

SPORTS



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Kings Mountain's Crossfire baseball team won the Summer Warm-up Tournament in Gastonia last week and will be playing in the USSSA World Series Qualifier this weekend at the Kings Mountain YMCA. Front row, left to right, Matt Hoppes, Wesley Jackson, Clint Johnson, Kanaan Greene, Luke Kiser, Tray Sellers, Bryan Thomas. Second row, Dallas Conner, Morgan Costner, Dalton Shaw, Dylan Dixon.

Crossfire is more than just baseball

The Crossfire youth baseball team won the Summer Warm-Up Tournament last weekend in Gastonia and will compete in the USSSA World Series Qualifier 10-under event this weekend at the Kings Mountain YMCA parks.

Fifteen teams will be in Kings Mountain to compete for the right to play in the World Series in Mississippi.

But, according to Crossfire Coach Rick Greene, Crossfire is much more than winning baseball games.

It's a ministry. The team is an extension of the adult Crossfire basketball and softball teams that give their Christian testimonies before every game.

The basketball team, based in Asheville, plays some of the top adult amateur talent,

including the ACC all-stars.

The major softball team, coached by Ron Carroll of Kings Mountain, does the same.

With the help of Carroll and Mark Johnson, Greene and others, a youth baseball team was organized in the Kings Mountain area and not only teaches the basic fundamentals of baseball but Godly characteristics.

All of the baseball team's players learn the Ten Commandments and the team's Bible verse, Col. 3:17.

"We try to put God first," says Greene. "We pray before each game and we do Bible Trivia after each practice. It's not easy in this day and time. We just want them to know that the Lord loves them and cares for each one of them individually. That goes way beyond any baseball game."

Spring sports look good for many years to come

Kings Mountain High's spring sports season ended recently. Most fans probably wish it could begin again today.

The Mountaineers were very successful in baseball, soccer and softball this year and things look even brighter for years to come because most of the players on those teams will be returning.

Both the soccer and softball teams made great runs for the State championship, both coming up just one game short of the Western Championship and a berth in the State Championship.

The softball team, which finished 24-3 overall, won the Southwestern Foothills Conference and defeated East Lincoln and Franklin in the playoffs before falling to Enka in the last inning.

Veteran coach Suzanne Grayson loses only two players off that team - second baseman Brooke Blackburn and outfielder Alicia Dodge.

The team included ten freshmen, including three starters - ace pitcher Morgan Childers, shortstop Casey Camp and outfielder Jessica Yarbo.

Nine sophomores will also return, including starters catcher Kala Buchanan, pitcher-third baseman Kristyn Funderburke, out-

fielder LaRonda McClain and first baseman Brittney Thornburg.

The only junior on the team was outfielder Laura Clark.

With all that talent coming back for at least two, and in some cases three years, the Mountaineers will be among the best teams in the State for a long time.

The potential of the soccer team is just as great. Even though this year's team did not win the conference - it finished second to R-S Central - it posted 25 victories and went four rounds in the State playoffs.

The Mountaineers lose only four seniors, including starters Jenni Wilson and Lauren Horne. Both were All-Region and will be hard to replace.

But veteran Coach Dan Potter has a host of outstanding players returning, including this year's Southwestern Foothills Player of the Year, junior Blair Heffner. Other rising seniors are Emily Edwards, Kara Fujita and Stacey Spicer - all starters and all recipients of at least one post-season honor.

Sophomores Susie Potter and Candace Champion, both all-conference, will return along with ten talented freshmen. Freshmen starters this year were Lauren Suber, Vanessa Sidavong, Katie Cooke and Jennifer Lingg, and all but Cooke made the all-conference team.

So, the Mountaineer kickers will be a State threat for the next two or three years as well.

A program that made great strides this spring was the Mountaineer baseball team. After several sub-par seasons, first-year coach Eric King did a tremendous job in turning the program around. The Mountaineers led the league for most of the season before faltering in the final two weeks and finishing second.

The Mountaineers will miss some good senior players, including All-Conference standouts Matt Echols, Ronnie Wilson, Weston Taylor, C.J. Austin and Brandon Bridges but here's another team that returns a wealth of talent.

Tyler Leach, who led the team in hitting and strikeouts, should be in for a banner senior season. He will be joined on the mound by his younger brother, Ryan, and Trey Glass, as well as some talented pitchers who played at the JV level this year. KM's mound staff next year should be second to none.

Isaac Proctor will return in left field and people who played reserve roles on the varsity this year, and starting roles on the JV team, will be more than capable of filling in the positions left vacant by graduating seniors.

In a couple more years the Mountaineers will reap the benefit of a group of very talented players at the middle school.

Congratulations, and thanks, to all the players and coaches that brought us so much enjoyment this spring.



Gary Stewart Editor

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