

# Sports

BAKER WRESTLERS FINISH FOURTH IN THE STATE, BEST IN SCHOOL HISTORY



S. John Collins / Baker City Herald

Isael Duran took third place at 106 pounds at the state competition. He wrestled and won this match during a previous event at Baker against La Grande.

## Grappling with history

By Gerry Steele  
gsteele@bakercityherald.com

For the first time in roughly 40 years of wrestling, Baker is bringing home a state trophy after placing fourth at the Class 4A tournament.

“We would like to thank our community for all their support, Baker Mat Club, and all our coaches, parents and wrestlers for their efforts. Without you, none of this would be possible,” said Baker coach Brandon Young.

“We knew we had a great shot and expected Junction City and Cascade to be right there with us. We earned a lot of extra points in the first two rounds by earning several pins.”

After going 0-5 in the state semifinals Baker had to regroup and raise team morale, Young said.

“This is the toughest sport out there, because you have to pick yourself up after a hard loss and give it everything you have got,” Young said. “Wrestling is life, you get knocked down sometimes, but you have to get back up. That’s what we call character. No sport instills that as much as wrestling.”

The team points race was tight at this point with Baker having a slight lead over Cascade and Junction City. At this point Baker was worried about Cascade, which had four wrestlers in the finals.

“The thing was, though, all seven of our wrestlers were in the consolation and had two matches, which gave us a good opportunity to build our lead. We needed to be over 24



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MaHonri Rushton took third place at 170 pounds at state competition. Here he wrestled and won during a previous match at Baker against La Grande.

points ahead of Cascade to hold them off for certain, and were able to build that cushion to 34 points and hang on to finish fourth,” Young said.

- Baker’s individual state placers:
- Isael Duran, 3rd, 106 pounds
  - MaHonri Rushton, 3rd, 170 pounds
  - Johnny Niehaus, 4th, 120 pounds
  - Ian Feldmeier, 4th, 145 pounds
  - Mariano Duran, 5th, 113 pounds
  - Colton Anderson, 6th, 132 pounds

Baker had five wrestlers who made it to the heart break round, two of them won — Colton Anderson and Jake Eskew.

“Jake set out on a vision quest and nothing was going

to get in his way,” Young said. Gavin Stone lost a hard fought battle by a few points, and Alex Duran had a rough weekend.

“That’s all it was for him, just one bad weekend,” Young said. “He had a great season and career, setting several school records. Gauge Bloomer wrestled really tough to make to the top 8.”

Young said he expects Bloomer to be a top competitor next year.

Freshman Alex Ritter won by a fall, scoring 3 team points.

“For him to qualify as a freshman at 182 pounds and then win a match is a big deal,” Young said. “Looking forward to watching his growth in the seasons to come.”

Other wrestlers who

qualified for state but did not place are Trevor Tidwell at 113 pounds, Alex Davila at 138 and Lucien Yervasi at 195.

“Trevor, similarly to Ritter, got to see the big show as a freshman,” Young said. “Now he knows what to expect and will be ready for next season. Lucien Yervasi in his two years of wrestling was able to qualify as a senior. His personality was contagious. He can really get our guys pumped. We will miss him,” Young said.

For the third time, Coach Young was nominated for the Class 4A Coach of the Year.

“This speaks highly of our program and also our assistant coach Torrey Roberts, volunteer coaches Zack Feldmeier, Josh Anderson, and Jeris Stephens,” Young said.

PAC-12 MEN’S BASKETBALL

## Beavers hold off Trojans late

By Joe Reedy  
AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES — Oregon State took a big step toward possibly getting a first-round bye for the Pac-12 tournament.

The Beavers took control of Saturday’s game against USC in the final three minutes as they defeated the Trojans 67-62. The win moves the Beavers (17-9) into a tie with Arizona State for second in the conference at 9-5. More importantly, they solidified their chances of not having to play in the first round on March 13 in Las Vegas.

“It’s a huge win. It would have been a real blow to come on this trip and lose two and fall to the middle of the pack,” Oregon State coach Wayne Tinkle said.

Stephen Thompson Jr. and Kylor Kelley led the Beavers with 15 points apiece. Thompson Jr. did most of his work early, scoring 11 of Oregon State’s first 18 points while Kelley was a point shy of tying a career high set earlier this season against Kent State.

Oregon State trailed by 12 on Thursday night at UCLA before rallying and falling short 68-67. Saturday’s game on the other side of Los Angeles at the Galen Center was the opposite. The Beavers led most of the way, but saw USC come back to take a 56-55 lead with 3:54 remaining. Oregon State though would regain control with 10 straight points.

“Defensively we were able to get rebounds and we were getting to their shooters,” said Kelley, whose dunk with 3:35 remaining put the Beavers up for good.

Oregon State missed three of its first four free throws but was 14 of 15 the remainder of the game, including a stretch where it made all 10 the final 2:44. Tres Tinkle, who had 14 points, 13 rebounds and seven assists, had six points at the line down the stretch as Oregon State swept the season series for the first time in five years.

## Ducks squander big lead to UCLA

By Beth Harris  
AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES — Jaylen Hands nearly couldn’t miss. He stopped and popped 3-pointers from all over, repeatedly burning Oregon’s defense.

Hands scored all of his 27 points in the second half when he led a 19-point comeback to help UCLA win 90-83 on Saturday night.

Kris Wilkes added 20 points and Jules Bernard had a career-high 20 for the Bruins (15-13, 8-7 Pac-12), who outscored the Ducks 62-39 over the final 20 minutes.

“If we can figure out how to tie a ribbon around the second half as we move forward we’re a good basketball team,” interim Bruins coach Murry Bartow said. “We made a lot of plays in the second half. Defensively, we were much, much better.”

UCLA completed a season sweep of the Ducks, having stunned them 87-84 in overtime last month when the Bruins rallied from a nine-point deficit with less than 58 seconds left in regulation on the road.

This time, the Bruins got going much earlier.

Payton Pritchard’s 3-pointer opened the second half and pushed Oregon’s lead to 19 points.

“When we went up there we were down by a lot. We knew to keep fighting,” Wilkes said. “We ultimately had to get some energy. Hands got everybody hyped. Our defense stepped up, too.”

The Ducks led 53-38 when the Bruins took over.

They ran off 17 straight points, including three consecutive 3-pointers by Hands, to take their first lead of the game, 55-53. Hands added a pair of free throws and a fast-break layup during the spurt.

Hands wasn’t done yet.

He hit another 3-pointer and Wilkes followed with one of his own, raising the noise level in Pauley Pavilion considerably thanks to the season’s third-largest crowd of 10,588.

## Duck women end losing skid

EUGENE (AP) — Oregon regained its footing with the return of its shooting touch and junior forward Ruthy Hebard.

Things felt so routine for the Ducks, in fact, that another marquee effort by Sabrina Ionescu barely caused a ripple.

Ionescu recorded her NCAA-record 17th triple-double, Erin Boley had a career-high 32 points and No. 2 Oregon snapped a two-game losing streak by racing past Southern California 96-78 on Sunday.

“I think she played a lot more free tonight and was able to do a little bit of everything,” Oregon coach Kelly Graves said. “Sabrina was really focused and motivated today.”

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