

the second quarter.

"That was the difference in the game. If we clean those things up we will be in good shape," Auvinen said.

West Salem would score again to go up 28-7 after another empty possession for the Celtics offense.

With the Titans on the verge of putting the score out of reach, Tyler Copeland got McNary back in the game with an important touchdown drive before the half.

First down completions to Braiden Copeland and Montoya helped McNary march into opposing territory. With 1:23 left in the half, the McNary front five gave Tyler Copeland ample time in the pocket to find Dyer — who got free on a double move — in the corner of the end zone for the 32-yard score, cutting the lead to 14.

"Tyler was getting the ball out pretty quick. The protection was decent and I think the receivers did a good job at getting open," Auvinen said.

When healthy, Tyler Copeland's mobility plays a big factor in his ability and effectiveness as a quarterback. Although he couldn't scramble, he was able to operate in a clean pocket for the majority of the night thanks to his offensive line.

"I think that was the O-line's best game of the season. They gave me enough time to sit in the pocket," Tyler Copeland said.

West Salem went back up by three scores midway through the third quarter. Once again, McNary responded.

Three first down completions got McNary inside the West Salem 10-yard line. On third-and-goal Braiden Copeland faked to inside then cut outside, and his older brother, Tyler, hit him with a perfect throw for a four-yard touchdown to trim the

deficit to 34-21.

On previous possessions, Tyler Copeland saw that the West Salem secondary was biting on the slant route, which is why, before the play, he told Braiden to fake the slant and try to beat his defender to the sideline.

"We made that up on the fly. It was supposed to be a slant. I asked him if he could beat him on a whip. He told me yes and I had faith in him," Tyler Copeland said.

Trailing by 13 heading into the fourth quarter, McNary's defense picked up a massive fourth down stop to get their offense the ball back. Minutes later, it was the Copeland to Copeland connection once again as Tyler found Braiden wide open for a 40-yard score after a West Salem cornerback fell down.

It ended up being a career-game for Braiden Copeland, who caught nine passes for 169 yards, and his second touchdown made it a one possession game for the first time since the opening period.

"If we wanted to win the game I needed to throw it to my best receiver," Tyler Copeland said.

Not to be outdone, Tyler Copeland, despite playing hurt, went 17-of-24 through the air for 211 yards and three touchdowns, nearly rallying McNary to a victory.

"(Tyler) gave us a chance to win. If we got the ball back, the way our offense was rolling, we had a really good chance," Auvinen said.

While McNary's 4-3 defensive scheme has been successful for most of the season, the Celtics front seven struggled against West Salem in the trenches. And on the Titans final possession, they used their physicality to their advantage.



McNary safety Pierce Walker makes a tackle in the open field.

Photo by MATT RAWLINGS of Keizertimes

"We got handled. We were putting seven in the box and we were still getting handled. We didn't get off blocks very well and we didn't play with a very low center of gravity. To their credit, they came off the ball really hard and took it to us and we did not handle it very well," Auvinen said.

After the McNary score, West Salem regained possession with just over six minutes on the clock. Without putting the ball through the air once on the drive, the Titans converted three straight third downs to milk more than three minutes off the clock.

The Celtics had one final chance to try and stop the Titans on fourth-and-one, but Ferguson picked up the first down on a quarterback sneak, allowing West Salem to go into victory formation.

"We just couldn't get it done. They overpowered us a little bit. It wasn't from lack of effort, they were just better than us tonight in the trenches," Auvinen said.

McNary (5-2, 2-2 MVC) will attempt to bounce back this weekend as they host their final home game of the season against Mountain View (3-4, 1-3 MVC) at 5 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 23.

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