

Celts move to second round with convincing win over North Medford



Football

McNary running back Dakota Dunagan attempts to break through the tackle of a North Medford defender Photo by MATT RAWLINGS of Keizertimes

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In their first home playoff contest in four years, the McNary football squad showed their superiority on both sides of the ball

The McNary offense broke the 30-point threshold for the fifth time this season, while the defense held North Medford to under 200 yards of total offense, giving the Celtics the 37-7 win over the Black Tornado in the first

round of the OSAA playoffs on Friday, Nov. 5.

The Celtics improved to 7-3 with the victory.

“It was exciting for all the coaches and the kids,” McNary head coach Jeff Auvinen said. “The guys flew around and made plays. Kids that hadn’t played that much this year just stepped up and went.”

The Celtics 4-3 defense set the tone right away, holding North Medford to

just two total yards in the first quarter, and putting relentless pressure on Black Tornado quarterback Mason Warren.

“I thought we were going to have to load the box more than we did. We started in our base defense and shut them down in that first series, which is when we realized that we could stay in our

regular stuff,” Auvinen said.

“Our guys were getting pressure all night,” McNary linebacker Jake Paton added.

After going three-and-out on their opening drive, the McNary offense found a rhythm on their following possession.

The Celtics converted a key fourth-down on a run by Dakota Dunagan to get the ball inside the North Medford 30-yard line. McNary quarterback Tyler Copeland then followed by hitting Zane Aicher with a 12-yard screen pass to put the Celtics in the red zone, and moments later, Aicher capped off the drive with a two-yard touchdown run to give McNary a 7-0 lead.

North Medford moved the sticks for the first time early in the second quarter, but coughed the ball up on the next play to give the Celtics great field

position.

Copeland hit Logan Ready for a first down on a fourth-and-three hitch pass, then found Jesse Dyer on a third down slant to put McNary in the red zone.

The Celtics were without their top receiver in Braiden Copeland — who suffered an injury in the previous game — while their second best receiver, Gunner Smedema, was playing on an injured leg, which meant guys like Ready and Dyer needed to step in their place. Ready had a career-high seven catches for 51 yards and a touchdown, and Dyer caught four balls for 36 yards.

Even though McNary couldn’t push the ball downfield like they had in previous games this season, the Celtics still found great success in taking what the defense was giving them, continuously hitting underneath routes to move the sticks.

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— JEFF AUVINEN

McNary head coach

