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Hayward Bound



Downer qualifies for state in pole vault

By **DEREK WILEY**
Of the Keizertimes

SALEM—Senior Paige Downer punched McNary's first ticket to the state track meet on Tuesday, finishing second in the pole vault in day one of the Greater Valley Conference Track and Field Championships at West Salem High School.

"I've wanted to go there for so long," said Downer of the state meet held each May at Hayward Field in Eugene. "Hearing of all the people that went there, it just made me so excited and I finally get to do that and it's pretty cool."

Downer entered the district meet tied with the best vault in the GVC this season at 10 feet, 6 inches with Mila Lumae of Forest Grove, and just ahead of the reigning district champion—West Salem senior Alyssa Premo at 10-3.

But Downer didn't get off to a dazzling start, missing her first attempt at 9 feet.

"I was a little stressed," Downer said. "I compare myself to the other competitors, which is bad. After the first attempt at nine, I missed that and both the people (Lumae and Premo) I was competing with cleared it the first time so I was a little stressed but I needed to calm myself down mentally and know that it was Ok, vault and do what I've been doing and take it step by step."

After clearing 9 feet on her second attempt, the next steps included 9-6 and then 10-0.

With only three girls left in the event after McNary freshman Ashlin Samples went out at 9-6 to finish fourth, Downer cleared 10-3 on her first attempt while both Premo and Lumae missed.

That's when the thought that Downer could go to state really set in.

"I was freaking out because I knew attempt wise they were beating me at the other heights," Downer said. "Once I got 10-3 the first time and they both missed it, I can't even explain what I was feeling. I was just so excited."



ABOVE: McNary senior Paige Downer finished second at the Greater Valley Conference Championships in the pole vault on Tuesday night at West Salem to qualify for the state meet at Hayward Field May 18-19. BELOW: Tim Kiser placed fourth in discus.

While Premo cleared 10-3 on her second attempt, Lumae missed on her second and then her third, qualifying Downer for state.

An ecstatic Downer gave McNary vault coach Dustin Walker a high five and ran to hug teammate Brandi Grunberg.

"They were talking about how proud they are of me," Downer said.

"They are my best supporters. I'm so thankful for them."

With the district title on the line, Downer cleared 10-6 on her third attempt. Premo finished at 10-9 to repeat as the champion.

"I wanted to prove that I can do that again (10-6) and that I can compete at state and I can compete with those girls and hopefully get on the podium," said Downer, who has never been to Hayward Field, not even as a spectator.

Please see TRACK, Page B6



McNary golfers to tee up at state

By **DEREK WILEY**
Of the Keizertimes

McNary senior Hannah Elliott saved the best two rounds of golf of her young life for when she needed them the most.

Elliott backed up a personal best 88 in the first round of the GVC Championships at Trysting Tree with an 87 in the second to finish third overall and qualify for her first state tournament.

"It was the one thing that I wanted to do because I haven't gotten there yet," said Elliott, who was tied with Anna Schweitzer of West Albany after the first day before beating her by three strokes on the second. "I just played smarter than she did in a couple of shots. We were pretty evenly matched. It just came down to a couple of shots that I just ended up doing better than her."

Confident from the first day, Elliott played her best nine ever, shooting 41 on the front.

"I knew I could do it. It was just keeping it together on the back nine," Elliott said. "After the first day I had a lot of confidence going into the second day and I think confidence really helps. You do good on one hole and it kind of pushes you to keep going."

The rounds were her first two in the 80s. Elliott shot 91 at the district tournament as a sophomore but spent much of the past two seasons struggling to break 100.

"It was a complete 180 from last year," Elliott said. "I've been wanting to be here (80s) for a while and I just couldn't get here all season until districts. It was the perfect time to get there."

Elliott will return to Trysting Tree Golf Club on May 14-15 for the state tournament.

"I love Trysting Tree," Elliott said. "Because it's a wide open course, even if you hit it a little bit right, it's easier to hit it

back into the fairway and then get it up. I just love playing the course. It's really nice there and knowing I can shoot low there will be exciting to see how I can do at state."

Joining Elliott at the state tournament will be McNary teammate Juralee Stover, who shot a 94 on Monday, May 7 at regionals. In a three-way tie for fifth after 18 holes at Tokatee Golf Club, Stover made a 10 foot put for par on the first playoff hole to earn the final state spot.

"I was surprised that I actually made that put because during that whole day I wasn't putting very good at all," Stover said. "It will be a good experience to go to (state), especially when I wasn't expecting it."

McNary junior Matt Langenwalter and sophomore Joel Dutcher will play in their second 6A boys golf state tournament.

Please see GOLF, Page B6



Submitted
 McNary golfers Joel Dutcher and Matt Langenwalter finished second and third at the district tournament to qualify for state.

Celtics finalize football schedule

After multiple appeals, one from Salem-Keizer and two by Cascade, McNary finalized its 2018 football schedule, its first in the new Mountain Valley Conference, and it won't be a cakewalk.

All nine opponents reached the playoffs last year.

Four made it to at least the quarterfinals and two played for state championships.

On paper, the Celtics first game, at home against North Medford on August 31, should be the easiest.

The Black Tornadoes finished 3-7 last season with one of those losses coming to McNary, 40-20. But North Medford beat the Celtics the year before and played in as tough a league as any with South Medford and Sheldon.

McNary will spend most of September on the road.

In a rematch of the second round of the state playoffs, the Celtics will play at West Linn on Sept. 7 and then travel to face another Three Rivers Conference squad in Tualatin on Sept. 14.

West Linn lost in the state quarterfinals last year but played in the previous two state championship games, winning the title in 2016. Tualatin has made the playoffs for three consecutive years but hasn't advanced past the second round.

The road stretch continues into week four when McNary travels to Tumwater, Wash. on Sept. 21.

The T-Birds went 11-3 last season, losing in the 2A state finals for the fourth time in the past six years.

The Celtics then welcome defending state runner up South Medford to Keizer on Sept. 28. The Panthers lost the 2017 6A state championship to Clackamas by one point, 31-30.

McNary will play just four league games, beginning with Sprague at home on Oct. 4. After road games at Bend (Oct. 12) and West Salem (Oct. 19), the Celtics will close the regular season at home against South Salem on Oct. 26.

Bend went 5-5 last season and finished fourth in 5A's Special District 1.

Most coaches want to play teams that will get them ready for the playoffs, counting on the fact that their squad won't play anyone tougher than what they saw in the regular season.

With this schedule, the Celtics should definitely get that.