

# McNary loses heartbreaker at the buzzer

**By MATT RAWLINGS**  
*Of the Keizertimes*

The McNary boys hoops squad led for the most of the contest, but a squandered opportunity in the final moments left the Celtics heartbroken in the end.

With the score tied at 56 with 11 seconds on the clock, McNary had possession of the ball with a chance to score the go-ahead bucket. But West Salem's Justin Scoggin came away with a clutch steal, and then went coast-to-coast to finish a tough layup on the other end as time expired to give the Titans the 58-56 victory over McNary on Friday, Jan. 11.

"It stings. Losing tough games hurt. But I couldn't be prouder of how hard our guys played," McNary head coach

Ryan Kirch said. "We're walking out of here with our heads held high."

"Give credit to West Salem. They battled for 32 minutes. They are very well coached, and their players made plays when they needed to."

Boston Smith led McNary with a game-high of 19 points and Griffin Oliveira chipped in with 12 points.

Nate Meithof added 11 points on the evening and Alfredo Villareal was also in double-digits with 10 points.

West Salem grabbed the 5-4 lead in the early-going, but five quick points from Oliveira gave the Celtics the lead back midway through the period.

Along with being a key scorer for the Celtics, Oliveira was also given the task of face-guarding Scoggin for the entire first quarter.

"We knew that (Scoggin) was a really good player and a really good scorer for them, so it was our game-plan to face-guard him coming in," Oliveira said.

"On the offensive end, I was just trying to take what they were giving to me. I wasn't trying to force anything up."

Both Meithof and Junior Walling hit a pair of foul shots late in the quarter to complete a 9-1 run, giving the Celtics a 13-6 advantage.

Despite putting the clamps on the Titans offense with



KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings  
McNary post Boston Smith (#30) tries to fight through a double team after receiving the ball in the paint.

their hard man-to-man defense, the Celtics started to get into foul trouble towards the end of the first quarter. So Kirch elected to move to a 2-3 zone at the beginning of the second period after Meithof and Smith each picked up their second foul.

"We were trying to extend the lead but needed to stay out of foul trouble," Kirch said. "So I put Boston and Nate back in because I wanted to protect them for the rest of the second quarter so we could try and go to the third quarter with the lead."

Adjustments with defense and personnel didn't seem to effect McNary offensively in the second period. A put-back hoop from Smith, followed by a baseline fadeaway jumper from Oliveira and a three-point play by Meithof allowed

McNary to stay on top 26-19.

The Celtics extended their lead to double-digits after Smith muscled in a pair of buckets deep in the paint late in the second quarter, giving the senior post 14 points for the half.

"It's always a point-of-emphasis to get the ball inside," Smith said. "I thought we did a good job with our spacing."

McNary kept the momentum going to start the third quarter as a runner from Villareal and a 3-pointer from the corner by Meithof helped McNary stay on top by double-figures midway through the third period.

But West Salem came roaring back to tie the game with a 10-0 run thanks to four second-chance buckets.

The Titans even grabbed their first lead since the opening minutes of the first quarter moments later, but Villareal ended the third period with a floater to tie the game at 46.

Villareal then started the final quarter with a three-point play, which was followed by a jump-hook from Smith to put McNary on top 51-46. West Salem, however, came back to re-take the lead with a 6-0 run.

The back-and-forth play continued for the remainder of the period as the Celtics were able to capture the lead once

again after Smith hit a tough jumper to make it 55-54.

After a defensive stop by McNary, Smith was then fouled on the other end and sent to the foul line with 1:27 to go. Smith, however, was only able to hit one of his two shots, which allowed West Salem guard Kieran Pruett to tie the game on the Titans next possession with 1:15 remaining.

Kirch wanted his team to hold for the final shot, so after stalling for just over a minute, the McNary head coach called timeout and drew up a play for Meithof.

"They were really packing the paint on Boston and I was concerned with getting him the ball in the right spot," Kirch said. "We had turned it over three times in the last four minutes trying to enter it into (Smith). We tried to put (Meithof) in a pick and roll situation to draw his defender out and open up a driving lane."

Meithof caught the ball on the inbounds and started to make his move. But after trying to use a screen from Smith, Meithof spun into a double-team and had the ball stolen by Scoggin, who then took off in the other direction with the intent of scoring the winning bucket.

Oliveira was the last line of defense for the Celtics, but Scoggin just got around him to put in a nifty scoop shot off the glass as the buzzer sounded, sending West Salem off to victory.

Kirch took full responsibility of what took place during the final play.

"I need to put my players in the best position to make plays, and I didn't do that in the final moments," Kirch said. "That's on me. I'm so proud of how hard our kids played, competed for each other, and represented our program."

Despite the loss, this team is confident in their ability to pick themselves up off the mat.

"It's just one loss. It will sting tonight, but we got each other's backs and we're not worried about it."

Smith added: "We're dealing with this loss in a positive way."

McNary travels to McKay tonight for a 5:45 p.m. game.



KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings  
Celtics point guard Alfredo Villareal looks to set up the offense.

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