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McNary's Division I summer baseball team began play in the state tournament Thursday, July 21 at Western Oregon University and Crescent Valley High School.

Celtics ready for state tournament

By **TIM HAYS**
Of the Keizertimes

The McNary summer baseball program is off to the state playoffs. On Thursday, July 21 they played against top seed Churchill.

This summer the team has four players from the spring returning, and just like most years, a lot of new faces. Key returners have been two-time first league second baseman Matthew Ismay, 'rubber band man' Riley Hays, and infielders, Josh Benson and Jonah Geist.

"This group happens to be another good group," Head Coach Larry

Keeker said. "They are kids I can count on. They are reliable in terms of coming to the park ready to compete. Summer time is always difficult because everyone is coming and going. To their credit we have been able to compete with every guy we have."

Because multiple players play various sports, and unforeseen injuries, Keeker has played 20 different players this summer. This opened the door for players like incoming sophomore Jacob Jackson to get his name in the lineup.

"There are a lot of good coaches, and the players are fun to be around,"

Jackson said. "It has been a great summer so far, and I am still learning new things on the go. It's a step, and I'm liking the challenge that is presenting me."

The leaders on the field this summer have been two incoming seniors, Ismay and Hays. Ismay, who has found a lot of success in the program, is transitioning from second base to first base.

"I like the transition to first base," Ismay said. "It took a while to get used to, and there are still small things to work on. I think I'm doing well, and it is really good to get experi-

ence now because that is where I will be playing next season."

Hays is a different story, dominating the opposition in his return this summer, not allowing a run.

"It is fantastic being back on the field," Hays said. "I missed it so much in the spring time. Being on the mound now is really special. I want it to be the way it was before, and it has been my area of expertise since I was 7 years old."

With the summer winding down, each player is seeing their own individual growth.

"This summer was all about de-

veloping the program, developing as individuals, and trying to get better as a team," Keeker said. "I am extremely proud of this particular group because we've done all those things. We are excited, and our goal is to play on the last day of the summer."

As much as it is about development, the competitive nature will be what gets them to Sunday.

"We want to win the whole thing," Hays said. "We started the journey at the beginning of May to go out and achieve our goals. A great way to do that is by winning it all in the summer."



KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley

Paris Boyd, of Northwood, swam the breaststroke leg of the winning 11-12-year-old medley relay Thursday, July 14. She also set a new pool record in the butterfly, finishing in 10.78.

Keizer swimmers breaking records

By **DEREK WILEY**
Of the Keizertimes

Keizer swim clubs Holiday and Northwood defeated Salem teams Cambridge and Jan Ree, respectively, Thursday, July 14, while Northview Terrace came up just short against Madrona.

Kian Gonzales and Kameron Splonski paced the Holiday boys who edged Cambridge 108-91. Gonzales won the 13-14-year-old butterfly, backstroke and freestyle while Splonski finished first in the 9-10 individual medley, backstroke and freestyle. The two also joined Tony Gonzales and Jack McCarty to set new club records in the 13-14 free (1:38.22) and medley (1:55.81) relays.

McCarty won the 13-14 IM and Tony Gonzales touched the wall first in the breaststroke.

Vinny Arnold had the fastest times in the 7-8 IM, fly and breaststroke. He also swam with Jared Toland, Cole Steele and Brody Hollis to win the free relay.

Xavier Grantham won the 9-10 breaststroke and Carter Hollis placed first in the 11-12 IM. The two also joined Jackson Collyer and Ryan Bethers to have the fastest time in the 11-12 free relay.

Holiday's girls had an easier time with Cambridge, outscoring their opponent 143-23.

Bella Beard placed first in the 13-14 IM, back and free.

She also swam on the winning 15-18 free and medley relays with Alex Beard, Kylie McCarty and Antonia Gonzales. Alex had the fastest time in the IM and Antonia in the butterfly.

Bella Grantham, Hannah Williams, Kassy Winters and Jayla Toland won the 13-14 free relay. Grantham, Williams, Winters and Ashlynn Hughes took first in the medley relay.

Alex Wilcoxen had the fastest times in the 9-10 IM, fly and free. Kyra Norstrom won the backstroke and Erika Robinett touched the wall first in the breaststroke. The three girls joined Maya Privratsky to win both the free and medley relays.

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Brody keeps dream alive

By **TIM HAYS**
Of the Keizertimes

Imagine being told that you will never be able to do something you love. Just in the blink of an eye the passion in your life is ripped away from you.

This is what happened to Greg Brody.

In his junior season at Belmont College, Brody went diving for a ground ball at third base. Little did he know it would cost him more than just a couple of games.

Brody continued to play through the pain for about two weeks. He finally went to the doctor and was told the unpleasant news. With five stress fractures in his lower back, Brody was told he was never to play baseball or he would risk permanent injury.

"I was told I was never going to play again," Brody said. "It shut me down, and I turned the page on baseball."

After weeks and months of rehab, Brody decided he couldn't just give up.

"I prayed about it a lot, and I realized that I can't give up on this dream," he said. "I began pitching and that led to a different journey. It wasn't what I wanted at first. Pitching was weird to me, and I still haven't figured it all out."

Brody began pitching. It was easier on his back, and allowed him to take days off in between starts. His college career was resurrected. Brody was then drafted. His dream, after much heartache (and back ache), had finally come true.

"It is everybody's dream to get drafted, but once it becomes a reality, it becomes surreal," Brody said. "It's crazy



Submitted

Greg Brody has returned from five stress fractures in his lower back and Tommy John surgery.

how competitive it is on a daily basis, and how great you have to be to get to the big leagues."

A year after getting drafted, Brody faced more problems. Due to his throwing program, it became too much for his arm to handle. He faced Tommy John surgery.

Brody since has returned from injury. On June 23, he pitched for the first time since 2014.

"In high school I knew it was tough, and when I got to college I found out that it was a daily grind," Brody said. "After college, when I got drafted

I realized it was another step. The players that are in the MLB have showed that they can grind it out on a daily basis."

The Volcanoes are slowly getting Brody rotated in the bullpen. With more than 200 days off, Brody is more than excited to be finding his way back on the field.

"It's everybody's dream to play pro ball," he said. "It is a real blessing whenever you see your name come across the screen on draft day. God has something planned for me, and I can't wait to figure it out."