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## Celtics rout West Salem in Mountain Valley opener

### Celtics need something to celebrate

It's homecoming week at McNary. Monday was the coronation assembly, Wednesday the powder puff game, Friday the varsity football game and crowning of the queen and king and then Saturday a dance.

It all couldn't come at a better time. Mostly, the Celtics need something to celebrate.

Playing in Tumwater, Wash., McNary dropped to 0-4 last Friday, falling 56-13 in another game that was never really competitive. The T-Birds led 43-6 at halftime.

The Celtics have played as difficult a schedule as anyone in the state and host South Medford, last season's 6A state runner-up, for homecoming, in their final non-conference game. After graduating 19 seniors, the Panthers (3-1) aren't nearly as talented as a year ago, squeaking by McMinnville 21-12 at home last week.

So will the homecoming celebration include the Celtics first win of the season? Here are my picks:

#### West Salem at Beaverton

The Titans and Beavers have similar resumes. Both are 2-2 and have not been able to compete against the elite teams in the state with West Salem getting blown out by Lake Oswego and Sheldon and Beaverton losing by 35 points to Clackamas. The last time these two squads met, Beaverton won 41-28 in the second round of the 2016 state playoffs. West Salem gets revenge.

*Prediction: Titans 45, Beavers 34*

#### Bend at South Salem

Moving up to 6A, the Lava Bears have been one of the biggest surprises, starting the season 3-1, with their most impressive win coming at North Medford, 29-28, in the third week of the season. But the last time Bend came to Salem, it lost by 29 points to West Salem. The Saxons are riding high off a 21-20 win over rival Sprague. Can South Salem carry over the momentum or is it due for a let down?

*Prediction: Saxons 27, Lava Bears 24*

#### Tigard at Sprague

The Olympians difficult schedule continues against undefeated Tigard, No. 4 in the power rankings and in OSAAtoday's coaches poll. The Tiger defense has allowed just 57 points this season, the third lowest of any 6A team in the state, while Sprague's offense has lacked its usual firepower of previous teams.

*Prediction: Tigers 44, Olympians 14*

#### North Salem at McKay

The good news is either the Royal Scots or Vikings will celebrate their first victory of the season at the end of this one. Both have been close, with McKay falling to South Albany by four, and North Salem losing to Corvallis by seven. The Vikings won last year and are the more experienced group.

*Prediction: Vikings 30, Royal Scots 28*

#### South Medford at McNary

For the first time since opening the season on Aug. 31, the Celtics return home, where they are 2-4 over the last two years, including a 39-35 loss to McMinnville on homecoming last season. While McNary hasn't shown anything over the last two weeks to appear like a team on the verge of a breakthrough, South Medford hasn't played on the same level as Tualatin and Tumwater. The Panthers defense allowed 275 yards passing last week to McMinnville. If McNary's offensive line can give him time, Erik Barker should be able to take similar advantage. South Medford's offense also isn't as dynamic as what the Celtic's defense has seen this season. The lumps and bruises McNary has taken the first four games should help the Celtics down the stretch and that begins with South Medford.

*Prediction: Celtics 28, Panthers 24*

Derek Wiley is Associate Editor of the Keizertimes.

Last week: 4-1, Overall: 15-8



McNary senior Francisco Rios, above, and junior Luis Lopez, below, scored the Celtics first two goals on Tuesday against West Salem.



### Next up: Summit

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

McNary (5-1-2) wanted to show the rest of the new Mountain Valley Conference that it was here to fight for the league championship.

After a 5-1 win over West Salem (2-5-1) on Tuesday, the Celtics are now ready to prove they're one of the top teams in the state.

McNary will get that shot Saturday at Summit (7-1).

"We have to give everything that game," McNary junior Jack Baez said. "They're a top three team in the state so we need to show them that we're up there with them. We have to come out big."

The Celtics came out big against West Salem, scoring two goals in the first eight minutes.

Francisco Rios put in the first. Luis Lopez scored the second.

But then McNary relaxed and the Titans took advantage as Andres Labate fired a shot into the net to get West Salem within 2-1 early in the second half.

Picking up the pace, Baez tapped in a goal to extend the Celtics lead to 3-1 with 29 minutes remaining.

"It was a really nice assist," Baez said. "I just got lucky I was in the right place at the right time."

Midway through the second half, Baez added a second goal to give McNary a 4-1 lead.

"We got too composed, too

cocky," Baez said. "We had to pick it up. We had to come to a realization that this game isn't over, 2-0 is always the most dangerous score in soccer so we just had to continue to pick it up in the second half. It was good we didn't let our heads down our anything like that. We raised the tempo instead of lowering it down. That's another thing that is special about this team. We overcome a lot of things."

Alex Salazar put in the final goal of the night with 13 minutes left to play.

"There's just something special about this team this year," Baez said. "We just connect way better this year and I'm confident going into this league. I feel like we're a top team, hopefully we continue to show it. We just have to continue with our hard work."

Goal keeper Alejandro Villarreal had five saves, playing for the injured Sebastian Lopez, who McNary head coach Miguel Camarena expects back soon.

"He's getting there but we want to be smart," Camarena said. "It's a huge asset to have two goal keepers."

Saturday's game at Summit begins at noon.

"It's going to be a tough one but if our kids play their game, we should be good," Camarena said. "They're a pretty good technical team with a lot of possession so our goal is going to be to try to take the ball away from them and create opportunities."

## Defense leads Whiteaker over Walker

Whiteaker's varsity football team moved to 2-0 with a 14-6 victory over Walker on Wednesday, Sept. 19.

Head Coach Tom Larimer credited the defense for the win.

"We really were not very good on offense," said Larimer, "But our defense owned the day."

Whiteaker's defense is led by coordinator Luke Atwood, an all state quarterback at McNary, one of the top D-III quarterbacks in the country at Willamette, coached with Tom Smythe for 13 years, including 10 years at McNary, and played professionally for seven years.

"I can't describe how fortunate Keizer is to have him back coaching in our community again," Larimer said.

Atwood's defense smothered Walker the entire game.

Braiden Copeland led the way with 10 tackles and an interception, while Kyler Donahue, Jackson Alt, Hunter Ruberto, and Dominic Hughes each had five tackles. Damon Thornton snuffed out Walker's last gasp effort when he intercepted a pass in the final minute of the game.

"Kyler, Ty (Borde), and Damon really just shut down Walker's passing game. They were stuck on those receivers all day," said Larimer.

Whiteaker's offense struggled, but did enough to win.

The Wolverines put 14 points on the board in the

second quarter, and that was all the defense needed.

Copeland opened the scoring with a short touchdown run and connected with Jacob Hurst from 10 yards out just before half for what turned out to be the winning score.

Copeland led the team with 79 yards rushing on 11 carries, running primarily behind Will Green, Cristian Garcia, Hughes and Hurst.

The game was followed by a free post game BBQ for the players and fans.

"We have incredible sponsors," said Larimer. "They provide anything and everything we need to build a positive experience for these kids. We served nearly 200 free meals after the game. I saw lots of smiling faces and happy families."

#### Claggett wins big

Claggett Creek blew out Leslie 52-14 in its season opener on Sept. 19.

Jabol Balos rushed for two touchdowns and threw a touchdown pass to Osmid Cano Espinoza.

Julian Orta ran for a touchdown and took a kickoff back for another score.

John Carlos Vasquez ran a blocked punt back for a touchdown.

"Our defense played really well the whole game," Panthers head coach Aaron Carr said.

"It was a good start to the season."



ABOVE: Whiteaker's defense gang tackles a Walker ball carrier on Wednesday, Sept. 19. BELOW: Osmid Cano Espinoza catches a touchdown pass against Leslie.

