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Saxons spoil Celtics senior night

By MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

Senior night featured one of McNary's best defensive performances of the season. Unfortunately for the Celtics, the same couldn't be said for the offense.

McNary failed to reach the 30-point mark for just the second time in the conference season as the sixth-ranked Saxons defeated the Celtics 56-29 on Friday, Feb. 29.

Leah Doutt was the only McNary player in double-figures with 10 points.

"I thought our effort and intensity were good. We carried out our defensive scout, but their defensive pressure made us a little tired offensively and I think that showed in the third quarter

when we were struggling to score. They're a great team with multiple offensive threats," McNary head coach Elizabeth Doran said.

Doult had five straight points to start the game out. Then, McNary post Bekah Grimmer had back-to-back hoops as South Salem ended the period with just a two-point lead.

The Saxons had trouble with McNary's 2-3 zone in the early going. The defensive scheme especially affected South Salem guard Hillary James.

James, the Mountain Valley Conference player of the year, was held to just five points on 2-for-12 shooting.

"I thought we did a good job of lowering Hillary's points, which is what our

"I thought our effort and intensity were good. We carried out the defensive scout, but their defensive pressure made us a little tired offensively..."

— Elizabeth Doran,
McNary head coach

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Bekah Grimmer goes up for a shot after battling for position on the low block. Grimmer finished with eight points in McNary's 56-29 loss to South Salem on Friday, Feb. 28.



Nate Meithof drives past a South Salem defender on Friday, Feb. 28.

McNary falls flat in second half against South Salem

By MATT RAWLINGS
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What started as a competitive ballgame got out of hand on the scoreboard in the second half.

McNary had the score within six early in the third quarter, but second-ranked South Salem outscored the Celtics 38-11 in the last 13 minutes of the game to earn the 83-50 victory in the regular season finale on Friday Feb. 29.

Nate Meithof led the Celtics with 18 points and Jando Gonzalez added 11, but McNary had no answer for South Salem's Trey Galbraith, who lit up the gym for 39 points and set the Saxons new school record for 3-pointers in a game (10).

Gonzalez, a freshman, talked about the challenge of guarding a 19-year old senior in Galbraith.

"It was a tough. He had a lot of combo moves and he was just shooting from everywhere. It was a challenge, but

I believe that this experience will help me grow as a player," Gonzalez said.

After losing their top player from last season in Jaden Nielsen-Skinner, the Saxons reloaded with six incoming transfers to easily win the Mountain Valley Conference with a 14-0 league record — only three of their league games were within single-digits.

McNary gained the upper hand early in the opening quarter thanks to a triple from Gonzalez and back-to-back hoops from Tyler O'Connor.

A floater from Meithof and a bucket in the post from O'Connor put McNary on top 11-8, but the Saxons went on a 12-0 run to take a nine-point lead. The Celtics, however, were able to score the last five points of the quarter to cut the lead to four.

"We were playing more like a team on both sides of the court," Meithof said. "We had really good ball movement."

A trio of McNary turnovers led to some easy baskets for the Saxons. But after trailing by double-digits early in the second quarter, the Celtics fought back.

A baseline triple and a nifty lefty floater from Gonzalez trimmed the deficit to 32-26. Meithof and Gunner Smedema each hit jumpers before the end of the half, but South Salem still went to the break with a 40-32 advantage.

Despite the deficit, McNary head coach Ryan Kirch was quite pleased with the first half effort he saw from his squad.

"I thought we did an unbelievable job in the first half. They hit a couple of deep threes and we had a couple turnovers in the backcourt, but I thought we executed our game plan well and our kids played hard," Kirch said.

The two teams traded hoops to begin the third quarter. A put-back bucket from

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Ruberto and Villavazo pick up wins at state

By MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

The McNary wrestling squad sent four athletes to the state tournament, which took place at Memorial Coliseum Feb. 28-29. Although they weren't able to get anyone to the podium, the Celtics got multiple match victories from sophomore Aldo Villavazo and freshman Hunter Ruberto.

Villavazo, a 220-pounder, advanced in the bracket by receiving a bye in the first round before facing off against Eric Sheldon from Reynolds.

Villavazo held the lead late in the match, but Sheldon got a two-point takedown in the waning moments of regulation, tying the match at 10-10 and forcing overtime.

However, Sheldon had been called for stalling earlier in the match, and Villavazo took full advantage.

"Aldo did a really nice job of pushing the pace in overtime," McNary interim head coach Sam Martin said. "The Reynolds kid was pretty timid."

As Villavazo continued to go after Sheldon in the overtime period, Sheldon tried to back away every time, forcing the official to hit him with another stalling call, which gave Villavazo the 11-10 sudden victory, as well as a berth in the quarterfinals.

Villavazo ended up getting pinned in the third round of his quarterfinal match, then again in the consolation bracket, but that didn't take away from what he was able to accomplish in his first ever state meet.

"He proved that he belonged. He put his head down and got to work. He is already pumped for next year and I can't wait to see what he will do," Martin said.

Ruberto, who competed at 145 pounds, lost via major decision in his opening bout. But the freshman bounced back in a big way in his next two matches.

Ruberto got a bye in the first consolation round, then won an 8-3 decision over Sprague's Devin Jeanes. In the following

match, Ruberto gained a dominating victory over Aloha's Logan Moore, earning a fall early in the second round.

"Hunter was in a traditionally tough weight class, so to win two matches was definitely a huge confidence builder for him," Martin said. "I think he had a lot of nerves going into his first match, but the way he responded was awesome."

Ruberto was eliminated from the tournament after getting suffering a fall to Oregon City's Austin Nekvapil.

The Celtics also had Gilbert Parra wrestling in his second straight state meet. Parra just missed a victory in his first match, which was a 3-2 loss Uriel Rodriguez from Century. The McNary senior was unable to recover from the defeat as he lost his second match via major decision.

Dalila Hernandez competed as a freshman in the 190-pound girls tournament, but got pinned in the second round of both her matches.



McNary's Aldo Villavazo (blue singlet) advanced to the quarterfinal match at the state tournament.