

Celtics searching for first league win

By **DEREK WILEY**
Of the Keizertimes

McNary left the bases loaded in the bottom of the seventh inning Monday.

West Albany hit a walk-off two-run home run Friday.

That was the difference as the Bulldogs took two games from the Celtics, winning 7-5 on April 6 and 4-2 on April 9.

"We're having a difficult time coming up with a big hit in the big moments when we have guys in scoring position," McNary head coach Larry Keeker said. "A lot of times we're in those positions with two outs and we just haven't been able to produce a two-out RBI. And then the flip side of it is the opponents seem to be getting some base hits with two outs. That ends up being the difference."

Down 3-0 entering the bottom of the fifth Monday, McNary drew three consecutive walks to load the bases with one out. Lance Becktel grounded out to second, scoring David Allen from third, to get the Celtics on the board. But Jacob Jackson then struck out swinging with runners at second and third, ending the inning.

McNary drew two more

walks in the sixth and Ryan Thompson scored on an errant throw while stealing third to get the Celtics within 3-2.

After West Albany added a run in the top of the seventh, McNary loaded the bases with two outs in the bottom of the inning but Thompson grounded out on a bang-bang play at first, ending the game.

"When it happens game after game after game, then you tend to tighten up a little bit and the confidence level is probably not where it needs to be," Keeker said. "We need something to go right to re-establish our confidence in those situations."

The Celtics finished with just three hits. Jackson and Becktel were both 1-for-4. Ty Covalt was 1-for-3 with a walk.

Carl Rumbaugh got the start on the mound, allowing three hits, four walks and one earned run over three and two-thirds of an inning. Allen pitched the rest of the game, giving up one run on three hits and a walk.

Freshman Ian Martin started at second base in place of senior Collin Wentworth, who was suspended for running over West Albany catcher on Friday.

"He stepped in there and the moment hasn't been too big for him," Keeker said. "He lets his instincts go to work.



KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley

McNary pitching coach Cole Ferguson meets with pitcher Carl Rumbaugh, catcher Ty Covalt and the rest of the infield during the third inning of the Celtics 4-2 loss to West Albany on Monday, April 9.

He's practiced well from day one. He got our attention from day one so we knew the skill set was in place."

On Friday, Covalt hit a

double to center field, scoring Thompson and Jackson, to give McNary a 3-2 lead in the top of the fifth. Devon Bedoya then added a RBI single to score Martin.

But West Albany answered with two runs in the bottom of the inning to take a 5-4 lead. The Celtics tied the game at 5-5 with a run in the top of the seventh. However, West Albany sophomore Por-

ter Phillips hit a walk-off two-run home run to left field.

Jackson was 1-for-2 with a walk and two runs. Covalt went 2-for-4 with three RBIs.

"If we can just keep plugging away and keeping our heads down and keep pushing forward, all these close games that we're having and the emotions that go with it should help us," Keeker said. "But at some point we're go-

ing to have to find a way to get a victory, feel good about it. The mental status of everybody we have is going to be a little bit better because of a victory or a big hit in a big moment, something that breaks the ice and we get going. But right now, we haven't been able to come up with the big play on defense or the big play on offense to make the difference."

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