

SPORTS



GARY STEWART / HERALD
Kings Mountain linebacker Corey Branham sacks Waddell quarterback in Friday's Cleveland County Jamboree at Gamble Stadium.

Another exciting season in store for county fans

Another high school football season begins for Cleveland County teams on Friday night, and just as has been the case the past several years it should be exciting.



Gary Stewart
Editor

All four teams took part in the seventh annual Cleveland County Jamboree last Friday night at Kings Mountain's John Gamble Stadium.

Since that night, there has been a lot of talk about Crest. The Chargers have their program on such a high level that fans expect them to win the state championship every year, but from the look of things on Friday night they have a long way to go before becoming a sound football team.

I have long said that you can't really tell anything about a football team by its performance in a scrimmage. Sometimes coaches use those games to look at personnel and phases of the game that they're not sure of and they are no indication of how the team would fare in a real ball game.

I feel like that's the case with Crest. If, indeed, that was the best team the Chargers can put on the field then it will be a long season for them because they didn't have a running game, they threw six pass interceptions in two quarters of play, and in my opinion their much-talked-about defense led by All-American candidate, linebacker Brandon Spikes, was not that impressive either.

In other words, even though the score was only 14-7, Hickory kicked their butt. But don't take that to mean that teams will do the same in the regular season.

The Chargers open their season Friday at Burns in a game that should draw many thousand fans. The Bulldogs were very impressive Friday night, rolling over 4A Freedom, but in my opinion Freedom looked to be about the weakest team on the field that night.

Mountaineer spikers open season with win

Kings Mountain High's women's volleyball team opened its season Tuesday with a 25-11, 25-9, 25-7 victory over North Lincoln.

LaRonda McClain had seven kills and Kala Buchanan and Marsha Meeks added five each. Buchanan also had nine ace serves and Meeks added three.

Kristyn Funderburke led the team in assists with 10. Brittney Thornburg had four

There again, you can't judge teams by their performance in scrimmages. With the track records of Roy Kirby at Crest and Tim McMahon at Freedom, you can bet by the time their conference season rolls around they will have their teams in contention for the championship.

Burns and Shelby, which blanked Gastonia Forestview 20-0, look to be very strong. Burns has one of the best quarterbacks around in Lance Camp, who can give defenses fits with his running and passing ability. Camp is very impressive throwing the ball on the run, and if his receivers are covered he has the ability to tuck the ball in and take it all the way.

I was also impressed with the Burns defense, which picked off several passes. And, even though their offensive line is young it's obvious that KMHS product and former East Lincoln head coach Matt Rikard is developing them into an outstanding blocking machine.

You heard it here first - Burns will go very deep in the state 3A playoffs, possibly all the way to the championship game.

Ditto for Shelby. The Golden Lions are once again loaded. They have an outstanding running and passing attack and the defense gets to the ball quickly. Shelby will go deep in the 2A playoffs - possibly all the way - and the Shelby-Burns game at Burns on October 7 should decide the Southwestern 2A/3A Conference championship.

Kings Mountain's Mountaineers showed a lot of potential in their 14-12 loss to Waddell, but they also showed that they're going to have to develop consistency in all three phases of their game - offense, defense and special teams.

But, there again, you can't judge them on a scrimmage performance. The KM coaches were sending a lot of different players into the game.

Not trying to put any undue pressure on anyone, but in my opinion Kings Mountain has the best talent they've had since their state championship run of 1998.

Most of their core group of players have been starting on the varsity level since their sophomore year, and junior Martrice Love started as a freshman.

The Mountaineers have the potential to put a lot of points on the board, however they must improve tremendously on defense if they are going to be competitive with most of the schools on their schedule.

Win or lose, this season should provide a lot of exciting moments for Cleveland County football fans. Get out each Friday night and support your team. And remember, these players are teenagers. They're going to miss blocking assignments and tackles, they're going to fumble and throw interceptions, they're going to hold and clip. But most of them will try their very best if the stands are full and the fans are cheering them on.

■ Make plans now to attend the Salute to Bill Bates Thursday, Sept. 29 at 6:30 p.m. at the Patrick Center.

Tickets are \$25 and many of his former players will come back to town to speak. Get your tickets in advance because we need a full house to honor a man who was a tremendous influence to his players, students, church and the community of Kings Mountain.

In addition, on Friday, Sept. 30 at halftime of the KM-East Gaston football game the Kings Mountain Sports Hall of Fame will dedicate the Gamble Stadium field house in honor of Coach Bates. Coach Bates and members of his family will be in attendance at both events.

KMHHS

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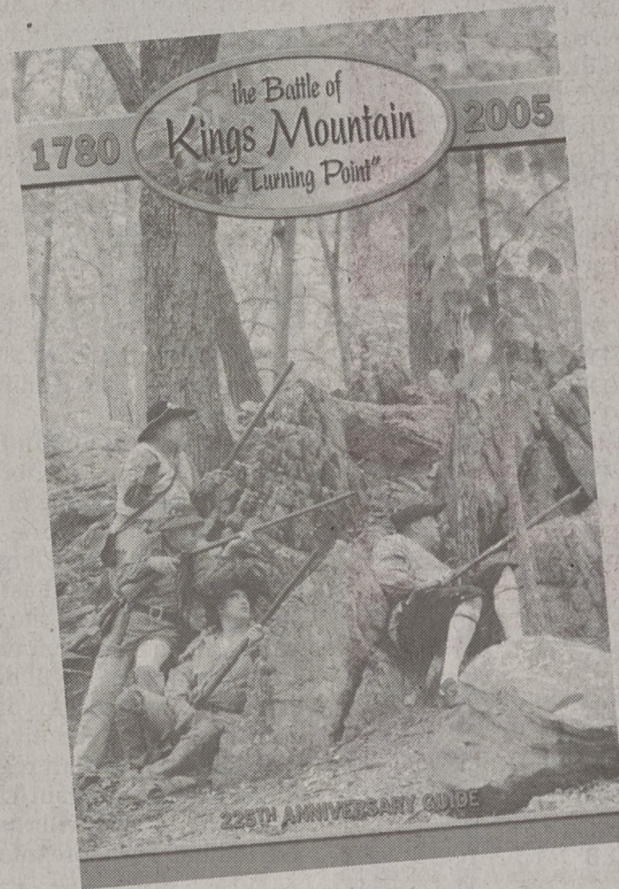
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The Battle of Kings Mountain 225th Anniversary Guide



Join the Kings Mountain Herald, Cherryville Eagle and BannerNews as we celebrate this once in a lifetime Anniversary.

The Anniversary Guide will include an overview of the battle that is known as the "Turning Point" in the south, information about the National Park and how it came into existence, biographical data on the key figures in the battle, information about the Anniversary Celebration, a calendar of all of the events, information and calendar about the Kings Mountain Gateway Festival, and much, much more.

This guide will provide visitors and locals all of the information they need to truly be a part of the 225th Anniversary of The Battle of Kings Mountain.

This special publication will appear in our three newspapers on October 5 & 6. Additional copies will be available at welcome centers in North and South Carolina, and area hotels and motels.

Join us as we celebrate this once-in-a-lifetime event!

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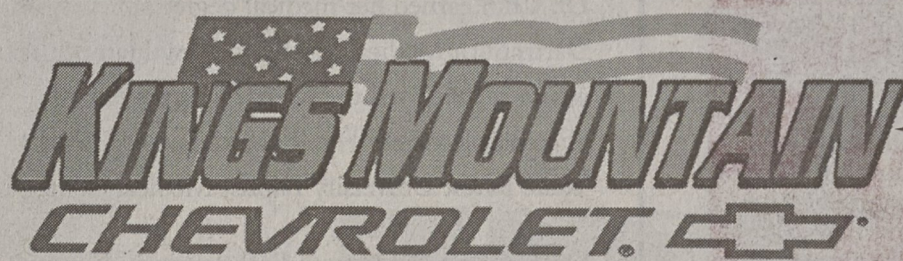
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