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## Lady Celts knocked out in first round

By **DEREK WILEY**  
*Of the Keizertimes*

PORTLAND—With the bases loaded and one out in the top of the first inning, McNary had a chance to jump out in front of Franklin and play with a lead in the first round of the 6A softball state playoffs.

Instead, the Lady Celts didn't score a run and committed eight errors in the next six innings, resulting in a 9-5 loss on Monday, May 21 at Erv Lind Stadium.

"I don't know if it would have changed it or not but it would have been nice to get two or three runs out of that first inning and be ahead," McNary head coach Kevin Wise said. "You look at how young we were, we have a ton of freshmen and sophomores. I think those runs kind of settle them down and maybe we don't make as many errors."

McNary's threat in the first ended when Emma Kinler popped up in the shallow outfield and Alexa Cepeda, trying to tag up from third, was thrown out at home.

"We've talked about that all year, be aggressive on the bases and eight times out of 10 it works for us and we make teams make errors," Wise said. "And these guys have a green light on that. They know their abilities and so with her (Cepeda) running, she's got speed. I wouldn't fault Alexa at all for that. That's what

we want her to do. We want to force them to make errors. That's what we've tried to do with our speed. Today, it backfired on us a little bit."

Franklin scored two runs in the bottom of the inning on two errors by freshman shortstop Taylor Ebbs.

The Quakers then added three more runs in the second on three hits and two more errors by Ebbs.

After another error in the third, Wise switched Ebbs with center fielder Nadia Witt to start the fourth.

"Nadia's played shortstop for us before and honestly for Taylor, you could see the wheels were going and she's trying to rush the throws," Wise said. "She just needed to slow it down a little bit. Instead of just letting her continue to spin in that cycle, you just try to get her out of it. She's a great player. She's going to come back. It doesn't affect her in the box. She comes back out and hits. Nadia's been Player of the Year two years in a row and honestly Taylor is a kid that could do that kind of thing in the future, too. She's that good. She's that kind of kid."

Witt scored McNary's first run in the top of the third but the Lady Celts could have scored more as freshman Abigail Covalt was picked off third after hitting a double to lead off the inning.

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McNary sophomore Alexa Cepeda made a diving catch in right field against Franklin at Erv Lind Stadium on Monday, May 21.

KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley

## Champion Cheer climbs the Summit

By **DEREK WILEY**  
*Of the Keizertimes*

McNary senior Madesyn Samples had been with Champion Cheer Athletics in Salem for 13 years, since she was five. Brynlee Ramsay had been with the gym for 10 years, since she was six.

But neither had experienced a season like this last one.

Competing in the D2 Summit at Walt Disney World Resort's new ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex in Orlando, Fla., Samples, Ramsay and Champion Cheer's Level 3 Blaze team advanced to finals for the first time in the program's 14-year history and placed third in the nation.

"It was amazing, especially my senior year to get third at Summit, it's just crazy, especially with all my friends there with me," Samples said. "I think we did so well because we all wanted it so much for ourselves and for our teammates. Everyone jumped up and was screaming and hugging each other and crying and it was really awesome."

Blaze competed in the semi-finals on Saturday, May 12 and then were one of seven teams to advance to finals on Sunday, May 13. They performed a two-and-a-half minute routine of tumbling, stunting, jumping and dancing to music.

Judged by the number of athletes performing each skill, Blaze received zero deductions for a total score of 96.97 out of 100.

"It's so awesome to see them work all year and then to come out and end the season in such a big event and perform so well and place so high," said Angela Rasmussen, co-owner of the gym. "In Orlando it is a huge stage at ESPN. It's very intimidating. They just opened a brand new arena at Wild World of Sports just for cheerleading. Just with the nerves and all of the pressure and all the build up from being there, our kids just did so amazing."

Champion Cheer has 26 girls on its Level 3 team, ages 11-18, including 10 from Keizer—Ramsay, Madesyn Samples, Ashlin Samples, Kayla Camper, Raegan Bedingfield, Taylor Johnson, Katelyn Hampton, Emily Daniels, Stephanie Wade and Angelina Fajer.

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LEFT: McNary senior Madesyn Samples dances during Champion Cheer Athletics routine at the D2 Summit in Orlando, Fla. ABOVE: McNary freshman Ashlin Samples flies in the air. BELOW: Champion Cheer Athletics placed third at the D2 Summit.

Submitted

