

McNary suffers devastating defeat in final moments

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

It is tough to lose in a more painful fashion than the McNary hoops team did on Wednesday, May 26.

After leading the entire way, the Celtics gave up four points in the final 10 seconds of the game to lose a gut-wrenching 48-47 contest to South Salem.

Nate Meithof led the way with 20 points for McNary.

"It was a tough way to lose for sure, but it will make us better in the long run. We need to do a better job of not getting too comfortable," Meithof said.

As the reigning Mountain Valley Conference Player of the Year, Meithof was face-guarded by multiple South Salem defenders for the entire game. But in the first quarter there was nothing the Saxons could do to slow down the 6-foot-5 shooting guard.

Meithof began the game with a tough floater, then got loose for a layup off a backdoor cut moments later. After a few empty possessions, Meithof knocked down a pair of foul shots, then got to the rim for another hoop moments later to give his team the 8-4 lead.

Midway through the quarter, South Salem head coach Travis Brown burned a timeout after Meithof nailed a deep 3-pointer to extend the Celtics lead to 11-4. Meithof had 15 in the quarter and McNary held a 17-7 advantage after one period.

"I was just taking what they gave to me. I really didn't think they could stop me at first," Meithof said.

The Celtics went up by as many as 14 in the following quarter thanks to back-to-back hoops by Kyler Rodriguez and Gunner Smedema. However, South Salem responded with a 7-0 run to cut the lead down to seven. McNary went back up by double-figures later in the period after a jumper



Tyler Copeland looks to throw the ball to a teammate in the Celtics 48-47 loss to South Salem.

Photo by MATT RAWLINGS of Keizertimes

by Jando Gonzalez and a layup by Rodriguez, but South pulled within six

before the half, making the score 28-22 at the break.

After Meithof dropped 15 in the first quarter, the Saxons held the McNary star to just two points in the second and third quarters, which is how they were able to climb back in the game

"They are going to deny him the ball no matter what, we just need him to continue to cut and move through the offense. I think we got a little stagnant. We weren't able to get to the free throw line as much as we liked. They did a good job on Nate, we just have to be able to execute a little bit better in the end," McNary head coach Ryan Kirch said.

The Saxons got within two points at the end of the third quarter, but Meithof

completed a three-point play to start the fourth period, allowing McNary to cling to the 41-36 lead.

Midway through the quarter, Evan Cornell knocked down a clutch 3-pointer from the baseline to bring the Celtics lead to six at 45-39. South Salem closed the gap to one with less than two minutes to play, but Gonzalez was able to break the press and go coast-to-coast for a hoop to make the score 47-44.

After the Celtics got a crucial stop with less than a minute to play, Jabol Balos was fouled in the backcourt and sent to the free throw line. But the sophomore guard missed the front end of a one-and-one, giving the Saxons the ball back with 43.6 seconds left.

The Saxons came down the court

That loss was on me. I need to keep my foot on the gas pedal. I need to show up when my team needs me.

- NATE MEITHOF
McNary shooting guard

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