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THE Tribune

Wednesday, August 22, 2001

Section B

Sports

Few answers to questions you may ask

Questions, questions, everybody has questions. What we're really looking for, though, is answers. When it comes to those, everything turns quiet.

But not any longer. If you're looking for sports-related answers to all your questions, then you've come to the right place. Over the years, I've become your Athletic Answer Man, a near super-hero persona with powers beyond your wildest beliefs. Now, if I could only figure out where to put in the gas in that lawn mower.

Common sense has never been one of my strong points. But what is a strength is my answering ability. How strong is that? See, I know you'd ask that. It's so strong, I can actually come up with the answers before you even ask the question. Don't believe it? Again, I didn't think you would.

That's why I'm here with proof. What follows are the answers to questions you really haven't even asked yet. I'll match that ability up against any of those other so-called super heroes.

Yes, and maybe.

Probably.

No.

Oh, wait a minute. You just might want some explanations to go along with those answers. See, I knew that, too. Well, if you insist.

Yes, I, too, am most excited over Mooresville's existence in its new North Piedmont Conference. Granted, there will be no more games in any sport across the board when it comes to awarding state playoff berths. Second to league titles, reaching the postseason is utmost on all teams' plans. All year, just two available berths will be up for grabs. There are those out there, myself among them, who feel it just might be the most competitive of all of the state's 3A class league. Still, I feel that maybe our teams will stack up against the best of them in all sports. I feel we'll get more teams in than those that fall short.

When it comes to participating in this fall's second annual Fredell County Golf Championship, I definitely feel that it will probably have more than just the disappointing few who engaged in last year's tournament. I certainly hope so, anyway. The date of this year's two-day, two-course affair has been set for Oct. 5-6. Mooresville Municipal and Fox Den Country Club course are again serving as host of a round each. Entries are now being accepted. I'll be disappointed if we don't have more.

No, I really don't think all these preseason scrimmages are necessary, but they do serve a purpose. It gives the players a chance to prove their worth more than in just practice situations. And it allows coaches to make final decisions on those who might be in consideration for more playing time. Also, they certainly get us ready for the real thing. By the way, our Blue Devils engage in their final scrimmage here tomorrow night.

Yes, we will be having our high school and college football contest again this year. It will start the first week of September and again provide each weekly winner with the chance to cash in on a year-ending prize. I'd love to see some new names challenge those regulars.

I agree that more than just local prep athletes in a single sport deserve recognition. That's why we will be providing a feature that will serve to identify a varsity athlete of the week in the very near future. It will cover all varsity sports all year, starting this fall. It's an idea that is long overdue.

No, it doesn't come as a surprise to me that Mooresville was one of just 93 of the state's nearly 400 public schools that did not receive a single ejection of a player or coach during the past school year. Our crew is just as competitive as the next, but we know how to control that desire. It's great that the entire athletic program is being recognized by the NCHSAA.

Yes, we will have our Sports Survivor Series. Trying to please the schedule of all our committed participants has been the real tough part so far. Look for it to take place, perhaps, sometime next month. Perhaps.

First shutout preserves mark

It took one first for Mooresville's varsity soccer team to keep avoiding another Monday night.

Back on the field for the first time in five days and in the first of two matches within a three-day stretch, the Blue Devils kept their undefeated record intact with the season's first shutout, a 3-0 blanking of host South Point.

With the win, in which the guests received single goals apiece from three different sources, they improved to the 3-0-0 mark in their first season back under the controls of former head coach Steve Stith.

During his previous stint with the program, Stith led Mooresville's boys to a pair of state championships before leaving in pursuit of other vocational experiences following the 1996 season.

Mooresville gathered in a goal each from junior midfielder Phillip Citroen, senior forward Patrick Bell and senior midfielder Preston Davis, all but the first getting their first tallies of the season, to account for the balanced offensive performance. All of the damage came in the second half, after the visitors pelted the home team's goal with 17 first-half shots but came up empty.

That effort enabled keepers Ben Peacock and Evan Lindsey to log the shutout, their first combined effort this season, boosted by the play of fellow defenders throughout the match.

The win over South Point, which appears just once on the Blue Devils' schedule this season, follows earlier triumphs over Alexander Central at home and in strong comeback fashion against Newton-Conover on the road.

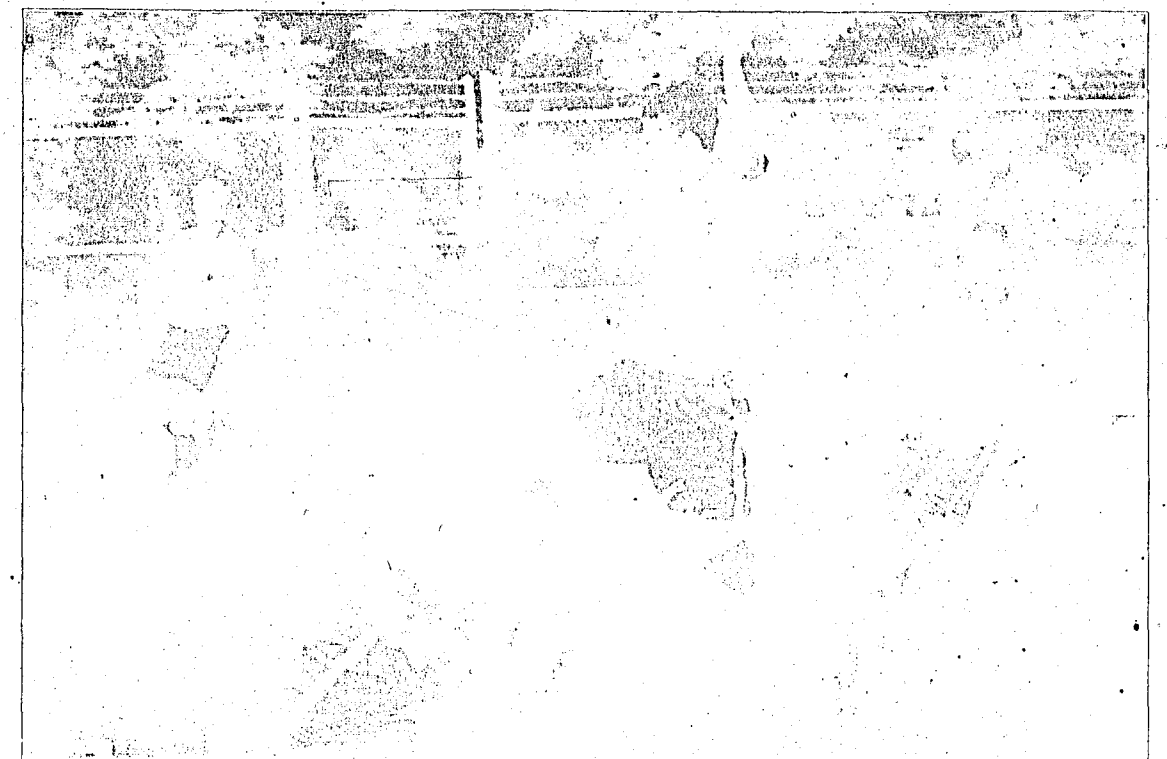
The most recent decision also took place during what is Mooresville's second longest road trip of the season, one covering three games.

In junior varsity play that took place before the varsity match, Mooresville's Little Devils also remained perfect, improving to the same 3-0-0 mark with a 2-0 blanking of the Baby Red Raiders.

The Devils remain bus-bound later this week to face another one-time opponent when visiting Davie County this (Wednesday)

See SOCCER, page 2B

Still undefeated



Tyler Locey goes airborne while trying to throw a little scare into opposing team's keeper near net

but came up empty.

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See SOCCER, page 2B

Almost here



Hoping practice makes perfect, teams goes through preparations for final preseason scrimmage

Suddenly, the preseason scrimmage season has evolved into a battle of survival for Mooresville's football team.

"Man," sighed Mike Carter, just under two weeks shy of officially kicking off his 13th season as the Blue Devils' head coach, "we're hurting. We got banged up, beat up and bruised pretty good at our last scrimmage. We're not sure who can go and for how long right now. We're just going to wait and see."

That waiting and seeing comes to a head when the Devils, coming off a school record-setting season and rewarded for that by being named as the number 14th-ranked entry in last weekend's initial

Sweet 16 area high school football poll of the season, host their only scrimmage this week.

Mooresville, with a pair of scrimmages within the past week under its helmet, closes out that segment of the season with its only at-home appearance when hosting Thomasville Ledford tomorrow (Thursday) night.

"We've had three scrimmages over the past several years," revealed Carter, "but we haven't been hurt like we are right now. I still think, for the most part, we'll be okay. We already taken some big hits, but the kids are getting used to getting and taking them."

See BLUE DEVILS, page 2B

Marlin is Sterling for team

Sterling Marlin lived up to the meaning of his name for both his Mooresville-based NASCAR Winston Cup team and his preferred manufacturer's model during last weekend's Pepsi 400 at Michigan International Speedway.

Honorable, deserving, worthy and valuable -- a few of the words used to define sterling -- were among the accolades tossed

Marlin's way after he avoided the crowd and the weather long and well enough to score his first win as the driver for local-based Chip Ganassi Racing, his seventh career win and first in five years, and the first win for Dodge

in 24 years after the automaker returned to Winston Cup racing this season following a 16-year absence.

"We'll take them," beamed an elated Marlin, who has knocked on the door a number of times over recent weeks before crashing through it, albeit weather-aided, for the first time since winning the same race also cut short by rain in 1996.

As for Dodge, it's that model's first win since placing first in the 1977 race held in Ontario, Calif. This marks the automaker's return season of Winston Cup racing after being out of the sport over the past 16 years.

Marlin garnered a 15th-place start in the 43-car field and didn't make his first appearance at the head of the pack until Lap 145. Once there, the last of the eight drivers to be involved in 16 lead changes never relinquished the lead.

The previous two-time winner of the Daytona 500 passed fell Dodge driver Bill Elliott with the 53 laps to go and then won when a heavy shower, the race's second of the day, halted the scheduled 200-lap event. The earlier rain at the race's mid-way point forced a near two-hour delay.

The win, which enabled Marlin to lead the parade of local efforts in the field, failed to affect his overall points standing, keeping him fourth as none of the top six in that category made any moves up or

See STERLING MARLIN, page 2B

Despite taking an early advantage, Devilettes seek first volleyball win

The watch for the season's first volleyball win remains for Mooresville's varsity team.

The Lady Devils suffered their second straight loss, dropping three straight games to be handed a three games to one decision at the hands of visiting St. Stephens late last week.

Mooresville had another matched tabled for early this week to complete the season's longest home stretch, but the outing against East Lincoln was postponed due to the death of a member of the Lady Mustangs team.

As a result, the Devilettes of veteran head coach Nancy Dilks, in her 26th season, hit the road this week seeking to end their first-win search.

Against a St. Stephens team familiar to the Lady Devils due to same-conference tie between the two programs over the past four years, the hostesses opened matters with a 15-11 win but failed to maintain the momentum, finishing on the short end of games by scores of 15-12, 15-8 and 15-10 to drop the best-of-five match.

It continues an early experience-building segment of the season for the Devilettes, who are fielding a squad with limited prior on-court time due to the presence of six members of last year's team who have since graduated. That crew dominated the majority of the playing time during their extended careers.

In the loss, the hostesses were carried in the point-scoring department by the serving of senior Alisha Leonard, one of just three upperclass players on this year's team. She gathered in a total of 11 points with the serve in the first two games combined. Fellow senior Crystal Furmanuk paved the way in play at the net.

In junior varsity action that took place before varsity action in the Senior High gym, Mooresville was handed a two-game sweep, by scores of 15-1 and 15-12, despite the serving of freshman Dee Plyler.

Both volleyball teams are back in more action this week, playing at South Rowan to open a three-game road trip that also includes a visit to St. Stephens tomorrow (Thursday) afternoon.