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SECTION B

MARCH 20, 2015

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KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald
Celt Matt Aguilar hits a line drive to the outfield in McNary's first game of the season Monday, March 16. McNary beat Cleveland High School 14-7.

McNary baseball back in the swing

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

Last year, the McNary High School varsity baseball team drew one of the short straws in the Central Valley Conference.

The Celtics finished fifth out of six teams with a record of 5-10 in league and 10-16 overall. All of which is not to say the season was devoid of bright spots. This time around, the league's Pitcher of the Year, Mickey Walker, is back for his senior season. Walker finished the 2014 season 6-0 with three shutouts, one one-hitter, a pair of two-hitters and a win against every team in the league.

While that bodes well for the Celts, the pitching staff beyond Walker remains something of a question, said Larry Keeker, McNary head coach.

"I like who we have on the pitching staff and it's a deep pool, but there are a lot of questions that won't be answered until they get into the game," she said.

The Celts can boast a number of seniors this season including Jacob Vasas, Ben Cummings, Cole Thomas, Nick LaFountaine, Connor Goff and Tim Hays.

Hays said the addition of three teams to the new-this-year Greater Valley Conference wasn't a huge concern.

"We'll probably have to be

more strategic with pitching, but it's just going out and hitting the ball on offense," Hays said. "We can hit a lot of line drives, throw a lot of strikes and I don't think our defense will be making a huge amount of errors."

Goff said he was eager to see sophomore Josiah Gilbert on the mound this season.

"He pitched real well for us in summer league this season," Goff said.

Walker, who has already signed on to pitch with St. Martin's University next fall, said he just wants to see the team play competitively and with energy while getting some W's on the mound.

During spring break, the Celts are headed to Arizona to compete with other teams from around the nation.

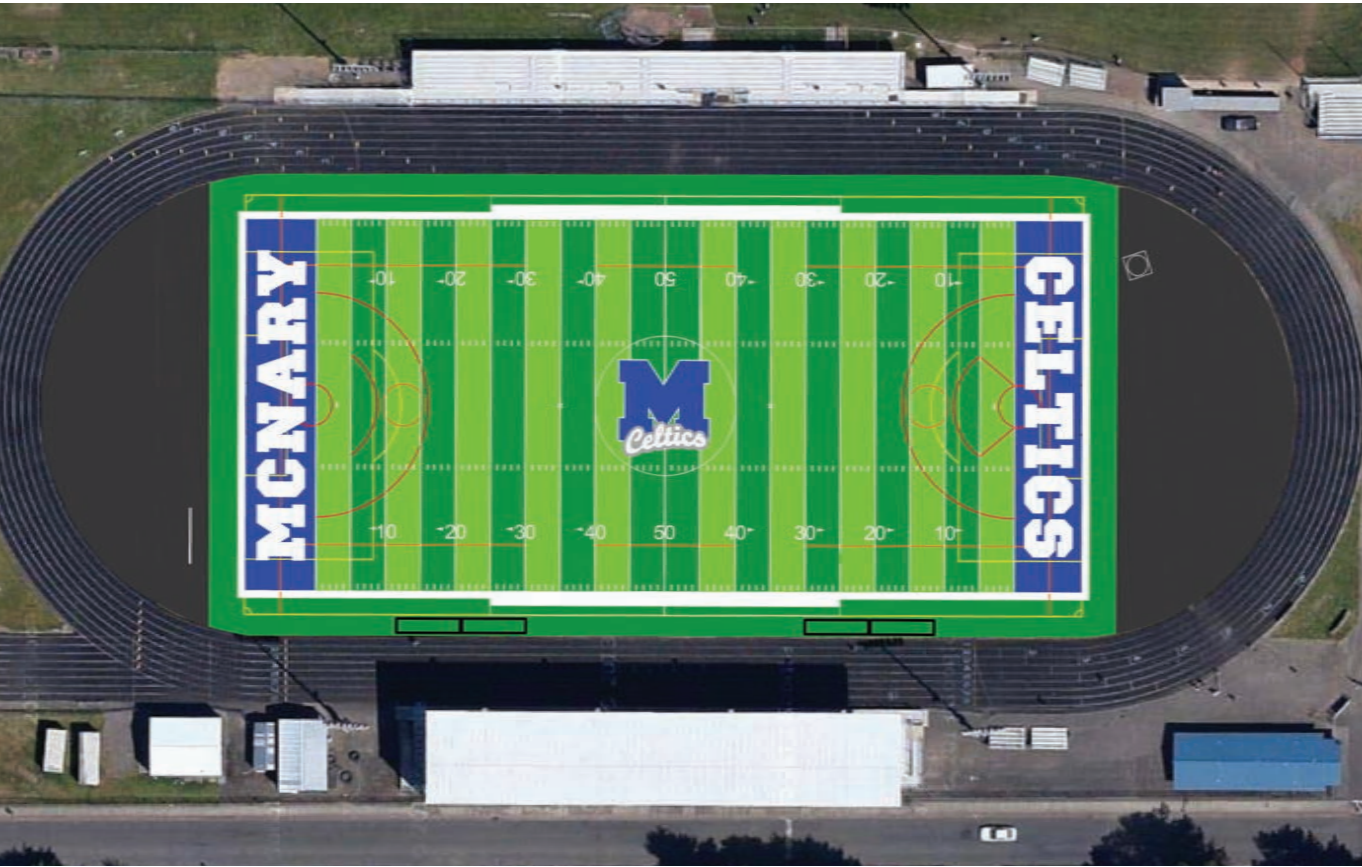
"We play four times and watch three spring training games, but the real payoff is coming back having spent bonding time with the whole team," Keeker said.

In recent years, the team has stuck around the area to play in Oregon-based tournaments, but frequently made the pilgrimage to Arizona before that.

Goff said the key to a better season this year will begin with the first pitch of every game.

"We have to come out and Please see SWING, Page B3

Everything you need to know about McNary's turf project



Submitted

A design mock-up of a planned artificial turf field at McNary High School coming this summer.

McNary High School will be installing a new artificial turf field this summer.

The turf will replace the existing grass field, which means McKay High School will be the only high school in the Salem-Keizer School District with a natural field.

In the two months since *Keizertimes* last talked with organizers, the project has continued apace. Here are some of the most important questions we asked with updates including the latest information.

What exactly is this project?

About 80,000 square feet of dirt and grass will be removed from the existing Flesher Field at McNary. It will be replaced with FieldTurf, an artificial surface.

How much will it cost?

About \$1 million.

Who is paying for it?

The cost of the field will be covered by financial contributions and in-kind donations in approximately a 50/50 split. No Salem-Keizer School District funds are being used.

How will the turf field improve options at the school?

Due to the up-keep involved in natural fields, Flesher Field can currently only be used about 160 times per year. The turf field will be able to withstand 10 times that usage each year over the next 10 years.

Who will benefit?

Both students and the community will benefit from the installation. More sporting activities, including McNary's soccer and lacrosse teams will be able to host games on the field. The McNary marching band will be able to practice there, and additional physical education classes will be permitted to use it. Community events, like Relay for Life, could also schedule time to use the field provided it does not conflict with school events.

When will work begin?

The project will break ground June 1 and existing dirt and

grass will be removed during the next couple of weeks. After that, the groundwork will be laid for the new turf, meaning rock, concrete and drainage piping.

What happens next?

The actual turf will be installed beginning in July.

When will it be used for the first time?

Organizers are hoping to have the field ready for McNary's annual Blue Day celebration, the third Saturday in August.

How has fundraising been done?

Merchandise sales, auction proceeds, and a variety of other fundraisers have contributed to financial needs. Advertising spaces on the field are being sold.

Who has purchased advertising?

While no names have been released, organizers have a local health care business, tire business, local real estate and local financial representative lined up for the home side of the field. No alcohol, tobacco or weapon-related advertising will be permitted.

How much has been raised so far?

About \$375,000 in cash. In-kind donations of rock, fuel, and trucking are still needed. All other in-kind needs are locked in.

How can someone contribute to project?

For financial contributions, visit www.gofundme.com/MC-NARYTURF2015, or contact Ted Anagnos at tedanagnos@comcast.net.

In-turf advertising is still available on the visitors side of the field. There are five spaces left and the cost is \$15,000. Logo spots will remain on the field for the next 10 years.

Who do I talk with about in-kind donations?

Project consultant Bill McNutt at bmfarmins@comcast.net, or McNary Athletic Director Ron Richards at 503-399-3238 or richards_ron@salkeiz.k12.or.us.

Where can I get more information?

Visit mcnaryabc.com.

Lady Celts return with big power at the plate



McNary senior Kimi Ito reaches to get an out at second base in a game last season. Ito is one of three seniors returning this season

File

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

The drawback and the boon to adding three new softball teams to the league this season is that all three are something like powerhouses.

"One of the things that it will have an impact on is power ratings. When we have a struggling program somewhere in the league, we can play them and beat them 23-0 and our ranking will drop. When you do that three times, it takes a toll," said Kevin Wise, head coach of the McNary High School softball program, regarding the smaller league the Lady Celts competed in last season.

The three teams added to the ranks of the new Greater Valley Conference — Forest Grove, McMinnville and West Albany high schools — all made it to the state tournament last year. While the Celtics, Vikings and Grizzlies were all eliminated in the first round, the Bulldogs made it to the quarterfinals in the 5A competition.

"The new schools are generally stronger than some of the other

teams in our league and we'll only play each team twice," Wise said.

However, McNary will also have to contend with South Salem High School last year's 6A state champs.

The Lady Celts lost only two seniors to graduation last season, which means the team will return a number of athletes with a bounty of varsity experience.

This time around, the Celts have three seniors in outfielder Kimi Ito, pitcher Megan Ulrey and catcher Kiana Villareal. In addition to their strong performances in the field, all three were essential to what became an offense-heavy team last season. Ulrey started getting looks from colleges as a junior in the circle, and she's already excited for what this season holds.

"We haven't even started yet and we're like sisters. Just to spend the whole season with these girls is going to be great," she said. "We still have a lot of room to grow though."

Villareal said she's eager to face some of the new teams' players that

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