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## Smythe highlights new HOF class

By **MATT RAWLINGS**  
Of the Keizertimes

For the second time this year, McNary High School inducted new members into their prestigious athletic Hall of Fame, led by one of the best football coaches in state history, Tom Smythe.

Smythe, along with Luke Atwood, Niki Hayhurst Volz and the 2001 state champion football team were all honored in a ceremony on Thursday, Oct. 17 at Quality Inn & Suites.

In 34 years of coaching high school football in Oregon, Smythe won 278 games and three state titles in three different decades (1987, 1997, 2001).

Smythe won two of his three state championships with McNary, where he was the head coach from 1995-2006. In his tenure with the Celtics, the 78-year-old accrued a record of 105-29 and five conference championships to go along with his two state titles.

Smythe has had many incredible moments over his illustrious career, but one in particular that stands out is the '97 state champion-

"I feel so blessed to have coached in Keizer, Oregon for the McNary Celts. What a beautiful time."

— Tom Smythe  
Former McNary coach

ship game, where the Celtics took down Beaverton by a score of 51-48 — which still holds the record for most combined points in a state championship game. Smythe believes that it was the best state final game ever played.

While he was known as an offensive innovator, what Smythe prided himself most on was making sure that his kids were enjoying the game of football.

"When a season was over, I want kids to be able to look me in the eye and say 'Coach, that was really fun,'" Smythe said. "I think sometimes, coaches tend to take



Tom Smythe (middle) stands with McNary athletic director Scott Gragg (left) and principal Erik Jespersen after being entered into McNary's athletic Hall of Fame.

the fun out of the game. And to me, the fun is the most important part of the game."

Once the ceremony had wrapped up, Smythe grabbed the microphone and gave an emotional tribute to the Celtics faithful.

"Twelve years at McNary. I can hardly put it in perspective without tearing up and crying. I always told my players that it was okay for

men to cry. And now I find myself in that same situation, where I can hardly speak," Smythe said. "I feel so blessed to have coached in Keizer, Oregon for the McNary Celts. What a beautiful time."

Those in attendance erupted in cheers at the conclusion of Smythe's speech, with the biggest applause coming from the members of his '01 state title team,

who he was happy to share the spotlight with.

McNary's '01 football squad — also known as the "Giant Killers" — had one of the most dominating postseason runs in state history, winning each of their playoff games by two touchdowns or more. But it was a loss to South Salem early in the season that lit a fire under this team.

"We used that loss as motivation," Smythe said. "I've had players tell me that if we hadn't lost to South Salem, we probably wouldn't have won (the championship)."

The Celtics finished the season with a 13-1 record, which was capped off with a 35-10 victory over Sheldon in the state championship.

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## Big third quarter propels McNary to victory



McNary running back Nico Sandoval runs past the Bend defense for a 52-yard score to give the Celtics their first lead of the game in the third quarter.

By **MATT RAWLINGS**  
Of the Keizertimes

The McNary football team has been no stranger to halftime deficits. The Celtics have trailed after two quarters in six of their seven contests so far this season.

In their annual homecoming game, McNary found themselves in a similar position, losing by double-digits going into the break. But when they came out of the locker room, the Celtics looked like a brand new team.

After being shut out in the first half, the Celtics scored

21 points in the third quarter in route to their 28-20 victory over Bend on Friday, Oct. 18, moving to 2-0 in Mountain Valley Conference play.

Junior Walling led the way for McNary with 25 carries for 183 yards, to go along with his 12 tackles in the Celtics victory.

"We knew that we needed to be confident and we knew that we needed to play with some heart. The seniors took leadership and we just put it all together. That was a real fun game," Walling said.

McNary quarterback Erik Barker had his best perfor-

mance of the season in this one, throwing for 198 yards and a touchdown.

"I think the kids are starting to believe in themselves and believe in each other. That was huge for us to be able to rise to the challenge," McNary head coach Jeff Auvinen said.

The Celtics defense struggled early on with Bend's double-wing offensive attack as the Lava Bears scored on their opening possession thanks to a 31-yard run from Nate Denney.

After their first drive stalled in Bend territory, the Celtics

offense drove the length of the field thanks to a 39-yard completion from Barker to Riley Flores, as well as a pair of first down runs from both Barker and Walling.

But on fourth-and-goal from the Lava Bears one-yard line, Barker couldn't reach the end zone on a quarterback draw, and the Celtics were forced to turn the ball over on downs.

Driving 79 yards and getting nothing out of it seemed to be a momentum killer for the Celtics as the first quarter came to a close. To make matters worse, McNary turned the ball over near midfield on their first possession of the second quarter, and Bend took advantage with another rushing score from Denney, which put the Lava Bears up 12-0.

Bend would take that same lead into the half. But when the Celtics got the ball to begin the third quarter, it didn't take long for the momentum to shift.

Walling's 40-yard run on the third play of the second half got McNary inside the red zone. Four plays later, the senior running back dove into the end zone from a yard out, making it a one possession game at 12-7.

The Celtics got the ball back almost immediately after forcing the Lava Bears to go three-and-out. From there, it only took McNary one play to grab their first lead.

Running back Nico Sandoval took a pitch to left, cut upfield and went untouched into the end zone from 52

yards out, putting McNary on top 14-12.

"When I saw that gap, I just turned it on," Sandoval said.

Sandoval's long touchdown run wouldn't be McNary's last big play of the quarter. On a beautiful play-action look that froze the Bend linebacking core, Barker threw a dime on a corner route to Noah Lelack, and the senior receiver juiced out a defense back and dove across the goal line for the Celtics third touchdown in less than nine minutes.

But it wasn't just the offense that made adjustments after halftime. The McNary front seven made life a lot more difficult for Bend in the second half, forcing the run-heavy squad to rely more on their passing attack.

"We came out in the second half just blowing everything up. I was really proud of our defense," Walling said.

After Lelack's touchdown made the score 21-12, Bend responded early in the fourth quarter. Denney scored his third touchdown of the night, and the Lava Bears got the two-point conversion to make it a one-point game.

Bend's defense got their first stop of the second half on McNary's next drive, but when the Lava Bears got the ball back, quarterback Cole Musgrave muffed the snap from under center, and the Celtics were able to dive on the loose ball, allowing their offense to regain possession.

The Celtics offensive line dominated the trenches in the fourth quarter, allowing

Walling room for a 32-yard run down to the one-yard line. Walling would punch it in moments later to put McNary on top 28-20.

"I want the ball in my hands, so I always feel very comfortable in those situations. I had a lot of faith in my linemen to make it easy to get the job done," Walling said.

Bend drove down to the McNary 35-yard line on their final drive. But on fourth-and-nine, Junior Nunez broke up Musgrave's pass intended for Sebastian Edwards. The Celtics took over on downs and were able to run the clock out thanks to a pair of first down runs from Walling.

"I never felt secure until after that fourth down play. But we had some kids come up big down the stretch," Auvinen said.

McNary's victory sets up a senior night showdown with the West Salem Titans — the only other unbeaten team in the MVC. Kickoff is Friday, Oct. 25 at 7:15 p.m.

The Celtics pulled off a big upset last season at West Salem, and the Titans will be looking for revenge in a game that will likely decide the league championship.

"I know that West has had this game circled on their calendar for a while. I think these kids are going in confident because we have beat (West Salem) two of the last three years and I believe that they will rise to the challenge," Auvinen said. "We seem to have a different psyche this time of year."