

Keizertimes

SPORTS

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Despite their being no athletic events for the first two months of the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the city of Keizer featured a litany of notable sports stories this year.

Here were the top 10 sports stories featured in the *Keizertimes* in 2021.

1

McNary wins first game in return to the field

In their first game since November 2019, the McNary defense set the tone from kickoff until the last play.

Facing fourth-and-goal from the McNary 10-yard line with four seconds left on the clock and trailing by five, West

Albany quarterback Michael Cale tried a fade to his favorite target, Caden Zamora, in the corner of the end zone for the win. But McNary's Sage Allen broke up the pass as time expired, giving the Celtics the 19-14 victory on Friday, March 5.

During a typical McNary home game, there would be a celebration with the student section on the field and players

would stay behind for nearly an hour after the horn sounded, greeting friends and family members and taking photos. But due to COVID-19 protocols, the Flesher Field grandstands were empty. There was no band, there was no cheering after a big play, only silence.

However, after the game was over, the players weren't dwelling on what had been taken away from them during this tumultuous year, they were instead, thankful for the simple joy of playing football once again.

"It feels amazing to be out here again. Right before kickoff I was like Man, I am really about to play football again,' and I am so glad it turned out the way it did," McNary linebacker Dyami Rios said.

"It feels so good to be back. It's a blessing that we are able to be out here," Celtics running back Dakota Dunagan added.

McNary head coach Jeff Auvinen, who has been coaching football at McNary for nearly three decades and has been a part of two state championship teams (1997, 2001), claimed that this might be one of the best feelings he has ever experienced after a game.

"I've been doing this a long time, and no matter what level it's at, it's always been awesome. But this might be the best I have ever felt," Auvinen said.

Trailing 14-13 late in the fourth quarter, McNary quarterback Jack McCarty connected with Braiden Copeland for a 14-yard touchdown to give the Celtics the

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