

got out of the jam unscathed. However, he was not as fortunate the following inning.

Crescent Valley led off the top of the fifth with a triple, which was soon followed with an RBI-single to put the Raiders on top 3-1. To make matters worse, Nease had to be taken out of the game, after finishing the inning, due to a knee injury.

Whenever McNary has been in a pinch this season, they have turned to Mayer, a senior with a quirky delivery and a filthy slider. And once again, Mayer stepped up for his squad.

Mayer's slider was too much for the Raiders lineup to handle as the side-arm-throwing righty only allowed one runner on base over three innings.

"That is my best pitch," Mayer said of his slider. "I have been working on it all year. Having that pitch to keep hitters off balance for the whole count is really what makes me effective."

"Eben has been lights out on the mound all year. He came in and just competed and battled like he always does," Keeker added.

I have had a few walk-offs before, but never at the varsity level. It is such a surreal feeling.

— NOAH FISCHER

McNary third baseman

In the bottom of the sixth, a sacrifice fly from Ben Allen cut Crescent Valley's lead to 3-2. It appeared that McNary was going to tie the game after Carter Hawley reached on an error by the shortstop, but a miscommunication between Trevor Thompson, who was at second before the ball was hit, and third base coach Jordan Keeker, resulted in Thompson being back-picked at third to end the inning.

But as they entered the bottom of seventh trailing by a run, the Celtics



Dante Olivo threw 3.1 innings for the Celtics and didn't give up an earned run.

Photo by MATT RAWLINGS of Keizertimes

refused to give in. Back-to-back one-out singles by Gunner Smedema and Mayer began the threat. After Zane Aicher reached on an error to load the bases, Smedema scored on a wild pitch moments later to tie the game.

The Celtics left the bags packed to end the frame, putting the game into extra innings. But after Mayer got a 1-2-3 inning in the top of the eighth, McNary was able to push one across for the win thanks to some clutch hitting.

In his first at-bat of the game, sophomore Cooper Cripe leadoff the frame with a pinch-hit single up the middle to get things going.

"Cooper hasn't had a ton of at-bats at the varsity level, but he stepped up against a guy throwing in the mid-80s and rifled one up the middle," Keeker said.

Cripe was bunted over to second by Allen and then got to third when Carter Hawley reached on an error by the shortstop, which brought Fischer to the dish.

"I am only a sophomore, but I have been waiting for this opportunity my

whole life. I just got up there ready to pounce on the first pitch," Fischer said.

Due to early substitutions and a late-game injury, Crescent Valley was forced to play the seventh and eighth innings with only eight players in the field. While the Raiders disadvantage didn't come into play in the seventh, it ended up costing them on the last at-bat of the game.

Fischer hit a high and shallow fly ball down the line in left field. With their normal three outfielders, Crescent Valley might have been able to make a play on the ball. But since there were only two players in the outfield, the ball fell harmlessly to the grass with nobody around, allowing Cripe to come in and score the winning run.

"To our team's credit, they rallied when a number of our guys went down. It was a really bizarre game, but I am super happy with the way the kids battled. It was truly a team effort," Keeker said.

McNary travels to Sprague for a doubleheader on Saturday, May 15. The first game starts at noon.



Celtics outfielder Zane Aicher dives back into first base after taking a substantial lead.

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