

Jenkins' quad squad takes 5th in national tournament

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Kings Mountain's David Jenkins took to the court with his Charlotte-based quad rugby team recently to pull down fifth place in a national tournament in Louisville, Ky.

The Carolina Crash edged out Houston's TIRR Texans 47-45 in the first game, lost to the Tucson Roadrunners 51-40 and then

defeated an Indianapolis team 54-42.

That set up a three-way tie for their division in the March tournament, which played host to 16 teams from around the country. The tie was broken by the points differential from previous games, and Jenkins' team came up short, keeping it from advancing to title action.

Still, the Carolina Crash, which is sponsored by

Adaptive Sports and Adventures Program, a part of Carolinas Rehabilitation, went on to topple Jacksonville's Brooks Bandits and beat a Seattle team 69-56, notching the most points scored in a game for the entire tournament. That gave the Crash a fifth place finish and Seattle sixth in the quad rugby tournament, which is played by athletes with varying degrees of impairment, on a basketball court. Players power across the floor, passing and dribbling a volleyball while trying to cross the opponent's goal line with at least two wheels. Four players from each team are on the court at the same time in the game, which consist of four 8-minute quarters.

Most players have sustained cervical level spinal injuries and have some type of quadriplegia. Players are given a classification number ranging from 0.5 to 3.5. The 0.5 player has the greatest impairment, while the 3.5 players as the least impairment. Jenkins' classification is a 2, he said.

The game can be rough and there are plenty of spills, said Jenkins, who, along with three other quadriplegics founded Carolina Crash in 1997. Jenkins sustained a serious spinal cord injury in a 1994 accident that left with him severe paralysis. The team has been building up numbers and talent ever since, holding weekly practices year-round. This year marked the first time the team has qualified for the national tournament, typically held in Alabama or Kentucky. Jenkins is looking ahead to the shape he sees the team taking.

"We will be adding 2 players to our roster this year that were out due to injury ... both are experienced and should see plenty of playing time," he said, adding that he is "disappointed" with fifth place. "I will be 39 this season (September) and these shoulders won't hold up forever. The time to win is now."

This wasn't Jenkins' first



Carolina Crash teammate Robbie Parks takes a spill as Jenkins and a member of the Tucson Roadrunners looks on in quad rugby action in Louisville, Ky.

Photos by ANNIE JENKINS

time in the quad rugby spotlight. He was a member of the U.S. quad rugby team from 2001-2006, during which time he traveled to New Zealand and Brazil to compete in international tournaments. The U.S. team returned from New Zealand with a bronze medal in 2003.

Two years later, two U.S. teams traveled to South America and actually wound up facing each other in the

gold medal game. Jenkins' team returned home with the silver. A member of the gold-medal team is now a starter on the Crash. A stand-out athlete in high school, Jenkins pitched for a Kings Mountain High team that collected a 1993 State Championship, beating Asheboro 2-1 in a best of three series.

The year before, the team missed the title game by just one loss. "David is very

competitive," said his sister Annie Jenkins, who traveled with David and his mother Nell to the Kentucky tournament. "I enjoy watching all these guys overcome being in a chair and showing that anything can be accomplished when you put your mind to it. His father was very proud of his playing rugby. It's an awesome sport to watch!"

Relay for Life moved to June 21



Julie Pearson, who chaired 2014's Relay for Life in Kings Mountain, Friday night minutes after she and other members of the Relay committee decided to reschedule to a June date due to rainy weather that threatened to bog down the opening hours of the event.

Photo by DAVE BLANTON

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Sour weather crushed Friday's Relay for Life in Kings Mountain just as teams and survivors were set to kick off the annual cancer research fundraising event. Organizers rescheduled it for Saturday, June 21, from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Scattered but heavy rainstorms had visited the area Friday afternoon, and as the time approached for the 6 p.m. Survivors Walk, rainy conditions seems to be setting in.

"Several campsites were actually demolished after one of the storms came thru with heavy wind and rain in the afternoon while teams were setting up," said Colby Brown, whose Endless Dreams Entertainment was to provide DJ and emcee services for the night's events.

About 20 local teams had anticipated a final night of fundraising - through food and clothes sales, raffles and other prizes. The annual walking track event features live music, games, vendors and usually draws thousands of visitors.

"Severe weather is heading our way," said Julie Pearson, a Relay for Life employee who was the chairperson for Kings Mountain's event. "The postponement was the recommendation from the local offices of American Cancer Society. In addition to the rain, we've heard a lot of reports of lightning, too."

Pearson said it's not the first time foul weather has hit the annual walk.

"We've been out here in tornado-like conditions and we didn't stop," she said, showing a small scar on her left arm where she had melanoma removed in May 2013. Relay for Life committee members and other organizers met at 5:30 p.m. and decided it best to try their luck with another date. They also decided to turn the clock back for the event making, making it mostly a daylight affair. Relay for Life has typically started around dinnertime and run through night and into dawn the next day.

"I can see that people are disappointed, but looking at the radar behind us it was a

good call," said Kings Mountain Fire Chief Frank Burns, a cancer survivor and committee member who has served as chairman for Kings Mountain's relay a number of times in past years. "I like that it's all day when we have it June 21."

As daylight lingered under storm clouds and rain peppered the field and walking track, most teams rushed to pack up and stay dry.

A few teams remained, seemingly in no hurry to get out of the way of the impending wet weather.

"We'll keep selling food for a little while ... since we have so much," said Timmy Baucom, the 17-year-old cancer survivor who is the namesake of Team Timmy. He and family members dished out nachos topped with chili and cheese to visitors as the crowd quickly thinned. Baucom was diagnosed with a kind of pediatric lymphoma in 2011. He said he's free of cancer now and this was the first time he'd been on a fundraising team for Relay for Life. For the Baucoms, the frustration was apparent. They had been looking forward to the all-night get-together for weeks. Worse still, the family has a vacation planned that conflicts with the June 21 makeup day.

"This will be the first time Kings Mountain has used the daytime schedule but hoping it will allow for more people to attend," Brown said. "There is still time for families, businesses, churches or friends

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