

McNary athletic workouts continue with restrictions



A: Kylie Nepstad works on her crossover dribble. B: Bethany Villegas lines up a shot. C: Nate Allen locks in on a fastball during batting practice. D: J.T. Walsh runs down the line after a single to left field during a scrimmage.

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

Earlier this month, the McNary girls' basketball team and baseball team returned to district facilities to begin workouts.

Even though each program is under intense restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, both teams are excited to be able to return to some form of athletic action.

"Even with all the weird things, our girls are just glad to be back together. It beats working out by yourself," said Elizabeth Doran, the McNary girls' basketball coach.

McNary baseball coach Larry Keeker added: "Kids were excited to be there. It has been really nice to see everyone. A lot of our guys haven't been able to do much of anything baseball related over the summer."

The Salem-Keizer School District prohibits indoor basketball workouts, so the McNary girls' team spent last week practicing at the outdoor courts at Forest Ridge Elementary.

Although Doran scheduled six workouts last week, each player was only allowed to come to two. The workouts were each an hour long and featured between six to

eight McNary players in two different pods.

The workouts all featured stations involving individual skill work regarding agility, shooting and ball-handling.

OSAA phase two guidance allows sharing of equipment within pods, but Doran elected to play it extra safe by having each player bring their own balls and disinfect them regularly.

"I just don't want to take the risk of sharing equipment at this point," Doran said.

Players are also required to socially distance during the workout, although they do not have to wear masks — as a coach, Doran is required to wear one at all times.

Doran usually has her players participate in skill development training during July

and August, so she admitted that this summer hasn't affected her team as much as it has some of the fall sports squads. However, Doran also said that through this process, she is having to learn a different way to coach.

As a former Division I basketball player, Doran is used to showing players what she wants them to do, rather than just telling them. Now she is relying solely on verbal instruction.

"It's definitely forced me to change the way I coach," Doran said.

Workouts are expected to run until mid-August.

The McNary baseball team, on the other hand, has been working out two to three times per week since early July. About 14 kids

showed up to the first workout, but according to Keeker, there were close to 30 kids showing up to workouts last week.

Keeker and his coaching staff wear masks throughout the entirety of the workout and encourage their players to do the same. Hand sanitizer is readily available at multiple spots during the workout.

The disinfecting of equipment, mainly baseballs, is happening constantly at these workouts. Each time a ball is used, it cannot be used again until it is cleaned and sanitized.

Keeker says that they go through hundreds of baseballs per workout.

"If two guys play catch, that ball is going into a bucket to be disinfected. If we're hitting ground balls and pop flies, once the play is made, the ball is put into the bucket. Once a ball is touched, it goes to be cleaned," Keeker said.

Despite the restrictions, the McNary team has been able to do hitting and fielding drills at separate stations and even hold a live scrimmage with a pitching machine.

"It's not terrible. Yes, it's challenging, but it's better than nothing," Keeker said.

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— Larry Keeker
McNary baseball coach

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