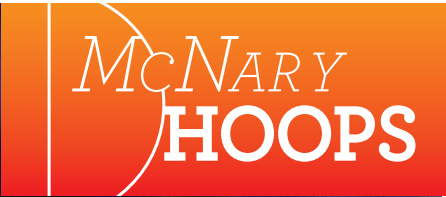


McNary falters in second half against West Salem



McNary wing Jabol Balos-Mesey attacks the paint against West Salem. Photo by MATT RAWLINGS of Keizertimes

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

After falling behind by double-figures in the opening half, the McNary boys' basketball team rallied to cut the lead to four in the third quarter. But the Celtics ran out of gas in the final period against one of the top teams in the Mountain Valley Conference (MVC), falling to West Salem by a score of 66-51 on Friday, Jan. 14.

"They really made us guard, and I think it took a lot of energy out of us. We would have a really good defensive possession, but come back down and have

a possession with only one pass, then a shot. After a while, that really wears on you," McNary head coach Ryan Kirch said.

Tyler Copeland and Brody Roth led the way for the Celtics with 15 points apiece.

"We competed for the entire game, but I think we got worn out and started giving them some easy buckets," Copeland said.

A three-point play from Jabol Balos-Mesey in the opening moments of the game gave McNary the 5-4 advantage. However, it was the only time McNary

would lead in the contest, as West Salem responded by going on a 9-0 run.

McNary point guard Jando Gonzalez knocked down a deep triple to stop the bleeding, but the Titans still ended the first quarter with a 16-9 advantage.

Early into the second quarter, West Salem was able to extend their lead to 10.

Kirch said that he was impressed with the defensive effort of his crew and that West Salem just played really well on the offensive end.

"We really guarded them and forced tough shots. But you got to give them

credit, they made multiple tough shots where our guys were right in their face," Kirch said.

Six straight points from Copeland helped McNary cut the lead to 29-23 at the half. The Celtics cut the deficit down to four on a put-back basket from Copeland early in the third quarter, but cold shooting from McNary allowed West Salem to go back up by double figures.

McNary shot just 40% from the field and was 4-of-19 from beyond the arc.

"We missed a ton of shots. I thought we took a lot of rushed off-balance



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