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## Claggett Creek 4x100 wins gold

By **DEREK WILEY**  
*Of the Keizertimes*

If the 50-plus track and field teams competing in the Oregon Middle School Meet of Champions didn't know about Claggett Creek before, they certainly do now.

In its first ever trip to the state meet, Claggett's 4x100 boys relay team of eighth graders Gabriel Martinez, Ethan Martin, Emanuel Figueroa, Dyami Rios, brought home the track program's first state championship while setting another school record, finishing in 46.61 seconds.

"This is destiny what we had," Figueroa said. "I was supposed to go to a different school but something happened so I came here and coming here has basically changed who I am because without running I wouldn't be here. Without these three people (Martinez, Martin and Rios) behind me, supporting me, picking me up when I fall, I wouldn't be here. Experiencing everything, blood, sweat, tears, soreness, it's all changed who I am and I know it's changed who these guys are, too."

CCMS went into the meet on Thursday, May 25 at Corvallis High School with the fastest time but barely made it to finals after finishing in sev-

enth in 47.85 during prelims.

"It was very nerve-racking," said Martinez, who ran the first leg of the race. "We didn't know what was going to happen in finals. We had four hours to prepare ourselves mentally and just win the race and try to do our best."

CCMS wasn't at full strength. Just one day before the meet, Martin, Claggett's second runner, had hurt his ankle falling off the bleachers at school.

"I didn't want to let them down so I just ran through the pain," Martin said.

After running the third leg, Figueroa passed the baton to Rios to finish the race.

"I was just trying not to lose the lead and run my fastest," said Rios, who also competed individually, finishing ninth in the 100 and 10<sup>th</sup> in the 200 during prelims.

Shirley Richardson, Claggett's sprint coach, put the four kids together as sixth graders.

"I like to keep kids together because the more you work together the stronger you become as a team," Richardson said.

"They started off as sixth graders with a 52 (seconds) and then went 49 as seventh graders and 46 as eighth



Claggett Creek eighth graders Emmanuel Figueroa, Dyami Rios, Ethan Martin and Gabriel Martinez won the 4x100 relay at the Oregon Meet of Champions in Corvallis.

graders. It's huge because we haven't had a dominant group of kids so it's been a real blessing. These kids are leaving a legacy of what they can do so other kids here can be in-

spired by what they've done. These guys are good leaders in the classroom. They're hard workers."

The 4x100 team has already inspired their teammates.

Despite being seeded ninth and not even running in the fastest of the three heats, the 4x400 relay squad of Figueroa, Torren Hamilton, Juan Diego Acosta and Elija Devoursney

placed fourth at the Meet of Champions, breaking the school record by nine seconds in 3:49.83.

Their goal was 3:53. Please see CHAMPS, Page 13



McNary head softball coach Kevin Wise and center fielder Nadia Witt talk during a game played earlier this season.

## Witt, Wise voted GVC Player, Coach of the Year

By **DEREK WILEY**  
*Of the Keizertimes*

When voting on Greater Valley Conference Softball Player of the Year, McNary head softball coach Kevin Wise said he looks for "that kid that really stands out."

This season one of those players was McNary junior Nadia Witt, who along with West Albany senior Kennedy Jantzi, were co-recipients of the award.

"It's really cool to just think that the way I play and the way people see me as a high player," said Witt, who was also voted a First Team outfielder.

"I go hard and I'm always talking. I just try to leave everything out on the field."

Leading off for the Lady Celts, Witt hit .600 with four

home runs, 14 doubles, 28 RBI and 38 runs.

Wise and assistant coach Brad Ulrey weren't surprised to see Witt win the award. They talked about it at the beginning of the season.

"We've just watched her grow up," Wise said. "We knew she had a lot of talent but she was just so quiet at first. Even though she's really good, she's still kind of shy. She's not a cocky kid at all. Just to see her get to that level and her leadership and the way she carries herself. If we need a hit, she just wills it to happen. You just can't put into words what she means to us."

Wise was voted GVC Coach of the Year after leading the Lady Celts to a 19-4 record during the regular sea-

son, a league championship and then a trip to the state quarterfinals.

Wise downplayed the honor, giving credit to the players.

"That stuff doesn't happen unless... it's these guys," Wise said.

"That's not the coach. It's the girls. I just focus on them because it's just a phenomenal group."

Joining Witt on the GVC First Team was McNary junior Haley Ebner, who at first base hit .465, two home runs, 30 RBI and scored 33 runs.

McNary had four players on the Second Team, senior Hannah Carr as an infielder, sophomore pitcher Faith Danner and junior Emma Kinler and freshman Alexa Cepeda in the outfield.

## Ismay, Gilbert, Giest on 1st team

By **DEREK WILEY**  
*Of the Keizertimes*

The McNary baseball squad had three players voted to the All-Greater Valley Conference First Team.

Senior third baseman Matthew Ismay was an unanimous selection, hitting .425 with two home runs, 11 doubles, 20 RBI and 22 runs scored in the heart of the Celtics' lineup.

Senior Josiah Gilbert was a First Team pitcher. On the mound, Gilbert was 3-4 with a 2.67 ERA and 39 strikeouts over 39 and one-third inning.

McNary senior outfielder Jonah Geist was also voted



McNary senior Matthew Ismay was an unanimous All-GVC First Team selection.

on to the First Team. Leading off for McNary, Geist hit .349 with four doubles, 19 RBI and 18 runs scored.

Josh Benson, a senior second baseman, and Jacob Jackson, a sophomore outfielder, both represented McNary on

the Second Team.

McNary seniors Riley Hays and Brenden Frizelle as well as sophomore Tyler Covalt were all honorable mentions.

McMinnville senior Wyatt Smith was voted both Player and Pitcher of the Year.

## Kesler signs with Umpqua

By **DEREK WILEY**  
*Of the Keizertimes*

After an injury ended Wyatt Kesler's high school wrestling career early, the McNary senior was determined to keep on competing.

"I wasn't done," Kesler said. "Even if I had to pay to go to school, I would've gone and wrestled."

Thanks to a scholarship from Umpqua Community College, Kesler won't have to.

"It was frustrating not being able to finish and then to get this opportunity just meant the world to me," Kesler said. "I was so excited."

McNary head coach Jason Ebbs first met Kesler as a 5-year-old at the Celtic Mat Club.

"That set back with his injury not letting him wrestling at districts and state probably turned him into one of the most responsible and best per-



McNary senior Wyatt Kesler will get the opportunity to continue wrestling at Umpqua Community College.

forming kids in seeking out a college that I may have ever coached," Ebbs said.

"He handled that process very well and most of it on his own. He made his door open for his chance to wrestle in college."

Ebbs noted Kesler still has

plenty of room to develop.

"Some of us who have been around the sport for a long time know you're not done developing in the sport of wrestling until you're somewhere near your 30s," Ebbs said.

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