

# Blythe leads young bowlers

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

Nick Blythe, the Keizer kid who bowled a perfect game at age 13, is now a senior at McNary High School and knocking down more pins than he ever has.

Competing in an Oregon Junior Classic tournament on Nov. 20 in Longview, Wash., Blythe recorded another 300 game, which including practice marked his fourth in less than two weeks.

In a high school team tournament at AMF Firebird Lanes in Salem on Sunday, Dec. 4, Blythe was the high points all-star. Out of 40 frames, he bowled 30 strikes and nine spares.

"It was definitely my best high school performance by far," Blythe said. "I've changed my ball driller so I have a better fit now. It makes a big difference."

Blythe, who plans to enroll at Chemeketa Community College next year as he decides whether to bowl in college or professionally, has worked on being more consistent and staying focused.

"It's 90 percent mental and

10 percent physical," he said. "My biggest flaw in the mental aspect, you get inside your own head, that's what brings you down mostly."

Blythe and junior Tim Kiser return to the McNary boys team that bowled a near-perfect 298 game to win the district tournament last season.

"We have really good freshmen who have come up this year, a couple who could be in the starting lineup," McNary boys coach Dan Kaplan said. "We have a great future."

The future of the McNary program is Mike Valdez, an eighth grader who Blythe predicts will be even better than him some day. Valdez won't be able to compete in the district tournament this season but he did place third at Firebird Lanes on Dec. 4 behind only Blythe and Donny Grubaugh, of West Salem. Valdez had 21 strikes and 15 spares in 40 frames.

McNary bowlers Konnor Sjullie, Derrick Lucas and Layton Thurlow finished in the top 25, placing 11th, 20th and 22nd respectively.

Out of 12 teams, the Celts knocked over the second



KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley  
McNary senior Nick Blythe bowled another perfect 300 game on Nov. 20 in Longview, Wash.

most pins, 3,475, through 20 games but lost to Silverton in a head-to-head stepladder competition to place third in the tournament.

The McNary girls were also second after 20 games and then fell to McKay to take third. With only three girls, Mimi Gonzalez, Aneeka Stephen and Cassidy Steckman,

the Lady Celts have combined with Sprague this season. The boys had a similar arrangement with West Salem last year.

McNary hosts a tournament on Sunday, Jan. 8 at Town & Country Lanes in Keizer. The district tournament is scheduled for Sunday, Jan. 22 at Firebird in Salem.

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"Sydney coming out, I think it was frustrating for her, but honestly for the team it might not be the worst thing in the world," Handley said. "It made a lot of other girls step up. I knew they (Hawley and Lao) were both going to play a lot for us but the fact that we could put both of them in at the same time with our back up post (Kelsey Koenig), between those three to make a run like they did to end the half, ultimately it's going to be better for our team, just help us with a little bit of depth. I know it was frustrating for Sydney. It was her first game of her senior year but hopefully she's going to have 28 more opportunities and we'll work on keeping her in there."

Koenig finished with four points and three rebounds off the bench.

Committing fouls was a problem for the Lady Celts in the first half. Barlow was in the double bonus midway through the second quarter but went just 3-for-10 from the free throw line in the first half. The Lady Bruins were also held to just two field goals, one in each quarter. "Our game plan, we've

been talking about it for the past week, that we need to play with our feet and we go out there and I think the emotions had a lot to do with it, play with our hands," Handley said. "I thought in the first half we played way too emotional, a lot of nerves, start of the year so you never know what you're going to get. It's also the first time in six months that we've played somebody other than ourselves. I thought it took us a good quarter and a half to settle but once we did, we slowed things down and I thought execution got a lot better."

The Lady Celts got revenge on Tualatin Saturday, Dec. 3.

The Lady Timberwolves had won the two previous matchups but McNary won the latest 55-51.

Doutt had 18 points, eight rebounds, three assists and two steals. Hunter was also in double figures with 14 points, nine rebounds, three assists and three blocks.

The Lady Celts improved to 3-0 Tuesday, Dec. 6 with a 44-43 win at Sheldon.

Hunter had another double-double of 16 points and 15 rebounds to go along with three assists, four steals and three blocks.

Doutt added 12 points and nine rebounds.

McNary opens GVC play Friday, Dec. 9 at West Albany.



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McNary senior Sydney Hunter had a double-double of 14 points and 11 rebounds against Barlow.

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