

Face Off: Donahue, Celtics prepare for senior season

BY JEREMY MCDONALD
For the Keizertimes

The face-off position is a tough one in lacrosse. Possession of the ball is decided between the two athletes who meet at midfield, placed in between two lacrosse sticks, waiting for the whistle for them to go to battle for it.

Win and you charge down field with your offense while the other squad runs back on defense. It's a specialty position, like goalie. Not everyone is cut out to be a face-off player or a goalie in this sport. But for those who are cut out for it, it's tough, nonetheless.

"I had to put on at least 30, 40 pounds since I got to high school just to compete and make these national teams. It's a hard position to play, it's like goalie," describes Kyler Donahue. "It's one-on-one. You got to have quick hands, strong forearms."

Lacrosse is a chaotic sport, but for Donahue, it's life. The junior started the sport in the second grade when a few friends and family talked him into joining the Salem-Keizer Youth Lacrosse League (SKYLL, pronounced Skill). Donahue later joined MadLax, a travel and All-Star team, his freshman year of high school before moving on to Team

Oregon just recently.

Lacrosse is more popular in the Midwest and East Coast, but it's been steadily gaining popularity out West. Donahue's head coach at McNary, Sean Littrakis, played a year of college lacrosse at Rutgers as a defender. His division included Syracuse, John Hopkins, and Virginia, which have a combined 26 Division-1 lacrosse titles and 19 second-place finishes since the inaugural season of the sport in 1971. Maryland had 12 second-place finishes to three titles.

"The sport is taxing with the body shots from opposing player's sticks," said Donahue. "It's a mental

game, as well - and it's played in rain, shine, cold or hot - you're out on the turf playing and practicing, running, and just the hours you put in to make the most of the opportunity to get better at the craft."

"It's everything to me honestly," he said. "It's like a job, but I love the job. It makes me feel really good, it clears my mind every time I go out and step out on the field."

This path that Donahue has chosen has slowly paid off as his junior year kicked off on Feb. He was invited and accepted to two national-level all-star teams: Advanced Nationals, where he'll get to play against kids from the East Coast;



Kvler Donahue coming off a teammates hip during a drill in Monday, Feb. 28 practice at McNary High School

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