



Kings Mountain quarterback Brandon Bell (9) scrambles for a 12-yard touchdown run against East Burke Friday at Gamble Stadium.

Mountaineers hold off Cavaliers 28-20 for best regular season record since '08

It wasn't easy, but Kings Mountain's Mountaineers defeated NC coaching legend Tom Brown's East Burke Cavaliers 28-20 Friday night at Gamble Stadium to complete their best regular season (8-3) since their Southwestern championship season of 2008.

Now, head coach Greg Lloyd and his charges hope to repeat the post-season they had '08 when they made it to the Western Regional championship game and finished 11-4 overall.

East Burke's Ryan Newell turned a short pass into an 80-yard touchdown play on the second play of the game to give the Cavaliers (3-8) an early 6-0 lead.

Kings Mountain came right back to drive 58 yards to take the lead 7-6 on a three-yard run by Darian McClain and an extra point kick by Sam Liss. The Mountaineers never trailed again, but the game was still in doubt until quarterback Brandon Bell hit Jake Merchant with a 15-yard pass for a first down at the East Burke 23 which allowed the Mountaineers to keep possession of the ball and run the final 1:33 off the clock.

"We got off to a slow start," said Mountaineer coach Greg Lloyd. "We had a hard time getting them off the field. They had a good receiver (Newell, who had six catches for 141 yards). He's the best receiver we've seen all year. They kept the game closer than we wanted it."

McClain, who recently sat out three games with an ankle injury, was back to his early-season form. He car-

ried the ball 17 times for 132 yards rushing to bring his season's total to 828 yards. He added two later touchdowns on runs of five and four yards.

His two second half scores came on back-to-back drives after the EB defense held the Mountaineers to three and out after the second half kickoff. The Mountaineer defense limited the Cavs to two three-and-outs in the third quarter.

"In the second half we controlled the line of scrimmage," Lloyd noted. "It was good to get a win in our last home game, and it was a big accomplishment for us to win eight games after winning only two last year."

Lloyd said Graham Keeter, Max Peterson, Cory Hester and Gage Kornegay all did a great job blocking as the Mountaineers finished with 356 yards total offense.

Quarterback Brandon Bell, one of 14 seniors honored in a pre-game ceremony, also had his best game since returning from an injury. He hit 9 of 18 passes for 131 yards, breaking the 1,000-yard passing mark for the second year in a row. He has 1,022 yards passing heading into the playoffs.

Bell scored KM's other touchdown on a 12-yard scramble in the second quarter. He was trying to find a receiver on a rollout and had to retreat to around the 20 but kept zig-zagging around defenders and got inside the pylon for the score.

"It was good to see him get back going good, and Darian McClain had the best game he's had since early in



Kings Mountain split end Xavier Johnson catches a pass near the sideline

the year," Lloyd said.

Bell's TD put the Mountaineers up 14-6, but East Burke responded with a three-yard touchdown run by Brandon Clark and a two-point conversion reception by Newell to tie the game at 14-all at intermission.

McClain's two second half scores put the Mountaineers up 28-14 with 11:32 remaining but the Cavaliers, who were fighting for an outside chance to get into the playoffs, wouldn't go down easily.

They used a crisp passing attack to move the ball

downfield in a hurry and scored on a 12-yard run by Landon Ward with 7:12 remaining. KM linebacker Dwayne Capps intercepted a two-point conversion pass to leave the score at 28-20.

The Cavaliers recovered an onside kick to take possession again at the Mountaineer 49. Very quickly, Newell caught a 15-yard pass at the 36, but on a fourth and eight play from the 34 KM's Shawn Adams batted down a pass to end the threat.

East Burke still wasn't through, as they held the Mountaineers to three and out and gained possession again when Jarrett Ledford's punt rolled dead at the East 28 at the 4:48 mark. Facing third and 7, quarterback Joe Duckworth rambled 10 yards for a first down at the 41, but a tipped pass by Dillon Frederick, no gain by Clark on a hard tackle by Collin Watkins, and two more incomplete passes resulted in a loss of downs at the East 41 with 2:29 left.

Sparked by a 15-yard pass from Bell to Jake Merchant for a first down at the 23, the Mountaineer offense wouldn't surrender the ball again.

"We found out about 5:30 that Julian Coulter wasn't going to be able to play because of a hurt back and that put a little wrinkle in our game plan," Lloyd said. "But Chance Frederick stepped in and did a good job on offense."

Mountaineers at W. Henderson for first round 3A playoff game

Kings Mountain's Mountaineers will play their first NCHSAA playoff game in three years Friday when they travel to West Henderson for a first round 3A game.

The Falcons and Mountaineers have gone through similar struggles the past two seasons. The Falcons suffered through a 1-10 season a year ago while the Mountaineers went through a 2-9 campaign.

Both teams went with young players last season, and it has paid off for them this year as they have reversed their fortunes with a host of players with playing experience. West Henderson has 21 returning lettermen including 10 on offense and nine on defense.

"They're very similar to us," noted KM coach Greg Lloyd. "They haven't won a lot of games the last two years but they have a senior laden offense."

The Falcons, coached by Paul Whitaker, finished 5-2 in the Western NC2A/3A Conference with their only losses being to perennial Western NC powers Franklin and Canton Pisgah. They are 7-4 overall.

Kings Mountain goes into the game with a 5-3 SMAC and 8-3 overall record. The Mountaineers are in the playoffs for the first time since 2011 when they defeated Forestview in the first round and fell to Crest in round two.

The Falcons operate mostly out of a wing-T offense, but Coach Lloyd said they do switch to a shotgun on occasion.

"They run a lot of buck sweeps and sweeps," he noted.

"They do a good job with their defense," he added. "They're in a 3-4/4-4 depending on what you're doing on offense. They're definitely a good team and it will take a good effort for us to have a shot at winning. It's going to be extremely cold Friday but it ought to be a lot of fun."

The Falcons, who are in the state playoffs for the first time since 2010, have a host of outstanding players. Senior running back Cody Jackson has 909 yards rushing and seven touchdowns and

Results of the W. Henderson and KM 2014 regular season:

WEST HENDERSON		
WH Pts.	Opp.	Pts.
28	Madison	26
20	Hendersonville	29
35	North Buncombe	28
21	Mtn. Heritage	40
35	N. Henderson	10
37	Smoky Mtn.	15
0	Canton Pisgah	3
56	Brevard	21
23	Tuscola	21
13	Franklin	42
28	E. Henderson	12
(296)		(247)

KINGS MOUNTAIN		
KM Pts.	Opp.	Pts.
34	Hunter Huss	21
43	East Gaston	15
35	Forestview	20
21	East Rutherford	14
28	Burns	0
7	Shelby	27
62	Draughn	0
7	Crest	35
14	RS Central	21 (ot)
54	Chase	13
28	East Burke	20
(333)		(186)

quarterback Dustie Fender rushed for 130 yards on 16 carries in last week's win over East Henderson.

Defensively, the Falcons are led by linebackers Stephen Perron, Tanner Bullock and Tristan Thomas with 111, 88 and 75 tackles, respectively.

Coach Lloyd said he hopes to see improvement in his defense this week.

"We have to get back to being more aggressive on defense," he said. "We suffered a setback against R-S Central and again this week because we didn't come away with any turnovers. We are at our best when we are aggressive and making things happen."

Offensively, Lloyd said the Mountaineers need to "establish the run and get the ball out to our receivers."

"In playoff games, sometimes the one that makes the least mistakes will come out the winner," he said. "We need to play smart. If we do, we'll be okay. We have to get mentally prepared to play and we have to take care of the ball."

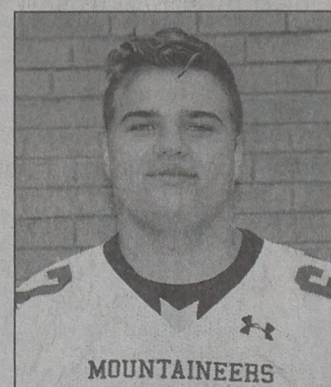
Friday's winner will advance to a second round game against the winner of the Freedom-East Rowan game.



Kings Mountain running back Darian McClain (23) picks up a huge chunk of yardage

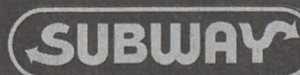
Kings Mountain Mountaineers

Athlete of the Week



Graham Keeter

Football



105 York Rd., Kings Mountain
704.734.4782

Now Serving

Breakfast!!

All Day... All The Time...

\$3²⁵ Combo!

6" sand. & drink