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## McNary upsets second-ranked South Salem

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

McNary boys basketball head coach Ryan Kirch has had a number of big victories throughout his eight years with the Celtics.

But the win he got on Thursday, Jan 31 will stick in his mind for a long time.

Boston Smith led the Celtics with 19 points as McNary went on the road and knocked second-ranked South Salem, beating the Saxons 59-57 and keeping themselves in position for the MVC title.

"I'm just really proud of our guys. Each and every one of them gave of themselves for the betterment of the team," Kirch said. "It's one of the best wins I've ever had as a coach. To watch them be so happy and excited is a joy to watch."

Nate Meithof was also in double-figures with 14 points and Alfredo Villareal added 13 points in the victory.

"Honestly, for me, this is the best win I've ever had in my entire life," Villareal said. "We all played so great together and I am just proud of this team."

Villareal had been playing limited minutes coming into this game after suffering a foot injury in January. But in his first game back in the starting lineup, the senior point guard made his presence felt almost immediately.

After knocking down a mid-range jumper to start the game, Villareal hit an open 3-pointer right of the key on the next trip to give McNary the early momentum.

Meithof and Smith each added hoops to put the Celtics ahead 9-7 midway through the opening period, but a pair of offensive fouls by Smith sent the McNary big man to the bench.

However, Kirch entered Smith back into the contest later in the period and the senior post threw down a monster jam after the Celtics beat the overly-aggressive de-

fensive press from the Saxons.

South Salem forced numerous McNary turnovers throughout the game with their aggressive double-teams on the ball and three-quarter-court traps. However, the Celtics also got a large supply of easy hoops after taking advantage of the Saxons being a little too greedy defensively.

"We spent a lot of the last two days working on all the fundamentals of handling pressure," Kirch said. "We don't talk about it as a press-break, we refer to it as press-attack. I'm a big believer that, if you attack it, you got to make them pay. If they don't pay, their just going to keep on doing it."

"We did have some turnovers, but we got some easy buckets because of their pressure."

Both teams went back and forth into the midway part of the second period. But with the Saxons up 23-22, South Salem was hit with their second technical foul of the game when Eric Lungu got in the face of a McNary player after the whistle.

After Meithof hit one of the two technical foul shots, McNary's Devyn Schurr knocked down a straightaway triple to give the Celtics the lead back at 26-23. A lay-in from Noah Hudkins and a pair of free throws from Meithof helped the Celtics go on a 7-1 run to take a 30-24 lead late in the period.

"We knew it was going to be chippy. These two teams have been at the top of the league for the last five years," Kirch said. "When (South Salem) started talking a little bit, our guys just maintained their composure throughout the entire thing."

The Saxons cut the lead to three with under a minute remaining before halftime, but Villareal ended the second quarter with back-to-back buckets in a 20-second span, extending McNary's advantage to 34-27 at the break.

"We had so much energy



McNary guard Nate Meithof goes up for a shot after driving into the lane in the Celtics 59-57 victory over South Salem on Thursday Jan. 31.

KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings

going into the locker room. I knew at that moment that we were going to win this game."

A three-point play from Smith early in the third period gave McNary their largest lead of the game at 41-29. Smith picked up his third foul midway through the quarter, but that didn't stop his aggressiveness on the offensive end.

Smith scored two more times before the end of the period, including a high-light-reel finish off a lob from Meithof.

"I just have to play my game," Smith said. "I'm not going to change for the refs and I'm not going to change for the other team."

"My teammates definitely got me open with being ultra-aggressive driving in from the three-point line."

The Celtics entered the fourth quarter with a 49-41 advantage. Now, the only thing on their mind was to hang on.

One thing that allowed McNary to do that was their tenacious 2-1-2 zone, a defense that has become prominent for the Celtics over the last few weeks.

South Salem had to settle for long jumpers and were denied any second-chance opportunities thanks to the rebounding abilities of Hudkins and Smith.

McNary also held South Salem's star guard Jaden Nielsen-Skinner in check all night as the Portland State commit made just two field goals for the game.

"It's different than what a lot of people see, so it's hard to prepare for a little bit,"

Kirch said about the unique zone defense. "It certainly gave (South Salem) a lot of trouble tonight."

What nearly killed McNary down the stretch was foul shooting. The Celtics held a 58-52 with 1:30 remaining in the contest and were looking to put the game on ice. However, they missed six out of seven free throws to close out the game — including a pair of front end 1-and-1 misses.

After Nielsen-Skinner hit a couple of free throws to cut the Saxons deficit to 59-57 with 8.1 seconds left, Villareal was fouled on the inbounds and was sent to the line. But Villareal missed both shots, giving South Salem the opportunity to force overtime or win with a 3-pointer.

South Salem's Trey Gal-

braith tried a step-back triple on the Saxons ensuing possession, but Meithof was able to extend every bit of his 6-foot-4 inch frame to partially block the shot.

Ryan Brown caught the carom for the Saxons and threw up a desperation shot in mid-air at the buzzer, but the ball spun around the rim and fell out of the cylinder.

Right as gravity brought the ball back down to the hardwood, the McNary student section rushed the floor, celebrating the monumental victory.

"The crowd definitely brought the energy for the whole game," Smith said.

McNary travels to Bend tonight for a 6:30 p.m. contest.

## Celts pick up a win at multi-dual meet

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

The majority of league wrestling meets feature two teams facing off against each other. However, the addition of Bend schools into the valley has caused teams from the Salem-Keizer area to do things a little bit differently this season.

The McNary wrestling team took on Mountain View, Summit and Bend in a unique Mountain Valley Conference multi-dual match on Friday Feb. 1. Sprague and West Salem also competed at the meet.

The Celtics couldn't hang with the likes of Bend and Mountain View — who are two of the better programs in the state — as they fell to Bend 49-18 and lost to Mountain View 57-24. However, McNary was able to salvage a victory in their final match, defeating Summit 57-14.

More importantly for the Celtics is that they are peaking at the right time as an overall team.

"I can honestly tell you there was a difference in our kids," McNary head coach Jason Ebbs said. "It didn't necessarily come in the form of wins and losses, but we were

more purposeful in what we were doing that night."

"The kids were attacking with purpose and their technique was better. But was more exciting to see was the types of mistakes and the number of mistakes we were making was a lot fewer. Across the board, we saw marked improvement. We made a leap, and it wasn't a small leap, it was a big leap in the right direction."

McNary 138-pounder Gilbert Parra was the top performer on the night for his team and was the only Celtic wrestler to finish the meet 3-0.

Please see WRESTLING,  
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## Walling receives offer from Yale

Junior Walling, who is currently a junior at McNary High School, announced on his Twitter page Tuesday evening that he received an official offer to continue his education and football career at Yale University.

As one of the best Salem-Keizer players in the Class of 2020, Walling had a monster



McNary's Estaban Victoria tries to get out of a leg lift in the 132-pound bout against Bend on Friday, Feb. 1

KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings

junior season for the Celtics in 2018. He was named a first-team all-Mountain Valley Conference performer at both linebacker and running back and was also received all-Mid-Valley recognition.

Walling rushed for over 1,000 yards last season and scored 12 touchdowns on the offensive side of the ball. On

defense, he ended the year with 86 total tackles (49 solo, 37 unassisted) as well as five sacks.

In the classroom, Walling earns a 4.0 GPA and takes weighted classes.

This is Walling's second offer from a Division 1 school — the first one came from Oregon State University last April.

## ATHLETE *of the Week*



presented by



### LEAH DOUTT Sophomore at McNary High School

#14 - Point Guard

Leah Doutt led all scorers with 21 points on 8-of-13 shooting in McNary's first league loss to South Salem on Thursday, Jan. 31.

In the Celtics previous contest, Doutt's 20 points helped her team to a 42-41 win over Mountain View on Saturday, Jan. 26.

Doult was also honored as the player of the week by the Salem Sports and Breakfast Club.

She is averaging 13 points and 5 boards per game so far this season.