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## McNary seniors get final sendoff on the diamond

BY MATT RAWLINGS  
*Of the Keizertimes*

Even though they didn't get their final year of prep baseball, five McNary seniors got to experience one last hurrah on the diamond.

Alex Simpson, Danny Okada, Ethan Patterson, Jamison Martin and Alex Tavera all competed for Team Lincecum last weekend as Volcanoes Stadium played host to the 2020 senior day series, which featured more than 100 high school seniors from 48 different schools across the state.

The prep baseball season was canceled in the spring due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted the Salem-Keizer Volcanoes to honor the seniors in a different capacity — by giving them the opportunity to play with their high school jersey for the final time.

"One of the most cherished events in high school baseball is Senior Day at the field. It's usually the last home game of the season and provides a final recognition for the senior players and their parents who have supported their efforts for so many years," said Volcanoes CEO Mickey Walker, who's also an assistant coach for McNary. "COVID-19 destroyed this emotional opportunity, along with all high school games, this year. We wanted to do something for the seniors, and providing them an opportunity to take the field again seemed to be the perfect scenario."

The seniors were divided into eight different squads, named after Volcanoes and San Francisco Giants legends. Each team played two games in the round robin tournament that was held from July 31 to Aug. 2.

"It felt really good to have the opportunity to play one last time with guys that I have known for years,"

— Jamison Martin,  
McNary senior

The attendance was capped at 250 and fans were required to practice social distancing. Masks were being worn in the dugout and balls were sanitized regularly. But even in the midst of a national pandemic, both players and coaches found joy in the return to semi-normalcy.

"Honestly, it was actually really nice just being able to be in the coach's box and talk to kids when they were coming around third. It was fun. I really enjoyed it," said McNary head coach Larry Keeker, who was one of the coaches for the Lincecum squad.

To begin their opening game against Team Sandoval, Team Lincecum trotted out an all McNary infield in the top of the first, with Okada getting the start on the mound. Tavera and Simpson played up the middle while Patterson and Martin took position at the corners.

Scappoose coach Cameron Webb came up with the idea to have all Celtics in the infield in front of the hometown fans.

"Cameron told me that we should fill the whole infield to start the game with McNary kids and I said 'that would be fantastic,'" Keeker said. "I wasn't going to try to influence the lineup, but he was really gracious and recognized that it would be a cool thing to do."

Okada retired the first batter on a fly-out to left field then struck out the second hitter with a nasty 3-2 breaking ball. He gave up a bloop single later in the frame, but a sweet play from Tavera at short on a dribbling ground ball got Lincecum out of the inning.

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FROM RIGHT TO LEFT: Jamison Martin, Alex Tavera, Danny Okada, Ethan Patterson and Alex Simpson got to play one final time in their Celtics uniform in the senior day tournament at Volcanoes Stadium.



LEFT: Ethan Patterson goes from first to third on a base hit.



RIGHT: Alex Tavera hits a hard grounder in his second at-bat.

## Offense carries Celts in victory over Woodburn



J.T. Vachter delivers to the plate in McNary's 14-6 win over Woodburn.

BY MATT RAWLINGS  
*Of the Keizertimes*

The McNary Youth Baseball 12U squad exploded for four runs in the first inning and six runs in the fifth on their way to a 14-6 victory over Woodburn on Wednesday, July 29.

While they played with a mix of new kids and experienced players, the Celtics proved to be in-sync for the majority of the game.

"I was pleased with the way that we played and competed. We had a lot of kids playing in different positions and they all kept their focus really well," Celtics coach Bob Wort said.

After giving up a leadoff triple and a walk to begin the contest, Celtics pitcher J.T. Vachter fanned the next two hitters he faced, then got out of the frame unscathed by forcing a groundout.

In the bottom half of the inning, the Celtics bats got hot immediately.

Bryce Felbob doubled to center field to start the inning, which was followed by another two-bagger by Henry Wort to give the Celtics

a 1-0 lead. McNary upped their advantage to 3-0 when Luke Allen hit a two-run moonshot over the wall in left field.

"We have the ability to score in a hurry. We have a bunch of kids that can get on base, which really helps when you have a couple kids that can hit it out," Wort said.

Derek Olivio came around to score later in the frame after reaching on a hit-by-pitch.

Woodburn came back to score a pair in the top of the second on a two-run bloop single, but the Celtics responded with two runs of their own to keep their lead at four.

Parker DeMarco knocked in a run with an

RBI-groundout and Tanen Swing scored later in the frame after J.P. Herring reached on an error.

Felbob replaced Vachter on the bump in the top of the third and gave up two runs in two innings of work.

"Our guys don't throw super hard, but they throw a lot of strikes. That's what it's all about at this level," Wort said. "If you can avoid walks and free passes, you can do pretty well."

Felbob hit his second double of the contest to lead off the bottom of the third. Henry Wort, the next batter, followed with a towering two-run bomb to left field to extend McNary's lead to

— Bob Wort,  
McNary coach

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