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## McNary rallies for first round victory

BY MATT RAWLINGS  
*Of the Keizertimes*

After trailing for the entirety of the game, Alexa Cepeda had a chance to be a hero for the Celtics softball team in the bottom of the sixth. And the McNary center fielder took full advantage of the opportunity.

Cepeda came to the plate in the bottom of the sixth with the bases loaded and two outs with the Celtics trailing 4-2. After working the count to full and fouling off four pitches, Cepeda lined a three-run double to the wall in left field, bringing in the go-ahead score and allowing McNary to come away with a 5-4 win over North Medford in their first round playoff game on Monday, May 21.

“It felt awesome. I love being there for my team and I love that I was the one to be in that position to help us pull it off,” Cepeda said.

McNary head coach Kevin Wise added: “When we get to the playoffs, Alexa is one of those kids that turns it up another notch.”

After suffering an early exit in last year’s postseason, this McNary crew needed some extra resiliency to make sure they didn’t suffer that same fate this time around.

The Celtics found themselves in a 2-0 hole after two innings as North Medford’s small-ball approach turned out to be successful for them early on against McNary pitcher Faith Danner.

Danner had to deal with a lot of traffic on the bases throughout her complete-game outing. But the star-senior always found ways to minimize damage as she only gave up three earned runs, despite surrendering 11 hits.

“I pitch a lot better in

pressure situations,” Danner said. “I’m able to focus in pretty well and I don’t let mental stuff get to me.”

“I was not ready for this to be my last game in this uniform.”

“I was not ready for this to be my last game in this uniform.”

— Faith Danner

(McNary pitcher)

The Black Tornadoes struck again in the top of the third on an RBI-single by Shahr Miles to put North Medford up 3-0. McNary, however, was able to respond in the bottom half of the inning.

After an infield single from Cepeda and a walk from Abbi Covalt, McNary shortstop Taylor Ebbs ripped a base hit up the middle that scored Cepeda from first to cut the lead to 3-1.

Both teams went scoreless in the fourth inning, but North Medford pushed another one across in the top of the fifth thanks to an RBI-single to center field by Lauren Berry.

The ball got to the wall on the base hit due to a misplay by Cepeda in center field. Berry pushed the envelope and tried to make it to third, but a perfect throw from Cepeda nailed the North Medford shortstop at third base.

Cepeda would make another rally-saving play in the following frame.

With runners on second and third and two outs, Grace Johnson roped a line drive into left center field that would have easily scored both runners, but Cepeda made a fantastic leaping catch to get the Celtics out of trouble.

“We always pride ourselves on our hitting, but defense is the thing that really keeps us in the game especially when it’s a close game,” Cepeda said.

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KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings

Kate Ronning (left) celebrates with Alexa Cepeda (right) after McNary records the final out in their 5-4 victory against North Medford in the first round of the OSAA Playoffs. Cepeda hit a three-run double to give the Celtics the lead in the bottom of the sixth.



KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings

Kamryn Miller slides safely across home plate for the go-ahead run.



KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings

Faith Danner threw a complete game for the Celtics, giving up just three earned runs on the night.

## Celts send 11 athletes to podium at districts



Submitted

Isabella Walker runs the first leg of the girls 4x400 relay race at the Mountain Valley Conference District Meet.

BY MATT RAWLINGS  
*Of the Keizertimes*

Although they didn’t qualify any kids for the state meet, the McNary track and field team was able to get 11 athletes (six boys and five girls) onto the podium at the Mountain Valley Conference District last weekend (May 16-18) at Summit High School.

Despite dealing with rain and wind for most of the meet, the Celtics had multiple athletes set new personal records.

“I feel really good about what we did,” McNary head coach Frank Gauntz said. “It wasn’t ideal conditions to put really good times down, but the majority of our kids had a really good meet.”

Two of the top athletes for the McNary boys this season have been sprinters Ethan Martin and Bryan Hernandez, both of whom were hopeful to snag a spot at the state meet.

But after making it to the 100-meter finals, Hernandez pulled his hamstring 20 meters into the race and

was unable to finish. He also had to be scratched from the 200m finals due to the injury.

Martin, on the other hand, ended up rolling his ankle while warming up for the 4x100 relay and couldn’t perform up to what he was capable of.

Losing both athletes was a huge blow to this Celtics squad.

“It was really unfortunate to lose those guys,” Gauntz said. “It put a damper mood on the guys side, but there’s nothing we can do. It was just kind of a fluke thing.”

The two top performers for the boys team were Logan Anderson and Sunny Hoang.

Anderson took fifth in the javelin with his personal best throw of 145-feet-5-inches while Hoang placed fifth in the pole vault, beating his old personal record by nearly a foot (12-3).

Cole Garland placed sixth in the triple jump with his personal-best leap of 40-2.5. McLean Schmidt took

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