

Hope opens season Friday

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

Hope Christian Academy will play its first-ever football game Friday night at 7:30 at Northside Christian Academy in Charlotte.

The Thunderbolts have been working hard since the last week in July to get ready for their inaugural season.

Coach Jason Thomas has added several new players during the past week and hopes to have 25 players ready for the first game.

Late additions include 6-5, 225-pound tight end and defensive end D.J. Byrd, 6-5, 170-pound quarterback and defensive end Kenneth Gabriel, 6-2, 165-pound split end and cornerback Kenny Gabriel, and 5-9, 155-pound kicker Josh Burgess. Other players are Trevor Adams, Jamie Singleton, Tyler Shore, Jarred Whitlock, Josh Huskins, Caleb Kellough, Justin Runyon, Taylor Brewer, Sidney Adams, Dee Bell, Brandon Ward, Josh Gilbert, Aaron Pope, Johnathan Cort, Casey Adams, Justin Donovan, and Trevor Mashburn.

Thomas said even though Northside Christian has been playing football for six years and has an established weight program, that he feels like his Thunderbolts will be very competitive.

See Hope, 8A

Cleveland County Jamboree

8 teams in Friday night event at Gamble Stadium

By GARY STEWART
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The seventh annual Cleveland County Jamboree will be played Friday night at Kings Mountain's John Gamble Stadium.

All four Cleveland County high schools will be in action against four teams from neighboring Gaston, Mecklenburg, Burke and Catawba counties.

Two-time defending state 3AA champion Crest will open the action at 6 p.m. against Hickory's Red Tornadoes. Burns and Freedom will play at 7, Shelby and Forestview at 8, and Kings Mountain and Charlotte's E.E. Waddell at 9.

Admission is \$5 and concessions will be available. Gates open at 4:30.

All of the teams entered in the jamboree are regarded among the favorites in their respective conferences.

Despite falling to Gaffney, SC 14-0 in last weekend's Border Showcase at Gardner-Webb University, Crest is again mentioned as a contender for the state 4A championship. Crest won the 4A state crown in 1994 and 1996 before being reclassified 3A for the 2001-05 realignment period.

The Chargers are young on offense, having lost the running tandem of Martray Littlejohn and Travis Padgett that combined for over 3,000 yards rushing last year. The Chargers also lost their starting quarterback, Maurice Gullatte, who was MVP on offense in the state championship game.

The offense is potentially powerful, though, and Crest

fans think it will just be a matter of time until it explodes. Quarterback Jordan Robinson is considered an able replacement for Gullatte and possibly a better passer than the graduated Crest star. Ronnie Miller heads a promising running attack.

Making up for the inexperience on offense is a big, quick experienced defense led by All-State linebacker Brandon Spikes, who is regarded as one of the top Division I prospects in the nation.

Crest won the Southwestern Foothills Conference the past four years and won the Northwestern 4A seven of the eight years it was in that league. Crest holds the honor of being the last team to defeat Charlotte Independence, which carries a 76-game winning streak and five straight state championships into this season.

Hickory comes in with a veteran ball club which has been a traditional contender in the Southwestern Foothills Conference, but one that could not corral the Chargers. The Red Tornadoes and 2A powers Bandys and Maiden are regarded as the teams to beat in the new Catawba Valley 2A/3A Conference.

The Red Tornadoes have two of the conference's potential stars in quarterback Patrick Shelton and running back Carlos Shade, both returning starters.

Burns, which hosted the Cleveland County Jamboree last season, will bring one of the most explosive offenses in the area into Gamble Stadium. The Bulldogs are



Kings Mountain High linemen work on blocking techniques in preparation for Friday's Cleveland County Jamboree at John Gamble Stadium.

expected to battle Shelby for the Southwestern 2A/3A title.

Junior quarterback Lance Camp is an impressive runner and passer, and the Bulldogs' senior tailback Brandon Jackson has been starting since his freshman year.

Freedom is a perennial contender in the Northwestern Conference but veteran coach Tim McMahon is said to be rebuilding this year after losing 17 starters off last year's team. McMahon does have one of his most versatile athletes returning in wide receiver Curtis Bristol, who played quarterback last year, and a promising tailback in Quentin Corpening, who runs a 4.2 forty.

The Shelby-Forestview matchup could be the best of the four games as both teams are serious contenders for their conference championship - Shelby in the new Southwestern 2A/3A and Forestview in the Big South 3A/4A.

Shelby features its traditional quick, tough defense and a veteran offense led by junior quarterback Darryl Montgomery and senior tailback Tavorris Jolly. Jolly is

regarded as one of the top running backs in the state and has already committed to the University of North Carolina.

Forestview has most of its starters back from last year, including a talented running-passing quarterback in Mark Barnette.

This will mark the first time Kings Mountain has scrimmaged Waddell. The Mountaineers, who return 10 starters on offense and seven on defense, should be much improved. Waddell lost most of its starters off last year's team but is expected to challenge Olympic and Charlotte Catholic for first place in the new Queen City 3A/4A.

The Raiders have good size and speed, led by running backs Patrick Nelson, Chris Smith and Leshawn Davis, and wide receiver Shanquan Davis.

Kings Mountain may be at a slight disadvantage because of a lack of scrimmage time against other schools. Kings Mountain scrimmaged Gastonia Ashbrook last Thursday night and was scheduled to go up against another Charlotte power, Olympic, Saturday in the Gaston

County Jamboree at Hunter Huss. However, that jamboree was called off because of wet playing conditions at the Huskies' stadium.

But, the Mountaineers were back at practice Monday afternoon and working hard to get ready to showcase their talents in front of a host of area fans.

"Practice has been good," said KM Coach David Farquharson. "We came in and had a good day after the Ashbrook scrimmage. We got some things corrected. We're going to continue to work on those things and get ready for Waddell."

Against Waddell, Farquharson said the Mountaineers will look more to game situations and becoming more cohesive.

"We're going to try to shore up our special teams and look for getting in and out of the huddle and transition on and off the field, things that will help us on opening night," he said.

Farquharson said the school will have three parking lots open for the jamboree, including the field behind Kings Mountain Middle School. Cars may enter at the high school or middle school for parking.

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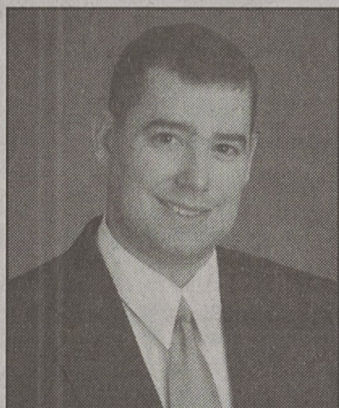
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