

hitting those short routes really got me into a groove,” Copeland said. “Not a lot was open deep, so I was hitting a lot of hitches and bubbles and letting my players play.”

“They were playing deep coverage and it left a lot of open space for hitches and inside routes. Our game plan was to hit those short routes and just play in space,” Smedema said.

However, a costly interception by Copeland gave South Medford the ball on the Celtics four-yard line — the Panthers scored two plays later to make it a one-possession game.

But when McNary got the ball back late in the period, the Celtics were able to give themselves a little breathing room going into the half.

A pair of first down runs from Zane Aicher put the Celtics inside the 40-yard line. McNary receiver Braiden Copeland was flagged for a personal foul, putting the ball back into Celtics territory, but the junior receiver would redeem himself later in the drive.

On third-and-14, Tyler Copeland found his little brother, Braiden, for a 15-yard completion to move the sticks. The next play, Braiden caught a short pass in soft coverage, but broke a tackle and carried two defenders into the end zone for a 24-yard score with 19 seconds left in the half, putting McNary on top 21-7.

After beating the Panthers through the air in the first half, McNary's wore down South Medford with the ground game in the final 24 minutes. Dunagan, as well as junior running back Hunter Ruberto, had multiple first down runs in the Celtics first drive of the second half, which took nearly six minutes off



McNary assistant coach Connor Astley gives the offense instructions before they take the field.

Photo by MATT RAWLINGS of Keizertimes

We really controlled the line-of-scrimmage. When you do that, you have a chance of being really successful. It was nice for us to be as physical as we were.

— JEFF AUVINEN

McNary head coach

See **CELTS**, page **A23**

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