

## Mountaineers host Draughn in homecoming

Kings Mountain's Mountaineers hope to bounce back from last week's loss to Shelby when the Draughn Wildcats come to John Gamble Stadium Friday for the Mountaineers' homecoming game.

Kickoff is at 7:30 p.m.

The Wildcats, who defeated the Mountaineers last year in Valdese, won their first game last week with a 3-0 homecoming victory over the Chase Trojans. Sophomore kicker Abraham Sagaon-Lozada booted a 30-yard field goal with 5.1 sec-

onds left after the tough Draughn defense forced Chase to punt from its own end zone.

The Wildcats are 1-2 in the SMAC and 1-5 overall with their losses coming to West Lincoln, Freedom and Patton in non-conference play and Crest and R-S Central in the SMAC.

First-year head coach Allen Wittenburg has several players back from last year, including senior quarterback Coy Lambert, but he is also depending on a lot of younger players to come

through and they are doing just that after dropping games to tough non-conference and SMAC opponents.

"They are very similar to last year," says Mountaineer coach Greg Lloyd. "They have great size and run a ball control offense.

"They're playing better and are coming here with a win. I'm sure they will be excited."

Lloyd said the Wildcats run a 3-4 defense.

"They played really good defense last week against Chase," he said. "We're

catching them playing their best."

The Draughn defense recovered two fumbles, intercepted two passes and notched numerous tackles for loss in last week's win.

Lloyd said the Mountaineers will be without quarterback

Brandon Bell and leading rusher Darian McClain this week. Bell still has his left shoulder in a sling after injuring it in the Burns game two weeks ago; and McClain suffered a high ankle sprain in the Shelby game.

So, the Mountaineers will need some players to step up and take up the slack.

Lloyd hopes to see the Mountaineers come out strong after playing a good game despite a loss to defending state champion Shelby.

"The big thing for us is to get Tico (Crocker) another week of practice at quarterback," he said. "That's going to help us a lot and it will be very good for him. It's tough for your first start at quarterback to be against

Shelby. He will learn a lot from that game that will help us.

"Our running backs will have to step up," he said. "Jair McCluiney and Dylan Frederick need to run hard and our offensive line needs to block better and the defense needs to continue to get better. The defense did a good job last week. It's hard to keep going out there over and over. I was very pleased with their effort. The defense has improved every game.



Kings Mountain quarterback Tico Crocker (2) runs behind the blocking of Cory Hester (55), Gage Kornegay (53) and Chance Frederick (5) against Shelby.

## Kickers' streak stopped by Lions

Kings Mountain's five-game winning streak came to an end Wednesday night at John Gamble Stadium when Shelby scored an own goal with five minutes left in the second overtime to edge the Mountaineers 2-1.

"I could not be any prouder of the effort our players gave tonight," said Mountaineer coach Dan Potter. "The players really gave their hearts and souls into their game and I am so very proud to be their coach."

The match was one of the closest KM-Shelby games in the last ten years, Potter noted.

KM's Max Sappia blasted home a goal just seven minutes into the match to give the Mountaineers an early 1-0 lead.

Both teams had scoring opportunities before Shelby finally knotted the score with 1:30 left in the half.

Both keepers made some saves in the second half, including one by KM's Jarrett Ledford with 15 minutes remaining in regulation.

Shelby hit the crossbar with 10 minutes remaining in the first overtime but the rebound ended outside the penalty area.

Shelby made it a clean sweep in the opener by defeating the JV Mountaineers 5-0.

## Big plays lead Golden Lions to win over Mountaineers

Kings Mountain went into Friday's rivalry game at Shelby without the services of senior quarterback Brandon Bell, and the loss of rushing star Darian McClain early in the game made the challenge even tougher as the Mountaineers dropped their first loss of the season, 27-7 to the defending state 2A champions.

Bell was hurt during the previous week's win over Burns. Although Tico Crocker played hard the entire 48 minutes, Bell's running and passing threat was missed at quarterback, and with Crocker, who usually plays at slot receiver, calling the signals it also took away one of the Mountaineers' top receiver.

Still, the Kings Mountain defense played well and the offense had enough get up and go that they were driving for a potential go-ahead score early in the second period when McClain suffered a high ankle sprain.

The Mountaineer D stopped the Lions three times inside the 10 yard line early on, resulting in two field goals and a loss of downs as the Lions built a 6-0 lead.

Behind the running of Crocker and McClain, the

Mountaineers were threatening to take the lead when McClain's 13-yard run to the Lions' 13 ended with his injury. Shelby's Demarrio Houston intercepted a fourth down pass in the end zone and returned it to the 38 yard line.

A 15-yard horse collar penalty gave Shelby possession at the KM 48 and eight plays later a scrambling QB R.J. George spotted Devin Gullatte on a crossing route and hit him for a 22-yard touchdown and a 13-0 lead.

Except for two one-play touchdown drives, the Mountaineers' defense held the Lions in check the entire second half. Jayden Borders, son of former Crest and UNC star Chesley Borders, caught a 67-yard touchdown pass on a play that KM cornerback Marquise Camp had the bead on, but somehow the ball went through his hands into Borders'; and Chad Reid, who finished with 140 of Shelby's 166 yards rushing, broke a 39 yard TD run. Both touchdowns came on the first play following KM punts.

After Borders' TD, Kings Mountain's Xavier Johnson returned the kickoff 95 yards for a touchdown for the Mountaineers' only score of

the night.

Although he would have preferred a victory, Mountaineer coach Greg Lloyd said his players gave it their all from start to finish.

"We played hard," he said. "The defense played very well. Our offense left a couple touchdowns out there. We never could make the big play catches. We got deep (in their territory) several times and didn't score."

It was obvious the offense was not as crisp without Bell, but Coach Lloyd said he was pleased with Tico Crocker's performance at quarterback.

"It's tough for your first start at quarterback to be against Shelby," Lloyd said. "We couldn't make many plays offensively but our defense and special teams played pretty good."

Except for Shelby's three long scoring plays and some big runs by Reid early in the game, the Mountaineer defense spent most of its time in the Shelby backfield. Dwayne Capps, Julian Coulter, Colin Watkins, Trevon Wilson, Dre Bell, Josh Bell, Chance Frederick, Dylan Frederick, Jake Merchant, Camp and Shawn Adams all played well. Merchant sacked George for a huge



Kings Mountain split end Jake Merchant (15) looks for a receiver on an end around, but couldn't find anyone open and had to run the ball.

loss to end one Shelby possession and Dre Bell recorded the Mountaineers' first blocked punt of the season.

"Capps had his best game of the year and Dylan

Frederick had a very good game," Lloyd noted. "Everybody played well on defense and special teams. That's going to make us a better team. We'll bounce back and move on."

## Spikers suffer first SMAC loss

Kings Mountain High's women's volleyball team dropped its first SMAC game of the season Monday night at Draughn 25-20, 23-25, 25-27, 23-25.

The loss leaves the Lady Mountaineers with a one-game lead over the Wildcats heading into the stretch run of the season.

Kayla Bolt recorded 23 kills and 23 digs for KM. Angel Peterson had nine kills.

Sara Pasour had 36 assists and Gracie Hunter had 36 digs. Ashton Withers had 14 digs.

KM's JV team lost 7-25, 11-25.

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