

Auvinen: 'Everything is wide open'

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

The McNary football team was able to work faster this spring.

"Last year we put a lot of new stuff in offensively and defensively," head coach Jeff Auvinen said. "This year, most of the older kids have a hold on things so we can go a little bit faster without leaving some of the younger kids."

But that doesn't mean the Celtics have a lot returning from last year's team that went 6-4 overall and finished third in the Greater Valley Conference. McNary must fill holes at quarterback, receiver, the line and all over the defense.

"Everything is wide open," Auvinen said. "Returning starters, we just have a handful. This is a good time to look at those kids that are competing for spots."

Competing against other sports as well as just finishing school, the Celtics had 86 incoming sophomores, juniors and seniors take part in at least one day of spring practice May 30-June 8.

"We've got a lot going on with the end of school," Auvinen said. "I told them if they're not doing anything else, we want you out here as much as you possibly can. It's a pretty busy time of year."

While players spent the first week in shorts, linebackers and linemen, who had been to two of the four practices, added helmets and then pads the second week.

While Auvinen has seen growth from many of the returning players, two, who are both switching positions stood out.

Junior Walling is moving from safety to linebacker and Josh Schmeltzer got snaps at center instead of guard.

"It's good to see some kids that have grown and become more physical," Auvinen said. "It will be interesting to see how we end up but kids are working hard. The kids that have been here, I've seen some real progress from them."

Players took the last week of school off to focus on final exams. Morning workouts begin Monday, June 19. The



LEFT: Quarterback Casey Toavs looks for an open receiver during spring football practice at McNary High School. RIGHT: Tim Kiser goes through lineman drills.



Celtics will meet three days a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, throughout the summer, lifting weights and working on speed, quickness

and agility. McNary is also competing in 7 on 7 competitions in Woodburn and Portland as well as hosting a tournament

on July 11. Team camp is scheduled to begin on Aug. 7 with fall practice officially starting Aug. 14. Blue Day is August 19 and a

jamboree the following week-end. McNary opens the regular season on Friday, Sept. 1 at home against North Salem.

RETIRED,

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"We had a group get together, Bob Zielinski and

Ted Anagnos, they were really behind the project and sat down with Rhonda Brattain and many others to plan how this would happen," Richards said.

"They believed they could do it. I then contacted the (Salem-Keizer) district to find out all the procedures that we would have to do and the timelines that we needed in order for that to happen. Then a number of us started figuring out what kind of turf and going around to different places."

"Booster club president Danielle Bethell was a real integral part in the ending of that. She came in midstream as we were doing it and she was able to put the finishing touches on the financing that we needed in order to complete the project."

The booster club continued that momentum into raising

\$20,000 to paint and resurface the gym floor as well as building new dugouts on the softball field.

"The booster club, they have been such an ally," Richards said. "They created an allegiance between the community and McNary High School. Many of the things that I've done in my tenure here would never have happened without the booster club and all of the volunteers. Keizer is amazing."

Richards has been rewarded mostly by the effort the kids give in all sports on the field and in the classroom.

The Celtics had 13 sports teams compete at the state level during the 2016-17 school year.

Academically, the softball team, which advanced to the state quarterfinals, tied for second in 6A with a 3.6 GPA. Of all the 6A boys basketball teams, McNary had the top GPA (3.7).

Three of its five starters were valedictorians. The cheerleading team had a 3.85, which was the best of any classification.

Richards decided to retire in the fall of 2016.

"It's time for some new

people," Richards said. "It's time for a little different vision. My wife retired a year ago and she's enjoying her retirement and I'm a little envious."

Richards is looking forward to spending more time with his grandson in Colorado, fishing and playing more golf.

He's also taken a position at Ohio University, where he'll teach one online class per semester in the master's program for interscholastic athletic administrators.

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