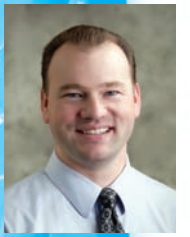


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McNary senior Tregg Peterson slams a ball home on an alley-oop.

Exceeding Expectations

Peterson takes star status in stride

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

With his thick red hair and 6-foot-3 frame, McNary High School senior Tregg Peterson stands out on the basketball court for his physical appearance alone. After the tip off, he stands out even more.

Peterson has been a backbone of the Celtic boys basketball team all season long. He's averaging 16 points, five rebounds and three assists per game. His most points in a single game this season is 34. As soon as he gets close to the net, there is a collective intake of breath on the Celtic side of any gym. That's because there's a better-than-average chance he'll slam one home. If he does, what follows is most like a roar.

"It's really the best feeling you can get. When you have everyone there — friends and family — and they explode, it gets your adrenaline going and gets you excited," said Peterson.

Peterson's path to becoming a star on the court likely began playing basketball with his father and sister, Teresa.

He laughs and smiles shyly at the mention of her name.

"She used to beat me pretty handily, but she was my push factor. She was good when she played and, coming in, I wanted to be better than she ever was. I've tried to surpass her and my dad who played in high school and college," Peterson said.

After playing on a three-time state champi-

on soccer team through middle school, Peterson turned his focus to basketball his freshman year. In some ways, it was the best and worst time to join the program. The Celtics had been struggling for a couple of seasons already, but it continued for the next two years under a new head coach, Ryan Kirch.

"You could tell there was a lot of confusion and a lot of player issues. There were egos and attitudes, and a lot of them," Peterson said. "But you still learn to love the people you play with."

While the teams struggled, Peterson turned to what he could contribute and began hitting the gym, focusing on weights and building strength in his legs.

"Tregg puts a lot of time in during the off season, specifically in the weight room," Kirch said. "Between his sophomore and junior season he went from being an average looking player to a physically dominant perimeter player. His vertical leap improved by nearly 10 inches, and he became a very physical presence on the floor."

Kirch said Peterson came into his own two years ago during a summer league team in a tournament at University of Oregon.

"Johnathan (Doutt) missed a couple of games for a family event and we were in a position where we were looking for someone to step up. We began to run plays to isolate Tregg and he scored at will," Kirch said.

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"I got a little light-headed and I was tired after, but it was life-altering."

— Tregg Peterson

Two district titles for Kuch

The McNary High School girls varsity swimming team will be sending a small contingent on to the state swimming meet, after one freshman claimed two district titles last weekend.

Marissa Kuch will be the No. 6 seed going into the 100 yard freestyle. She's took the district title with a time of 52.35. Kuch will also be

the No. 7 seed headed into the girls 200 yard freestyle after winning the event at the district meet with a time of 1:55.23.

Kuch will also head to the meet in the 200 free relay with teammates Sara Eckert, Jewel Boyd and Josie Ellis. The team turned in a time of 1:45.05 at the district meet. The same

group will also compete in the 400 free relay after placing fourth at the district meet with a time of 3:52.52.

Overall at the district meet, the Lady Celts placed sixth with 158 points, the boys placed seventh with 95 points. The McMinnville boys and girls teams won the district team titles.

Celtics to top ranks in two weight classes at district meet

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

McNary High School's varsity wrestling team will have two no. 1 seeds headed into the wrestling district meet Friday, Feb. 20.

The event gets underway at 10 a.m. at Sprague High School in Salem.

The two wrestlers entering the tournament as top seeds are at opposite ends of the spectrum wrestling-wise. Senior Alvarro Venegas will go in as the top-ranked wrestler in the Greater Valley Conference — and the state — at 195 pounds. Freshman Brayden Ebbs is the district's top-ranked wrestler at 120 pounds.

Venegas, who has dropped about 30 pounds since his freshman year and sculpted what remained, has been waiting for this moment for a long time. His record this season is 42-1.

"I feel like everything I've done has paid off. If I keep following in the footsteps of the other wrestlers, I can win it and it's something I really want," Venegas said. "I also

Champs in the making?

McNary's state-ranked wrestlers headed into the regional tournament:

195 pounds: Alvarro Venegas, senior, first.
132 pounds: Michael Phelps, senior, seventh.
182 pounds: Taran Purkey, senior, seventh.
120 pounds: Brayden Ebbs, freshman, ninth.
160 pounds: Carlos Vincent, sophomore, ninth.
126 pounds: Sean Burrows, sophomore, 10th

want as many other guys going to state with me as we can manage. Brayden is going to be a district champ and Wyatt Kessler has a great shot."

Ebbs's journey to this tournament started well before he became a member of the varsity ranks at McNary, as a longtime member of the Celtic Mat Club.

"From the beginning of the year, my goal was to be the best. I'm pretty sure ... I wanted .. I know I'm going to win this title," Ebbs said.

He'd like it to come down to a finals match between him and either Trent Martinez, of Sprague, or Christian Guerra, of Forest Grove High School.

"They've both beat me this

season and I've beaten them. I don't want to leave any tournament with the other guy having a better record than me," Ebbs said.

Celt Jonathon Phelps will enter the tournament as a second seed. His brother, Michael Phelps, is seeded third. Several other Celts round out the top five spots headed into the district tourney.

"We've got some good seedings and kids in position to exceed their seeds and do a good job," said McNary Head Coach Jason Ebbs, father of Brayden. "Every one of them is going to have to win one or two tough matches. That's what it will come down to.

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After open-heart surgery

11-year-old back in the game



Submitted

Gubser Elementary School fifth grader Mehki China underwent open-heart surgery last summer and was cleared to return to the sports he loves last fall.

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

Mehki China was practicing with his baseball team last spring when something started going wrong.

"I got panicked because it was hard to breathe and I started stumbling," said Mehki, who was 10 years old at the time. He had been diagnosed with sports-induced asthma prior to this attack, but it didn't take long for his mother, Brooke, to figure out something else was going on.

She was playing with her younger son when one of Mehki's friends came to let her know something was wrong.

"I went outside and he was slumped against a wall. I tried to stand him up and get him to breathe through it, as he tried to stand up his eyes turned black and rolled up, then he passed out," Brooke said.

Assuming it was an asthma attack, Brooke ran back inside and began yelling for someone to get an inhaler. Mehki's had been left in the car that day.

She went back to check on Mehki and found him still unconscious on the ground, then back into the gym to find Andrew Copeland, one of the team's coaches and a Keizer

police officer, running across the gym with an inhaler.

"Mehki was still out and I thought, 'How is this going to work if he's not breathing?'" I went into terror all over again," Brooke said.

Copeland opened Mehki's mouth and sprayed the inhaler into it. He was about to begin CPR when Mehki began moving about 30 seconds later. "The ambulance came and they checked him out. They offered to take him to the ER, but I wanted to take him to his doctor," Brooke said.

Mehki's doctor's performed an EKG and things looked fine, but the family opted to pursue further testing. The hardest part for Mehki — a three-sport athlete in baseball, football and basketball — was his unquenched thirst for the competition sports bring.

"I've been playing since I was younger and I like everything about it. I didn't like not being able to play. It's all I wanted," Mehki said.

A sonogram of Mehki's heart revealed the problem.

"The left coronary artery is supposed to come from the aorta. His was coming from the pulmonary gland and cutting off the oxygen to his heart," Brooke said.

The condition is a congenital heart defect that is usually caught in the first several months of a child's life, but Mehki's had gone undetected. It's in the family of conditions that sometimes result in sudden athlete death.

Brooke said they could have left it untreated, but it would mean Mehki would likely never play sports competitively again.

"It was a question of the risk of surgery versus a better quality of life," Brooke said.

Mehki went under the knife for open heart surgery in July 2014, but was back on the field six weeks later as an assistant football coach to Bill Klem.

He was cleared to play himself in November and started basketball in December.

"We're not doing so great right now, but I really want to see our baseball team do good this summer," Mehki said. The team took second in the state last year while Mehki was benched.

"Now he's free and clear to do whatever he wants. He had no complications and was out of the hospital in four days. He was laid up for a really long time, but he can live the life that he wants," Brooke said.