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The best in sports 2014



Boys soccer 'miracle' season

In 2014, there was no bigger story in Keizer team sports than the McNary High School boys varsity soccer team.

Out of the gate in September, the Celts began upsetting or tying top opponents and it led to them being ranked fourth in state rankings by the end of the first two weeks. During the next two months, the Celtics would go from dominating lesser opponents to rallying against tougher ones and coming out with wins or ties.

McNary didn't lose a game until the first week of October, but managed to bounce

right back. The season reached its apex with a 5-4 win over the South Salem High School Saxons later that month. McNary trailed for much of the first half and was down 4-0 before junior Paulo Reyes sparked a rally.

With 1:45 left in the game, a Saxon player grabbed a handful jersey as Celt Mario Garcia-Garibay near the Saxon goal. McNary was awarded a penalty kick that sophomore Gustavo Villalvazo netted.

The Celts went on to win the GreaterValley Conference, the first league title for the team in a decade.

Keizer 15-year-old sets state, national powerlifting records

When it came to individual efforts in 2014, there was no doubt who our top pick for the year would be: Leilang Salang.

In early December, Salang, 15, captured state and national records in powerlifting at the U.S. Powerlifting Association's Western Regional Championship. Salang began breaking records at Blanchet Catholic School earlier this year and decided to attempt competitive lifting mere weeks before the competition.

Whereas many of the lifters at the competition will choose only one event, Salang went for the full boat hefting 143.3 kilos in the bench press, 252.52 kilos in the squat and 303.14 kilos in the deadlift.

Her total of 688.95 kilos sets her about 95 kilos ahead of the previous record for her age group.



Netters make Elite 8

After two seasons of struggles, the McNary High School varsity volleyball team made a stellar run through the GVC to land in second place. From there, the girls stormed into the state tournament with a 3-1 win over Newberg High School in the third round of the playoffs.

The Lady Celts were stymied in the tournament, but the successes of 2014, which extended all the way through the junior varsity and freshmen teams, bodes well for the future.



10U team wins state title



The Keizer 10U Celtics capped a 35-0 league season with a state championship in July.

Coach Kyle Hughes said the team bonded early in the season after some losses in an open tournament in Redmond in May, but came together in a big way by June at a Reedsville tournament.

"We were tied 4-4 in the bottom of the last inning with two outs and two runners on when 8-year-old Gage Smedema hit a double to win the game and the tournament. After that moment, the entire team believed we could win any game no matter what was up against us," Hughes said.

Boys basketball team tops 6A in classroom

Not all the top news of the year was made in the gym and on the field.

The McNary boys varsity basketball team was excelling in the classroom while their

fortunes were turning on the hardwood. The boys ranked first among boys basketball 6A schools with an average team grade point average of 3.63.

All around the school, Celtics were emphasizing the student in student-athlete, 2014 marked the first time ever that every winter sport team averaged at least a 3.0.

Bowlers roll to 2 district titles

McNary bowlers, boys and girls claimed district titles in 2014. Both teams were buoyed with a large, enthusiastic crowd at Salem's Northgate Lanes.

"We would go up to bowl and the crowd would roar and the other teams would go up and it was silent," said Lady Celt Sierra Mo.

The girls were in second place headed into the final match, but beat Dallas High School to take the title.

The boys were in the re-

verse position. They cruised into the final match, but struggled in their first game. It all came down to a 10th frame bowled by then-junior Scott Bridger. He needed two strikes to get the win and nailed both of them.

"It was amazing, they were perfect flush balls with 10-in-the-pit and there was no question it was a clean win," said Dan Kaplan, McNary head coach.

The boys won with an overall score of 394-390.

Fresh boys basketball goes 23-1

The McNary boys freshmen basketball team lost only one game, to West Salem High School, in its 2013-14 season.

Even the loss was a close one. The Titans edged the Celts 51-48 in their first meeting, but McNary eked out a 45-42 win in the second clash of the two teams. The West games were the exception to a blowout season.

The young Celts beat most teams by 10, 20, 30 and even 40 points en route to winning the unofficial Central Valley Conference freshman title with a 23-1 record.

'Hammer' repeats at regionals

McNary's Zach Hammerschmith repeated as a regional champ in his senior year with the Celtics.

Brandishing a pair of black eyes in the wake of the tournament, Hammerschmith said the win only made him want to strive even harder at the state tournament.

To win the regional title, Hammerschmith beat Tualatin's Luke Gossens 6-3 in the finals. He made it all the way to the finals at the state tournament before succumbing to Roseburg's Max Hane in a 12-6 decision.

