

SPORTS

Mountaineers clinch berth in state 3A baseball playoffs

Kings Mountain's Mountaineers won two key Southwestern 2A/3A Conference games last week to clinch a berth in the upcoming 3A state playoffs.

The Mountaineers defeated Chase 13-2 in five innings on Wednesday night, and shutout Shelby 5-0 on Thursday.

With just three games remaining and a three-game lead over Burns, the Mountaineers are assured of the SWC's second 3A playoff berth. KM, 8-4 in conference play, is two games behind SWC leader R-S Central (10-2) in the race for the #1 3A playoff seed.

The Mountaineers will be making their first playoff appearance under fourth-year coach Eric King and their first berth since going three rounds in the 1999 playoffs.

Cody Austin made his first mound start of the season and pitched a complete game four-hitter in the win over Chase. He didn't walk and batter and struck out six.

Kings Mountain collected 14 hits off three Chase pitchers and scored at least one run in every inning.

Brantley Blalock led the Mountaineers' plate attack with 3-for-3, including a lead off home run in the third inning which sparked a six-run rally to the score to 8-0.

Jeffrey Howell also went 3-for-3. Rai Robinson went 2-for-3 with three RBIs and followed Blalock's third inning blast with a two-run homer over the left field fence.



GARY STEWART / HERALD
Brent Hunt rounds third and heads for home for playoff-bound KMHS baseball team.

Justin Heinbach went 2-for-3 with two RBIs and Austin, Luke Proctor, Brent Hunt and Blake Glass added a hit apiece.

The Mountaineers scored the only run they really needed in the bottom of the first when Blalock and Howell singled, and Blalock scored on a throwing error.

The Mounties went up 2-0 in the second when Hunt singled and later scored on Heinbach's double.

Austin followed Blalock's and Robinson's third inning home runs with a two-run sin-

gle.

Blalock led off the fourth with a single. Howell followed with a single and Robinson singled to plate Blalock. Hunt added a sacrifice fly, Glass doubled, Heinbach had a run-scoring single and Austin added a sacrifice fly.

■ Against Shelby on Thursday, Howell threw a complete game three-hitter and struck out 14. The Mountaineers scored two runs in the first and third innings, and one in the fifth.

Howell and Hunt each had two hits in the Mounties' seven-hit attack against two Shelby hurlers. Austin, Proctor and Robinson added a hit each.

Austin led off the game with a single to center, and Tyler Ross was hit by a pitch. Two outs later, the Mounties loaded the base when Proctor reached on an error. Robinson ripped a two-run single to right.

Proctor's two out single to left-center sparked the third inning rally. After Robinson was hit by a pitched ball, Hunt singled to left and Proctor and Robinson scored on the fielder's error.

Byers wins 7th U.S. Championship

Kings Mountain's Dremiel Byers won his seventh national championship in the heavy-weight division of the U.S. Wrestling National Championship over the weekend in Las Vegas.

The former North Carolina high school champion is now setting his sights on the U.S. Olympic Trials in June, also in Las Vegas.

Byers has lost the last two Olympic trials by a single point to Rulon Gardner, who won the Gold Medal in the 2000

Olympics. Gardner retired following his loss in the 2004 Olympics, leaving Byers as the U.S. favorite.

Byers, based with the U.S. Army in Colorado Springs, CO, defeated Russ Davie 2-1 and 4-0 to win the U.S. Championship.

Byers won the World Championship in 2003 and is currently ranked as the #3 heavyweight in the world in the Greco-Roman division.

Byers also led the U.S. team to a bronze medal in last year's World Championship.

Schroder in championship match in SWC tournament

Kings Mountain High's Southwestern Conference champion tennis team opened play in the SWC tournament Tuesday at Shelby High School and has already placed its #1 singles player, Felix Schroder, in the championship.

In singles play, Schroder drew a first round bye, along with Michael Martin of R-S Central. In the semifinal,

Schroder defeated Zeke Stephenson of R-S Central 6-1, 6-1 to advance to the finals against Martin.

Matt Gray of the Mounties defeated Isaac Xiong of Burns 6-2, 7-5 but lost in the semifinal to Martin 6-1, 7-5.

In doubles, Paul Philavong and Davis Phanthalack of KM drew a first round bye but lost

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Brantley Blalock went 3-for-3 with a home run to help lead Kings Mountain's Mountaineers to a 13-2 win over Chase.

Gary Stewart
Photo



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