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# KeizerSports

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McNary wrestlers Brayden Ebbs (160), left, Enrique Vincent (126) and Blake Norton (220) won district championships on Saturday, Feb. 3 at McKay High School.



KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley  
McNary senior Brayden Ebbs defeated West Albany senior Mitchell Sorte in the 160-pound district finals.

## ATHLETE of the Week



### BRAYDEN EBBS McNary High School wrestler

McNary senior Brayden Ebbs pinned his way to the 160-pound district championship to earn a team-high 30 points for the Celtics on Feb. 2-3 at McKay High School. Ebbs defeated Mitchell Sorte of West Albany in overtime to bring home the title. Ebbs pinned his first three opponents in one minute and 38 seconds, two minutes and 40 seconds and 54 seconds. He'll wrestle in the state tournament with four of his teammates on Feb. 16-17 in Portland.

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# Ebbs, Vincent, Norton capture district titles

By DEREK WILEY  
Of the Keizertimes

SALEM—Down by a point heading into the third period of the district finals, McNary senior Brayden Ebbs heard the voice of his father—head wrestling coach Jason Ebbs.

“Since I was a little kid, my dad always told me no matter how much time is left, there’s always time to score in a match,” Brayden said. “A lot of kids will be down by points and give up. My mindset, with my dad being my coach, is I always keep going no matter what because anything can happen at any moment in time.”

The match went to overtime when West Albany senior Mitchell Sorte was called for locking hands, giving Ebbs a point and tying it 4-4.

Brayden again thought of his father. “I was exhausted,” Brayden said. “I was tired but dad always told me never let anybody see your emotions on your face when you’re wrestling, always go in there and make it look like you’re hungry and ready for more.”

With time running out, Ebbs put Sorte on his back to win the 160-pound title.

“It feels amazing to go out my senior year with a bang and now it’s just getting

ready for state,” Ebbs said. “I’ve got that state mindset automatically.”

Wrestling in the district tournament at McKay High School on Feb. 2-3, Ebbs cruised to the finals with three pins, the longest coming in two minutes and 40 seconds. He pinned McMinnville senior Noah Spencer in 54 seconds in the semi-finals.

Twenty-six seconds, 35 seconds and one minute and seven seconds.

That’s how long it took McNary junior Enrique Vincent to pin his first three opponents at 126 pounds.

# Beard twins too legit to quit

By DEREK WILEY  
Of the Keizertimes

Alex and Bella Beard tried to quit swimming once. It didn’t last.

As 7-year-olds, wanting to be like their older sister, the Beard twins went to Holiday Swim Club.

At their first practice, Bella swam one length of the pool, got out and quit. Alex made it about halfway before she figured out what her sister had done and followed.

Their swimming career was over.

Until the next summer when their dad gave them an ultimatum to give it another shot or enroll in swimming lessons.

“We knew how to swim,” Bella said. “We just didn’t want to do it.”

The twins enjoyed their second stint at Holiday so much that they decided to join a year-round club.

“We were doing gymnastics and we were really quite bad at it,” Alex said.

“We realized we sucked and then joined swim team,” Bella added.

On the Bearcats, which later became Mid-Valley Aquatics, the Beards swam their first state qualifying times as 9-year-olds.

Bella got her’s first in the 100 breaststroke and then the 50 breaststroke. Not to be outdone, Alex then qualified for state in three events—the 50 breast, 100 breast and 50 free.

“We’re super competitive with each other but with other people I’m always known as the gentle giant because I’m so tall,” Alex said. “I’m really just racing myself.”

“I think I’m much more competitive than Alex is,” Bella said.

That dynamic has worked for the Beard twins, who as 10-year-olds swam in their first sectional meet in Federal Way, Wash. Competing against swimmers from Hawaii and Alaska and east to Montana, they finished seventh in the 200-free relay, despite being seeded 27th.

“I got to swim with my best friends on this relay and we were so excited,” Alex said.

Bella has qualified for sectionals four years in a row. At state, Alex placed fourth in the 500 free when she was 11.

Now as freshmen at McNary, the twins will swim in their first Greater Valley Conference Championships on Feb. 9-10.

With injuries to seniors Marissa Kuch and Sarah Eckert, Alex and Bella have led the Lady Celts this season.

On the gold squad at Mid-Valley Aquatics, with three hour practices a day, they are only able to attend one McNary practice a week.

“That’s been a hard thing getting to know the team,” Alex said. “It’s been really cool how some people look up to me. It’s been cool as a freshman to be able to do that and be on the varsity. My main priority is to always be supportive of the other swimmers. I don’t care how fast they are, as long as they are swimming, they are just as fast as me, in my book. I always want to support people because swimming is such an awesome sport. I think anyone should do it, no matter how fast they are.”



KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley  
Twins Alex and Bella Beard have led the McNary girls swim team this season as freshmen and will compete in the Greater Valley Conference Championships on Feb. 9-10 at the McMinnville Aquatic Center. BELOW: Alex swims the butterfly while Bella does the freestyle for the Lady Celts.



That sportsmanship and humility comes from their father. “Our dad always taught us to tell the swimmers next to you ‘good luck’ before the race

and give them a high five afterwards,” Bella said. “If we beat the other person or even if we lose, we always make sure to congratulate the other people.”

Individually, Bella will swim the 200 free and 100 breaststroke at the GVC Championships while Alex will compete in the 200 IM and 500 free.

Their best times would have been good enough to get them to A Finals (top eight) in all four events at last year’s Please see BEARD, Page B2