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Hawley and Jackson share prestigious honor



McNary student-athletes Abigail Hawley (left) and Jacob Jackson were recognized as the male and female athletes of the year by the Salem Sports and Breakfast Club.

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

The Salem Sports and Breakfast Club (SSBC) has been recognizing outstanding athletes in the Salem-Keizer area since 1964. And on Friday, May 31, the club added two McNary senior athletes to their historic fraternity.

Abigail Hawley was honored with the Harold Hauk Award for Female Prep Athlete of the Year while Jacob Jackson was given the Oliver Huston Award for Male Prep Athlete of the Year.

It was the first time since 1999 that two McNary athletes won were given Athlete of the year honors by SSBC.

"We have put in so much work throughout our high school career, and it was just really nice for us to get recognized," Hawley said. "It's also great for McNary to get the recognition because there are a lot of talented athletes here."

"I want to thank all my past coaches for the competitive mentality they put in my head."

Hawley was a four-year varsity player for the girls soccer squad and took home first-team all-Mountain Valley Conference honors in 2018. It was the second straight season she received the first-team all-conference nod.

Despite playing a litany of different positions over the course of her career, Hawley was the leading goal-scorer for the Celtics in each of the last three years.

"Abbie is a born leader. Since her freshman year she has been a team player, accept-

ing any role and position our coaching staff asked her to play," McNary girls soccer coach A.J. Nash said.

"On and off the field, her competitive mentality was one of the best assets she brought to the team. Her effort was always 110 percent. Abbie was a leader by example on the field, and was our go-to player for big goals in big games."

Hawley was also a four-year varsity player for the girls basketball team and helped the Celtics reach the playoffs in all four years of her career.

This season, Hawley was the unquestioned leader of a very young team. Despite starting the season with a 1-8 record, McNary was able to go on a seven-game win streak and eventually earned a spot in the postseason. She led the team in scoring with 13.3 points per game and was named first-team all-league.

"It was really humbling to see the kind of progress that we made," Hawley said. "We were the underdogs all season, but just being able to put the idea in the younger girls' heads that anything is possible ... I'm just really proud of that."

Jackson was also a two-sport star for McNary over his four years of high school, competing in football and baseball — he also played basketball for the Celtics until this season.

As one of the most versatile athletes in the state, Jackson received three different all-conference honors in football last fall.

As a free safety Jackson had 62 tackles, five interceptions

and was named first-team all-league. On the other side of the ball, he caught 31 passes for 354 yards and earned an honorable mention nod at receiver. He also was recognized as a honorable mention kicker.

Jackson was able to do this all while playing with injuries to his wrist, elbow and knee.

"It's my senior year. I wasn't at 100 percent, but I'm going to fight every minute just to make sure that I can make this the greatest experience I can have."

But what was most special to Jackson was not his individual accolades, it was that his team clinched their first conference title in 13 years with a 40-33 win over South Salem in their regular season finale.

"I got really really emotional after that game. It was probably one of the happiest moments that I have had in high school."

However, the injury bug bit Jackson once again during the spring, forcing the star shortstop to miss the last chunk of the season. But Jackson refused to get discouraged about the situation.

"Injuries kind of altered the season, but you learn as an athlete growing up that things are going to happen and not always go your way," Jackson said.

Despite being banged up, Jackson still batted .316 with a .443 on-base percentage and nine extra-base hits. He also stepped up as a leader according to head coach Larry Keeker, and helped the Celtics reach the postseason for the second time in three years.

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8 Celtics receive all-conference recognition



Taylor Ebbs was recognized as the Mountain Valley Conference player of the year. The sophomore shortstop batted .628 this season with seven homers and 60 RBIs.

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

The McNary softball team had eight players receive all-Mountain Valley Conference recognition for their excellent play throughout the 2019 season.

Taylor Ebbs- (sophomore) shortstop: Player of the Year.

Ebbs stood out for this McNary team as not only the best player in the league, but one of the best players in the state. She batted an incredible .628 with seven homers and 60 RBIs. She also had 22 extra-base hits on the year and only struck out three times. Despite only being a sophomore, Ebbs excelled in a

leadership role the Celtics this season.

What her coach (Kevin Wise says):

"Taylor is a natural leader on and off the field, and probably one of the best I have had the opportunity to coach. That is impressive considering she is a sophomore. The greatest asset for Taylor, is that she is very humble. I have seen athletes who are very good at that they do, but you can't stand to be around them because they let you know how great they are. Taylor is the exact opposite of that."

Faith Danner- (senior) pitcher: Pitcher of the year.

Danner has been a four-year starter in the circle for the Celtics and has received all-conference recognition in each season. But she saved her best for last during her senior campaign, going 17-8 on the season with a 3.62 ERA over 135.1 innings, with only 32 walks and 65 strikeouts. Danner also had a marvelous season at the plate, hitting .434 with 38 RBIs, which was second on the team.

What her coach says:

"I can't put into words what Faith has meant to the program over the course of her four years here. She has brought a lot of joy and laughter, a great attitude, hard work, and is one of the

most consistent pitchers in the state. I think it would be hard to find a pitcher who hits spots as well as Faith does, and she has great movement."

Alexa Cepeda- (junior) outfielder: First-team all-league

As the top leadoff hitter in the league, Cepeda led the team in runs scored (48), and was second on the team in batting average (.495), on-base percentage (.560) and in doubles (10). She also proved to be one of the top defensive center fielders in the MVC.

What her coach says:

"When you have your lead-off hitter getting on base a majority of the time, it sets the

tone for the rest of the team. The great thing is, even when we had the innings where she was not leading off, she was putting balls in play and moving and scoring runners."

Abbi Covalt- (sophomore) infielder: Second-team all-league

Covalt was third on the team with 40 runs scored and batted .404 on the season with seven extra-base hits and 27 RBIs. She also proved to be a leader in the infield as one of the scrappiest players on the team.

What her coach says:

"Abbi is a true competitor. She absolutely loves the game and has more passion for it than anyone I have coached. She is

the player who will go work for a couple of hours after a practice or game to fix a weakness in her swing or defense."

Kate Ronning- (sophomore) infielder: Second-team all-league

Ronning controlled the hot corner (third base) all season for the Celtics and was arguable the best infielder on the squad. At the plate, she batted .466 and was tied for the team lead in doubles (11). She also scored 26 runs on the season and knocked in 22 runs.

What her coach says:

"Kate is one of the smartest

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McNary pitcher Faith Danner was named the Mountain Valley Conference pitcher of the year after finishing the year with a 17-8 record with a 3.62 ERA.