

Celts conclude spring practice with momentum



KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings

McNary quarterback Erik Barker gets set to fire a pass.

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

The McNary football squad doesn't play their first game until September. But their preparation for the 2019 season is well underway.

The Celtics held nine spring practices over the last three weeks, with their last one taking place Thursday, June 6.

More than 100 kids came out in half-rack (helmet and shoulder pads) to work on drills and fundamentals, as well as offensive and defensive schemes.

Considering how many his kids play multiple sports, Auvinen was really impressed with the turnout.

"We're trying to encourage these kids to be two and three-sport athletes, instead of specializing," Auvinen said. "We're trying not to stretch these kids too far, but we want them to just compete as much as they can."

While he is impressed with the overall effort from his players, Auvinen did mention that his guys are still knocking the rust off.

"The last few weeks have been good because we have had some really good efforts," Auvinen said. "But it can be hard to have cohesiveness at this time of year."

However, what Auvinen was really pleased with was the play of his younger kids, specifically the sophomores.

"We have been really impressed with the development we're seeing from our sopho-

mores," Auvinen said. "They are going to put pressure on the older kids and they are going to beat some guys out."

"I've said from day one that the best player will play. The older kids will get the first shot, but it will ultimately come down to who is playing the best, and that could be a freshman, sophomore, junior or senior."

Over the course of the three weeks, the Celtics hosted representatives from multiple big-time colleges to watch practice, including Oregon State, UCLA, Utah, Boise State, Arizona, USC, Cal and Kansas State — the Celtics have two Division I prospects in quarterback Erik Barker and linebacker Junior Walling.

"I think it was really exciting for the kids. It was pretty hectic here for a few days," Auvinen said.

McNary knows that they have some big shoes to fill before the season starts. The Celtics lose three all-league performers in the secondary and two on the offensive and defensive line. But Auvinen believes that he will have kids that step up over the summer.

"We have really got some openings to fill on both sides of the ball," Auvinen said. "We're hoping to see some progression as the fall comes up. But we got some good things going right now. This group is starting to gel."

"We're getting better individually, but we're also getting better as a team. We have kids that want to be successful."



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McNary head coach Jeff Auvinen gives instructions to the Celtics offense

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