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Celtics blow by Grants Pass to move to 3-0



Football

McNary receiver Gunner Smedema hauls in a 26-yard touchdown in the Celtics 41-0 win over Grants Pass Photo by MATT RAWLINGS of Keizertimes

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

After coming away with a thrilling win last week, the McNary football squad ended their non-conference slate with a dominant performance against Grants Pass.

Quarterback Tyler Copeland threw for four touchdowns and the McNary defense held the Cavemen to just four first downs as the Celtics moved to 3-0 on the season with a 41-0 victory on Friday, Sept. 17.

“We definitely had one of our best games tonight. Our defense was in-sync and our offense was there all night,” Copeland said. “We balled out tonight.”

The victory marked McNary’s first 3-0

start since 2008.

“They took command in every facet of the game, especially on defense,” McNary head coach Jeff Auvinen said. “The kids played really hard.”

Grants Pass picked up a pair of first downs on their opening drive, but were put behind the sticks after being called for holding. On third-and-21, Caveman quarterback Jace Blanchard had his pass tipped at the line-of-scrimmage and picked off by McNary linebacker Zane Aicher, who returned the ball to the Grants Pass 27-yard line.

“We started off a little slow, but after that pick everyone started going crazy. It was a huge momentum change,” Aicher

said.

Moments later, Aicher got the payout on the offensive end.

Lined up at running back on fourth-and-goal from the one-yard line, Aicher took the handoff from Copeland and was initially stopped at the line-of-scrimmage, but plowed forward and reached the goal line on the second effort, giving McNary the 7-0 advantage.

After surrendering some yardage on the first drive, the McNary defense tightened things up and repeatedly got Grants Pass into long-yardage situations — the Caveman didn’t get their third first down until the fourth quarter.

“After that first drive, the front kids were telling us that they could get by their guy. And our DBs started playing more aggressively. From that point on, they really struggled to pick up first downs,” Auvinen said. “They tried running inside, running outside, throwing short, throwing medium, but we pretty much handled everything that they did.”

“It was all about our game-plan. We

knew when they were running certain plays and we were able to jump it,” Aicher said.

Grants Pass ended the first quarter deep in their own territory and a short punt gave McNary the ball on the Cavemen 33-yard line. On the first play of the second period, Copeland put his play-making ability on full display.

Copeland felt the blitz come from his left side and scrambled out of the pocket. After eluding a pair of tacklers, the senior signal-caller found his brother Braiden Copeland across the middle for a 33-yard touchdown to extend the McNary lead to 14-0.

“You can’t ask for a better competitor. He always keeps his eyes downfield. It’s nice to have an athletic quarterback,” Auvinen said.

Tyler Copeland showed his ability to go off-script once again on McNary’s following possession. Grants Pass brought pressure from the outside, but Copeland got loose with a nifty pirouette and hit Gunner Smedema deep downfield for a

