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McNary puts clamps on South Albany

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes



ABOVE: McNary's Jando Gonzalez attempts a shot over South Albany's Logan Parker. The Celtics held South Albany to a season-low of 34 points in their home finale. Photo by MATT RAWLINGS of Keizertimes

While their offense wasn't firing on all cylinders, the defense picked up the slack for the McNary boys basketball team.

McNary held South Albany to a season-low of 34 points in their 48-34 win over the Rebels on Wednesday, June 23.

"I thought our defense was incredible," McNary head coach Ryan Kirch said. "I am proud of our group. Our depth and our quality of play has been skyrocketing. We feel really good about where we are at."

Nate Meithof led the way for the Celtics with 16 points.

Despite being one of the top scorers in the state, Meithof struggled offensively early on, going 1-for-7 in the opening period.

McNary trailed 7-6 after the first quarter, but after going scoreless for more than six minutes, Celtics point guard Jando Gonzalez finally broke the seal by drilling one from behind the arc. Tyler Copeland got a triple of his own drop moments later to put McNary up 12-7.

After South Albany cut the lead to two, Gonzalez nailed another 3-pointer and Kyler Rodriguez hit one from deep to extend the Celtics lead to 18-10.

"We got some energy off the bench and got a bunch of open shots," Copeland said.

The second quarter three-point barrage continued as Copeland knocked down another triple from the baseline and Evan Cornell made a three from the corner, giving the Celtics six triples for period.

"We really tried to distort the defense with the dribble. We want to shoot threes, but we want to make sure the ball is touching the paint first," Kirch said. "When you move the ball side to side and make the team guard you, you are going to get easier shots."

A tip-dunk from Meithof and a steal and layup by Jabol Balos put the Celtics up 28-16 at the break.

Meithof scored a pair of hoops to open the second half, but McNary went

through another dry spell, going over four minutes without a bucket. However, the Celtics were able to maintain their double-digit advantage by limiting South Albany to just six points in the third quarter.

McNary also held South Albany star, and Mid-Willamette Player of the Year, Isaiah Gilliam to 18 points — eight below his season average — and made sure he wasn't getting any easy hoops.

"He had to earn everything. He had to score over us, and not a lot of other guys got into a rhythm. His baskets were hard and difficult," Kirch said.

McNary ended the third quarter on a buzzer beater from Rodriguez to put McNary up 36-22. Then, Meithof went on a 7-0 run by himself to open the fourth quarter, giving the Celtics their largest

We are 10 deep, and what you see is our depth when we get to the third and fourth quarter.

— RYAN KIRCH

McNary head coach

lead of the game at 43-22.

"I just wanted to get to the rack," Meithof said.

"We are 10 deep, and what you see is our depth when we get to the third and fourth quarter," Kirch added.

After pulling off back-to-back wins at Mountain View and Bend on June 24-25, McNary finishes the season with a 13-4 record.