

MOUNTIES

From 7A

third base when Ronnie Wilson was on the mound, could see a lot of action this year.

"He has a good assortment of pitches," King says. "He's going to relieve a lot."

The sixth member of the mound crew is sophomore **Kevin Bell**, who may be a swing player between the JV and varsity teams.

"With all the pitching talent we have, I just don't know if I'll have enough games for him to pitch in," King says. "But he really looks good."

Catcher may be a pleasant surprise for Kings Mountain fans. The Mountaineers lost an All-Conference receiver and one of their best clutch hitters in Matt Echols but his back-up **Josh Hendricks** has put in a tremendous amount of time on his own sharpening his skills.

"From the day we finished last year until now he's been out there working every day," King says. "He looks a lot better than last year. His throws to the bases are looking good."

Senior **Brad Moffitt** will also battle for the starting catcher's spot. He missed a number of games last year with an injury but came back strong late in the season.

"Brad's a good receiver," King said. "He maybe doesn't have the arm that Josh has but he does a good job behind the plate and has a lot of experience."

Tyler Leach will get some competition at third base from junior **Trey Robinson**, who played on the JV team last

year, and **Camp** when he is not on the mound.

"Tyler did a good job there for the (Gastonia) legion team last summer," King said. "He's so versatile. If I need to I can put him back at first base. He can play a lot of positions."

Camp could turn into a "utility type" player in both the infield and outfield, King said.

"His first priority will be the outfield, but he may play some at third base too," King said.

Ryan Leach returns at short-stop, where he is a good defensive player and hit .258 last season. **Cody Barrett** played short last year when Leach was on the mound, and he could do that again but will likely see most of his time at second base where the Mountaineers lost All-Conference standout **CJ Austin**.

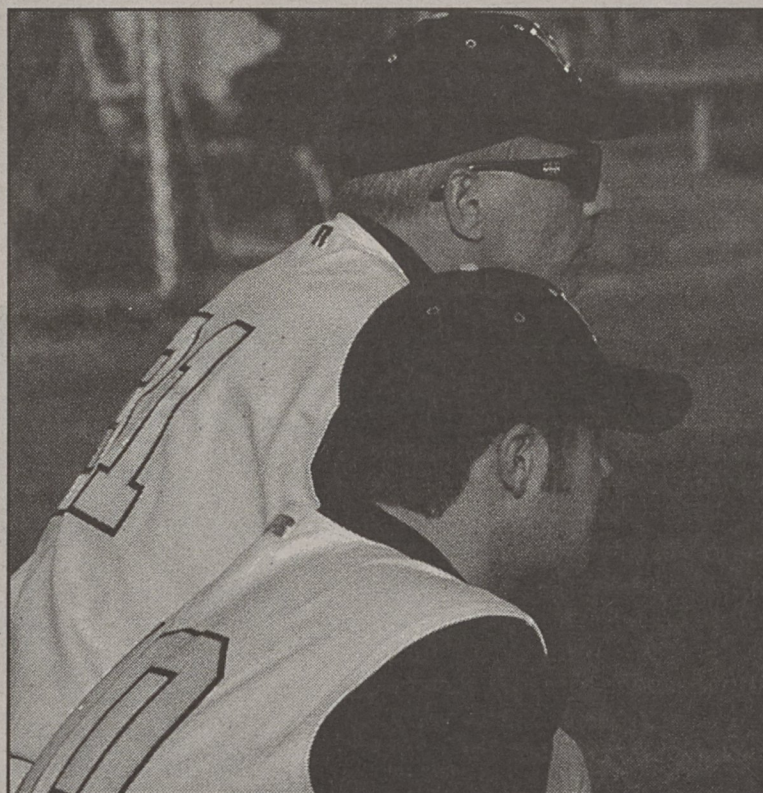
Camp and **Chris Patrick** could see time at either short or second.

Glass will hold down the starting job at first base, and when he's on the mound either **Melton** or **Robinson** will be there. **Glass** hit .276 and scored 16 runs last year.

"With **Melton's** height he can play multiple positions," King says. "That helps."

The only returning outfielder is **Isaac Proctor** in left field. **Proctor** and **Tyler Leach** were the team's only .300 hitters last year, with **Proctor** hitting .317 with 20 hits and nine runs. **King** has a lot of other talented athletes he can use in center and right, including **Melton**, **Patrick**, **Philip Bunch** and **Richard Anderson**, who is up from the JV team.

"We're going to be moving a



Eric King, left, begins his second season as head coach of the Kings Mountain Mountaineers. Right is his assistant Kenneth Pasour.

lot of people around," King said, "especially early in the season."

Needless to say, pitching is the team's major strength but even with the loss of four All-Conference players (**Echols**, **Austin**, **Wilson** and center fielder **Bo Bridges**) **King** feels the defense could even be better than last year.

"I feel good about the defense," he says. "We lost some key people. All of those guys did a good job. But we had people on the sidelines that could have played last year. Overall we have better speed on defense."

Don't get the idea that everything is rosy, though. **King** says there are areas

where the team must improve tremendously if it's to make a run for the state playoffs.

"I think the major thing we have to work on is being more aggressive on the bases," he says. "And we're going to be trying to hit better. As a team, we only hit .276 last year. That's not bad, I guess, for a team that was 18-8."

But **King**, who won three state championships in Virginia and played for one in North Carolina when he was head coach at North Gaston, has a knack for getting the most out of his players.

"I think a good problem is that we have so many good players," he says. "I'll have people on the side that could

start somewhere else. I like their attitude. They've been coming in at 6 o'clock in the morning and getting in their bullpen work, hitting and conditioning. I hope the seniors will lead like the ones I had last year. Even though we got knocked out of the playoffs, they went out on a good note."

KMHS SCHEDULE

FEBRUARY

28 - at East Gaston, 4:30

MARCH

1 - at North Gaston, 5 p.m.
4 - at Ashbrook, 4 p.m., (JV/Varsity DH)
9 - Ashbrook, 4 p.m. (JV/Varsity DH)
11 - South Point, 4 p.m.
15 - at St. Stephens, 7 p.m.
16 - Shelby, 4:30
19 - Bessemer City, 12 noon (JV/Varsity DH)
21 - N. Lincoln (End.), 6 p.m.
22 - R-S Central, 7 p.m.
24 - Crest, 7 p.m.
28-April 1 - at Shelby Easter Tourn., TBA

APRIL

5 - at Hickory, 7 p.m.
8 - at Burns, 7 p.m.
9 - at Bessemer City, 12 noon (JV/Varsity DH)
12 - F.T. Foard, 7 p.m.
15 - St. Stephens, 7 p.m.
22 - at R-S Central, 7 p.m.
26 - at Crest, 7 p.m.
28 - Hickory, 7 p.m.

MAY

3 - Burns, 7 p.m.
5 - at F.T. Foard, 7 p.m.
5-14 - SWFH Tourn. at Crest, TBA
17 - State tourney first round
20 - District final
24 - Sectional final
27 - Regional

JUNE

3 - State Championship series



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