

Saxons foil boys tournament hopes

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

After winning a hotly contested first round playoff game, the McNary High School boys varsity basketball team ran up against a wall with South Salem High School in the second round of the state tournament.

The Celtics edged Tualatin High School 44-43 Wednesday, March 2, to advance to the second round, but the Saxons shot out the lights from three-point range to win 71-58 Saturday, March 5, and earn the berth at the state tournament.

"I thought we had a good game plan, but South made more shots than us. Losing was difficult, but I'm proud of the way our guys competed and they lost with class," said Ryan Kirch, McNary head coach.

In the South game, it was a back-and-forth battle for the first couple of minutes. The

teams traded the lead six times before the Saxons went on an 11-0 run that included a trio of treys.

The Celts were able to staunch the bleeding as they settled into a rhythm. McNary dominated scoring in the last four minutes of the period, but were only able to close the gap to 23-16 by the buzzer.

McNary made the most of rebounds and a couple of steals in the second quarter to cut South lead to as little as four points. The teams went to the locker room with a score of 33-27, South still in the lead.

After the break, South spent the next eight minutes driving nails into the Celtic coffin. McNary scored only four goals in the third frame while the Saxons put up 19 points. The Celtic's offense showed more life in the fourth frame, but it was too little too late, leading to the 71-58 final.

Kirch said he spent the weekend trying to figure out a defensive plan for a team that hit 12 of 15 three-point goals.

McNary's path to South Salem led them through Tualatin three days prior. In that game, the lead passed back and forth throughout the first period, ending in a 14-14 tie to start the second frame.

The Celts were kept alive through the first 12 minutes of the game by three three-point goals by junior Adam Harvey.

"Adam really stepped up in the second half of the season giving us another offensive threat. Matthew (Ismay) did a great job of battling inside during the Tualatin game," Kirch said.

Tualatin had a three-point



McNary's Trent Van Cleave cuts in front of the rim and makes a leaping shot in the game with Tualatin High School.

lead going into the final two minutes of the half, but a steal and dunk by senior Harry Cavell put the score at 24-23. A bucket by Cade Goff gave McNary a one-point lead and Cavell sunk another shot and hit one from the foul line to put the score at 28-24 McNary going into halftime.

After three quarters, the game was still neck-and-neck with the Celtics up 36-35. Tualatin made a small 6-0 run to start the fourth quarter. Celt Easton Neitzel scored cut the Timberwolves lead to three points. Harvey put in the next shot to make the score 41-40.

With 30 seconds left in the game, Tualatin drained two shots from the foul line and got a third chance after McNary intentionally fouled to stop the clock.

Tualatin's last shot missed and Cavell grabbed the rebound. He took the ball back up the court and hesitated a split second at the arc before driving to the rim and putting up the ball. It bobbed around the edges of the rim before falling true for the 44-43 final with 4.2 seconds remaining.

"Their whole game plan was to take Harry out of the game, but he was able to battle through it and we knew all along our plan was to put the

ball in his hands at the end of the game and hope for a play," Kirch said.

With the season over, Kirch said he's excited about where the program goes from here after back-to-back 20-win seasons and three years running as the state champs in tens of academic achievement.

"Losing the player of the year (Cavell) and a three-year starter at point guard (Trent Van Cleave) is going to be something to deal with, but guys will have to step up in different roles," Kirch said. "Our freshman class is very deep, the junior class is deep, the sophomore class has a handful that are very talented and the current players now expect to win no matter who they play or where they play or when they play. They're instilling that in the younger players."

For the graduating players, Kirch said he has high hopes for their futures on and off the court.

"I'm proud of them as people and I have no doubt these guys will be successful in their lives and as leaders wherever they go," Kirch said.

Crusaders deny Lady Celts with 53-32 win

The McNary High School girls varsity basketball team lost its first game of the state tournament to Jesuit High School 53-32.

The loss meant McNary would face the loser of a game between Oregon City and South Salem high schools at the Chiles Center Thursday, March 10, past press time.

Jesuit had control of the game from the start and ran up a 19-9 lead after the first period. The score was 34-17 at halftime.

The Lady Celts cut into the spread in the third period and went in the fourth frame 42-29.

A win in the Thursday game, would set up McNary to play again Saturday, March 11 at 9 a.m.

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