South Medford takes down McNary

By MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

The good news for the McNary football squad is that the brutality of their rough non-conference schedule is finally over

The bad news is that the Celtics couldn't come away with a single non-league victory for the second season in a row.

Despite taking the lead early on, McNary couldn't rally back from South Medford's 21-point second quarter as the Celtics fell to the Panthers 31-9 on Friday, Oct. 4, dropping their record to 0-5.

"South Medford was a little bit better than I expected, but we came out and competed. It just seems that breaks are not going our way in many facets at the moment," McNary head coach Jeff Auvinen said.

One of the tough breaks for McNary wass the inability to stay healthy. The Celtics were without their best offensive lineman in Michael Ridgway, who was out sick. McNary linebacker/running back Junior Walling got banged up in the first half and played limited snaps for the remainder of the game. Receiver Noah Lelack and linebacker Layton Thurlow were also injured in the game and didn't return.

The Celtics defense forced a turnover on South Medford's first drive of the game as Walling was able to snuff out a screen pass and come away with an interception — which was returned to the Panthers three-yard line.

KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings
McNary receiver Riley Flores stiff-arms a defender after cathcing a pass.

After being stuffed on their first two offensive plays, McNary quarterback Erik Barker found Lelack in the end zone for a three-yard touchdown to put the Celtics on top 6-0.

McNary held onto the lead until the end of the quarter, but in the following period, the South Medford offense found their rhythm.

South Medford quarterback Toren Tuttle threw for three touchdown passes in the second quarter, and the Panthers took advantage of a muffed punt by McNary to grab the 21-6 advantage.

"Defense played really well throughout the game. They set us up for that first touchdown. They were just out there the whole half and ended up getting a little tired," Auvinen said.

The Celtics got a 32-yard field goal from Daniel Mood to give McNary a little momentum going into the half, but Barker threw a 50-yard pick-six in the third quarter, which gave South Medford the lead for good.

"We struggled with out consistency on offense. They battled, but we made too many mistakes on that end," Auvinen said.

Most teams might be discouraged after losing their first five games to open the season. McNary however, also started 0-5 last season and came back to win the Mountain Valley Conference title, so there is still confidence in the locker room that this team can turn this around.

"It's not what we wanted, but it eerily feels like last year at this point, so we're going to stay with it and we believe that anything can happen," Auvinen said.

KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings
Anthony Cruz prepares to send a free kick upfield.

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thing to do to stop them is communicate with your defenders. The organization keeps everyone where they need to be at the right time," Villarreal said. "As a part of the goalkeeping aspect, it's just about staying on your toes and being ready for everything."

The Storm's last chance to score came in the final two minutes when Marshall got the angle on a McNary defender and sent a left-footed kick towards the net. Villarreal was able to dive and knock the ball away, but Summit's Kamdon Simmons controlled the deflection and quickly fired a shot at the empty goal before Villarreal could recover and get back into position. The shot, however, was rushed and sailed high over the post.

The Celtics played keep-away in the final 90 seconds to preserve the upset victory.

McNary will try to play at that same high-level when they return to the field on Friday, Oct. 18 when they travel to take on Sprague at 4 p.m.

"The key is discipline. We can't have an amazing game like this and then start to get cocky. We have to come in with that same mentality and that same hunger that we played with today," Lopez said.

puzzle answers

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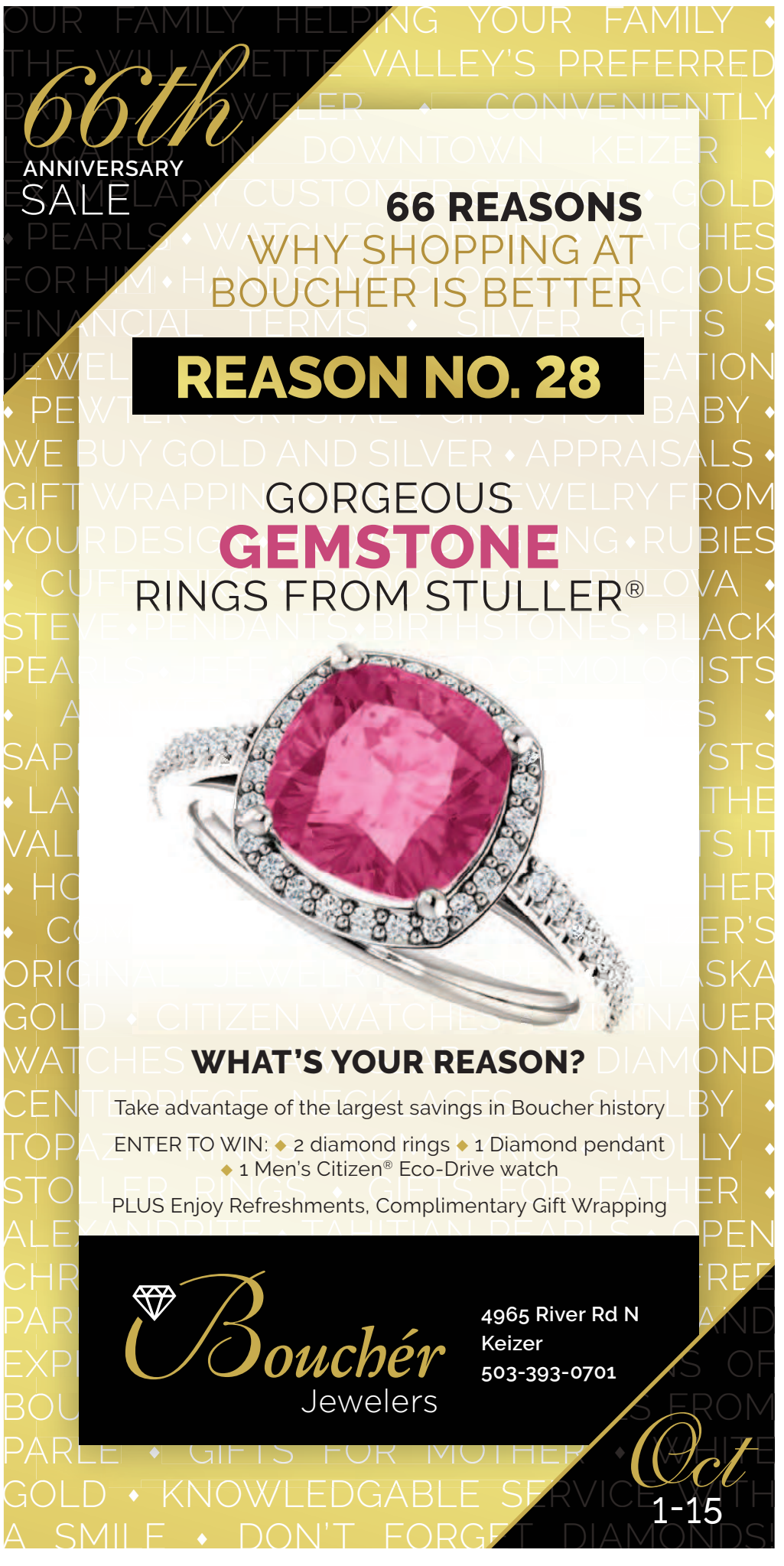
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