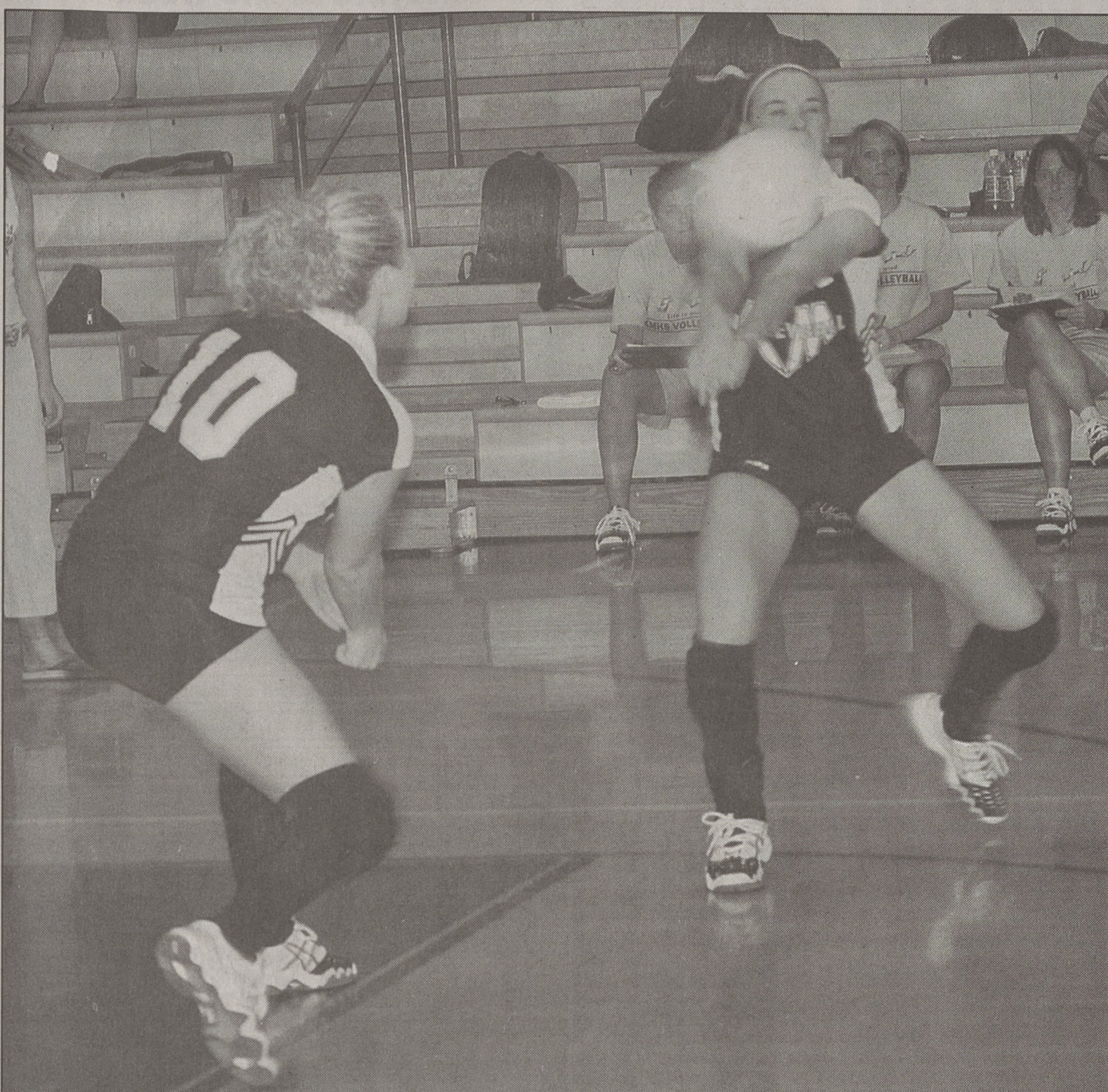


SPORTS



GARY STEWART / HERALD

Kings Mountain's Lady Mountaineers had a super run in State 3A volleyball tournament, knocking off three teams, including defending state champion Fred T. Foard, before falling to undefeated Mooresville Tuesday night.

KM spikers eliminate defending State champ

The third time was a charm for Kings Mountain High's women's volleyball team in their 2004 rivalry with defending State 3A champion Fred T. Foard.

Foard defeated the Lady Mountaineers twice in the regular season to claim the Southwestern Foothills Conference championship, but in the third round of the State 3A playoffs on Saturday night in Newton the Lady Mountaineers stunned the Lady Tigers 25-23, 19-25, 17-25, 25-23, 15-13.

The victory advanced the Lady Mountaineers into the Western Regional championship game last night in Mooresville against a Lady Blue Devils team that is 26-0 and has lost only one game all year, that coming in a 3-1 victory over Weddington in the second round of the playoffs.

Suzanne Grayson, who coached the Lady Mountaineers to the state championship in 2001, was overjoyed with her team's victory.

"We finally played good for a whole match against them," she said. "We played good against them at the end of that first game we had them there, and we played good that second game, but we didn't hold that level of play for an entire match. We did Saturday night."

The Lady Mountaineers got an outstanding game from several players, including Alex Dawson and LaRonda McClain on the net, Kala Buchanan and Marshia Meeks in the middle, Kristyn Funderburke at setter, and Brittney Thornburg and Jessica Yarbrow at the service line.

Dawson had a match-high 22 kills and also contributed 25 digs, three blocks and was 10-for-14 serving with one ace.

McClain had 15 kills, four blocks, 11 digs and was 16-for-

17 serving with an ace.

"Alex and LaRonda had a great game," Grayson noted. "Everybody needed to be on. LaRonda had a great night hitting."

Kala and Marshia did a good job holding their middle, so our outsides had a better opportunity to hit against a single block or a blocker being late. The passing game was better. Kristyn did a good job setting and everybody stepped it up. They just wanted to beat Foard."

Buchanan was true on 17 of 19 serves including four aces. Yarbrow was 17-for-17, Funderburke 11-for-11, and Thornburg 10-for-11.

Funderburke had 34 assists and Meeks had three kills and four blocks.

Grayson was proud of the way the Lady Mountaineers kept their composure and never gave up, despite being down two games to one and down 12-8 in the fifth and deciding game before outscoring the Tigers 7-1 to win the match.

"We've talked about when we get behind holding our composure," she said. "We did that. We were down two games to one but just kept fighting back. And were down 12-8 in the final game and came back. We had some key serves by Kala. She had a great night serving, as did Alex as far as jump serves. Thornburg had a real nice floater serve, which is a hard serve. We never gave up and pulled for each other, and kept our heads in the game."

■ The Lady Mountaineers advanced to the third round on Thursday night by defeating Mountain Athletic Conference champion Enka on the road, 28-26, 25-16, 25-15.

Dawson registered 25 kills, three blocks, 10 digs and was 8-for-11 serving with three aces.

McClain had 11 kills, one block, seven digs and was perfect on nine serves, including an ace.

Funderburke had 26 assists and was 22-for-23 serving.

Buchanan was 8-for-9 from the service line with two aces and had three kills and 15 digs.

Yarbrow was perfect on eight serves and had five digs, and Thornburg was 5-for-6 serving.

Meeks contributed two kills and two blocks.

Lady Mounties lose to Devils in west finals

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

Kings Mountain High's volleyball team barely missed a trip to the State Championship Tuesday night, falling to undefeated Mooresville 25-19, 22-25, 25-20, 25-21 in the Western Regionals championship game in Mooresville.

The Lady Blue Devils, 27-0, go to Raleigh Saturday to face the Eastern Champion for the State crown while Kings Mountain, 22-11, packs up its gear until next year.

Despite the loss, KM Coach Suzanne Grayson had nothing but praise for her young team, which finished second in the Southwestern Foothills Conference before knocking off Forestview, Enka, and Fred T. Foard in the state 3A playoffs.

"We did not have our best match, and Mooresville is a very good team," Grayson said. "We're disappointed but we played hard. We got everybody's best effort but didn't have our best game. They were just better than us tonight."

Alex Dawson, the only senior on the KM roster, had another spectacular game along the net, registering 35 kills and two blocks. She also led the team with 16 digs.

LaRonda McClain had nine kills and two blocks. She had 10 digs and was perfect on 13 serves.

Kristyn Funderburke had 30 assists and was 15-for-17 serving with three ace serves.

Kala Buchanan was 14-for-16 serving, Brittney Thornburg 8-for-11, Dawson 7-for-11, and Jessica Yarbrow 8-for-8.

Mooresville's loss to KM in game two of the best-of-five set was just their second game lost this year. They dropped one game to Weddington in the second round of the playoffs.

"We started out slow in game one," said Grayson, "but we came back and made a game out of it. You look at those scores and any of them could have gone either way. Even though they out-played us, you look at that and know how close we were to going to the big dance."

Kings Mountain, which won the State title in 2001 in Grayson's first year as coach, had a tremendous season considering their youth and strength of schedule.

"I'm very pleased with our season," Grayson said. "If you consider there's 12 volleyball positions actually, because you have to rotate a total of six people on front row and back row, and only four of those positions were taken last year, we were very young. We always set goals at the beginning of the year, and your goal is to win the state championship. But, realistically, at the beginning of the season nobody thought we would have finished tied for third in the state, playing in the semi-finals."

"I have never been more proud of a group of girls. I hate it for people like Alex Dawson, who is a senior and left her heart on the floor every match. She's been a great leader and has done a tremendous job. She is a tremendous player and you hate it for somebody like that when your season's over."

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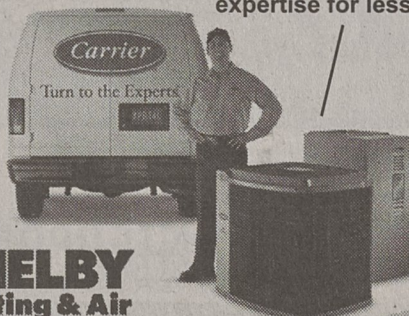
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