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# Rally Celtics

## Lady Celts come back at South Salem

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

SALEM—Coming off the bench, McNary senior Hannah Carr's approach at the plate was simple—just make contact instead of trying to win the game with one big swing.

Down by six runs with two outs in the top of the sixth inning, that's exactly what the Lady Celts needed.

With two strikes, Carr singled through the middle of the infield to begin a rally that ended with a McNary come-from-behind 9-8 victory on Thursday, April 6 at South Salem.

"The entire whole game I just tried to stay in it," Carr said. "I try really hard to be a really huge impact on the team and try to stay in the game and pump everyone up and keep the energy going."

The Lady Celts fell behind 3-1 and did little on offense until the fourth inning when South Salem pitcher Maygen McGrath walked the bases loaded but got Nadia Witt to ground out to end the threat.

The Saxons appeared they would make McNary pay, putting two runners on base with no outs in the bottom of the fourth but pitcher Faith Daner, who threw all seven innings to earn the win, caught a line drive and turned a triple play to end the inning.

However, South Salem did cash in an inning later. With one out in the fifth, Erin Elmore hit a grand slam to give



McNary junior Nadia Witt, right, slides head first to score the Lady Celts' first run of the game at South Salem on Thursday, April 6.

the Saxons a 7-1 lead.

McGrath then retired the first two batters in the sixth before Carr led the McNary come back.

After Sabella Alfaro singled and Witt walked to load the bases, Alexa Cepeda singled on a line drive to left field to score Carr from third. Haley Ebner then drove in Alfaro and Witt with a base hit to center field. Cepeda and Ebner scored on an error to get the Lady Celts within 7-6.

"Somebody gets a hit and it just kind of sparks other people and then when I think you string those together like we did, I just think the girls started getting confidence," McNary head coach Kevin Wise said. "She (McGrath) had us off. She was doing a good job. We had opportunities but we weren't able to cash in. We didn't hit well before that (sixth inning) and all of the sudden it just came together."

McNary had just three hits

against McGrath entering the sixth.

"I think we figured out where she was throwing us and what she was throwing," Wise said.

"There was one point where she was throwing an illegal pitch. She had a curve that she was really coming outside on and he (umpire) made her come back under a little more and I think that changed the path of the ball."

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KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley  
Tyler Covalt, left, celebrates with Brendan Frizelle after scoring a run in the bottom of the sixth inning against West Albany.

## McNary evens baseball series in extra innings

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

Battling through the rain, McNary took advantage of six West Albany errors to come from behind to defeat the Bulldogs 6-5 in eight innings on Tuesday, April 11.

The Celtics trailed 5-0 going into the bottom of the sixth when Josiah Gilbert singled and then scored on a ground ball by Daniel Johnson to get on the scoreboard. Tyler Covalt also singled in the inning and scored on an error to get McNary within 5-2.

"I was extremely proud of our efforts in the last couple innings and to be perfectly honest I was not happy with our competitiveness and our intensity basically through five innings," McNary head coach Larry Keeker said. "(Curtis) Zamora, he was really good at

mixing up his pitches so he really had our hitters off balance. We just weren't aggressive on enough pitches that were in the zone, maybe a little tentative against him. We just didn't have that competitiveness, that battle at the plate that I like to see, until we got him off the mound. We just couldn't get anything going against one of their really good pitchers."

With Zamora out of the game, Joshua Benson and Matthew Ismay hit back-to-back singles to lead off the seventh. After Benson scored on an error, pinch hitter Tyler Ellerton, facing a 0-2 count, singled to drive in Ismay and get the Celtics within a run.

With the bases loaded and two outs, Gilbert scored from third on a balk to tie the game at 5-5.

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# Coach gives McNary experienced voice

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

In his mid 60s, Bob Plantz was still giving lessons but thought he was probably done coaching baseball on a team when he got a call from a former player.

It was Larry Keeker at McNary. He needed a pitching coach and wanted to know if Plantz was interested. The two met at Applebee's.

"It was a little bit of a surprise," Plantz said. "I had to check with my wife and she said, 'Get out of the house.' It was real easy (to say yes). In all seriousness, Larry does a fantastic job. I would not be doing this with just anybody. He created an atmosphere for all the coaches."

Plantz began coaching in 1967, leading the freshman team at Wilson High School in Tacoma, Wash., while student teaching at the University of Puget Sound. Plantz's first teaching job was at Silverton, where he again coached freshmen. He then became the head junior varsity coach at Mt. Angel.

"I guess I knew from the time I was a sophomore in high school that I wanted to teach and coach," Plantz said. "I grew up in California and I had teachers and coaches that really made an impression on me."

After giving law school a try, Plantz got back into

coaching at Whiteaker in 1974. One of his players was Keeker. They were also neighbors and Keeker served as Plantz's classroom aid.

Plantz left Whiteaker in 1978 to become the first head baseball coach at McKay High School.

In 1983, Plantz's team defeated Corvallis in the last game of the regular season to win the school's first league championship in any sport.

"That was pretty special," Plantz said. "It was really a great bunch of kids."

On that McKay team was Deputy Chief of Keizer police Jeff Kuhns and Dave Brundage, who went on to become an All-American at Oregon State and made it to AAA with the Seattle Mariners. He now manages the San Francisco Giants AAA team—Sacramento River Cats.

"Dave had a quality you don't coach," Plantz said. "He seemed to have no fear of failure."

After five years at McKay, Plantz went to Newberg, where he coached baseball and softball before retiring in 1998. He had a Grand Slam batting cage franchise in West Salem and then started doing lessons at the Courthouse.

Retirement didn't stick and Plantz assisted Jerry Walker when he started the baseball program at Blanchet Catholic School. But when Walker left,

so did Plantz.

But that retirement didn't last either as Plantz joined Keeker at McNary five years ago.

"I guess I just love it," Plantz said. "What I'm doing now, just being an assistant, it's just pure coaching. I don't have to do budgets. I don't have to do fundraisers and all the field maintenance and all the head coach responsibilities. That's Larry's worry. I just go coach."

Plantz biggest point of emphasis is teaching good mechanics to avoid injuries.

"We start by making sure they use their legs and their back muscles, try to take the strain off their arms," Plantz said. "A lot of kids come in, they throw hard but they put terrible strain on their arm. We try to teach them safe mechanics."

Plantz said he's never been a yeller or screamer and stopped throwing batting practice years ago when "the buzzards were circling around my arm."

He and Keeker call games together.

"When we get somebody out, it's my idea. When a guy cracks one, it's Larry's fault," Plantz joked. "We have a lot of fun with it."

Two pitching performances stand out in Plantz's time at McNary.

In 2014, the Celtics opened league play with a 1-0 win



KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley  
McNary head baseball coach Larry Keeker and pitching coach Bob Plantz talk in between innings during a recent varsity game.

over South Salem as McNary junior Mickey Walker out-pitched Sam Tweedt, the reigning Pitcher of the Year, who went on to sign with Oregon State.

"That was amazing and so much fun," Plantz said. "It was a remarkable accomplishment."

The second came in 2015. Down in Arizona, with West Salem watching after playing the game before, McNary senior Nick LaFountaine threw 45 pitches and couldn't get out of the first inning. But LaFountaine came back to defeat West Salem 8-3 later in

the season.

"They were licking their chops and he beat them," Plantz said. "It was just really satisfying for this kid to start out that way and battle and compete."

Plantz had surgery for prostate cancer just before Christmas. His prognosis is optimistic but he doesn't know how much longer he'll keep coaching.

"I guess that's probably made me appreciate it even a little more," he said. "It's just open ended."

Keeker is happy to have Plantz on his staff as long as he

wants to be there.

"He's helped baseball players literally at all different levels so that experience alone is certainly valuable to our program," Keeker said.

"He just has a good perspective on the game. He loves the game itself. It's been a part of his life for a long, long time. Probably the most important thing is he's just passionate about working with baseball players and specifically the kids here at McNary. He's emotional just about every season at the end. He's invested so much of himself that he gets emotional about it."