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McNary senior Chandler Cavell scored 20 points, including the game-winning free throw as the Celtics defeated South Salem in double overtime on Tuesday, Jan. 16. KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley

Changes coming to high school football?



McNary running back Junior Walling carries the ball against McKay, which has asked to play in 5A for the next two years. File

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

While nothing is final, OSAA high school football schedules may look different than other sports in 2018-19.

When the Executive Board adopted its final classification in October, which put McNary and four other Salem-Keizer schools in a league with Bend, it also created a football ad hoc committee, made up of athletic directors, coaches and principals from 1A to 6A.

The ad hoc committee's task was reviving a sport that is declining in participation.

One recommendation from the committee allows football teams with a Conley winning percentage of 22 percent or lower to move down a classification for football only. In 6A, McKay is one of the schools that has agreed to move down and play in 5A for two years.

The committee has also proposed alignments for varsity football only.

In option A, McNary would play in a 12-team special district with South Salem, West Salem, Sprague as well as three Bend schools and five teams from Southern Oregon. While option B would only include the Salem-Keizer and Bend schools, minus McKay.

At a meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 16, the state's 6A athletic directors recommended option B with each team playing four league games and then having the flexibility to schedule five non-league games.

McNary athletic director Scott Gragg said that didn't mean the Celtics would be guaranteed to play the three Salem schools as part of their league schedule but could hypothetically schedule one of them for a non-league game.

"I could very easily see each of the Salem-Keizer schools having two Salem competitions and two Bend competitions, one home and one away," Gragg said. "We wouldn't want to leave Bend out on an island. By default we'd play them at least one anyway. They're going to need to play at least their two and need to look for two more."

The flexibility would allow teams to put together a more competitive schedule after last year 42 percent of games were decided by more than four



Scott Gragg

touchdowns.

The 6A athletic directors are also recommending a 24-team playoff, instead of 32, with the top eight teams getting a first round bye. The top eight seeds all won in the first round last season, outscoring their opponents 450-82.

"That would be different from any other sport at any other level," Gragg said. "The committees like to be consistent across the board. You're seeing that in different sport. But what we're finding out is football is a different animal."

"The desire is to build football programs to create balance in a way that draws more interest and promotes the sport in a time when the sport is showing trends that it is not growing."

The 6A football recommendations go to the OSAA State Championship Committee and then the Executive Board, which makes the final call.

"This isn't final by any stretch of the imagination," Gragg said. "The ad hoc committee has also discussed eliminating conferences altogether, since playoffs are decided by power rankings anyway, but Gragg doesn't see that happening this time, even though he likes the idea."

"Really, the conferences, other than identity, are meaningless, because the playoffs are based off RPI rankings," Gragg said. "It makes sense for all sports but it would also be a scheduling nightmare from an athletic director's perspective. But if it's in the best interest of kids, it might be where we land with all sports. If the ad hoc committee ever landed there, which I don't think is on the books for this one, we would start with football and then move on and see how it goes and add sports

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Celts win double overtime thriller

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

SALEM—It took double overtime and contributions from two players that a week ago were deep on McNary's bench to end a six-game losing streak to South Salem, as the Celtics defeated the Saxons 65-64 on Tuesday, Jan. 16.

McNary led 64-59 with 1:30 remaining in the second overtime. But South Salem guard Jaden Nielsen-Skinner made two free throws and then a 3-pointer to tie the game at 64-64 with 24 seconds to go.

Chandler Cavell then went to the free throw line with 8.3 seconds remaining. He made the first but missed the second.

Nielsen-Skinner's shot at the buzzer from half court was then just short.

"I'd never beat South Salem on the varsity squad so it felt amazing," said Cavell, who led McNary with 20 points. "I needed that one. Andrew Jones, with his stellar defense on the last shot. He got a hand on that. I think if he didn't get a hand on that, that was going in."

McNary junior Alfredo Villarreal and sophomore Junior Walling came off the bench for the Celtics and played most of the fourth quarter and all of both overtimes.

"We thought Alfredo was one of our quicker guards and with their lineup we had to match that," McNary head

coach Ryan Kirch said. "Junior had done a really nice job rebounding. I thought his physical strength inside and he's a little bit quicker than Boston (Smith)."

Walling gave McNary a 53-51 lead with 1:15 remaining in regulation and then pulled down a defensive rebound be-

fore South Salem made two free throws to send the game to overtime. Villarreal scored four points during the second overtime period.

"I think we've got a toughness and competitiveness that we haven't had in a while and that's credit to our young guys that came in fearless," Cavell

said. "We had two guys that were playing JV two games ago come in and finish the game for us and play really well. That's a tribute to their toughness and competitiveness."

Villarreal, who entered the game for the first time late in

Lady Celts win at the buzzer



McNary junior Abbie Hawley scored 13 points against South Salem, including the game-winner at the buzzer. File

McNary junior Abbie Hawley made a shot at the buzzer as the Lady Celts defeated Greater Valley Conference rival South Salem 39-38 on Tuesday, Jan. 16.

Hawley led McNary with 13 points and four rebounds. Senior Kailey Doust added 11 points and seven rebounds in the victory.

The Lady Celts hadn't defeated South Salem since assistant coach Deven Hunter's senior year (2012).

McNary rebounded from a 58-39 loss at McMinnville on Friday, Jan. 12.

Doust had 21 points and nine rebounds.

Hawley and Paige Downer each added seven points.

Sabella Alfaro scored the only four other points in the road loss.

The Lady Celts, 11-4 overall and 5-2 in league play, are back in action on Tuesday, Jan. 23 at home against North Salem at 6:45 p.m.