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LIFE OF

WILEY

Celtics show fight in Week 1

One game in, it is way too early to tell if McNary is a contender in the Greater Valley Conference. But one thing is for sure—the Celtics will not go down without a fight.

They proved that again and again Friday, Sept. 2 in a come-from-behind 38-35 win over North Salem that was as exciting as any high school football game you will see.

Playing on the road, McNary could not have gotten off to a better start. After the Celtic defense forced a three-and-out, the offense marched down the field to take a quick 7-0 lead.

But the Vikings defense stopped McNary on 4th-and-goal from the 1-yard line and answered with 21 straight points, taking advantage of two McNary turnovers, to lead by two touchdowns with 15 seconds remaining in the first half.

Instead of taking a knee and regrouping, McNary tried to grab the momentum going into halftime.

At midfield, quarterback Josiah Gilbert, who had just thrown an interception that led to a Vikings touchdown, stepped up in the pocket and rocketed a Hail Mary to Brendan Van Voorhis, who boxed out his defender to come down with the football in the end zone.

Down 35-24, the Celtics chances of winning their season opener looked even more inauspicious with 7:21 remaining in the fourth quarter.

But McNary, again, did not give up.

Gilbert got the Celtics within five points on a 1-yard touchdown run, the defense got a quick stop and then Marc Baiza scored the game-winning touchdown.

"I am just relieved and so happy," Gilbert said after the game. "I can't even explain to you how happy I am to see us come back and battle, keep our noses in it and keep pushing and pushing, keep the tempo going. We just came together as a team. We just zoned in."

Head coach Jeff Auvinen was impressed by the comeback.

"It's competitive. It's a will to win," he said "I saw some things in my team I didn't know were there. It's definitely exciting."

McNary will find out just how good it is the next two weeks with the home opener Friday, Sept. 9 against back-to-back league champion South Salem and then a road game versus Sprague, who certainly looked the part in Week 1, handling the Saxons 48-7.

But no one should underestimate the Celtics, especially not their fight.

At least not after Week 1.

Just ask North Salem.

(Derek Wiley is the Associate Editor of the Keizertimes. Opinions expressed are those of the writer.)



KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley
 Gustavo Villalvazo, No. 3, returned to the McNary boys soccer team after tearing his ACL last October.

'Gus' returns to McNary

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

McNary got one of its captains back.

Less than a year after tearing his ACL, senior Gustavo Villalvazo returned to the field Thursday, Sept. 1 to help the Celtics shut out Lebanon 7-0 for their first win of the season.

"I'm back, never felt better," Villalvazo said. "The team was excellent. They were perfect in every way, high pressure, defensive wise, offensive wise, ball control, possession, everything was good. It felt good to be back."

Villalvazo suffered the

season-ending injury on Oct. 13 in a 3-3 tie against Forest Grove and McNary went on to lose three of its final four games.

While rehabbing the knee through physical therapy five days a week, Villalvazo thought of his teammates and returning for his senior year.

"We have a bunch of good guys and I just wanted to play with them and make this town proud," Villalvazo said.

McNary head coach Miguel Camarena said Villalvazo's ability to control the pace of the game was the key to the Celtics win over Lebanon.

"When I see a kid working that had to come back and play the game, I love it," Camarena said. "This is a kid that can play at the next level and I'm happy to have him back."

After scoring one goal on a penalty kick in its first game, McNary put on an emphasis on finishing, which paid off almost instantly as the Celtics scored two goals in the first five minutes against Lebanon.

The first goal came from Jesus Lopez a little more than four minutes into the game. Bryan Keo then gave the Celtics a 2-0 lead just 30 seconds later.

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Celtics come back (twice)

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

SALEM—With four seconds remaining in the first half, McNary quarterback Josiah Gilbert threw a prayer into the end zone to Brendan Van Voorhis, who was able to haul it in for a 52-yard touchdown.

But the magic didn't end there, not even close, as the Celtics stormed from behind to defeat North Salem 38-35 in their season opener.

Trailing 35-24 with 7:21 left to play, McNary went on a 12-play, 61-yard drive to give itself a chance as Gilbert fought his way into the end zone from the 1-yard line to get the Celtics within 35-30 with 4:10 remaining.

After the McNary defense forced a three-and-out, the Celtics offense went back to work as Marc Baiza had a 3-yard touchdown run and two-point conversion to give McNary its first lead of the second half with a 1:23 remaining in the game.

The Vikings didn't stop fighting and after a defensive pass interference penalty on an underthrown ball, got into Celtics territory.

But McNary's defense held strong forcing three incomplete passes with a quarterback sack in between to end the game.

"That finish is why you (play the game)," McNary head coach Jeff Auvinen said. "It's quite an adrenaline rush. I was just really proud of the kids for never giving up and even though we were struggling on defense and struggling a little bit on our penalties and turnovers, we could have let that get us down but you saw the end of the first half, we continued to battle.



KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley
 McNary junior Lucas Garvey intercepts a North Salem pass in the second quarter of a football game played Friday Sept. 2. On offense, Garvey also rushed for 131 yards and a touchdown in a 38-35 victory.

Fourth quarter obviously was a great quarter for us."

The 11-point deficit in the fourth quarter wasn't the only double digit one the Celtics had to overcome. McNary trailed 21-7 late in the first half after North Salem turned two Celtic turnovers into touchdowns.

The Hail Mary from Gilbert to Van Voorhis just before halftime got McNary to within one score.

"I just saw my man (Van Voorhis) down field and I gave him a shot," Gilbert said. "He came down with the football and we were all ecstatic. That was a great play and definitely

took the momentum into the second half."

Van Voorhis wasn't sure if Gilbert was going to get the pass off but kept running towards the end zone.

"He was scrambling around a little bit," Van Voorhis said. "I was kind of thinking he was going to get sacked but then

he threw it up. I adjusted to it in the air, the defender didn't make as good an adjustment and I caught the ball and after I caught the ball, I tried to find out where the end zone was, if I needed to push, I was in the end zone, so I just fell over and scored."

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McNary thinking redemption in home opener

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

Sam Farr, a senior on the McNary offensive line, hasn't forgotten about last season's game against South Salem, a 56-12 loss to the Saxons.

"It's definitely a redemption game because of the loss we had last year," Farr said. "We're looking to gel together as a team and come away with a win. I know every single person on this varsity football team wants to win and that's, I think, what is going to carry us."

The Celtics actually led 12-0 a year ago before South Salem answered with 56 straight points.

"We played them good for

a half last year," McNary head coach Jeff Auvinen said.

"The second half was a nightmare. They played well. We fell apart. It was a combination of factors that weren't very good."

McNary hosts the Saxons Friday, Sept. 9 in its home opener at 7 p.m.

South Salem coming off back-to-back Greater Valley Conference championships but return just one starter on defense and only four linemen and running back Francisco Ramirez-Perez on offense.

The Saxons are breaking in a new quarterback in Harrison Broadus.

Even playing at home, South Salem had growing

pains in Week 1, falling to Sprague 48-7.

Ramirez-Perez rushed for 82 yards and the team's only touchdown. Broadus completed just four of 14 passes for 22 yards and an interception.

"I think they are trying to see who they are," Auvinen said. "It looked like they were kind of getting used to variety speed, kind of like we are. They are not as talented as they were last year. They were pretty good up front. They had a great quarterback. They had a great pair of receivers. I think it's going to be a good game. I think they do a lot of things that we do. I think it's going to be a good battle."

Auvinen added that the

Saxons skill players are similar to North Salem's, who McNary defeated to open the season, but that he liked the Vikings running backs a little more.

"Up front, they are very comparable to North," he said. McNary offensive lineman Caleb Kiefiuk-Yates definitely isn't overlooking South Salem after its blowout loss to Sprague.

"I think they're still a good football team because they've had a good program built up," he said.

"I don't think we've had our best games against them. If we can just play as a team, I think we have enough players if we put it all together

and have a good game against them we should be able to beat them."

Auvinen wants to see the Celtics clean up some things in their second game of the season, especially on defense after allowing three touchdowns of 40-plus yards to North Salem.

"We need to get more disciplined on defense," Auvinen said. "We had a lot of guys doing their own thing. We need to get to our assignments and work as a unit, trust each other, everybody individually doing what they should do. I thought we came out and played hard. I thought we competed but have a lot of mistakes to clean up."