

# McNary hoping for bounce-back season

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*Of the Keizertimes*

Last season: 12-15, 8-8 Greater Valley Conference (lost to Centennial in the state qualifier)

Although there are some question marks surrounding this McNary baseball team heading into the 2019 season, the Celtics do return a talented senior class that should make them a threat in the Mountain Valley Conference this season.

"I'm really excited about our seniors," McNary head coach Larry Keeker said about his nine returning upperclassmen. "When you have that many kids come through the program, make it to their senior year and our still a part of the team, quite frankly I'm pretty proud of that."

"Now is their chance to lead the way."

## Key Losses:

**Colin Wentworth** — One of two team captains for the Celtics last season. Playing second base, Wentworth batted .319 and led the team with 22 RBIs, earning second-team all-conference honors.

**Lance Becktel** — Also received second-team all-league recognition. Hit .294 last season and scored 19 runs.

**Carl Rumbaugh** — One of McNary's top pitchers last season. Rumbaugh threw 49 innings on the season and had an ERA of 2.00

## Top Returners:

**Jacob Jackson (senior- SS):** McNary's top hitter from last season. The shortstop led the Celtics by batting .395 with 14 doubles, two homers and 26 runs scored. He was named to all-conference first-team.

**Ty Covalt (senior- C):** Returning as a team captain. Covalt batted .341 last season with eight doubles, 14 RBIs and 26 runs scored. He was also a first-team all-league performer and is one of the

best defensive catchers in the state.

**David Allen (senior- RHP/OF):** The unquestioned ace of this McNary team. Allen was the workhorse for the Celtics on the hill last season, throwing 56 innings on the season and recording an ERA of 1.12 and striking out 30. Allen is also expected to be one of McNary top performers at the plate — he hit .321 last season.

"I think offensively, we'll be a solid group one through nine," Keeker said.

While Allen is expected to eat up a lot of innings on the mound, it is unknown at this point what the rest of the McNary pitching rotation will look like.

"Our biggest question marks will be pitchers two, three, four and five," Keeker said. "We'll just have to see how they perform in a varsity game."

Senior Devin Bedoya saw some time on the hill last year and will be called upon to step into a bigger role this season. Junior Rennick Jeffries will also see time on the mound, despite having no pitching experience at the varsity level.

"(Jeffries) has a lot of potential," Keeker said. "He has arguably some of the best stuff on our roster."

Nigel Harris and Robert Benson will also be expected to throw.

One thing McNary will want to clean up on this season is their defensive play. The Celtics averaged more than three errors per contest last year — including a season-high nine errors in their season-ending loss to Centennial.

However, Keeker does expect this team to be a little more electric on the bases this season — the Celtics swiped 32 bags in 2018 and are hoping to pump that number up in 2019.

"Our team speed has been better than it has been in the past," Keeker said. "Overall speed at different positions and on the base paths will al-



Returning first-team all-leaguer Jacob Jackson will be relied upon to carry the McNary offense this season. The senior hit .395 last year with 16 extra-base hits and 26 runs scored.

low us to do a few more things offensively."

While this McNary squad does have some holes, the Celtics should be in position for the postseason by the time mid-May rolls around.

"Our core goals and core expectations for every single year is to be the best baseball team we can possibly be," McNary

head coach Larry Keeker said. "This particular team, with the number of seniors we have coming back, we're at a good point."

"From our point of view, we're definitely thinking that this could be a playoff team. There's no doubt about that."

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