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Week one tough for local teams

The *Keizertimes* is expanding its high school sports coverage this fall and that begins this week.

Inside this paper, you'll not only find a 16-page high school football preview with stories on McNary, McKay, North Salem, South Salem, Sprague and West Salem, but also coverage of all five Salem-Keizer cross country teams that participated in the Wilsonville Night Meet last Friday.

As part of that extended coverage, I'll also be breaking down each week's football slate with my prediction for each game.

Here's Week 1:

West Albany at McKay

The Royal Scots open the season in a new league against a familiar opponent.

After struggling in the the 6A Greater Valley Conference the past four years, both programs are moving down to 5A, where the Bulldogs once ruled, winning the 2008, 2008 and 2013 state titles.

West Albany has won the past three matchups between these teams, including a 46-14 blowout last season. That's all I really need to know. But with both teams breaking in new quarterbacks, I expect a lower score.

Prediction: Bulldogs 20, Royal Scots 14

North Salem at Crescent Valley

The Vikings are another program moving down from 6A to 5A and start on the road against a team that began last season 8-0 and reached the state quarterfinals. While North Salem brings back experience at quarterback and along the line and should find 5A more competitive, the Raiders are expected to once again be one of the top teams in 5A.

Prediction: Raiders 31, Vikings 21

Newberg at South Salem

The Tigers went 2-7 last season but played in the brutally tough Three Rivers League with the likes of West Linn, Tigard, Tualatin and Lake Oswego. I could argue that Newberg was much better than its record but most of the losses weren't even close. Led by senior Ashton Adams, I expect the Saxons to win the line of scrimmage and the game.

Prediction: Saxons 34, Tigers 27

Liberty at Sprague

The Olympians open the season with one of its most inexperienced teams in years against an up-and-coming Falcons squad that finished the 2017 regular season on a five-game winning streak before falling in the first round of the state playoffs. Liberty returns starting quarterback Brad Norman as well as a collection of weapons headlined by senior receiver Aidan Maloney. I'm confident Sprague will figure it out eventually but the Olympians will take their lumps early.

Prediction: Falcons 30, Olympians 22

West Salem at Lake Oswego

This is a game fans from all over Oregon will be watching as the Titans and Lakers are projected to be two of the top teams in the state. In OSAA today's preseason 6A football coaches poll, Lake Oswego was voted No. 7, just one spot ahead of No. 8 West Salem. And that's not all they have in common. Both squads were eliminated by state runner-up South Medford in the 2017 playoffs, West Salem in the quarterfinals and then Lake Oswego in the semifinals. Both are loaded at the skill positions. Both have rebuilt lines and both have talented senior quarterbacks, who have waited their turn, making their first start. Can the Titans show that they're not only the best team in the new Mountain Valley Conference but also one of the best in the state? I'm voting yes.

Prediction: Titans 48, Lakers 44

North Medford at McNary

Two years ago, the Black Tornado came to Keizer and knocked around McNary 38-17. North Medford was clearly more physical and the Celtics couldn't handle it. But last year McNary responded with its own 40-20 whooping at North Medford, racking up more than 500 yards of offense. Although the Black Tornado bring a much different challenge in a season opener than what North Salem has given the Celtics the past four years, a team that has preached toughness and tenacity all off-season shouldn't get pushed around.

Prediction: Celtics 37, Black Tornado 34



KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley

McNary's girls soccer team, coached by A.J. Nash, returns 18 varsity players, including 15 upperclassmen.

Great expectations

By **DEREK WILEY**
Of the Keizertimes

McNary's girls soccer team will see its most difficult schedule in years, maybe ever.

But with 18 returning varsity players, including 15 of them upperclassmen, head coach A.J. Nash believes he's got the talent to face those challenges.

"We've never had that (experience)," Nash said. "We've got high expectations. We've got an ability to compete with any team in the state."

Instead of just one 6A team on its non-league schedule, which the Lady Celts have seen the past two seasons, McNary will face seven, all playoff teams that advanced to at least the second round of the 6A state tournament last season.

Lincoln, who the Lady Celts will travel to on Sept. 18, reached the semifinals.

"The level of competition for the non-league has went through the roof," Nash said.

McNary earned the tougher schedule by qualifying for the state playoffs the past two seasons.

"We've been fighting to get a more difficult 6A schedule the last four of five years," Nash said. "You have to have a proven track record, which isn't one year of success, it's multiple years' success. It's hard to get those teams to come play you. It's an example of what we've earned. That is not a gift or a request. It has to be earned." Conference play will also be tougher.

Gone are McMinnville, McKay and North Salem, three of the four bottom teams in the Greater Valley Conference last season.

In is former 5A powerhouse Summit, which last year won its sixth state title since 2010 and Bend, which reached the 5A state quarterfinals last season.

Mountain View is only one of two opponents on McNary's schedule that didn't play in the postseason last year.

"There's a lot on the line every game," Nash said. "One of the big differences we're going to see this year is often in that first six games we can have a larger rotation of players to get them looks on the field. Every single game this year is meaningful. We don't have any easy wins on the schedule."

Led by Sydney Snapp, a four-year starter at goal keeper and Sam Alfano, a three-year starter, the strength of McNary's team should be its defense.

"Our defense, I feel solid with," Nash said. "I know we're going to compete in every game because of our defense. We're bringing back a much more tenured defense group that has both playoff experience and age under their belt now."

While last season's leading goal scorer, Abbie Hawley returns, the Lady Celts are less proven in the attack.

Natalia Gonzalez and Izzy Haselip, both seniors, enter the

year healthy after missing large parts of last season with injuries.

"I need to be the person to also push my teammates to think they can score as well, not just me," Hawley said.

Seniors Gina Munguia and Katy Wyatt will lead the midfield. For the first time in three years, no freshmen made the varsity team.

"It's a sign of a good program," Nash said. "We don't have any rules against it. We want freshmen to earn it but with 15 returning upperclassmen there's not a whole lot of room."

That experience has already shown in tryouts when Nash said the team was in midseason form.

"Our starting point, we feel like is ahead of any year we've had," he said.

McNary opened the season on Tuesday, Aug. 28 with a 2-1 win at South Medford.

Haselip scored both goals with assists from Munguia and Wyatt.

Lady Celts fall in five

If McNary and Mountain View's first match is a sign of things to come, the two volleyball squads have quite the rivalry ahead of them.

Both teams opened the season on Tuesday, Aug. 28 with the Cougars coming from behind to win 3-2 in five games.

After splitting the first two games, with Mountain View taking the first 25-18 and McNary the second 27-25, the Lady Celts appeared to take control of the match in the third, dominating 25-14.

But the Cougars roared back in the fourth 25-16 and edged McNary in the fifth 16-14 to win the match.

The Lady Celts open the season against the three Bend schools.

They travel to Bend on Tuesday, Sept. 4 and then host Summit on Thursday, Sept. 6.

Bend defeated Summit for the 5A state championship last season.



KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley

ABOVE: McNary High School junior Zoie Warner dives for the ball in the first game of a 3-2 loss to Mountain View on Tuesday, Aug. 28 at home. LEFT: Chloe Martindale hits the ball over the net.