

Top sports stories of 2019

Hawley and Jackson share prestigious honor

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.

Hawley was a four-year varsity player for the girls soccer team 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 her last

three years (2016-18).

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.

She led the team in scoring her senior season with 13.3 points per game and was named first-team all-league.

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 his senior year.

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 an honorable mention kicker.

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

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.

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.



Abigail Hawley (left) and Jacob Jackson were named the Salem Sports and Breakfast Club's athletes of the year for 2019.



Anneke Titus

Titus heading to World Cup

Anneke Titus, a senior at McNary High, has been competing in roller derby for the last six years.

What started as a fun after school-activity has turned into a deep passion for Titus, which is one of the reasons why she will be heading north of the border this summer.

Last month, Titus was notified by the Junior Roller Derby Association (JRDA) that she has been selected to compete for Team USA at the

Junior Roller Derby World Cup in Saskatchewan, Canada.

Titus will join a team of 19 other skaters considered to be some of the top junior roller derby athletes in the country.

"I really couldn't believe that I got in. I started crying as soon as I found out. I know that I'm talented, but I never thought I was at that level," Titus said. "I still can't describe how excited I am about it."

Titus first got into the

sport at the age of eight when her mom joined a Cherry City Roller Derby adult team. Three years later, a junior team called the Cherry Blossoms was created, which gave Titus a chance to compete.

Even though she was only allowed to practice at first and couldn't make contact with other skaters, Titus fell in love with the sport.

"I was so excited when the junior team started," Titus said. "This is my main passion. I was always a sporty kid growing up, but I just fell in love with roller derby."

In her time with the Cherry Blossoms, Titus has gotten the opportunity to compete in bouts with the Rose City Rollers in Portland and even got to go to Los Angeles, Calif. for a tournament with her Cherry Blossom teammates.

After seeing her grow in her skill level, Titus was encouraged to go to Portland for a tryout for the World Cup team.

In late-September, Titus participated in what she called a "grueling" tryout that was focused heavily on conditioning, followed by a two-hour scrimmage.

"I was trembling by the end of it. I was so sore," Titus said. "It was very physically demanding, but also very fun."

A couple weeks later, Titus got the call to join the team.

"It's the highlight of my athletic career. I never thought I would be up this high," Titus said.

"I really have to credit my coaches over the years. I feel like they have really helped me hone my skills, especially in the last couple years."

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Smythe highlights HOF class



Tom Smythe (middle) stands with McNary athletic director Scott Gragg (left) and principal Erik Jespersen.

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 championship 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 playing the game of football.

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

"My 12 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.

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 game.

Atwood was an assistant coach on the '01 squad. But before that, he was one of the top athletes in McNary history.

In 1996, Atwood was the quarterback for the McNary football squad, leading the team to a league championship and helping them earn a berth in the state semifinal game. He earned all-state honorable mention status and participated in the East-West Shrine Game for the top players in the state.

On the hardwood, Atwood was a three-year letterman for

the Celtics basketball team, earning all-league honors in his senior season and leading McNary to a conference title and a fifth-place finish at the state tournament.

Atwood also excelled on the diamond as an all-state outfielder for the McNary baseball squad. Because of all of his accomplishments during his senior year, Atwood was named athlete of the year by the Salem Sports and Breakfast Club in 1997.

Volz was also one of the best multiple-sport athletes in McNary history, and is still the only female Celt to receive All-State honors in two different sports (volleyball and soccer).

Volz led the McNary volleyball team to three Valley League titles during her tenure with the Celts, including a fifth-place finish at the state tournament in 1998.

Volz was selected as the Valley League player of the year in her senior season, as well as the all-region player of the year in volleyball.

In softball, Volz experienced similar success, helping the Celts win a conference title in all four years of her career. And in her senior season, Volz took home the same individual accolades as she did during volleyball season, once again winning all-region player of the year and Valley League player of the year.

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