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## McNary athletes return to the field



KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings

McNary football coach Jeff Auvinen gives instructions to his pod during the Celtics first workout of the summer.

**BY MATT RAWLINGS**  
*Of the Keizertimes*

For the first time in nearly four months, McNary student-athletes made their return to the school's athletic facilities.

Though they were under heavy restrictions, the Celtics football squad began workouts on Tuesday, July 7.

"We were pretty limited in what we could do, but I think it went well overall. We had to deal with a lot of things we don't normally have to deal with, but it was definitely worth it."

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— Jeff Auvinen,  
McNary football coach

was deemed safe by the Salem-Keizer School District (SKSD).

Additionally, all head coaches in the district are labeled as an on-site social distancing coordinator for each workout/practice and must have their players sign waivers for participation.

The school district used guidance from the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and the Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA) to make their decision on what the restrictions would be. OSAA released phase two of their guidance in ear-

ly June. However, because of the size of the district, Salem-Keizer schools are under more intense restrictions than other areas of the state. For example, the OSAA has phase two basketball recommendations that feature individual work in pods. But according to SKSD, basketball is a restricted activity unless the workouts are outside — the McNary girls' hoops team began conditioning workouts on the McNary track this week.

The McNary boys and girls soccer teams were also planning workouts for this week, but after hearing what all the restrictions would be, both programs decided that they would be better off waiting until August to get together.

"After hearing more of the protocols at a meeting this afternoon both McNary soccer programs have decided to cancel our optional practices for now," McNary girls soccer coach Lauren Brouse said.

Gragg added that all the construction going on at McNary adds another layer to the difficulty in having workouts — athletes currently have no access to the gym or weight room.

"Even without COVID, summer athletics would have been difficult with all the construction and lack of parking, as well as lack of gym availability," Gragg said. "It became a big challenge for a lot of our programs."

"I support all our coaches and the different decisions that are made. We tried to remove as many barriers as possible, but it's still very difficult. The current climate is definitely testing our patience. We're just hoping that things return to normal."

The district is planning on re-evaluating the restrictions at the end of the month.

"We will see where the state is at in a few weeks, but as for now, we are committed to following our plan," said Larry Ramirez, the activities director of the SKSD.



KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings

TOP: Griffen Hubbard works out with a medicine ball.



BOTTOM: Aldo Villalvazo moves a heavy tire to the sideline.

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