

McNary stays in MVC title hunt with bounce-back win over South Salem



K SPORTS

McNary linebacker Ben Allen had a crucial 34-yard pick-six in the Celtics 21-13 win over South Salem Photo by MATT RAWLINGS of Keizertimes

BY MATT RAWLINGS
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After suffering a devastating loss to Sprague last week, the shorthanded McNary football squad responded in a major way.

Despite being without their starting

quarterback, and one of the best players in the Mountain Valley Conference (MVC) in Tyler Copeland, McNary (5-1, 2-1, MVC) used a physical rushing attack and stifling defense to defeat South Salem 21-13 on Friday, Oct. 8.

“It was huge. It was a gritty win. I very much respect gritty and tough-minded individuals. To come back from the loss last week where we lost our quarterback that was playing really well, the bounce back was huge,” McNary head coach Jeff Auvinen said. “There was a little bit of a limited playbook this

week, but they gritted it out.”

McNary senior running back Zane Aicher led the Celtics offense with 17 carries for 102 yards and a touchdown.

“It means a lot,” Aicher said about the win. “We’re more than just one guy. We are a team. There’s not just one guy we depend on, and we proved it.”

Due to Copeland’s ankle injury he suffered in the previous game, Gunner Smedema, the Celtics leading receiver, took reps as McNary’s signal-caller all week at practice and was named the starting quarterback.

“It was pretty stressful. My arm still isn’t really there, but we practiced running a new offense and I felt more confident throughout the week,” Smedema said.

McNary’s new offense featured a two-back set and several new wrinkles in the ground game, including multiple designed runs for Smedema, who only threw for 25 yards, but rushed for 71 yards on 15 carries.

“We went to a little more protection. You saw two backs almost exclusively. The lead backs did a great job blocking. They probably got us an extra 100 yards off their lead blocks,” Auvinen said.

South Salem appeared unprepared for McNary’s new offensive approach on the opening possession as Smedema ran for a pair of first downs to put the Celtics in business. McNary took six minutes off the clock on the

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Football

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