

# SPORTS

## 2 of the best clash here Wednesday

### Kicking Mountaineers host powerful Roberson Wednesday

By GARY STEWART  
Sports Editor

Two of the best high school soccer teams in the state will clash Wednesday at 7 p.m. at John Gamble Stadium when Kings Mountain hosts TC Roberson in the third round of the NCHSAA 3A playoffs.

The Mountaineers, champions of the Southwestern Conference, have posted 16 shutouts en route to a 21-1 record which included impressive blank jobs of Enka (6-0) and Watauga (3-0) in the first two playoff games.

But blanking Roberson will not be an easy task as the Lady Rams come in with a 22-2-2 overall record and are seeking their second straight berth in the state championship game.

Roberson has been one of the dominant teams in the state since beginning its soccer program. The school has been in existence for 20 years and has won 16 Mountain Athletic Conference championships. The Rams have three players who have already committed to major college programs, including Nicole Cucchi (Clemson), Katherine Ellis (Georgia) and Ashley Van Landing ham (Kentucky). Cucchi and Ellis, both juniors, have already set school records for assists and goals, respectively.

While getting most of their raves from its stingy defense that has allowed only one goal to conference foes in the past two years, the Lady Mountaineers can put up some impressive offensive numbers as well.

Juniors Ramey Kerns and Meagan Reynolds are a formidable 1-2 scoring punch as evidenced in last week's wins over

two other MAC opponents.

Kerns, the first KM sophomore to make All-State last year, has 26 goals this year and Reynolds has 22 assists.

Reynolds provided three assists and Kerns scored four goals in the Mountaineers first round romp past Enka on Wednesday. Kerns scored twice - off assists from Reynolds and Ashley Witherspoon - to give the Lady Mountaineers a 2-0 halftime lead.

Megan Loftin headed home two goals off corner kicks from Reynolds to increase the lead to 4-0 early in the second half.

"Those two goals were really the turning point of the match as they took all the air out of their sails," said Coach Dan Potter.

Kerns added her final two goals later in the second half off assists from Witherspoon and Courtneigh Bumgardner.

"I was especially proud of our girls with their unselfish play as they continuously found the player that had worked the hardest to get open," Potter said. "Defensively our girls were so very dominant as they denied their attackers the ball so quickly."

Kerns took an assist from Jordan Doty in the 9th minute of the game to give Kings Mountain an early 1-0 lead against Tuscola Friday night. Kerns hammered the ball with such velocity from the left flank that the Tuscola keeper was able to deflect it but couldn't re-direct it out of the goal.

The KM ladies controlled most of the possession the rest of the half but couldn't score again until the 34th minute when Reynolds beat a defender, drew the keeper out of the net and slid a perfect pass to a wide open Witherspoon for a tap-in and a 2-0 halftime lead.

"Since we changed our lineup a little, the three frontrunners are really getting a lot of looks at goal," Potter said. "Our girls are playing so unselfishly that teams are having a very difficult time defending our attack."

Kings Mountain deflated the visitors again early in the second half as Kerns scored off an assist from Reynolds just three minutes into the half to round out the scoring. Kerns made a fine cutting run, touched the ball out front, held off a very aggressive defender and blasted a shot from 20 yards out that just dipped under the crossbar.

"While the frontrunners kept continuous pressure on the backs, our midfielders tightened up so much on their midfielders that they couldn't pressure the ball for any kind of attack against us," Potter noted.

Heather Stevens came up with an aggressive collection of balls played into the box to record the 16th shutout of the season. The defensive play of the game came when Alex Edwards cleared a ball off the goal line as a corner kick nearly went directly into the Mountaineer goal in the second half.

"I am very proud of the girls and look forward to the challenge that our next opponent, TC Roberson, has for us on Wednesday," Potter said.

The Mountaineers will be trying to advance to the quarterfinals for the second time in their 11th year of soccer and will be trying to add to a nine-game shutout streak. The winner of the KM-Roberson game will advance to the Western semi-finals (tentatively set for Friday night at 7 p.m.) against the winner of the Charlotte Catholic-Asheville game. Should it be a KM-Catholic match-up, the game would be played in Charlotte. If it is an Asheville-KM match, it would be played here.



GARY STEWART/HERALD  
Meagan Reynolds takes the ball away from an Enka player and gets the Kings Mountain offense rolling in Wednesday playoff win at Gamble Stadium.

## Softball team wins 3 in a row to close season

By GARY STEWART  
Sports Editor

The Kings Mountain High softball team won its final three games of the season to finish 8-7 in the SWC and 12-12 overall and earn a berth in the state 3A playoffs.

The Lady Mountaineers were scheduled to open post-season play yesterday.

The Mountaineers rolled over Shelby 9-2 in a home game last Monday.

Hayley Hoyle slammed a two-run home run in the bottom of the first inning to get the excitement going and begin a three-game sweep of the Lady Lions for this season.

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GARY STEWART/HERALD  
Hayley Hoyle, and Chasiti Falls, left to right, celebrate in game with Shelby.



GARY STEWART/HERALD  
Ashley Witherspoon heads the ball in playoff game with Enka Wednesday night at Gamble Stadium.

## Mountaineers beat Enka in first round

By GARY STEWART  
Sports Editor

Rai Robinson and Jeffrey Howell crushed two-run home runs and Howell hurled a complete game three-hitter as Kings Mountain opened the state playoffs Friday at home with a 4-2 win over Enka.

The Mountaineers were scheduled to host the Tuscola Mountaineers in a second round game last night. Tuscola defeated Olympic 4-2 in a first round game Friday. The winner will advance to a game on Friday night against the winner of the Forestview-TC Roberson contest.

Howell struck out 10 batters and put 69 of his 111 pitches in the strike zone for his ninth win without a loss. The win was the Mountaineers 20th of the season against just two losses, and their 19th win in a row.

Caleb Suddreth pitched the first three innings for Enka and took the loss. Clemson recruit Dale Innes came in from third base to pitch the final three innings as the Jets tried for a comeback. Kings Mountain collected only five hits off the two Jet hurlers with Cody Austin, Howell, Robinson, Tyler Ross and Dylan Smith getting one apiece.

Suddreth retired the Mountaineers in order in the first inning before walking Howell to open the second. Kyle Bell went in to run for Howell and Robinson smashed a 1-1 pitch over the left field fence for a 2-0 KM lead.

Enka looked to be staging a rally in the third when Brandon Case led off with a single and Paul Costigan reached on an error. But Howell got the next two batters on pop-ups and struck out Cody Jones to end the inning.

With two outs in the bottom of the third, Brantley Blalock reached base on an error and Howell slammed the first pitch over the left field fence for a 4-0 Mountaineer lead.

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### Robinson, Howell hit two-run homers



GARY STEWART/HERALD  
Chris Allen takes a lead off first base against Enka pitcher Dale Innes in Friday playoff game at Lancaster Field.