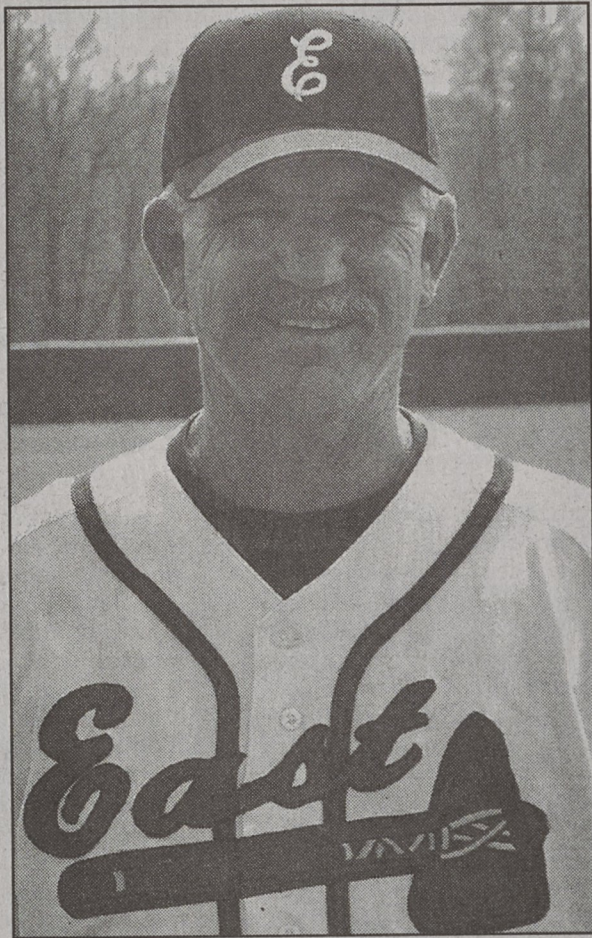


Darrell Van Dyke to be inducted into Kings Mountain Sports Hall of Fame

(Second in a four-part series on the 2007 inductees into the Kings Mountain Sports Hall of Fame. The dinner and ceremony is Saturday, May 12 at 6 p.m. at Central United Methodist Church Family Life Center. Tickets are \$10 each and may be purchased at The Herald or from any member of the Hall of Fame Committee.)

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"If you stick around long enough, you win a lot of games."

Darrell Van Dyke

Darrell Van Dyke can remember that Saturday in 1960 like it was yesterday.

He was four years old and his father, James, sat him down in the living room of their Love Valley home to watch a Milwaukee Braves baseball game.

James explained the game to him as Hank Aaron, Eddie Matthews and other Braves legends played the Pittsburgh Pirates.

From that day on Darrell was hooked on baseball and the Braves and James spent most of his free time teaching Darrell how to play.

In the ensuing years Darrell developed a habit of saving baseball cards, and by studying the statistics on the back of the cards and in the Sunday daily newspapers he could tell you the batting averages, RBIs, home runs and other statistics of just about every player in the major leagues.

His father was proud of that, but he wasn't too happy when he came home from work one day to see his lush green lawn turned into a baseball diamond.

"Momma told him, 'it's your fault, you taught him how to play,'" Darrell recalled recently. "It seems like I've been working on a baseball field ever since."

Indeed, Van Dyke has spent most of his years around the game. He played it in little league, Babe Ruth, high school, American Legion and college, and he is now in his 29th year as a high school coach.

He was an All-Conference outfielder for the Kings Mountain Mountaineers in 1972, 1973 and 1974, and he went on to Gardner-Webb College and played four years for Jerry Bryson's Bulldogs, graduating in 1978.

Taking advantage of the knowledge he had gained from his dad and some outstanding coaches, he went immediately into coaching and served

a year as an assistant to Jerry Adams at East Gaston. The Warriors defeated Kings Mountain in a special playoff game for the Southwestern Conference championship, won the Western North Carolina championship and played in the state 3A championship series.

Van Dyke took over as head coach of the Warriors in 1980 and coached them for 27 years, retiring at the end of the 2005-2006 school year with 362 victories and four conference championships. His teams made the state playoffs 14 times. During the first half of his tenure at East Gaston, a team had to win its conference championship to advance to the playoffs.

In addition, Van Dyke coached the Stanley American Legion team for 15 years, winning 183 games and three straight Area IV championships. One of his East Gaston and legion products, pitcher Scott Stewart, played in the major leagues.

After retiring from the North Carolina Public School system, Van Dyke signed a contract to teach and coach baseball at Clover High School in South Carolina.

Van Dyke said he has been blessed by learning from a lot of good coaches, and also from having good athletes at East Gaston and Clover.

"Coaching just has so many highlights," he says. "I have been blessed to have kids that had a lot of heart, that played hard and accepted our way of doing things. From a coaching standpoint all you can ask is for them to play as hard as they can and do what you ask them to do the first time."

Van Dyke said one of the biggest thrills for him was to step into a major league ball park and have a player call him "coach." That was Stewart, who recently retired after 12 years with the Expos, Indians and Dodgers and who helped the Dodgers win the National League West two years ago. He was also proud to step into Atlanta Stadium two years ago and hear his children, Victoria and Taylor, sing the National Anthem before a Braves game.

It's hard for Van Dyke to keep up with the number of his former players that played college ball. "At one time I know we had more than 70," he said, "but I know for a fact that I've coached 14 kids that signed professional contracts. Some of them made it to AAA but Stewart was the only one to make the major leagues."

Van Dyke said one of his biggest thrills as a player came when he was playing legion ball at Kings Mountain. The Post 155 team was playing Hickory. When Van Dyke stepped into the batter's box, the Hickory catcher told him "the first base umpire is here to watch you play."

"You always dream about playing in college and

pro and all that," he said. "You know there are scouts there sometimes, but it's something when it happens to you."

Van Dyke got a hit, and the first base umpire (Jerry Bryson) started talking to him about going to Gardner-Webb. "I told him I was already enrolled there," Van Dyke said.

The Hickory catcher had played at Gardner-Webb the previous spring.

"I've had some great coaches that I learned a lot from," Van Dyke noted. "Barry Gibson was my high school coach at Kings Mountain and what I learned from him was the finer points of the game. I couldn't have had a better coach. At Gardner-Webb, I had Jerry Bryson who was an offensive mind. So the groundwork was laid if I wanted it. A lot of things that they taught me I've been able to use my whole career."

Van Dyke settled in center field after playing shortstop and catcher in his earlier years.

"In fact, Coach Gibson told me one time if he thought he'd had somebody to replace me in center field he'd put me behind the plate," Van Dyke recalled. "I got my start in the outfield my first year of legion ball with Coach Bob Jones. Tim Echols got hurt and Coach Jones asked me if I could catch a fly ball. I said 'yeah.' I really hadn't played outfield, since my first year of little league. But he put me there and I stayed there from then on."

Van Dyke said going into his hometown Hall of Fame is an honor.

"I'm thankful that I grew up in a town like Kings Mountain where people took the time with a little kid that really didn't have a whole lot," he said. "I didn't think about having a lot. We had what we needed and that was good enough. That the Hall of Fame would even take the time to honor me kind of blows my mind. I'm thankful for the kids and parents, the athletic directors and principals, and the teachers that have supported what we've tried to do in the program. Obviously, if the players don't play it doesn't matter how good you can coach."

"If you stick around long enough you win a lot of games," he added. "I just take it as an honor. I have to credit my family. My dad helped teach me the game and was supportive of what I wanted to do. The Van Dyke household had a lot of heated up supporters. But I'm just proud as a peacock that Kings Mountain thought enough of me to do this."

SPORTS BRIEFS

Golf toumney to raise funds for legion baseball

A Captain's Choice golf tournament to raise funds to help sponsor the Kings Mountain American Legion baseball team will be held April 28 at Pine Grove Golf Course near Shelby.

The cost is \$45 per player (\$190 per team) and includes green fee, cart fee and one mulligan per player on each side.

There will be an 8 a.m. shotgun start.

Awards will be given for first place. There will also be a \$350 birdhouse or bird feeder awarded for a hole-in-one on any par three hole. There will also be awards for closest to the pin on all par three holes.

Hole sponsorships are \$50 and signs will be posted on the tee boxes.

There will also be a meal at the American Legion building between 6-8 p.m. Door prizes will be drawn for players attending the meal. A ticket will be given at the entry door.

To enter, call the American Legion at 704-739-6387 or Jerry Ross at 704-616-3391. Golfers may put together their own foursome or call the American

Legion to register and have the legion place them in a foursome.

Bethlehem Baptist sets golf toumney for missions

Bethlehem Baptist Church will host its 7th annual Missions for Christ Golf Tournament May 19 at Pine Grove Golf Club.

It is a Captain's Choice format. The entry fee is \$45 per person (groups of four) and hole sponsorships are \$100.

Tee time is 8:30 a.m. First, second and third place prizes will be awarded as well as door prizes, longest drive and closest to the pin.

For more information call Lawrence Bolin at 629-5444, Dena Allen at 739-6461 or the church office at 739-7487.

Basketball camp set at KM Middle School

The Mountaineer School of Hoops will be held at Kings Mountain Middle School June 25-28.

The camp will be directed by

KMHS coach Ric Franklin and is for boys ages 10-14. The cost is \$55.

For more information and a free brochure, call 704-860-2308 or email rfranklin@clevelandcountyschools.org.

Basketball camp set at Victory Christian

The Hoops for Christ Offensive Moves Camp will be held at Victory Christian Academy in Gastonia June 13-15. The camp is for serious and advanced players only and is directed by Kings Mountain High coach Ric Franklin.

The camp is for boys and girls ages 11-17 and the cost is \$75. For more information call 704-860-2308 or email rfranklin@clevelandcountyschools.org.

Bethany Baptist to hold church softball toumney

Bethany Baptist Church will host a USSSA men's class C and D Church Softball Kick-off Tournament April 28 at

Macedonia Baptist Church, Kings Mountain.

The cost is \$100 plus \$25 sanction fee. All teams must be sanctioned in order to play.

The top three teams will receive bids to play in the National Tournament in Rock Hill, SC.

For more information call Brian Ramsey at 704-472-1710 (day) or 864-936-7576 (afternoon).

Mountaineers third in SWC golf match

Kings Mountain High School finished third behind R-S Central and Shelby in a Southwestern 2A/3A golf match Monday at Kings Mountain Country Club.

R-S Central shot 311, Shelby 318, KM 338, East Rutherford 346, Chase 355 and Burns 375.

Shelby's Mac Konitzer was medalist with a two-over-par 74. Jake Allen led the Mountaineers with a 76, followed by Camden DeVane 86, Reid Smith 87, and Hogan Sellers and Jared Spicer 89 each.

KM AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL SCHEDULE

MAY 25 - Gaston Braves; 26 - Denver; 27 - Charlotte.	Braves; 23 - at Denver; 24 - at Charlotte; 26 - at Union County; 29 - Pineville; 30 - Steele Creek.
JUNE 1 - Union County; 2 - at Pineville; 3 - at Steele Creek; 15 - at Huntersville; 16 - at Newell; 21 - at Gastonia; 22 - at Gaston	JULY 1 - Huntersville; 6 - Newell; 7 - Gastonia.

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