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## 2015: A year in Keizer sports

2015 was filled with ups and down for many McNary High School teams, but along the way a few rose to new peaks and a number of individual athletes made waves with top finishes in their sports of choice. Here is a round-up of some of the biggest stories of the year.

### New turf at MHS



After months of work by volunteers and contractors alike, McNary High School unveiled its new turf field during the annual Blue Day celebration in August.

The process of installing the turf involved a three-month timetable that included excavating the old field, upgrading drainage systems, filling in with new foundation material, leveling it off, laying down new turf, stitching it together with a sewing gun, clipping out sections for logos and numbers, gluing the pre-made numerals and letters down, adding sand

and plastic infill, and laying down asphalt on the areas the turf didn't cover. Three large I-beams were also added to reposition the old scoreboard.

The project was paid for through about \$500,000 in in-kind donations and another \$500,000 in cash. The McNary Athletic Booster Club is still raising money to help cover expenses.

The new artificial turf field is expected to be able to handle tenfold the amount of traffic the old natural grass field could.

### Wolverines go undefeated

The Whiteaker Middle School heavyweight football team capped an undefeated romp over, around and through opponents with a win over cross-town rival Claggett Creek Middle School in November.

Under the wing of a new head coach, Tom Larimer, the team rebounded from several tough seasons to win most of its games by large margins.

Eleven of the team's 25 players had never played football before and, coupled with a handful of seasoned athletes, turned in the performances of their young lives.

"Before the game (with



Claggett Creek) I asked my kids if they cared enough about their teammates to give their

very best on the biggest stage—and that's exactly what they did," said Larimer.

### Parker out, Auvinen in

In early January, McNary's head football coach, Isaac Parker, announced he would be leaving to take a new job with Lewis and Clark College.

Within a matter of days and a few brief conversations during McNary's winter break, there was an offer to become the Pioneers' new offensive coach and recruiter on the table and Parker had a day to accept or decline. Parker accepted.

On March 2, longtime McNary teacher and coach Jeff Auvinen was announced as the new leader of the program.

In his first year on the job, Auvinen's Celtics finished fourth in the Greater Valley Conference. The team had its share of ups and downs along the way to an appearance in the playoffs. Unfortunately for McNary, the team drew the state's defending champs and ended their season with a 42-21 loss.



### Venegas 2nd in state

When McNary senior Alvaro Venegas entered the state wrestling tournament he was the first seed in the 195-pound weight class and had only been beaten once the entire season.

Unfortunately, a state title wasn't in the cards. He ended up losing in the final match of the tourney with a 3-2 decision.

Regardless of the outcome, Venegas had a storied history with the program, dropping more than 60 pounds since his freshman year en route to becoming a powerhouse in the sport. He even overcame a dislocated shoulder in the district tournament to win the title there.

What carried him through the ups and down was a deep respect for the sport and all those who put on the singlet.

"Anyone who wrestles ... I don't care if you win a single match, but if you can survive the wrestling room, the workouts, the cutting weight, the getting beat up, I have respect for you," Venegas said.



### Boys ignite on hardwood

When it came to team sports at Keizer's only high school there was no bigger story than the boys basketball team.

The year began with a spectacular 67-60 win over South Salem High School that put the Celtics at the top of the Greater Valley Conference. What followed were a number of close games and a rematch with the Saxons that ended in a loss for the Celtics. That

loss meant sharing the GVC title with South, but it was the first time since 2009 the team reached such heights.

The boys barely beat Newberg High School in the first round of the playoffs and ended up succumbing to North Medford in the second round.

In the midst of their wild ride to the top, Celt Tregg Peterson, a senior, was named GVC Player of the Year while teammate Mathew Ismay, a

sophomore at the time, picked up Defensive Player of the Year honors.

With the new season just getting underway, the Celtics have already knocked off some big names in Oregon and Washington. To date, the only loss was dealt to the team by Central Catholic High School last week. All of it should leave the Keizer community with high hopes for what comes next.

### Childress sisters 4th in doubles

Sibling rivalry can be a good thing, especially when the siblings in question are Sandy and Hannah Childress and the pair join forces on the tennis court.

The Childresses made it all the way to the semifinals of the state doubles tennis tournament and took fourth in the state.

Sandy and Hannah beat McMinnville (6-3, 6-1) and went on to beat the No. 2-seeded team in the state with scores of 6-1 and 6-0, earning themselves a berth in the semifinals. The Lady Celts fell to a Jesuit High School team in the semis, and battled to three sets in the third place match before settling for fourth place.

While Sandy, a senior, is now off to greener pastures at California's Sonoma State University, Hannah is expected to return this year for her sophomore season.

For both girls, getting to the highest ranks in the state had a cherry on top in terms of doing



it together. "We've played together since Hannah started and getting to be partners was really cool," Sandy said.

### Freshman wins 4 district swim titles

When it came to making waves in McNary swimming it was a freshman who led the pack.

Lady Celt Marissa Kuch exploded on the scene in a

big way in 2015 by chasing school records. By the end of the season, Kuch earned two individual district titles in the 100 and 200 freestyle and was part of the relay teams

that won the 200 and 400 races.

She capped her first year by finishing fifth in the state in the 100 freestyle.

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