



McNary running back Zane Aicher led the Celtics with 102 yards rushing on 17 carries.

Photo by MATT RAWLINGS of Keizertimes

# CELTS,

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drive before Braiden Copleand muscled his way into the end zone from three yards out to give McNary the 8-0 advantage.

“We just ran it down their throat,” Smedema said.

South Salem came into the game as one of the top offenses in the state. But early on, the Saxons were unable to handle the physicality and athleticism of the McNary defense.

“The defense was very good all day long,” Auvinen said. “They fought their butt off. It was a great job by the kids.”

One of the keys for the McNary defense was slowing down Saxons receiver Tini Tinitali — who, coming into the game, had over 100 receiving yards three times in South Salem's first five contests.

Tinitali still had 70 yards receiving on the night, but the McNary secondary made it a point-of-emphasis to not let the senior wideout beat them deep.

Aicher credited his brother, Kyle, who is the McNary defensive backs coach, with coming up with a successful game plan to slow down the Saxons aerial attack.

“If (Tinitali) ever lined up on the ball, we knew he was going deep,” Aicher said. “My brother puts a lot of time in. Sometimes, I will look over to the sideline and he will give me a hand motion telling me what the route is going to be.”

McNary also held Saxons quarterback Daschel Smith to just 172 yards passing on the night — it was only the second time this season Smith didn't break the 200-yard barrier.

“We had a really good scouting report. We knew everything that they were doing most of the time,” Smedema said.

After 24 minutes of action, South Salem had more turnovers (3) than first downs (2). But McNary wasn't able to capitalize on any of the Saxons turnovers as the Celtics lead remained 8-0 at halftime.

Both teams traded multiple punts to start the second half, but late in the third quarter, the Saxons finally broke through for a score as Smith took it in on a quarterback draw from 11 yards out. However, Aicher broke up a pass on the two-point attempt, allowing McNary to cling to an 8-6 lead.

The Celtics offense looked to be back on track to start the fourth quarter, but their drive stalled in the red zone as Smedema's pass across the middle sailed over Logan Ready's head on fourth-and-seven, giving the ball back to the Saxons.

However, on the following snap, sophomore linebacker Ben Allen made the play of the day for the Celtics.

On first down from the South Salem 17-yard line, Smith faded back to pass and threw a ball over the middle, intended for Tinitali. What Smith didn't see was that Allen had faked a blitz, dropped back in coverage and was in the perfect spot for the interception.

After getting the pick, Allen broke a tackle and sprinted for a 34-yard touchdown, giving McNary a 14-6 lead, plus all the momentum.

“I saw the receiver turn to the middle,

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6	7	9	2	4	1	3	8	5
1	5	8	3	7	9	2	6	4
2	3	4	8	6	5	1	9	7
5	9	2	4	1	3	8	7	6
8	6	1	5	2	7	9	4	3
7	4	3	6	9	8	5	1	2
3	2	7	1	8	4	6	5	9
4	1	6	9	5	2	7	3	8
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*sudoku*

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*crossword*