

# McNary opens baseball season Monday

By **DEREK WILEY**  
Of the Keizertimes

McNary's roster is full of players who have been waiting their turn.

With the graduation of 10 seniors, they'll finally get their shot.

"We had proven guys that were coming back to last year's team and this year no one would be considered a proven high quality varsity player," McNary head baseball coach Larry Keeker said. "I think we have them. No one has actually proven it yet."

McNary's two most accomplished returning hitters are juniors Tyler Covalt and Jacob Jackson. Covalt, who was primarily used as a designated hitter last season, will catch this season. He has a .353 career batting average with 19 runs and 14 RBIs.

"Tyler is highly skilled," Keeker said. "He works a lot. He spends a lot of time on his craft and he's been waiting his turn. He'll hit in the middle of the order. He has a little pop in his bat."

Jackson, who played in the outfield for the Celtics last season, could move into the infield in 2018. He scored 12 runs and drove in nine while posting a .293 average.

Senior Collin Wentworth also returns at shortstop but the rest of McNary's starting lineup is up for grabs.

"Collin is our shortstop and Tyler is our catcher," Keeker said. "After that it's how the pieces come together. That's the fun part about coaching is trying to figure out how those pieces are going to fit."



File  
LEFT: McNary senior Kyle McCallister, who posted a 3.75 ERA and recorded 16 strikeouts over 28 innings, returns on the mound for the Celtics in 2018. RIGHT: Tyler Covalt, a junior, will start at catcher after batting .353 with 19 runs and 14 RBIs last season.

The Celtics have another big senior class. Kyle McCallister and Carl Rumbaugh will lead McNary on the mound. McCallister had a 3.75 ERA and 16 strikeouts over 28 innings while Rumbaugh posted a 3.15 ERA and recorded 11 strikeouts over 20 innings.

When they are not pitching, McCallister could play at third base and Rumbaugh at first.

John Catron, Danny Ocada, Brady Ellis and Ryan Thompson could also eat up innings.

David Allen, a junior, is the favorite to be the Celtics No. 3 starter and could also play in the outfield.

Alex Berger, Lance Becktel, Robert Benson, Devon Bedoya, a transfer from Salem Academy, and David Alfaro, who is trying to return from injury after breaking his foot playing football, will also compete for playing time.

"The good news is we have some competition in the program but the bad news is we have competition in the program, so someone is not going to get in the lineup," Keeker said. "That makes for a healthy team when you get a chance to compete amongst yourselves."

McNary is scheduled to open the regular season on Monday, March 12 at home against Roseburg at 4:30 p.m. The Celtics will spend spring break, March 28-31, playing in a tournament at Volcanoes Stadium and then open league



play April 3 at North Salem.

"We're really optimistic," Keeker said. "The kids they've been doing a good job in the offseason in terms of working out on their own and showing up to conditioning sessions. We had 20 guys on a regular basis doing the conditioning sessions. There's a commitment level there that's actually a lot better than we've had in the last couple of years. That's really been nice to see."

Keeker expects South Salem to be the favorite to win the Greater Valley Conference, at least on paper. The Saxons return catcher Aaron Zavala, who has committed to the University of Oregon, as well as a strong rotation on the mound.

"They have some really high caliber type players in their lineup that our coming back," Keeker said. "Just personnel wise you have to look at that team and think that they are probably the favorite."



File  
McNary senior Carl Rumbaugh will be one of the Celtics top pitchers this season.

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