

McNary crumbles under Saxon offense

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

After a rousing start, the McNary High School varsity football team had its will broken by the end of the third quarter en route to a 56-12 loss against the South Salem High School Saxons.

The Saxons rode eight unanswered touchdowns to victory beginning in the second half game Friday, Oct. 23, while McNary's team faded visibly with each ensuing touchdown.

While the final score tells one part of the tale, the Keizer team started the game looking ready to upset the Greater Valley Conference-leading South Salem.

"We kept them off balance in the first half by throwing on time and holding our blocks and then, all of a sudden, we stopped," said Jeff Auvinen, McNary head coach. "We stopped blocking, we stopped throwing on time and we stopped catching the ball."

After an unsuccessful first drive, McNary contained the South offense on their first possession and Celt Hayden Sader ended a three-and-out drive with a big tackle.

On their next possession, McNary pounded out a 64-

yard, 11-play drive with key rushes from quarterback Trent Van Cleave, and running backs Brady Sparks and Kyle Aicher. It ended with an eight-yard touchdown pass from Van Cleave to Matt Aguilar and a 6-0 lead.

"We moved the ball well and the defense did our job. We surprised them right out of the gate and that wasn't something they were prepared to handle," said Aguilar.

On South's next possession, the Celtic defense held the Saxons to another three-and-out possession highlighted by a Kolby Barker sack for a five-yard loss.

The Celtics' next possession began at their own 20-yard line, but a 47-yard catch-and-run by Aicher moved the ball all the way to South's 31-yard line on the second play of the drive. Celt Josiah Gilbert notched another first down putting McNary at the 19-yard line and Van Cleave found Brady Sparks out in space three plays later. Sparks walked the ball in from the four-yard line for a touchdown and 12-0 lead. A two-point conversion failed.

Tackles by Collin Young and Gilbert and Jake Wyer and Tanner Gordon helped stifle

the Saxons' next drive and forced a punt. On McNary's next possession, a Van Cleave pass over the middle was intercepted and returned to the six-yard line. South finally made it to the board two plays later, closing the gap to 12-7.

The Celts' return drive ended at the Saxon 44-yard line, but McNary put up another big defensive stand with contributions from Ty Penner, Young, Gage Mance, Colden Garro, Aicher and Sader. Sader's second tackle of the drive ended the push at fourth-and-one for South.

Scoring in the half ended when South quarterback Gabe Matthews loosed a 46-yard bomb for a touchdown with 2:51 left. The teams went to halftime with a score of 14-12.

"That interception and the long ball for a touchdown took a lot of wind out of our kids' sails. We're not sure why though, we outplayed them and dominated them for most of that first half," Auvinen said.

The Saxons unleashed for 21 points in the third quarter and added three more touchdowns before the final siren.

"They got it going and we didn't get anything going and it magnified that they were good and we were struggling.



McNary's Josiah Gilbert turns up field after reeling in a pass during the South Salem game Friday, Oct. 23.

We simply had too many breakdowns on offense and defense," Auvinen said. Aguilar said the final score

had more to do with mental lapses than anything the team was doing skillwise on the field.

"People were getting complacent and we kind of forgot that we were supposed to be in that game," he said.

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Saturday, Oct. 31. Both Hunter and Cloyd were hoping for Lakeridge because the Celtics took down the Pacers 2-0 in a tournament two weeks ago. "That was a really good match for us and they were No.

3 at the time," Cloyd said. "We are really tired and stressed but, if we focus on our goal of getting better than eighth place, we can do it. We're hoping for third or better." In the West Salem match-up, the Celtics took a 25-21 loss in the first set, but rebounded to take two wins of 26-16 and 25-22. The Titans evened the match with a 25-23 win and closed out the victory in the fifth set with a 15-9 score.

"We were playing well, and probably the best we've played in a while. The turnaround happened and their momentum just kept building while

we got a little scared, like deer in headlights," Hunter said.

Cloyd thought the Celtics would pull off the win if they had a chance to do it over again. Prior to the West Salem match, the girls put down the South Salem High School Saxons 3-0 Tuesday, Oct.

20. Despite the set tally, the Saxons never let up. Set scores were: 25-20, 25-23 and 26-24.

Vanessa Hayes had 12 kills in the match while Madi Hingston had seven. Kylie Gilmour had 19 digs, Hingston had 14 and Jaylene Montano had 10. Senior Kaelie Flores came up with nine blocks in the match, Reina Strand had four.

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