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Keizer golf facilities remain open and safe



McNary Golf Club has taken numerous safety precautions, but can still stay open in spite of Gov. Kate Brown’s executive order.

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

Though public parks and the majority of gathering places have been shut down due to spread of COVID-19, golf is still an activity Keizerites can enjoy during the pandemic.

Despite Gov. Kate Brown releasing an executive order on Monday, March 23 that shut down many non-essential businesses, golf facilities like McNary Golf Club and Willow Lake Golf Center are allowed to stay open for the time being, so long as they adhere to a strict set of regulations that enforce social distancing.

“It means a lot that we’re able to stay open because people are experiencing a lot of stress in their daily lives. Golf brings people calm and allows people to get outdoors,” said Chip Sullivan, the PGA director of club operations at McNary Golf Club. “Even through we are all going through tough times, anyone can come out and enjoy the scenery and fresh air. I hope it will be a good safe haven for people.”

Rich Howard, the owner

of Willow Lake Golf Center, added similar sentiments.

“It means that we can stay solvent financially by staying open, but more importantly, we can still provide an outlet for people,” Howard said. “Cabin fever is a real thing so we love that people can come here, be outside and have conversations with people, as long as they are practicing social distancing. It gives us a sense of pride that we are able to provide this service to the community

After Brown’s executive order, Sullivan admitted that he wasn’t clear on whether or not he had to close McNary Golf Club.

“She seemed to mention everything except golf courses,” Sullivan said.

Sullivan actually closed the course March 21-23, but after getting clarification from the Oregon Golf Association, he was able to re-open the club on Tuesday,

March 24.

“Golf is allowed as long as the social distancing measures are in place, country club activities for a gathering would not be allowed. We categorized golf similar to a hike or outdoor activity, rather than through “essential travel” which is meant

to stop vacations,” said Leah Horner, on behalf of the Governor’s office.

However, McNary Golf Club will be enforcing strict guidelines in order for everyone

at the facility to remain safe.

Patrons will have to remain six feet from each other at all times and there can only be one customer in the pro shop at a time.

Unless it’s a family member, more than one person riding in a golf cart at a time is prohibited.

“We are doing everything we can do to protect

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McNary seniors may never see the diamond again

By MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

For many prep athletes, senior year is the highlight of their high school sports career.

Typically, senior athletes have the opportunity to be celebrated with their friends and family on senior night and get the chance to play their favorite sport for one last year.

Sadly, the spread of the COVID-19 virus is bringing senior seasons all over the country to an abrupt end.

While the OSAA hasn’t canceled the spring season just yet, all practices and games have been suspended until at least April 28.

If the season does indeed get canceled, all five seniors on the McNary baseball team — Jamison Martin, Ethan Patterson, Danny Okada, Alex Tavera and Alex Simpson — would see their prep careers come to a conclusion without a final send-off.

“I feel extremely bad for our senior class. There has been so much that is unknown through this whole process. I was hoping that we would have some kind of season, but those hopes are slowly diminishing,” McNary head coach Larry Keeker said. “I’m sure disappointed, but it’s out of our control.”

For Okada and Patterson, the 2020 season was supposed to be about proving themselves at the varsity level. Both players split time between JV and varsity last spring and were coming off of successful summer league seasons. Patterson even hit a pair of homers during the summer and was looking

forward to bringing that power to the Celtics this season.

“This has all been pretty shocking. I have been playing the game my whole life, and then it was just taken away instantly,” Patterson said. “I was really looking forward to being a leader on this team.”

Okada has been involved with the McNary music program since he was a freshman and commits a lot of hours to playing with the Celtic band, but he described how much he would miss not having a senior baseball season.

“I was really looking forward to having a bigger role with the varsity team. But I was also really excited for things like senior night and just being with my teammates,” Okada said. “Baseball has always been a stable thing in my life. It’s really weird to have all this free time right now.”

On April 15, it is expected the OSAA Executive Board will have a decision as to whether or not there will be a spring sports season. Even if the season is shortened, it would mean the world to players like Patterson and Okada to have any kind of season at all.

“It would be amazing if we just had some kind of season. Even if it was really short or if it went into June or July, I would just love to see a glimpse so that I could savor it and appreciate it,” Okada said.

Patterson added: “It would be a great thing to remember if we were to have a senior season. Parents would be there. We would have a se-

nior night. I can’t even put into words what baseball means to me and I want to end my time as a high school baseball player in the right way.”

Simpson and Tavera both played varsity baseball last season and were expected to be key contributors on the 2020 team. However, the connection that these two share goes beyond just being teammates.

Simpson lost his father as a 10-year old. Days after his dad’s funeral, Simpson hit his first ever home run for his McNary JBO team, a moment that he considers as his top baseball memory.

“It was a rough time, but I had my mom, my teammates and my coaches to help get me through it. And I had baseball. Baseball has been the sport I always stuck with,” Simpson said.

For Tavera, baseball took on a whole new meaning when his father Pancho, who was a long-time youth baseball coach in the Salem-Keizer area, passed away in 2015.

“Baseball was one of the bonds that I had with my dad. I kept on playing for him. I want to make him proud,” Tavera said. “Baseball has always helped me through it all, that’s why I want to prove that I can play in college.”

Even though his baseball career might continue into next season, Tavera doesn’t want his final year of high school baseball to end like this.

“It really sucks right now. It seemed like it was going to be a really fun year with all the young players and some of the new guys on our coaching staff,” Tavera said. “Senior night is what every senior athlete looks forward to for their entire career, and right now, it looks like we won’t be able to have one.”

Simpson, on the other hand, plans to enter the

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TOP: Alex Tavera celebrates a walkoff single last season against Sprague. BOTTOM: Alex Simpson hustles down the line.