

McNary no match for Olympians



Quarterback Josiah Gilbert fights for extra yardage in a 50-21 loss at Sprague on Friday, Sept. 16. KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley

By **DEREK WILEY**
Of the Keizertimes

SALEM—McNary wanted to get Sprague, a primarily running team, out of its comfort zone.

That turned out to be easier said than done as the Olympians rushed for 350 yards in a 50-21 win over the Celtics on Friday, Sept. 16.

“At the point of attack, they block really well,” McNary head coach and defensive coordinator Jeff Auvinen said. “Their running backs run real hard. They teach really well. They’re well coached. They’re tough kids and they have a fair amount of talent, too. It’s a deadly combination.”

The Celtic defense stopped Sprague early as Junior Walling sniffed out a reverse on fourth down to end the Olympians first drive and then Marc Baiza sacked Sprague quarterback Spencer Plant on third down to force a punt on the Olympians second possession.

“I don’t think we backed down,” Auvinen said. “We started off strong.”

But Sprague went right down the field on its third drive. After runs of 12, 28 and 17 yards, a defensive pass interference penalty on McNary gave the Olympians the ball at their opponent’s 5-yard line. Dane McKinney took it in from there and a two-point conversion gave

Sprague an 8-0 lead with 1:09 remaining in the first quarter.

The Celtic offense responded and drove down to the Sprague 27-yard line but quarterback Josiah Gilbert was stopped a yard short on fourth down.

McNary’s defense gave the offense opportunities in the second quarter as Lucas Garvey and then Brendan Van Voorhis intercepted Plant but the Celtics failed to convert the turnovers into any points.

With only 1:35 remaining in the first half, Sprague went back to what it does best as McKinney carried the ball four times for 73 yards, including a 35-yard touchdown to give the Olympians a 15-0 lead entering halftime.

After McNary punted to start the second half, Sprague’s offense continued humming as Plant connected with Nick Brotton in the end zone and a successful two-point try gave the home team a 23-0 lead.

On third-and-long, the Olympian defense then made a play as Gilbert, trying to avoid a sack, threw an interception that was returned 40-plus yards to expand Sprague’s lead to 30-0.

“We’re not designed to make up those third and long situations,” Auvinen said. “We need to have a positive play on first down and a positive play on second down to set us up so we can do anything on

third down.”

On the following kickoff, Jonathan Williams finally gave the McNary crowd something to cheer about with a 90-yard return to get the Celtics on the scoreboard.

But after a failed inside kick attempt, the Olympian offense kept rolling as Noah Mellen added a 6-yard touchdown run with 2:38 remaining in the third quarter.

Xavier Martinez scored McNary’s first offensive touchdown on a 6-yard run with 10:06 left to play.

After Sprague tight end Jakoby Doke out jumped Van Voorhis in the end zone to catch a 26-yard touchdown pass from Plant, Van Voorhis responded with a 73-yard touchdown reception to get the Celtics within 43-21.

A.J. Johnk was a perfect 3-for-3 on extra points.

The Olympians added a 37-yard touchdown through the air to complete the scoring with 3:40 remaining.

Gilbert led McNary both in passing with 138 yards, a touchdown and three interceptions as well as rushing with 62 yards on 16 carries. Josh Benson caught six catches for 41 yards.

“We just need to keep getting better,” Auvinen said. “We need to work on our tackling and getting off blocks. We need to work on finishing plays on offense.”

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GRAGG, continued from Page 8

Scott has known two other McNary football coaches for years. Head coach Jeff Auvinen’s wife is Scott’s first cousin and offensive coordinator Brad Emmert was Scott’s defensive coordinator at Silverton.

“We felt like McNary would be a great place for our son to go to school and to interact with people that I know,” Scott said. “It’s been an adjustment but the community of Keizer and the school specifically have done

a great job of embracing and welcoming us here.”

Brian played football through the eighth grade but tore his labrum, bicep and dislocated his shoulder playing basketball the summer before he was to start high school. After surgery, he was able to finish out the basketball season and decided to try six-man football last fall. However, another dislocated shoulder quickly ended his season.

At McNary, Brian wasn’t sure if he’d give football another try.

“We were just moving here and I was concerned about the condition of my shoulder,” he said.

When Scott was asked if Brian would play, he would reply that was his son’s decision but you’re welcome to go pursue him.

“That’s why every student, teacher, their dog was asking me,” Brian said.

The encouragement of Auvinen, Emmert and MHS Principal Erik Jespersen was enough to convince Brian to come out.

“I think he’s in it for the right reasons,” Scott said. “I think he was approached for the right reasons and made a good decision in doing it. I just hope he’s able to stay healthy and enjoy it and stay active.”

“The bottom line is I’m proud of him. It has not been easy for him being the biggest kid. There’s a lot of ways that make it challenging. There’s a certain expectation when your dad played in the NFL for 11 years that he follows in those footsteps and that may or may not be what he’s interested in doing. I’ve always pushed him to stay active and participate in things that he’s interested in.”

Brian’s interests also include music. He’s playing trombone in the McNary band.

“Somehow we were able to find a uniform to fit me,” Brian said. “I’ve heard there’s a few parades I’ll have the opportunity to be in and I’m very excited about that.”

Brian hasn’t decided if he wants to become one of the most popular players on the McNary basketball team or throw the shot put for the Celtics this spring. But of course people are asking.

Right now, he’s just happy to be playing football.

“It’s just good for physical activity to keep me going and it keeps me surrounded with a lot of good guys,” Brian said. “I’m taking it one step at a time.”

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