon and after that the kids had a players only meeting," McDowell pointed out. "The kids said 'coach, we'll see you at practice' and I didn't see them again until practice. We had the best practice we've had all year, so I knew going into the game that the kids were going to play."

When the team arrived at the Crest gym the JV boys game was still in progress. Usually, the varsity boys sit in the stands until the third quarter of the girls game. But the Mountaineers went directly to the locker room and never came out.

"From the time I went in there in the See History, 7A

GARY STEWART / HERALD

Mounties open bid for trip to Regional

Byrd probably to miss playoffs

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

Despite their regular season championship, Kings Mountain's Mountaineers will probably face a tough battle as they try to make back-to-back trips to the Western 3A Regionals.

Heading into a second round Southwestern Foothills Conference tournament match-up last night with Fred T. Foard at Donald L. Parker Gymnasium, the Mountaineers were without the services of their #2 rebounder D.J. Byrd, who is averaging 12 rebounds per game.

And, as they enter the State 3A playoffs next week, the Mountaineers will still likely be Byrd-less.

Byrd recently hurt his knee in the next-to-last SWFH regular season game at Hickory, and Coach Danny McDowell said he cannot stand to put pressure on the knee.

In Kings Mountain's run-and-gun offense and full-court pressing defense, that means that Byrd won't get much - if any - playing time.

"Byrd's definitely out of the conference tournament," McDowell said, "and I doubt he'll be able to go next week in the State." We're going to miss the big fellow. The tournaments are going to be tough for everyone, and going in without one of your starters makes it very difficult.

As league champion, the Mountaineers drew an opening round bye in the SWFH tournament. Fred T. Foard, the fifth seed, knocked off #4 R-S Central to advance to the semi-finals against the Mountaineers last night at 8 o'clock. St. Stephens, the #6 seed, knocked off Hickory in the first round and was to face #2 Crest, which defeated Burns, in last night's opener at 7 p.m.

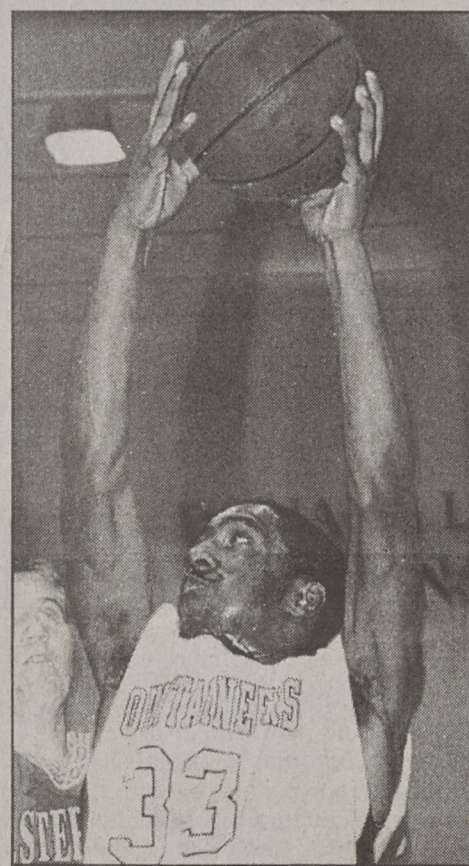
The boys and girls championship games are slated for Friday night at Hickory High School.

Kings Mountain will also draw a bye in the first round of the State 3A playoffs, which begin next Monday.

In the second round, which will probably be next Wednesday, they will host either the #3 team from the Mountain Athletic Conference or the #2 team from the Southwestern Foothills.

If the Mountaineers win that game, they would advance to the Sectional Championship game.

The Mountaineers could See Playoffs, 8A



Kings Mountain's David McClish (33) makes strong inside move for two points in last week's home game with St. Stephens.



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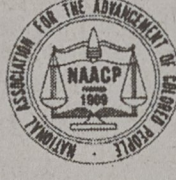
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