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## Celtics sights set on Portland

By **DEREK WILEY**  
*Of the Keizertimes*

Optimism fills the McNary High School gym as the boys basketball team prepares for its upcoming season, which tips off Friday, Dec. 2 at Grants Pass.

"It's going to be a special group," head coach Ryan Kirch said. "It could be as good as we've had. They're just all good kids. They'll all be enrolled in college next year. They're all honor roll kids. They all come from great families. They're all great friends. You just don't get groups like this anymore. We're talented in a lot of ways and have as much potential as any group we've had."

Senior Cade Goff shared his coach's confidence after the first day of practice.

"It's easy to jump to conclusions but I've practiced varsity for four years now and that was probably the best first day of defense we've had," Goff said. "I'm excited to see how we do defensively and how that leads to transition points and allows us to run up and down the floor."

One thing that makes the Celtics special is their toughness.

"You've got to be physically and mentally tough and I think this group is as physically and mentally tough as any group I've coached," Kirch said.

McNary's toughness starts with junior Mathew Ismay, a two-time Greater Valley Conference Defensive Player of the Year who took a school record 23 chargers last season, including four in one game.

"He's very smart so he's always where he needs to be," Kirch said. "He anticipates as opposed to reacts. You just

watch the way he plays. He's a guy that's not very flashy from a fan's standpoint, you may not see all the little things he does but it's just a difference for us when he comes off the floor."

McNary graduated about 25 points per game in Trent Van Cleave and GVC Player of the Year Harry Cavell but Kirch believes the Celtics have the pieces to make up for those losses.

"This summer, we had seven different guys score 20 or more points in a game," Kirch said. "Scoring won't be an issue for us. In fact, I think in a lot of ways we'll be tougher to defend in that I think our ball movement is better. I think we take care of the ball a little bit better. There's not really a guy that you can shut down. Last year, we knew Harry was the guy and teams could game plan around that. This year it's going to be more of a challenge. We've got a lot of diversity with our players and guys can do a lot of different things."

Senior Alex Martin agreed. "I definitely expect us to be able to run with eight or nine guys and be really deep," he said. "We've got a lot of guys who can really play. It should be a lot of fun this year."

McNary returns four players with varsity starting experience—Goff, Ismay, Martin and Adam Harvey. Senior Easton Neitzel and junior Chandler Cavell are also back. Kevin Martin returns from a shoulder injury that cost him last season while juniors Lucas Garvey and Andrew Jones are coming up from the junior varsity.

"Alex and Easton and Lucas are probably our best outside shooters, though a lot of guys can shoot," Kirch said. "Cade



McNary senior Cade Goff, guarded by Andrew Jones, is one of four players with starting experience returning for the Celtics, who open the season Friday, Dec. 2 at Grants Pass.

and Chandler can really attack the rim. Matthew and Adam can really score from all over the place. We can score from outside. We can score from inside. We can attack the rim. We can score in transition. There's not really a part of our game offensively that's lacking."

While the Celtics should have no problem scoring in transition, Kirch said executing in the half court will be the key to making a deep playoff run.

Advancing to the elite eight in Portland is on the minds of McNary's six seniors

who have been eliminated in the second round of the state tournament the last two years.

"We want to get over that hump," Goff said. "We don't want to be in the final 16. We want to be in the final eight."

"We definitely want to get up to Portland and compete for a state championship," Alex Martin said. "The two teams we've lost to, South Salem and North Medford, the year before, were both really good teams. I think this year we'll be a lot better and more prepared for that kind of situation."

### SCHEDULE

Dec. 2 at Grants Pass, 7 p.m.	Jan. 13 vs McMinnville, 7:15 p.m.
Dec. 6 vs Oregon City, 7 p.m.	Jan. 17 vs South Salem, 6:45 p.m.
Dec. 9 at West Albany, 7:15 p.m.	Jan. 24 vs North Salem, 6:45 p.m.
Dec. 13 at North Salem, 6:45 p.m.	Jan. 27 at Sprague, 5:45 p.m.
Dec. 16 vs Sprague, 7:15 p.m.	Jan. 31 at Forest Grove, 6:45 p.m.
Dec. 21-23 Capital City Classic	Feb. 3 vs West Albany, 5:45 p.m.
Dec. 28-30 Bend Tournament	Feb. 7 vs McKay, 6:45 p.m.
Jan. 3 vs Forest Grove, 6:45 p.m.	Feb. 14 at South Salem, 6:45 p.m.
Jan. 6 at West Salem, 7:15 p.m.	Feb. 17 vs West Salem, 5:45 p.m.
Jan. 10 at McKay, 7 p.m.	Feb. 21 at McMinnville, 5:45 p.m.

## Kuch leads MHS swim team

By **DEREK WILEY**  
*Of the Keizertimes*

What does a swimmer do when she's never lost an individual dual race in two high school seasons and already broken multiple district records before her junior year? What is she competing against? What's next?

Ask Marissa Kuch.

"I kind of just race against McNary's records," said Kuch who owns the school records in the 100, 200 and 500 free-style.

"I really race to get McNary's name more out there because we're not really well known for swimming."

Kuch, who also has the Greater Valley Conference record in the 100 and 200 free

and was named Female Swimmer of the Year last season, won't likely be tested until the state meet.

She placed fifth in the 100 free and eighth in the 200 free there last season, marks she would like to improve on.

"This year I have really high goals of placing top five or top three in the 200 free and the same with the 100 free," said Kuch, who would also like to lead the Lady Celts' 200 free and 200 medley relays to state.

Kuch was the only McNary swimmer to qualify for the state tournament last season.

"A lot of the girls I'm super close with," Kuch said. "They're some of my best friends. I have a pretty close relationship with all of the

girls on the team. It's just super fun getting to be on relays with them and trying to push them. They try to work so hard because they want to go to state and I want more McNary swimmers to get to state. It kind of sucks just being alone at state."

Kuch swims year round at Courthouse in Salem but looks forward to the high school season.

"I love the team atmosphere of it," she said. "I love that you are constantly getting support. You'll look from your block at the other end of the pool and you have a whole group, at every lane cheering for everyone. You don't get that as much with club swimming."

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Brayden Ebbs, right, and Wyatt Kesler wrestle during practice at McNary High School. The Celtics open the season Friday, Dec. 2 at home.

## Ebbs eyes state championship

By **DEREK WILEY**  
*Of the Keizertimes*

After placing sixth as a freshman and fourth as a sophomore, McNary wrestler Brayden Ebbs is ready to take the next step and win a state championship.

He also wants to go undefeated.

"Expect more and don't give too much respect to anybody," Ebbs answered when asked how he'd accomplish those goals. "Go out there and expect to win the match. There's always tough guys from a bunch of different schools but I'm willing to beat everyone of those guys to make my way up to the top."

Ebbs was the 138-pound Greater Valley Conference champion last year but expects

to jump up to 145 pounds this season. He spent his spring and summer wrestling, going to camp at Oklahoma State University and participating in tournaments in Iowa and Fargo, N.D.

"I learned a lot about myself," Ebbs said. "I'm ready to get back to what I do best. I'm going to go out there and give it all I've got."

Senior Wyatt Kesler and junior Isaiah Putnam, who both placed third in the GVC and wrestled at state last season, return for the Celtics as well.

Kesler would like to join Ebbs on the podium as state champions.

"I know pretty much everyone in our district that I'll be wrestling but right now I'm just worried about myself

and getting better and out-training everyone, wrestler tougher and don't give up the matches I shouldn't be giving up," Kesler said.

Senior Carlos Vincent, who didn't wrestle last year, also returns for the Celtics.

"He's back, he's excited, he's ready to go," McNary head coach Jason Ebbs said. "He's put in some extra time and we're hoping for bigger and better things out of him."

Senior Sean Burrows, who took fourth in the GVC, just missing the state tournament last season, is also back along with junior Noah Grunberg and sophomores Nick Hernandez and Enrique Vincent, who all finished in the top six in the district a year ago.

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McNary junior Marissa Kuch owns the Greater Valley Conference records in the 100 and 200 free and was also named Female Swimmer of the Year last season.

KEIZERTIMES/File