

## HAYS, continued from Page A10

"Nolan Ryan is one of my dad's favorite players and I remember seeing a video of him beating up Robin Ventura after he rushed the mound. I thought, 'A pitcher can do that? I want to be a pitcher,'" Riley said.

Even before that fateful day, baseball had a firm grasp on the future Celtic. His oldest brother is nine years his senior and another brother graduated from McNary last year.

"I grew up watching them play baseball but, even more than that, it was something all of us could do together – just play catch in the yard. And it was something I could do with my dad by ourselves," Riley said.

Riley was pitching in a tournament at Thurston High School last July when he first started experiencing pain in his elbow.

"It was the third or fourth inning and I'd been trying to get a pitch on the outside half because I'd been missing my spot there all day. I finally just tried to put some speed on it and that's when I felt it," Riley said.

He finished the game but couldn't move his arm easily

for the next few days. Soon, the only time his elbow wasn't aching was when he was throwing.

He went to the doctor in October and X-rays revealed an old stress fracture. That alone wasn't so out of the ordinary, but bone fluid was leaking into Riley's elbow and creating a pseudo-joint and causing the pain. There was also a possibility of a ulnar collateral ligament (UCL) tear, which would have resulted in the infamous Tommy John surgery, but that was eliminated as a cause.

Kyle said the UCL tear would have been the worst possible diagnosis, but it was clear that going under the knife for the stress fracture was the best possible route.

"I knew immediately that the right decision was to have surgery if he ever wanted to play baseball again," Kyle said.

Riley reluctantly opted for the surgery and returned for his check-up on his birthday.

When Riley asked when he would be able to throw again he was expecting several months. At best, he hoped he would be able to pitch for the Celtic varsity team this season. Unfortunately, the physician's assistant dropped the hammer.

"He said I was out for a year if not for good," Riley said.

Back in his family's car, Riley's mother asked if he was

okay.

"I had a panic attack, I had tears rolling down my face. I was absolutely crushed that he had said that," Riley said.

Some dark days followed, but Kyle said he was determined not to let Riley focus on the negatives.

Slowly, things got better. Riley got cleared to drive. He learned that his teammates weren't going to abandon him just because he wasn't on the mound. In March, he was cleared to throw again. He started the same way his journey began.

"It was just me and my dad playing catch in the back yard. He had to remind me that it's a marathon and not a sprint, and that we have a goal we are working toward for my senior year," Riley said.

That goal is becoming the Greater Valley Conference Pitcher of the Year. In the short-term, Riley is hoping to be cleared to pitch again in time for summer baseball.

While the past year has been an arduous one, Riley said he's come through it with a lot of lessons learned.

"God is always good, He has my best interests at heart and He's always there for me. I also have a great support staff in my friends and family and we'll always be close whether I play baseball or not," Riley

said.

Regardless of whether his arm proves up the task, Riley and Kyle get to maintain their bond over the space where almost all baseball dreams start – playing catch.

"Those moments are amazing although they don't come as often as they once did, but I love playing catch with him," said Kyle. "I am a very blessed father because I have a son who wants to spend time with me. Even if it's 10 minutes of playing catch, it makes my day when he asks."

## B-ball summer camps set

The McNary High School boys basketball program is now signing up participants for its summer camps.

The Freshman Training Camp is slated to meet May 31 through June 19. The cost is \$105 and includes a camp T-shirt and entry to the summer youth camp June 20 through 23. The camp consists of seven 90-minute training sessions and five tournaments. Players will be selected – based on skill and

availability – to participate in tournament games.

The summer youth camp, \$55, will be held at Whiteaker Middle School. Grades three through five will meet from 9 a.m. to noon. Grades six through eight will meet from 1 to 4 p.m. The camp focuses on developing fundamental skills to help athletes improve their game.

Registration forms for both camps are available at the McNary, 595 Chemawa Road N.



## On the court

KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald  
Celt Maria Munguia-Ortiz returns a volley in competition Tuesday, May 3. The Lady Celts were swept 8-0 by West Albany in the team's only game last week.



# Shopping break. A perfect moment to talk about alcohol.

An alarming number of pre-teens are drinking alcohol – which makes it urgent to find every opportunity to talk to your kids about the dangers of underage drinking. For tips on how – and when – to begin the conversation, visit:

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