

Sandy spoils McNary's senior night

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

After dropping their final four games in Mountain Valley Conference play, McNary was hoping to get back on the right foot before postseason play begins next week.

But in the final home game of the season, the Celtics had their senior night spoiled by the Sandy Pioneers, as McNary was non-competitive for the majority of the game in their 13-2 loss on Tuesday, May 14.

Needless to say, this was not the way the Celtics wanted their home season to end.

"At this point, we're just going to have to try and flush this effort," McNary head coach Larry Keeker said.

McNary's downfall in the beginning of the contest was on the defensive side. The Celtics made six errors in the first two innings and allowed Sandy to jump out to a 5-0 lead.

While the Celtics were dealing with some injuries and made some lineup accommodations to get all the seniors more playing time, Keeker acknowledged his displeasure with the defensive miscues.

"Our defense was very poor. There was no excuse for it," Keeker said. "We just didn't play well."

Nigel Harris, who was coming back from a high ankle sprain, pitched the first two innings for the Celtics. Harris came out for the top of the third, but was replaced by Alex Simpson after giving up back-to-back doubles and



KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings
McNary pitcher Nigel Harris unleashes a fastball towards the plate in the Celtics 13-2 loss to Sandy.

not recording an out in the frame.

Simpson hasn't got a lot of time on the bump this season, but still provided some quality innings for the Celtics in his outing. The junior right-hander threw three innings and gave up only one run, keeping his team in striking distance.

"In the few innings he's had this season, Alex has shown us that there is some potential there," Keeker said.

Sandy increased their lead to 6-0 in the top of the third, but McNary was able to respond in the bottom half of the frame.

Jacob Jackson started the inning off by reaching on an

error by the Sandy shortstop — he was pinch run for by Alex Tavera. Simpson earned a free pass on the next at-bat and both runners would move into scoring position on a wild pitch just moments later.

Tavera scored on another wild pitch to give McNary their first run of the game. Simpson would come home when Robert Benson roped an RBI-double that one-hopped the wall in left field, cutting the Sandy lead to 7-2.

The Celtics had several other opportunities to continue to cut into the Sandy lead, but could never take advantage.

After leaving a pair of run-

ners stranded in the bottom of the fourth, McNary loaded up the bases in the fifth. But after working the count to full, Sandy pitcher Tanon Main struck out Darren Kinnaid to end the threat.

In the bottom of the sixth, McNary would once again pack the bags after drawing a pair of walks to go along with a single from Simpson.

Noah Bach, however, couldn't come through for the Celtics as he grounded into a fielder's choice.

"We faced some quality high school pitchers tonight," Keeker said. "We have to be really focused and have our competitive juices in place in order to deal with quality teams because our margin of error is so small."

"We can't afford to be lackadaisical."

Benson, who came in to pitch in the top of the sixth, threw a scoreless inning to start his outing. But Sandy teed off on him in the top of the seventh, pushing six runs across the board to go up by double-digits.

Despite finishing below .500 this season, McNary was still able to qualify for the playoffs this season. Their first-round game will be on the road on Monday, May 20 and will likely come against one of the top five ranked teams in the state.

"We have to commit and be fully prepared for Monday because we'll be getting ready to face a top-tier team," McNary catcher Ty Covalt said.

TENNIS,

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other McNary boys to pick up a win on the singles side as he defeated Grant Burk from Mountain View 8-5 in the first round of the consolation bracket.

The freshman doubles team of Grant Goesch and Jaden Rhines won McNary's only other match in the first round of the consolation doubles tournament (8-6).

"Grant and Jaden both improved by leaps and bounds the last three weeks of league play. They also played their best tennis at districts and started to have some flashes of greatness," McAvoy said. "I think they got a glimpse

of what they could do with more experience and practice. I am hoping to build on that next year."

"They have a huge upside and I look forward to see them develop as players and as young men the next three years."

The McNary boys team had to break in a lot of new players this year, but McAvoy was pleased with the fight that they showed every day.

"The word for the season was courage. Kids showed a lot of courage to come out and try a new sport and then to have to go out day after day and play versus competition that was at a pretty high level. But nobody quit and nobody complained. I'm proud of them," McAvoy said.



KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings
McNary's Jorie Skipper attempts to send a backhand shot over the net in a match from earlier this season.

Wilson honored

Former Keizertimes G.I. Wilson won first place in the humor category of the Excellence In Craft competition at the annual Northwest Outdoor Writers Association Conference last week in Wenatchee, Washington. The article, which ran in the Keizertimes in December of 2018, is titled Buford and the Willamette Sturgeon.

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