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# KeizerSports

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## Celtics 0-5 start now paying off

I did believe McNary's non-league schedule would better prepare the Celtics for conference opponents.

I said so on the radio and wrote it here.

But did I see this coming—an 0-5 start followed by three straight wins, each one more impressive than the last, with the Celtics one win away from the Mountain Valley Conference championship?

Of course not.

Did anyone?

But that is where McNary sits now, after winning 35-23 at West Salem last Friday, in a game that honestly wasn't that close.

Along with their five touchdowns, the Celtic offense moved the ball inside the West Salem 15 yard line three more times and got zero points to show for it, thanks to a missed field goal and two fumbles, one at the two yard line.

Honestly, part of the reason I wrote that the non-league schedule would turn out to be good for McNary is because I wanted it to be true. I didn't want to cover an 0-9 team.

The Celtics did a good job of throwing me off the scent and testing my belief. Let's not forget, while those first five opponents were tough, none of the games were competitive, minus the fourth quarter at West Linn, which turned into another blowout.

McNary then defeated Sprague in a game that looked like the Celtics had just got the best of another struggling, winless team than they had really turned a corner or made some giant leap forward.

But then McNary went to Bend and knocked off a 5-1 team sitting at No. 10 in the power rankings, and followed that up with the win at West Salem.

The 0-5 start, as tough as it was at the time, had obviously paid off.

"You really can learn more from a loss sometimes," McNary head coach Jeff Auvinen said after defeating West Salem. "If we play a team that's not very good and we don't play very well, and just win because we were better than them, I don't think you learn very much."

The Celtics saw what it takes to compete against the best teams in the state.

"They are learning what it takes to be a 6A football player and play with that low center of gravity and running their feet and finishing plays," Auvinen said. "And what it's like to come together and trust your teammates. All 11 doing their job, it can be a beautiful thing."

Now, McNary is one win away from winning the Mountain Valley Conference.

Will the Celtics get it?

My picks:

### McKay at Crescent Valley

The Royal Scots will hope to close out the regular season on a high note against a Raider team that had won three in a row before falling to Lebanon by 37 points last Friday. McKay has been outscored by 70 points the last two weeks since getting its only win of the season at Corvallis.

Pick: Raiders 20, Royal Scots 14

### North Salem at Lebanon

Like McKay, the Vikings haven't really benefited from moving down to 5A. North Salem is coming off a 43-point win against South Albany but the Warriors are a playoff team, riding a three-game winning streak.

Pick: Warriors 38, Vikings 24

### West Salem at Sprague

The Olympians are another squad that has benefited from playing a strong non-conference schedule. Sprague followed up a 35-point win over Summit with a 28-point victory over Mountain View. An upset over West Salem could get the Olympians into the playoffs. But the Titans have won the previous two matchups and should rise again, even though I predict this game to be much closer than I would have thought two weeks ago.

Pick: Titans 38, Olympians 35

### South Salem at McNary

These two squads are obviously heading in opposite directions. While the Celtics have won three games in a row, the Saxons, with Ryan Rickman out for the season, have dropped four in a row, the latest to a 1-6 Summit team at home. McNary defeated South Salem last season for the first time since 2013 so the Celtics shouldn't overlook the Saxons. As long as McNary shows up ready with the same fire it has the past two weeks, the Celtics will celebrate the Mountain Valley Conference championship.

Pick: Celtics 45, Saxons 21

Derek Wiley is the associate editor of the Keizertimes.

Last week: 2-3, Overall: 26-16



KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley  
Eddy Martinez and the rest of the McNary boys soccer team will travel to Beaverton Saturday for the first round of the playoffs.

## McNary opens soccer playoffs at Beaverton

By DEREK WILEY

*Of the Keizertimes*

McNary didn't achieve its goal of winning the Mountain Valley Conference championship.

But that hasn't taken the Celtics focus off the grand prize—a state title.

"There's one big goal in everyone's mind," McNary senior Miguel Bravo said. "Our goal right now is to be state champs. Coach (Miguel Camarena) told us a state championship is worth more to him than 10 league championships. We're aiming for the big goal and hopefully we do our best to accomplish it."

The Celtics climbed as

high as No. 4 in the OSAA power rankings and opened league play with a 5-1 win over West Salem on Sept. 25.

But McNary began free falling after a 1-0 loss at Summit on Sept. 29. The Celtics tied both South Salem and McKay 1-1 in their next two matches.

"Unfortunately that loss really brought the team down," Bravo said. "Failures always going to occur in life and it's up to us to pick it up and show what the McNary team is all about, which is hard work and dedication for the sport."

With three goals by Jovanie Bravo and one by Luis Lopez, the Celtics closed the

regular season with a 4-1 win at Mountain View on Friday, Oct. 19 to finish 3-2-2 in league play.

As the 19-seed, McNary will open the state tournament at No. 14 Beaverton on Saturday.

"It's a new season on Saturday," Camarena said. "Our goal is going to be one game at a time. But our hope is to win five."

Camarena added the Celtics must enter every game 100 percent focused and finish goals, two things that cost them wins during the regular season.

"If we put in half of the opportunities, we should win every game," Camarena said.



KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley

Junior Walling rushed for 223 yards and four touchdowns in a 35-23 victory at West Salem on Friday, Oct. 19.

## Celtics hammer West Salem

By DEREK WILEY

*Of the Keizertimes*

SALEM—McNary's turnaround continued here.

Behind Junior Walling's 223 yards rushing and four touchdowns, the Celtics defeated West Salem 35-23 last Friday to improve to 3-0 in the Mountain Valley Conference.

Like any good running back, Walling credited the offensive line.

"I give it all to my line," Walling said. "They gave huge holes for me and made it easy for me and (quarterback) Erik (Barker) to do our thing."

Senior Wyatt Sherwood returned to the line after missing five games with a concussion.

"We came in this week jacked," Sherwood said. "We were excited for this game. We were ready. We knew this game was going to be big for us. We took this game and we went at it head on. We hit it hard. We were being the hammer, not the nail. That was the motto tonight, hammer, not the nail. We won it everywhere. Our whole team. We played phenomenal. We're a great team overall."

Wearing a new number, 38, Sherwood also lined up at tight end, catching three passes for 44 yards.

"(Offensive coordinator Brad) Emmert just decided that we should put in a tight end

package and he chose me as the guy," Sherwood said. "I've never played there. I've been offensive and defensive line my whole life. I never caught any passes, no routes, never taken any hits like that. It was a fun experience. It felt pretty natural."

McNary jumped out to a 14-0 lead at West Salem on two touchdown runs by Walling.

But the Titans answered with 10 points at the end of the first half on a 6-yard touchdown run by quarterback Simon Thompson and then a 32-yard field goal by Kyla Gordon with the clock expired after West Salem got an extra play thanks to a defensive holding penalty on McNary.

The Titans then took the lead when Thompson connected with Anthony Gould for a 33-yard touchdown just 20 seconds into the third quarter.

But West Salem's lead didn't last long as Walling broke loose down the McNary sideline for a 42-yard touchdown run to put the Celtics back on top, 21-17, with 10:30 remaining in the third quarter.

After Jacob Jackson added a 5-yard touchdown run to extend McNary's lead to 28-17, the Titans needed only one play to answer as Gould took a 45-yard pass to get West Salem within 28-23 entering the fourth quarter.

But McNary's defense shut out West Salem in the final 12 minutes and Walling scored his

fourth touchdown with 2:23 remaining.

Jackson then intercepted Thompson with 2:01 remaining to seal the victory.

Thompson completed just 12 of 35 pass attempts for 275 yards. Gould caught four passes for 78 yards.

"I was really proud of the whole defense," McNary head coach Jeff Auvinen said. "Nigel (Harris) did a great job of keeping Gould in check. The biggest part of our game plan was to not let him beat us. He still scored two touchdowns. That guy is really good. Oregon State signed him for a reason. He's really fast."

Gould predicted six touchdowns on Twitter, which McNary's defense was well aware of.

"It just motivated me even more," Harris said. "I just kept it classy. I didn't say a word to him. We just had to be mentally tough. We had a good game plan going in and I was confident. (Safety) Griffin (Oliveira) was over the top. Just being aggressive. I didn't go in scared. I think in previous years we were. This year we knew we had it."

West Salem tight end Micah Pugh caught six passes for 144 yards.

Barker completed 11 of 19 passes for 156 yards and also rushed for 62 yards.

The Celtics close the regular season this Friday at home against South Salem with a chance to win the conference championship.