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McNary athletes Kolby Barker, left, and Kayla Evans celebrated their opportunities to play in college with signing ceremonies at the high school on Wednesday, Feb. 1.

Signed, sealed, delivered

Barker picks Air Force Academy

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

McNary senior Kolby Barker considered canceling his visit to the Air Force Academy and committing to the University of Wyoming.

He's glad he didn't as Barker signed a national letter of intent to play football with the military academy on Wednesday, Feb. 1 in the McNary library.

The visit was different than Barker expected.

"It wasn't my plan," Barker said. "I figured I'd go to a regular university and play college football. But when I got on to that campus, all of my assumptions on what a military academy would be like, it was just so much nicer than I expected. You expect drill sergeants and stuff but the coaches were nicer than anywhere else. They were fantastic guys."

But what really set Air Force apart is what the academy would do for Barker after football.

"What really sealed it for me is the future," Barker said. "My future is set now. You get paid throughout going to



File

McNary senior Kolby Barker was an unanimous all-league defensive lineman in 2016.

the academy and then after that you get a guaranteed job. There I know that my life after football is going to be set."

Barker plans to get a business management degree and then either go to pilot school or become an acquisitions officer.

"Back in elementary

school and middle school, we'd do these tests where you take a survey and it says what career path you might like," Barker said. "I always got pilot and it just worked out. I always thought it would be kind of fun but I never planned on it."

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Evans going to Webster University

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

McNary senior Kayla Evans was at work when she got a life-changing email from an university she'd never heard of located 10 miles west of St. Louis, Mo.

"I read it and I literally started crying," said Evans of the letter from Webster University offering her the opportunity to join the girls soccer program. "I was so excited."

Before the email, Evans had spoken to a junior college in Washington and another school in Florida but had nearly given up on her dream of playing at the next level.

Evans visited Webster's campus on December 1. She had never been that far away from home and hadn't been on an airplane since she was too young to remember.

"I was so scared because I'm scared of heights," Evans said.

But the campus visit, where she was able to have lunch with current players, eased her fears of going to a school more than 2,000 miles from home.

"They were all so nice," Evans said. "They told me



File

Kayla Evans scored five goals and added two assists during her senior season at McNary.

how life is there and how the program works. It was really nice to be able to talk to them because I don't know what it's like to live that far away from home. One girl grew up in California so it was nice to hear how they deal with it."

And on Wednesday, Feb. 1, Evans made it official, signing a letter of intent with Webster.

"It doesn't even feel real right now," said Evans, who has played soccer since she was six years old.

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Lady Celts even the score with West Albany



KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley

Paige Downer had nine points in McNary's come-from-behind win over West Albany on Friday, Feb. 3.

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

McNary head coach Derick Handley told his girls basketball team to keep playing hard even when shots weren't falling or things weren't going their way.

They listened as the Lady Celts came from behind to defeat West Albany 35-29 on Friday, Feb. 3.

"Tonight was a great example that they (West Albany) had a lead and we still played hard and if you do that long enough good things will start to happen for you," Handley said.

The Lady Celts trailed 27-24 when the game turned with 2:10 remaining as McNary senior Sydney Hunter, playing with four fouls, stole the basketball, made a layup on the other end and was fouled. "I was just trying to make

contact because I knew we were down three," Hunter said.

After Hunter knocked down the free throw to complete the 3-point play and tie the game 27-27, the McNary defense got a stop and Kailey Douff passed the ball to Abigail Hawley, whose jump shot gave the Lady Celts a 29-27 lead with 1:34 remaining.

After West Albany senior Saylor Siegner made two free throws to even the score, Hunter missed the front end of a 1-and-1 but got a defensive rebound and went back to the line.

Hunter made the first free throw, missed the second but

got the offensive rebound and the ball to Paige Downer, who was fouled.

Downer, who finished with nine points, then made four free throws in the final 41 seconds to seal the victory.

"I just told myself to relax," Downer said. "Free throws win games. We've been focusing on that in practice."

Downer led the McNary offense in the first half, scoring five points at the start of the second quarter to tie the game at 9-9.

"We really all just played confident," Downer said. "We've been working together all week to push each other and hold each other

accountable. We've been going so hard in practice. It all really paid off tonight."

Kailey Douff, who added seven points and eight rebounds in the win, then scored on a putback to give the Lady Celts their first lead, 11-9, with 4:58 remaining in the first half.

But West Albany responded and led 16-14 at halftime and 25-22 entering the fourth quarter.

The Lady Bulldogs made just one field goal and scored only four points in the final period.

Hunter, who didn't score her first basket until a layup with 1:03 remaining in the first half but added 11 in the second to finish with 13 points, 12 rebounds and seven steals, said the key to the win was having a short memory.

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McNary boys blow out Bulldogs

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