

# Sports

## A Tale of Two Halves

### KM comeback beats Ashbrook 41-34

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Sports Editor

It was the worst of times. It was the best of times.

Kings Mountain's mistakes helped Ashbrook build a 27-6 lead midway of the third period, but the Mountaineers came back with perhaps their best quarter and a half of football to edge the Green Wave 41-34 before a huge homecoming crowd Friday night at Gamble Stadium.

The win, KM's third in a row, moves them to 2-1 in the Big South 3A and 5-3 overall and most likely wrapped up a state 3AA playoff berth.

"It was two games in one," a pleased Coach Greg Lloyd of the Mountaineers noted. "It was all them in the first half and all us in the final quarter and a half. I was proud of our kids for fighting back like they did."

Kings Mountain mistakes led directly to four of Ashbrook's first five scores as the Green Wave built a 17-6 first quarter lead and a 27-6 lead with 7:16 left in the third quarter.

A fumble by the Mountaineers at their own 23 set up a go-ahead field goal by Ross Taylor to put Ashbrook on top 3-0; and a Curtis Armstrong interception and return to the KM 13 set up a 9-yard touchdown run by Green Wave quarterback Justin Shempert to put the Wave on top 10-0 early in the second quarter.

Another 9-yard Shempert blast up the middle capped an 84-yard drive and put Ashbrook up 17-0 before KM finally scored with 28 seconds left in the half when Cedric Thompson took a screen pass from Cameron Harris and weaved his way through the Ashbrook secondary for a 40-yard touchdown.

The game appeared to be turning into a rout early in the third period when Taylor's 22-yard field goal following another interception and return to the KM six made the score 20-6.

And, then, what could have been the back breaker occurred when a high snap

from center at the KM 25 went all the way into the end zone and Ashbrook linebacker and Division I recruit Norkeithus Otis recovered it for a touchdown and a 27-6 Green Wave lead.

But, as has been the case many times before this year, the quick-strike Mountaineer offense launched a brilliant comeback, and except for one big play the defense turned up the pressure and the Mountain men put 35 points on the board in the final 18 minutes to win.

Everyone contributed heavily to the win, but the big differences that everyone was talking about after the game were the running of senior back Shelton Watson and Kings Mountain's weight and conditioning program.

Watson, who normally excels on defense, came in at running back early in the second half and carried the ball 22 times for a career-high 133 yards rushing. Good blocking up front allowed him to plow through the Ashbrook line and around the corners to wear down the Ashbrook defense and open up the KM passing game. Despite two first half interceptions, Harris hit 14 of 26 passes for 255 yards, moving him to within 100 yards of Michael Roberts' single season passing record of 1,635 yards. In addition to their late first half touchdown of 40 yards to Thompson, Harris and Thompson hooked up on two other catch and run TDs, Harris hit Zach Hopper with one TD and scored twice himself on quarterback sneaks.

When KM finally got its game on track, things happened very quickly. The Mountaineers answered Otis's fumble recovery touchdown with a 73-yard drive capped by Harris' 1-yard sneak and Edward Blackburn's PAT, making the score 27-13.

Then, the Mountaineers took advantage of a couple of Ashbrook fumbles to score on a 14-yard pass from Harris to Thompson, and another Harris sneak that tied the score at 27-all



Kings Mountain running back Cedric Thompson takes on a host of Ashbrook defenders in Friday's game at Gamble Stadium.

with 11:13 left in the game.

The lead didn't last long, though. Otis returned the ensuing kickoff to the 31 and on the first play from scrimmage Shempert hit wide receiver Curtis Armstrong with a short pass in the right flat and Armstrong made a good move to shake a KM cornerback and rambled 69 yards down the KM sidelines to put Ashbrook back on top 34-27.

Back-to-back 15-yard penalties against the Green Wave aided a 76-yard drive by the Mountaineers that ended with Zach Hopper catching a tipped pass for a 7-yard touchdown. Again, Blackburn drilled the PAT to tie the score at 34.

Kings Mountain's defense forced Ashbrook into a 3-and-out and with 4:15 remaining the Mountaineers began their winning touchdown drive. It took only six plays to cover 90 yards with Thompson on the receiving end of a 54-yard TD pass with 2:42 left.

The turnaround was probably one of the best in KMHS history and had the fans on the edge of their seat for the sixth straight week. After a big loss to Burns in the second game of the season, the Mountaineers have played six straight games decided in the final minutes by seven points or less. Until Friday night, they had played four in a row decided by three points, and the one before those four was decided by one point in double



Ashbrook running back Angelo Crawford (2) is brought down by an unidentified KM player as Trey Funderburke (40) comes up to assist in Friday's Big South 3A game at Gamble Stadium. KM won 41-34.

overtime. "For some reason we were flat coming out," Coach Lloyd said of the first half. "I don't know if it was because of homecoming or what. But you have to give Ashbrook credit too. They are a much better team than their record."

"Our conditioning paid off. Ashbrook had several players going both ways. Scoring 35 points in 18 minutes was very impressive.

Hopefully we can start getting four quarters put together."

Lloyd was proud of his whole team for not giving up and turning the game around.

"I thought in the second half that Jeff Douglas had a really good game on defense and Ed Hopper really turned his game up, too," he said. "In fact, the whole defense played well in the second half."

"Shelton Watson had a big game running the ball and played good on defense too. It looked to me like he was hitting the holes quick."

"After the snap went over our quarterback's head we decided to just run the ball and see if we could move it. We made some big plays and they got tired. They had a couple of turnovers and we were right back in the game."

## Postgame - KM vs. Ashbrook

### PLAYERS OF THE GAME

Offense - Cedric Thompson, RB/QB/WR, 8-172 receiving, 37 yards rushing. Shelton Watson, RB, 22-133 rushing; Cameron Harris, QB, 14-for-26 for 255 yards passing.

Defense - Jeff Douglas, DL, Dustin Stone, DE, Ed Hopper, DL, John Robbs, LB, Trey Funderburke, LB, Collins Pressley, LB.

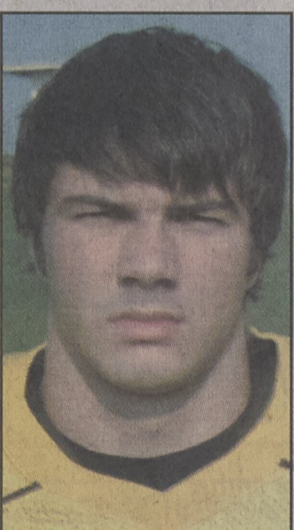
### PLAYS OF THE GAME

Offense - Cedric Thompson's catches and runs on all 3 of his touchdown plays; Zack Hopper's catch of a tipped pass in end zone to tie the score at 34-all.

Defense - When the Ashbrook center snapped the ball over QB's head on the Green Wave's last drive of the night, John Robbs chased Shempert down for a 25-yard sack resulting in a second and 43 play from the Ashbrook 46. Shempert threw three straight incomplete passes - one batted away by Robbs and the other two way off the mark - to end Ashbrook's chances of a comeback.



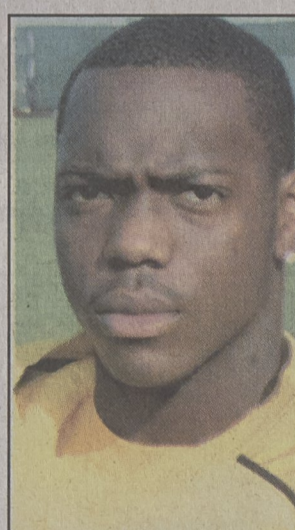
DOUGLAS



STONE



WATSON



THOMPSON

### THE YARDSTICK

KM		A	
First downs	11		
Yds. Rushing	105	141	
Yds. Passing	120	255	
Passes	3-16-0		
14-26-2			
Fumbles lost	2	2	
Penalties	14-120		
12-80			
Punts	5-36		
4-36			

### BY THE NUMBERS

Ash	3	14	10	7	34
KM	0	6	14	21	41

### FIRST PERIOD

A - 1:13 - Ross Taylor FG 24. (Following KM fumble at KM 23).

### SECOND PERIOD

A - 9:25 - Justin Shempert 9 run (Taylor kick). 13-yard drive, 5 plays following Curtis Armstrong interception.

A - 3:51 - Shempert 9 run (Taylor kick). 84-yd., 10 play drive following KM punt.

KM - 0:28.4 - Cedric Thompson 40 pass from Cameron Harris (Kick failed). 72-yd., 6 plays following Ashbrook punt. Thompson 3 catches for 65

yards; Lamont Jeffries 12-yard reception, Tim Hines 4-yard reception.

### THIRD PERIOD

A - 7:30 - Taylor FG 22. Following Ashbrook int. and return to KM 6.

A - 7:16 - Norkeithus Otis, fumble recovery in end zone. KM center snapped ball .25 yards over QB's head.

KM - 3:15 - Harris 1-run (Edward Blackburn kick). 73-yd, 11-play drive. Shelton Watson 54 yards rushing on 7 carries.

KM - 1:49 - Thompson 14 pass from Harris (Blackburn kick). Following fum-

ble recovery at Ashbrook 9.

### FOURTH PERIOD

KM - 11:13 - Harris 1-run (Blackburn kick). 52-yard, 8 plays following fumble recovery. Watson 39 yards on five carries, 13-yard reception by Thompson.

A - 10:55 - Armstrong 69 pass from Shempert (Taylor kick). First play following KM kickoff.

KM - 5:58 - Zach Hopper 7-pass from Harris. (Blackburn kick). Hopper caught tipped pass. 71-yard drive aided by back-to-back 15-yard penalties against Ashbrook for personal foul and unsportsmanlike conduct, re-

sulting in a first and 10 at the Ashbrook 17.

KM - 2:42 - Thompson 54 pass from Harris (Blackburn kick). 90-yard, 6 play drive following Ashbrook punt. Other key plays 16-yard reception by Thompson and 18-yard run by Watson.

KM RUSHING - Watson 22-133, Thompson 11-37, Harris 9-(9), Robbs 3-5, Team 1-(25).

KM PASSING - Harris 14-26-2-255.

KM RECEIVING - Thompson 8-172, Hines 2-44, Hopper 2-18, Jeffries 1-12, Quinn 1-9.

### THIS WEEK

Kings Mountain at North Gaston, Friday, 7:30.

### NOTABLE

Kings Mountain is 25-3-2 all-time against North Gaston. KM won 26-0 last year. The Mountaineers were 6-0 against Dallas High, the forerunner of North Gaston.

### QUOTABLE

"I'm sure we'll get their best effort."

-KM Coach Greg Lloyd