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KEIZERTIMES/Dee Moore

The McNary 2015 girls golf team pictured from left to right: Kate Lester, sophomore, Cammie Decker, junior, Mike McDowell, coach, Hannah Elliott, freshman and Felicia Elmore, senior.

Lady Celts return to links after taking district title

By DEE MOORE
For the Keizertimes

The four young women on the McNary High School girls golf team have one thing in common; they learned the game from their fathers.

Each one began playing in middle school, spending time on the links with their dads, learning the basics.

Senior Felicia Elmore learned the game from her dad who used to play pro golf. With coach Mike McDowell's help she built on that knowledge and used it to help take the team to district and state last year.

"It was my first time going to district with a team that was big enough to play with," Elmore said. "We were pretty proud."

A team must have four or more members to compete; the McNary team had five girls last year. This is Elmore's second year on the team. She played for Regis Catholic High School in Stayton during her freshman and sophomore years. The Regis team was too small to go to

competition. Her experience at McNary has been completely different, thanks in part to the relationship the school has with the McNary Golf Club, where the girls get practice five days a week.

"We're lucky," McDowell said. "McNary treats us like royalty."

But it takes more than practice, it takes skill and knowledge of the game. Elmore attributes the team's success to good coaching. "It's great," she said. "He's a wonderful coach."

Freshman Hannah Elliott agrees. "He's an amazing coach. He's always so relaxed."

That is part of the appeal for Elliott, how at ease she feels when she is on the links.

"My dad is a big golfer. He started getting me into it really young. I've always really enjoyed how relaxed you are out there," she said.

For her, McDowell's easy going approach to coaching them and teaching the game is dead on.

Kate Lester chose golf over track. The soph-

Please see GOLF, Page A9



KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald

McNary's Evan Alger loads up a pitch in the game with West Albany High School Friday, April 10.

Boys 5th in state with long season yet to play

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

While still early in the season, the McNary High School varsity baseball team can boast being the fifth-ranked team in the state after a 3-0 start in Greater Valley Conference competition.

"It's a lot of confidence and exciting for McNary baseball, but we have to keep playing well," said Celt Trevor Gilbert. "Coach (Larry) Keeker is helping us focus on the pre-game prep from the moment we get on the field, that's helping a lot."

Rankings are based not only on the team's record, but the strength of its schedule. Taking on tough competition in Arizona during spring break has likely boosted the team's rank. It's also where the Celts saw the extraordinary teams drilling down during game prep.

"We've talked about not paying attention to rankings because it doesn't matter, but the reality is the boys are going to look, but nothing beyond the next game matters at this point," Keeker, McNary head coach, said.

The biggest feather in the Celtic cap since the start of league play was traveling to West

Salem High School and taking an 8-3 win Wednesday, April 8.

"We got a little more production, which is good because we have not played well at West Salem the past couple of seasons and they are the two-time defending league champs," Keeker said.

Nick LaFountaine pitched a complete game against the Titans while Matt Aguilar was 2-for-3 and Jacob Vasas was 2-for-2 at the plate. "They thought they were going to come in and beat us, and we surprised them," said junior Evan Alger. "Staying positive through the whole game helped."

McNary's other two games last week were with North Salem and West Albany high schools.

The Celts routed the Vikings 6-1 Tuesday, April 7.

McNary pitcher Mickey Walker had the mound the entire game, allowing only four hits, one earned run and three walks with nine strikeouts. Tim Hays and Vasas had two hits each. The defense played without an error.

Please see FIFTH, Page A9



Youth players get lessons from elders

McNary High School's youth baseball clinic brought out about two dozen players Saturday, April 11. McNary players took on the role of coaches for the boys currently in youth leagues.

Above: Southpaw Ty Borde practices short throws.

Right: Landon Gerig scoops up a grounder.

KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald



Lady Celts start 2-1

Oliver swats grand slam

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

McNary High School's varsity softball team is off to a 2-1 start in the Greater Valley Conference.

Head Coach Kevin Wise said lack of consistency between games with West Salem and West Albany high schools was a bit perplexing.

"Against West Salem the hitting and defense were awesome, we had one error and it

didn't cost us anything. Then, two days later, we go West Albany, and we have three errors that cost us three runs," he said. "We have to get the defense up to the level of our offense."

The girls cruised past North Salem High School 22-5 in its first league contest Tuesday, April 7. Three of the Lady Celts - Madison Oliver, Nicole Duran and Kiana Villarreal - hit home runs in the outing. Kelsi Christenson, Hannah Carr and Megan Ulrey all hit doubles. Oliver's homer was a grand slam and

she ended the day with five RBIs.

Duran, in particular, is becoming a force to be reckoned with at the dish. She has a few home runs already this season.

"I fixed my swing this season and Brad (Ulrey) has been helping me with my steps. Right now, I'm focusing on keeping my hands up to drive the ball," Duran said.

McNary had a 22-0 lead before the Scots made it to the board in the bottom of the third inning. The Celts scored

Please see START, Page A9