

SPORTS

GIRLS

From 1B

First round losers and winners will play at 2:30, with the loser's bracket winner and winner's bracket loser meeting at 5 p.m. Saturday's two survivors will play for the State Championship Sunday at 2 p.m. If a second game is necessary it will be at 4:30.

Admission is \$6 each day. Sophomore right hander Morgan Childers hurled her fourth no-hitter of the season Thursday night as the Mountaineers defeated R-S Central for the fourth time this season. R-S advanced by knocking off the state's top-ranked team, Enka, 2-1.

Kings Mountain grabbed a 1-0 lead in the bottom of the first inning on a sacrifice fly by Childers. R-S Central only had two base runners, both on walks.

Casey Camp scored on an error and Brittney Thornburg singled home LaRonda McClain to give KM a 3-0 lead in the third. Jessica Yarbro beat out an infield hit and later scored on a single by Courtney Tate to make it 4-0 in the fourth. KM proceeded to load the bases and the fifth run scored on Childers' infield out.

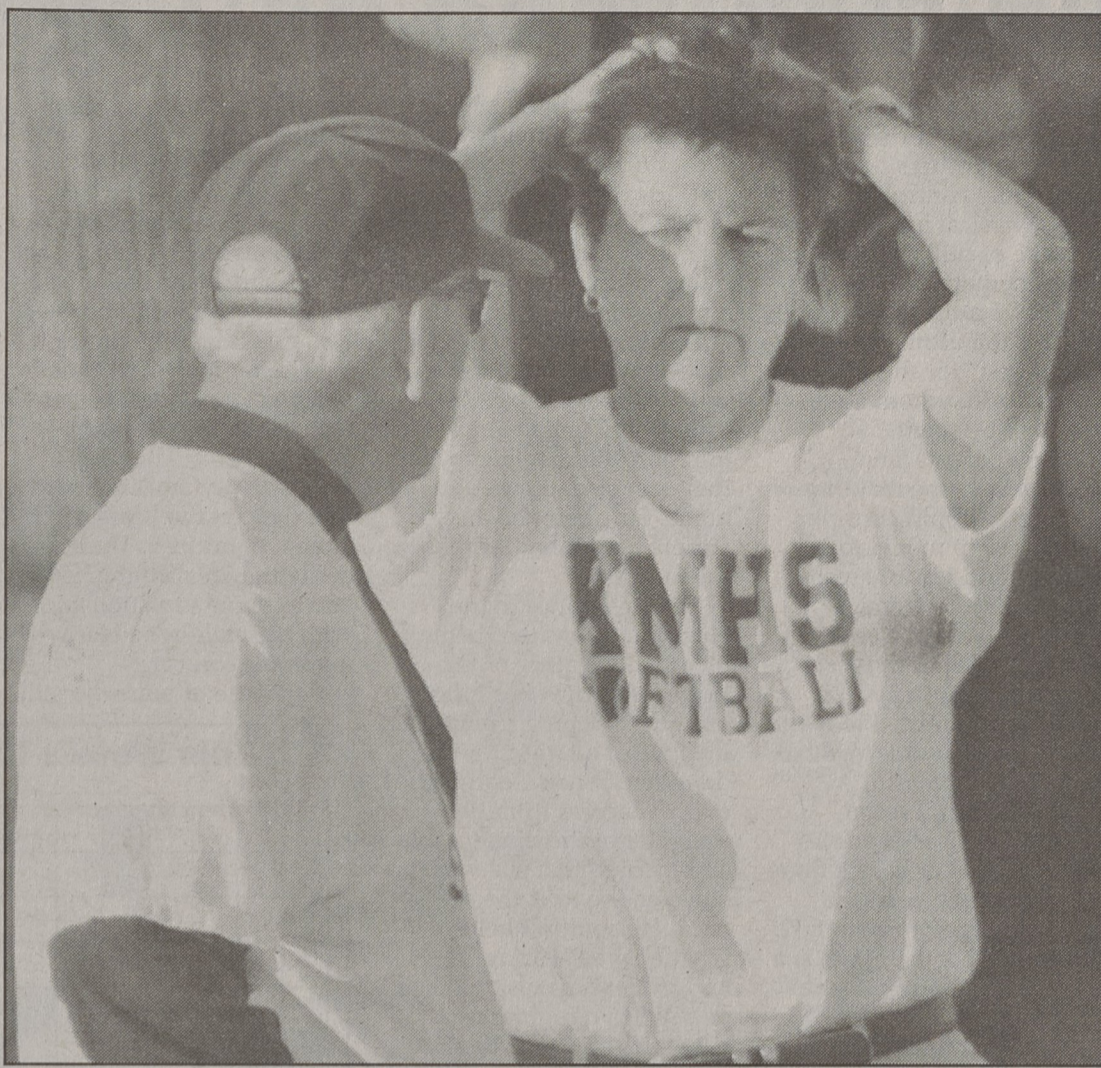
Kings Mountain added its final two runs in the sixth as McClain scored on a wild pitch and Thornburg singled home Childers.

The Lady Mountaineers celebrated only briefly, seeming to send the message that they had more business to take care of.

Coach Suzanne Grayson feels the team's experience and work ethic gives it the potential to be very competitive in Raleigh.

"I'm real pleased with the way the season's gone, but I'm also real pleased with the girls' work ethic," she said. "There's never a question about practicing or how long we are going to practice. They expect to be here. They don't usually ask what time we'll get out, they just come and work hard."

Most of the KM players have been playing together for years, first in AAU ball and the past two springs at KMHS where they've compiled a 42-4 overall record. Grayson lost only one starter and two seniors off last year's team, and will have all of her players back next



Kings Mountain head coach Suzanne Grayson, right, and assistant Don Sweezy talk strategy during time out in Friday's game with R-S Central at KM field.

year and many of them for two more years.

"I think that playing is a great experience for them," Grayson said, "knowing that all of them with the exception of our two freshmen went a whole season (last year) where they were very successful. We went to the third round of the state playoffs and lost in the top of the seventh inning. Being in those situations have to make you stronger and a better player."

"That's probably the reason we've played the tough schedule we've played this year," she added. "We try to put them in a situation where they're playing tough teams as much as possible. The game we lost against North Meck in the Rock Hill tournament was a situation where at the time we hadn't been challenged like they challenged us. They really put pressure on us defensively."

Kings Mountain hasn't had any weak points this season. The Mountaineers have strong pitching and defense, good speed on the base paths, and good hitting.

"One of our main strengths has been our

speed," Grayson said. "With Courtney Tate, Casey Camp and LaRonda McClain, getting them on base is key. We've been fortunate enough to be able to switch out either Amber Milwood or Lauren Gaffney to run for whoever was pitching for us so that added a little speed also, and Kala Buchanan has a lot of speed."

"When those folks aren't on and our other folks are on, we've been pretty smart at base running and that has helped us."

Having a two-year all-conference catcher behind the plate, Kings Mountain has been able to keep other teams honest on the base path. Kala Buchanan's reputation has spread across the conference and area. Only seven runners have attempted to steal on her, and she has thrown out five of them.

"She has done a tremendous job," Grayson said. "With that number being so low, that's out of respect for us. People know that she's got a good arm."

Pitchers Childers and Kristyn Funderburke have done a remarkable job on the mound, and when they're not pitching they

hold down other infield positions. "They've done a tremendous job," said Grayson, "and I feel like we've played good defense and our offense has been productive. It's not there for everybody every night, but we always have somebody that steps up and has a good night at the plate."

The Mountaineers have seven players hitting .333 or better.

While Kings Mountain is making its first trip to the State finals, West Rowan is no stranger there. West finished its conference season this year 14-0 and won the state championship in 2002 and 2003.

Grayson said some of the KM players' parents went to see West Rowan defeat previously unbeaten Southwest Randolph Saturday night and came away impressed. "We hear they are very

aggressive at the plate and that they've also got good speed and a very good catcher," she said.

Grayson, who has coached a state championship volleyball team at KMHS but has never been this far in softball, says she is excited for her players.

"It's exciting to be playing right now," she said. "It's kind of like you're not sure if it's sunk in or not. As we were scoring runs Thursday night and as the game ended, right then you realize that the goal the kids set at the first of the season is getting closer and closer. The exciting thing for me is seeing the kids excited about it. This is something they've really wanted. They seem to be tickled to death and I'm tickled to death too. It gives me a lot of enjoyment to see these kids win and have this opportunity."

The Mountaineers' winning tradition the past several years under Grayson has

made them a marked target for teams in Western North Carolina, and now they're ready to make that same kind of impact state-wide.

"I'm sure going three round last year and losing only one starter made people expect us to do well this year," Grayson said. "That can work both ways. Every time you win a game you're supposed to win it. But that's okay. I tell them we're supposed to win. We've got 'supposed to' written across our chest."

"But the reason we're supposed to is not because of where we were last year. You take a bunch of teenage girls who are a year older but each kid is different from last year. I tell them they're supposed to win because they've earned it. They've worked hard. They do things the right way. I just think they work as hard if not harder than anybody else."

KMHS SOFTBALL STATISTICS

Hitting	AB	R	H	RBI	AVG.
Haley Barrett	37	8	10	5	.270
Kala Buchanan	84	20	27	17	.321
Casey Camp	89	33	35	14	.393
Mo. Childers	85	18	28	23	.329
Kr. Cogdill	45	9	13	3	.289
K. Funderburke	84	11	28	21	.333
Lauren Gaffney	9	4	2	2	.222
Heather Hale	7	1	1	1	.143
LaR. McClain	91	34	39	19	.429
A. Milwood	12	11	3	2	.250
Courtney Tate	86	25	30	12	.349
B. Thornburg	95	27	39	33	.411
Laura Weigel	6	1	2	1	.333
Jessica Yarbro	69	13	21	15	.304

DOUBLES - Barrett 5, Buchanan 12, Camp 7, Childers 6, Cogdill 3, Funderburke 9, Gaffney 1, Thornburg 8, Weigel 1, Yarbro 4.

TRIPLES - Buchanan 2, Camp 1, Childers 1, Hale 1, McClain 1, Thornburg 1, Yarbro 1.

HOME RUNS - Buchanan 1, Camp 1, Childers 2, Thornburg 3.

STOLEN BASES - Barrett 6-7, Buchanan 11-12, Camp 29-29, Childers 6-6, Cogdill 3-4, Funderburke 3-3, Gaffney 2-2, McClain 31-33, Milwood 11-14, Tate 23-24, Thornburg 6-7, Yarbro 4-4.

Pitcher (W-L)	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
H. Barrett (0-0)	3.2	4	1	1	1	1
C. Camp (0-0)	2.0	1	0	0	0	2
Childers (19-0)	123.2	32	9	7	20	254
F'burke (9-1)	54.2	37	13	6	9	57



Ashton Henderson (right) of R-S Central dives head first back into first base to avoid being picked off in Friday's game at Kings Mountain in the state 3A playoffs. Making the tag for KM is Brittney Thornburg. Henderson, who walked to lead of the fifth inning, was one of only two base runners for the Hilltoppers.

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