



Childress Triumphs In Rebounding Battle With Airborne Mustang

## Loss Builds Confidence For Vikings

South Iredell lost its season-opening game, but may have found something more useful in the process.

The visiting varsity basketball Vikings of the Big Six Conference Sherrill fell victim to a pair of free throws in the game's final seconds to suffer a season-losing, 49-48 loss at East Lincoln last Wednesday night.

It was the first game of the season for both teams, who used to play each other on an annual basis when both competed in the now-defunct Western Piedmont Conference.

Nowadays, South Iredell flies a charter membership in the Foothills Athletic Conference, while East Lincoln in one of the original members of the Big Six Conference. Despite the result, the Iredell County guests may have pocketed something more valuable, namely some much-needed confidence the boys basketball program in general at South Iredell dearly need.

The Vikings overcame some early-game struggles, referred to as "first-game blues" by Sherrill, built as much as a six-point advantage, and still maintained the lead late in the game before the two free throws with five seconds left served as the nails that sealed the guests' coffin.

"Our greatest need right now," confirmed Sherrill, popping the cork on this his and the school's first year, "is building confidence. I feel like we made a step in that direction against East Lincoln. We got off to a poor start and still felt like we could have won the game. The call at the end of the game could have gone either way. Plus, if we could have connected on some more of our shots in that fourth quarter, it would have never come down to that last play. We're still not at full capacity yet, and we've got a long way to go, but for our first game, it was just what we needed."

Boys basketball at South Iredell has fallen on hard times, of late, with the Vikings finishing back-to-back seasons among the second division members of the PAC.

Only a late-season peak performance two years ago, when the Vikings avenged a disappointing regular-season by capturing championship honors in the first-ever FAC tournament, has prevented the past two years from being a total waste.

"Some of these guys have been around the past two years," noted Sherrill, "and they remember what we've been through. We surely don't want to peak too soon, but we want to prove that we are a much better team."

South Iredell began its efforts towards proving that last week and nearly made their initial effort a success despite managing only six points in their first regulation

quarter of play. South still managed to command the 6-5 lead after one period of play, and the Vikings increased that by a point during the second frame, registering a 17-16 advantage to take a 23-21 cushion into the locker room at the intermission break.

"After our slow start," revealed Sherrill, "we put on a full-court press that picked up the tempo of the game and put it more in our favor. That right there gave us confidence, knowing that we could overcome a bad start and still stay in the game."

And stay in it they did, even though the host Mustangs won their first, and only, quarter scoring battle of the night just after the halftime break with a 14-11 spread that put them ahead by one point entering the decisive eighth minutes of play.

In that fourth period, both teams flipped-flopped with the lead, with South enjoying a one-point advantage on a jump shot with 18 seconds to play. East Lincoln then opted to hold for the last shot, and on a drive to the bucket, a South player was called for a blocking foul that put the Mustangs at the free throw line.

It was a bang-bang play that could have gone either way, judged Sherrill. "It was close to being a charge, too."

East Lincoln's Kent Cloninger, held scoreless all night, connected on both free throws to put his team back on top with five seconds left.

South managed to get off a last-ditch attempt, but it fell short of the mark.

South Iredell's offensive attack featured eight weapons, with only one of them cracking the double-digit barrier.

That was senior Gerald Childress, a non-starter fresh off the history-making football team, who tallied 10 points to lead all Vikings. Mark Work finished the game with a team second-best nine points, while Nicky Adams, Kevin Howell and Keith James all fashioned eight-point showings to provide South with a balanced team effort. Jimmy Cox, the other Vike producing points, finished with five.

The Vikings, one of two South Iredell casualties on a full day of basketball action in the East Lincoln gym—joining the jayvee girls in suffering a defeat while both the jayvee boys and varsity girls christened their seasons with wins—entered their first full week of play with a pair of games on tap.

South Iredell was slated to make its home-court debut last (Tuesday) night against Central Cabarrus prior to returning the favor by visiting the nationally-named Vikings Friday night.

Larry Sullivan's

## SPORT SIDE

### The Art Of String Pulling

Touching All The Bases: Several years back, when statewide reorganization took place, there was some concern voiced over Mooreville's situation when the Blue Devils were moved from 3A status to 2A. Some immediately took it as a slap in the face, a downgrading of the school's predominately successful overall athletic program. The move came on the heels of one of Senior High's most stellar complete yearly showings ever, one that featured a steady stream of successful teams from fall through the spring that allowed Mooreville to tie much bigger, and usually better, Statesville for what was then the Western Piedmont Conference's Wachovia Cup. It is this Cup that, based on a simple point system, annually recognizes the most outstanding athletic program in each of the state's conferences.

Some of this concern surfaced upon the realization that Mooreville, would be placed in the well-known Southern District VII Conference, an established circuit that prides itself not only on its local but even statewide success rate in the so-called major sports, those of football, basketball and baseball. However, and admittedly, the SD-7 does take a much different view of the other not-so-major sports than, say, Mooreville's old WPC.

Right off the bat, Senior High lost several of its sports, among them cross country, volleyball, and wrestling, to conference affiliation and forced those teams to perform as independents. There was never any danger of the school losing those squads altogether, but with no conference to call their own, their already dim limelight, with each taking place during seasons dominated by one of the three major sports, was additionally dulled.

Over the past two years, those teams have more than held their own against what competition they have been able to find. They have played random schedules, hooking up with opponents at the latter's convenience, and have relied more on individual success rather than overall team accomplishment.

But this year, thanks to some favorable string pulling, that is no longer the case.

This past fall, Senior High's Devilette volleyball team became associated with a conference in midstream and rode that affiliation to produce one of, if not, the most successful displays of bumping, setting and spiking ever seen at the school. The Lady Devils crafted an undefeated regular season, winning the combined SD-7-Rocky River Conference championship in the process, and advanced into the final round of eight in search for a coveted state title before being eliminated. It represented the farthest any volleyball team from Mooreville has ever reached.

Despite the team's record, it would not have gone any farther than its regular-season finale had it not been tied in with a conference.

"This winter now, and basketball has moved into center stage, Mooreville's grapplers, though, are now once again able to wrestle some of that spotlight back in their direction. After spending the last two seasons as independents, and during that time producing a sparkling array of individual talent that has attracted statewide recognition, the Blue Devils welcome the return of conference affiliation this season, which for them has already begun. Mooreville, once again thanks to some friendly negotiations, will be among the three SD-7 members to wrestle competitively as a member of the Big Six Conference, a 3A circuit.

In both of those leagues separately, neither featured enough members fielding wrestling teams to make the sport qualify for conference honors. However, in a combining effort, the league is now made up of seven members, a healthy number for any league. In addition to Mooreville, other SD-7 schools joining the Big Six in wrestling only are Newton-Conover and West Lincoln. Those three join charter BSC members St. Stephens, Hixson, West Caldwell, and East Lincoln to form the combined conference.

As a result, it is conceivable, though perhaps unlikely, that a school from the 2A ranks could win the 3A league's regular-season championship, then advance into 2A postseason play and reign as state champions in that classification. Even though they are competing in a 3A league, once the regular-season ends, the three SD-7 schools will send their qualifiers into the 2A portion of the state playoffs.

Steve Young, Mooreville's fifth-season athletic director, was cited as the one responsible for bonding the volleyball team into its conference. He's probably also the one primarily in charge of sewing up the league ties for the wrestling team. If so, then his knack for constructive string-pulling may be unmatched in his field.

The Last Of The Last: Throughout the high school football season, I've been featuring articles on the weekly happenings within both the SD-7 and Foothills Athletic Conference, leagues that house, respectively, Mooreville and South Iredell. As of this past post-Thanksgiving weekend, the compiling has stopped.

The buck officially ends here, as Bunker Hill, the last remaining survivor from either league, was ousted from the state playoffs Saturday night, 37-0 by SD-7 executioner Mt. Airy, a team that moved into the third round following a 35-29 killing of Southern District regular-season champion Newton-Conover. The game was delayed from Friday because of rain.

The Bears, the last of the three teams to earn a playoff berth from the SD-7, finished their season at 11-2, with the other loss coming to Newton-Conover.

Of the combined six teams to make the playoffs from both leagues, the FAC's Statesville and SD-7's Macon were ousted in round one, while round two casualties included the FAC's North and South Iredell, and the SD-7's Newton-Conover.

Big Kids Left With No Place To Play: I see where the Mooreville Recreation Department wrapped up its month-long youth basketball registration period as of Monday. That's all find and dandy. But what about us big kids? Where are we going to play this winter?

It looks like there will be no adult basketball league anywhere in the immediate area this year, and that's a downright shame. Heck, as of this past October, I even qualify, though just barely, for an 30-and-over league.

I can't put my finger on the reason why. I can't even offer a guess. I'm definitely open for suggestions. I can recall, not too long ago, when we had more area adult teams than we could handle. We had two healthy leagues, and they were both full to overflowing. Where has all the interest gone? Send your answers here.

A Slightly-Blinded Oversight: South Iredell head football coach Bill Mayhew may not publicly disagree with the choices made concerning which FAC players received all-conference

honors, but privately he more than likely does. And with good reason.

Mayhew's Vikings put together their finest season ever, one that saw them wrap up a share of second-place and advance into the second-round of postseason play. Okay, so all-conference honors are gendered on regular-season play only. Still, it would seem that more than two Vikings, with one of them going as a specialist, would merit league-wide attention.

If my calculations are correct, regular-season champion North Iredell, as expected, paves the way with eight all-conference players, with one of them earning both an offensive and defensive team nod. That seems fitting. However, this does not. Three teams that finished lower in the standings than did either of the teams that shared second featured more all-conference performers. Third-place finisher Wilkes Central padded its roster with seven all-league players, while North Surry fashioned six of its own. And even West Iredell, a step away from finishing in the league cellar, featured three all-FAC Warriors. Meanwhile, Statesville and South Iredell, the co-runners-up, fielded only two apiece.

It's revelations such as this, with votes being cast from the head coaches who are prohibited from voting for their own players, that leads one to suspect that such a system is flawed. It would seem only natural that the teams enjoying the most success would reflect that with individual accolades.

But such is not the case. Regardless, when considering the options, South Iredell can find satisfaction in the fact that its season lasted just as long as North Iredell's and longer than all the rest.

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## Mooreville To Christen Cage Season

With sneakers laced and uniforms precisely in place, Mooreville Senior High prepares to tip off its 1987-88 prep basketball season early next week.

Senior High, readying for its third season as a member of the Southern District VII Conference, breaks the ice on a new cage campaign Tuesday, with two of its teams making their debut at home and the other two christening the season on the road.

Mooreville's varsity Blue Devils and Devilettes receive the honor of opening their new seasons on a split-shift and polished Senior High gym floor, doing so by entertaining cross-county rival Statesville Tuesday evening.

Action is tabled to get underway with the girls game at 6:30 p.m. Earlier in the afternoon, the school's junior varsity girls and boys teams reserve the right to begin the first teams to play, as they will do by visiting Statesville.

Those games, which also begin with girls play, feature a 4 p.m. starting time Tuesday.

In addition to the names and faces of the players, there is also one new coach in the line-up this season.

With Mark Quinn, the boys junior varsity coach the past two seasons, called home for fatherly duty upon the recent arrival of a new family addition as well as being burdened with the responsibilities of moving into a new house, Lee Sullivan, an assistant to varsity head coach Al Jones the past four seasons, has taken over the vacant jayvee reins. Quinn is expected to return to the post next season.

Elsewhere, the same coaches are back to guide their same teams. In addition to Jones, who will be popping the cork on his 11th season as head coach of the varsity Devils, Tuesday's game will open the third season at the varsity Devilette helm for Steve Brooks.

At the jayvee level, newcomer Sullivan will be joined by veteran Baby Lady Devil mentor Cheryl Crawford, preparing to embark on her fourth season in charge of what she jokingly refers to as her "tribe."

All four teams open a full schedule of activity Tuesday, a regular-season of continued contests that won't slow until late February, and only then for the jayvees, as the varsity units will then continue play into early March, if not beyond.

Of the four teams, the varsity Blue Devils have the toughest act to follow, although all but the varsity Devilettes are coming off extremely successful campaigns.

Last year, the Devils set a school record for the most wins in a season, with 23, and advanced into the first round of sectional play after a stellar season that included the championship crown of the annual Christmas Tournament, a second straight regular-season conference title, and the SD-7 tournament blue ribbon.

The 23 wins, against only a trio of defeats, allowed last year's team to become only the second boys team at the school to reach the 20-win plateau.

As for the varsity Devilettes, they will be out looking to avenge last year's 6-6 overall showing.

Both teams of jayvees finished among the top two in the SD-7 race and are eyeing repeats of similar success.

Tuesday's games against Statesville open two full weeks of pre-Christmas holiday non-conference

Coaches Are Needed At Rec. Dept.

You know how much you like to sit in the stands, or perhaps in front of the television set, and second-guess basketball coaches?

Now's your chance to make first-hand decisions involving what's taking place on the court for, and sometimes against, your own team. It's coming courtesy of the Mooreville Recreation Department, which is seeking several coaches at several levels of its youth basketball program.

According to Wanda McKenzie, athletic director, coaches are being sought to guide several of the youth league teams.

If this sort of opportunity seems right for you, contact McKenzie at the recreation department as soon as possible.

Registration for players, which is being extended to two of the planned leagues, was scheduled to wind up as of Monday.

Those leagues with enough players registered are already being aligned with teams, and practices are scheduled to begin shortly.

Players are still being sought for the girls Midget League, and the boys Senior League. So far, fewer than the required number of players needed to fill the leagues have registered.

Interested players eligible for these leagues are urged to sign up as soon as possible.

Elsewhere, teams are being filled by players in the boys Minor, Midget, and Junior Leagues, and it's some of these teams that need coaches to lead them.

For more information concerning the youth basketball program, contact the recreation department.

play for the teams. They will also face Kings Mountain on a home-and-home basis during that time period.

The varsity squads will then once again take part in the annual Iredell County Holiday Tournament in Statesville just after Christmas, with the Devils looking to defend their crown, before all four teams wind up non-league play in early January.

Play within the SD-7 will then crank up in mid-January and dates with conference foes will fill the remainder of the slate.

Other members of the SD-7 are Macon, West Lincoln, Newton-Conover, Cherrylee, Bandys, Bunker Hill, and Bessemer City.

With those will all be familiar foes, the playing procedure that will be followed this season is all new.

Unlike last season, when the jayvee games were held at opposite sites on same playing days, this year, marathon outings will be played, with all four games taking place the same day at the same site.

In addition to the statewide employment of the three-point line,

SD-7 varsity games will also feature three officials instead of the two that were used last year.

Beginning with Tuesday night's openers against Statesville, the complete Mooreville Senior High regular-season basketball schedule, with home games in all caps, follows:

|              |                    |
|--------------|--------------------|
| Dec. 8.....  | STATESVILLE        |
| Dec. 11..... | at Statesville     |
| Dec. 15..... | KINGS MOUNTAIN     |
| Dec. 18..... | at Kings Mountain  |
| Dec. 22..... | HOLIDAY TOURNAMENT |
| Jan. 5.....  | at East Lincoln    |
| Jan. 8.....  | EAST LINCOLN       |
| Jan. 12..... | at Macon           |
| Jan. 15..... | WEST LINCOLN       |
| Jan. 19..... | at Newton-Conover  |
| Jan. 22..... | CHERRYLEE          |
| Jan. 25..... | at Bandys          |
| Jan. 29..... | at Bunker Hill     |
| Feb. 2.....  | BESSEMER CITY      |
| Feb. 5.....  | MAIDEN             |
| Feb. 9.....  | at West Lincoln    |
| Feb. 12..... | NEWTON-CONOVER     |
| Feb. 15..... | at Cherrylee       |
| Feb. 19..... | BANDYS             |
| Feb. 22..... | BUNKER HILL        |
| Feb. 26..... | at Bessemer City   |

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