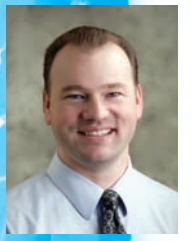


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Venegas denied state title, not defined by it



Alvaro Venegas finished second in the state at 195 pounds last weekend. It was a let down for Venegas, but he's already setting new goals.

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

In the 24 hours after his defeat in the state tournament finals match at 195 pounds, Alvaro Venegas did a lot of soul searching.

Venegas went into the tournament seeded first in the state, and went into the final match with a 51-1 record. He ended up losing 3-2 after his opponent, Brian Barnes, took him down in the third round.

"I dwelled on it for the whole day after, but I thought back to my coaches and the older guys and a title doesn't define me.

"(Jason) Ebbs said there's always someone who wants it more than you do. That may not be the case for me, but this guy has been wrestling his entire life. He dedicated his life to it," Venegas said. "Brian was ready to wrestle. I think I choked. Maybe I got too cocky, but Brian is going to

do great for himself," Venegas said.

Ebbs is McNary's head wrestling coach.

If that answer sounds humble, it's par for the course for Venegas. Talking with him after matches this past year, he never had a harsh word for any opponent. He mostly talked about them being "cool guys."

That attitude defines him more than any title - regional, state or national - ever could.

"As he wrestled through this season, he was the strongest mental wrestler I had seen in a long time. He learned how to control his opponents, how to control the match, and how to control position so that every match was wrestled on his terms," Ebbs said.

It was a far cry from when Venegas started wrestling at Claggett Creek Middle School in eighth grade.

"I would hear the guys talking about how hard wrestling

was. But, getting out there basically naked with other guys, I wasn't sure about it," he said.

He took the leap and thought he did fine in practices, but he didn't win a single match that year. He entered McNary as a heavyweight at 265 pounds.

"I didn't really work out. But, sophomore year, Zach Hammersmith and Mason Ross kind of took me under their wing and started getting me to work out. Mason would take me to the gym - usually without my consent - and he bought me some supplements. Still, I went through the season getting beat up."

He and Ross spent time that year swinging between the two heavyweight classes, 220 and 265 pounds. When the Oregon Classic came around, he had a crisis of faith, a result of not winning a single match.

"I was ready to quit, but Please see ALVARO, Page A12

Girls draw 11th-ranked Clackamas Cavaliers



Paige Downer puts pressure on one of the Sprague Olympians in a game earlier this season. The Lady Celts played their first state tournament game Wednesday, March 4, past press time.

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

Drawing the 11th-ranked team in the state for the first match in the playoffs would be a concern for many teams, but the Lady Celt varsity basketball team is fairly content with its circumstances.

"I think it's one of the best matches we could have hoped for in terms of skill match-up," said Jasmine Ernest, a McNary High School senior.

Junior Madi Hingston said the Celts were ready to upset the Clackamas High School Cavaliers Wednesday, March 4, in a game held

past press time.

"We are a better team than what we're ranked and we have the element of surprise," she said. "They are an all-around team, but if we stick with what we know and pressuring the ball, the offense will come."

The Lady Celts finished third in the Greater Valley Conference with a pelting 61-15 win over McKay High School last week and are now in a one-and-done situation. They enter the tournament ranked 22nd.

"Clackamas has a lot of size and that's why Please see GIRLS, Page A11



Trent VanCleave skirts around a Newberg defender in the first round of the state playoff tournament Tuesday, March 3.

Boys to second round after Newberg scare

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

If the best-laid plans often go awry, the McNary High School varsity basketball team's were also going sideways and pear-shaped Tuesday, March 3.

The boys faced Newberg High School in the opening round of the state tournament and had to overcome more turbulence than most would have expected in the game.

The Celtics eked out a 48-45 win and will travel to North Medford High School Friday, March 6, for the second round of the tournament. The Black Tornados ousted Barlow High School from contention in a 63-49 win.

"Newberg wasn't more than we were expecting, but they were different. We were game planning around their bigs and their lefty hurt us, but No. 32 (BJ Ulloa) was a big surprise and exposed us in some ways," said Harry Cavell, a McNary junior.

McNary fell behind the Tigers early. Newberg led by as many as seven points in the first period. By the middle of the second period, the Celts had cut the lead to 16-11. At the halftime buzzer, however, the Keizer team was still trailing 23-16.

"They were really slowing down the game.

We were trying to compact the paint and push them out, but we couldn't get any momentum and we couldn't get out to the open floor," said Trent VanCleave, a Celt junior.

From the outset of the second half, McNary was out to set the tone.

"Trent did a good job changing the tide of things in the third quarter. Tregg (Peterson) made some big-time plays as big-time players do. For the most part, we also played without fouling," said Ryan Kirch, McNary head coach.

On a VanCleave trey, the score sat at 25-24. At 3:19 to go in the third period, Cavell put in the go-ahead basket, but Newberg answered with a bucket of its own and a shot from the foul line. VanCleave tied up the score and Celt senior Devon Dunagan laid in a two-pointer at the buzzer to take control of the game.

In the final two minutes, McNary made the most of opportunities from the foul line and Kirch's jacket came off as the refs hit the teams with off-setting technical fouls. Dunagan hit one and Newberg drained both of its shots. The score was 45-40.

Newberg got close once more with less than 10 seconds left in the game. One of the Tigers got inside the Celt defense to lay up a shot, but

Please see BOYS, Page A11

Auvinen on new role: 'Keep them guessing'

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

McNary High School football players didn't need to wait long to find out who their new head coach would be Monday, March 2.

"When Coach (Isaac) Parker said that he had another opportunity, I knew we had some big shoes to fill. He did great things to build this program through his relationships with you, the players, and in the community," said Erik Jespersen, McNary principal.

Shortly thereafter McNary learned longtime McNary teacher and coach Jeff Auvinen would be taking the reins of the program. Most recently, Auvinen has been coaching the school's freshman gridders.

Parker resigned from the



Jeff Auvinen, a longtime Celtic teacher and coach will lead the McNary gridders.

program in January to take an assistant coaching and recruiter job with Lewis and Clark College.

"He's been such a part of the program for so long that

he's been through the ups and downs and now he's leading us," said junior Sperle. "It's not a whole new beginning, we're picking up right Please see COACH, Page A11