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Lady Celts earn hard-fought win over West Salem

By **MATT RAWLINGS**
Of the Keizertimes

The McNary girls basketball team faced one of the toughest non-conference schedules in the state this season.

Even though they only won two of their 10 preseason contests, the tough competition prepared them for what they would face in Mountain Valley Conference play.

In a game that went down to the wire, McNary proved that they were the more battle-tested squad.

Leah Doult led the way for McNary with 17 points on 7-of-8 shooting from the field as the Celtics pulled off the upset at West Salem on Friday, Jan. 11, defeating the Titans 42-39.

Abigail Hawley was also in double-figures with 10 points.

“(West Salem) is really tough team that put a lot of defensive pressure on us, so I was really proud of how we stayed composed throughout the game,” McNary head coach Elizabeth Doran said. “Early on in the season we weren’t winning a lot of games, but I could tell that we were getting better and now it’s coming to fruition.”

The game couldn’t have

started much better for the Celtics as they began the opening period on a 7-0 run thanks to a jumper from Annie Leigh Besa, followed by a 3-pointer from Hawley.

McNary extended their lead to 14-4 by the end of the first quarter after back-to-back hoops from Doult and another bucket from Hawley.

“The key for us was being able to break the press and handle their defensive pressure,” Doult said. “We were able to get around their defenders and take good shots.”

West Salem, however, came roaring back in the second quarter, going on a 14-2 run to take a 18-16 lead late in the period.

“We kind of went cold offensively in the second quarter,” Doran said.

Mackenzie Proctor made the only shot for the Celtics in the second period, burying a mid-range jumper with less than a minute left to tie the game at 18 going into the break.

After both teams traded baskets for the majority of the third quarter, McNary started to get the slight edge when they ended the period on a 6-0 run. A runner from Doult,



KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings

McNary guard Leah Doult drives into traffic to try and draw a foul. The senior point guard had 17 points on the night in the Celtics 42-39 win over West Salem on Jan. 11.

paired with four straight points by Hawley, gave the Celtics a 31-26 advantage with eight minutes remaining in the game.

The Titans, though, refused to say die, trimming their deficit down to two points on multiple occasions in the final period. But in each instance, Doult made sure to keep West Salem at arm’s length.

The senior point guard knocked down three buckets in the fourth quarter, but her most clutch play came on

defense when her team was up 37-35 with 1:10 left in the game.

West Salem had the ball and was looking to either tie or take the lead when Doult forced a steal at the top of the key, led the Celtics on the fast break and gave a beautiful feed to Kennedy Buss, who finished the easy layup to put McNary on top 39-35 with under a minute remaining.

“My teammates did a good job of getting open and setting screens for me so I could get

to the basket,” Doult said. “

A trio of missed free throws down the stretch allowed the Titans to cut the lead to one at 40-39 with 16 seconds left of the clock. But after West Salem fouled Leigh Besa with 8.6 seconds remaining, the sophomore forward calmly stepped to the charity stripe and knocked down two shots to put her team up by three.

“I was a mess in my head, but I just stepped to the line and took deep breath and I told myself that I had this,”

Leigh Besa said.

West Salem tried a desperation shot at the horn that was well contested by the McNary defense.

The shot never had a chance and didn’t even draw iron, which sent the Celtics into celebration mode.

“It was really exciting to get that win,” Leigh Besa said. “It showed that we can compete and go up against these big teams.”

McNary goes on the road to take on McKay at 7:15 p.m.



KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings

Abigail Hawley prepares to knock down a foul shot.

Parker and Bonn reunite at Willamette

By **MATT RAWLINGS**
Of the Keizertimes

Isaac Parker was the head coach of the McNary High School football program from 2012 to 2014 and led the Celtics to the postseason in all three years of his tenure.

Kyle Bonn got the chance to play for Parker when he made the varsity team in 2013 as a sophomore. He then earned a starting spot on the offensive line in 2014.

“It was about more than just football, Bonn said about playing for Parker in high school. “It was about building relationships and developing character.”

“The way that (Parker) coached made us excited to compete with each other. It kept football season really exciting and he kept me looking forward to what was coming up next.”

But Bonn didn’t get the chance to have a senior year with one of his favorite coaches. In the beginning of 2015, Parker left the McNary program to take a job as an offensive line and run game coach for Lewis & Clark College.

However, after spending the last four seasons apart, both Bonn and Parker will have the opportunity to reunite this fall.

After having a standout season in his final year at McNary,



KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings

Kyle Bonn (left) played for Isaac Parker (right) during the 2013 and 2014 football seasons at McNary High School. Bonn, who is a senior offensive lineman at Willamette University, will get to play for Parker once again after Parker accepted the head coaching job with the Bearcats earlier this month.

Bonn signed with Willamette University to continue his education, as well as his football career. He played the last three seasons for the Bearcats under Glen Fowles.

But after a 1-8 season in 2018, Fowles and the university parted ways, leaving the head coaching position vacant.

With Parker’s success at Lewis & Clark, combined with his connection to Willamette — he played for the Bearcats from 1998 to 2001 and was a

two-year team-captain — it was an easy decision for athletic director Rob Passage to offer Parker the job.

And Parker was more than happy to accept the offer.

“We are very excited to have Isaac returning to Willamette to lead our football program,” Passage said. “Not only does he bring outstanding teaching and coaching experience, he also adds a tremendous passion for building community within the program, the university and

Salem.”

Before his days at McNary, Parker was an assistant coach/offensive coordinator at South Salem High School from 2007 to 2011, so making a return to the Salem-Keizer area provoked a sense of joy in the new head coach.

“I’m really excited to be re-engaged with the (Salem-Keizer) community. I created a lot of connections in my time coaching here,” Parker said. “The only school I would

have left Lewis & Clark for is Willamette.”

Parker isn’t the only one excited about his return to coaching in Marion County.

“It’s really great to get him back for that senior season that I missed out on in high school,” Bonn said. “As a team, I’m excited to see us become, not only great football players, but also a great band of brothers.”

Parker has his work cut out for him as he is taking over a program that has lost 17 of their 18 games over the last two seasons. However, he is no stranger to helping a losing program develop a winning environment.

Lewis & Clark was coming off a winless season the year before Parker set foot on campus. The team also went through each of the 2015 and 2016 seasons without a victory. But when Parker was promoted to offensive coordinator in 2017, the program started to experience real change.

In his second game as the OC, Parker led Lewis & Clark to a 40-21 victory over Pomona-Pitzer. It was the most points the Pioneers had scored since 2014 and their first win since 2013.

Two weeks later, Lewis & Clark defeated Willamette 24-21 for the first time since 2000 to claim the Wagon Wheel

traveling trophy.

Even though the Pioneers still had losing records in 2017 and 2018, Parker played a big role in the culture shift at Lewis & Clark and hopes to do the same thing with his alma mater.

“When I played here, (Willamette) was considered a perennial contender. And I don’t believe that returning to that mindset is far off,” Parker said.

Part of changing the culture of a program is having seniors buy in to what your are preaching, which is why having a guy like Bonn — who will be competing for a starting job on the offensive line — is crucial to help Parker get his message across to the rest of the team.

“Getting the opportunity to get that fourth year together is fun and exciting,” Parker said. When you have a culture change or a new approach to how you do things in a football program, the senior class can be a hit-or-miss, so having someone who has been in this position with me before and understands the value of his role is huge.”

“The biggest thing about Kyle is that he is a high effort guy, which will take you far no matter what. He always gave it his all, which, as a coach, it is what you need and is one of our values as a program.