

# Sports

BAKER GIRLS AT CLASS 4A STATE BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

# A CLASSIC COMEBACK

■ Trailing by 11 points in the fourth quarter, Baker scores final 12 points to claim its first win in the state tourney since 2006

By Mike Weber  
For the Baker City Herald

FOREST GROVE — For the three-time Greater Oregon League champion Baker Bulldogs girls basketball team, the monkey is finally off their back.

After losing in the quarterfinals of the Class 4A state tournament each of the past two years, Baker refused to accept that scenario this year.

In a stirring fourth-quarter rally Thursday at Forest Grove High School, the No. 2 Bulldogs (23-1) overcame an 11-point deficit to top the Stayton Eagles, 42-36.

Baker scored the final 12 points of the game, and the Bulldogs' 21 points in the fourth quarter equalled their total points in the first three quarters.

It was the Baker girls' first win at the state tournament since 2006, when the Bulldogs won 1 of 3 games to finish fifth.

Baker won Thursday despite scoring its fewest points in any game this season. The previous low was 44, in a win over Pendleton.

Baker, guided by fourth-year coach Mat Sand, advanced to a semifinal this evening at 6:30 against Philomath.

The No. 6 Warriors (23-3) beat Banks 45-43 on Thurs-



Baker's Jayme Ramos goes to the basket Thursday against the defense of three Stayton Eagles, including Marri Martinez, left.

day.

"We almost gave this one away," Sand said. "I don't want to take anything away from Stayton, which came well prepared and they really played their guts out. They (Stayton) played aggressively and the ball was bouncing their way. Our girls finally adjusted to everything in the fourth quarter. They did everything we (assistant coaches Shawn Berry and

Amy Younger) asked them to do and they really figured things out very well."

It certainly looked bleak most of the afternoon for the Bulldogs, who trailed 34-23 with 5:46 left. Then the momentum turned in favor of the Bulldogs, who outscored the Eagles 19-2 from that point.

"It's a different platform here and we've been trying to get over this hump for three

"We've been trying to get over this hump for three years and we finally got the monkey off our back," Sand said. "I'm very proud of the kids for coming out here and show the grit and perseverance, which is what this team is really made of. Our goal is to win a trophy and I'm so glad that we accomplished that goal. We just couldn't put the ball in the hole and we weren't scoring like we normally do, so I had to call some timeouts. I told the girls that this is about transition buckets. We're playing at our best whenever we can get momentum and get into a rhythm and that's what we did."

— Baker coach Mat Sand

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Baker actually had a good start as senior post Rose Gwillim, who led the Bulldogs with 14 points and 12 rebounds, scored four points and senior guard Jayme Ramos hit a jumper from the corner to give the Bulldogs a 6-2 lead and force a Stayton timeout with 5:05 left in the first quarter.

Baker led 8-5 when Gwillim scored on an inside post move, but that would be the Bulldogs' final lead until the last 65 seconds of the fourth quarter. Stayton knotted it 8-8 and it was tied 10-10 at the end of the first quarter when Baker junior forward Anna Carter sank a baseline jumper in the final seconds.

Stayton, the Oregon West Conference runnerup to Philomath, then went on a

7-0 run to build a 17-10 advantage with 5:34 left in the second quarter. Baker responded with a 10-5 rally with Gwillim, sophomore Sydney Keller and Ramos contributing to the offensive spurt. Keller's jumper from the corner trimmed the margin to 22-20 at halftime.

But Baker couldn't maintain its momentum in the third quarter, as the Bulldogs scored just 1 point and trailed 31-21 entering the final period.

"We've never had a third quarter all year that looked as bad as that," Sand said. "Usually, we play progressively better in each quarter, but they (Stayton) just played good defense in the third."

Sand called timeout after Stayton built its largest lead at 34-23.

Following the timeout the Bulldogs started playing more aggressively on defense and they got key steals to help spark the comeback effort.

Junior Isabella Nemeč hit the first of her three consecutive three-pointers to narrow the lead to 34-26.

Baker sliced the deficit to 36-31 when Gwillim scored on a driving layup in the lane, forcing a Stayton timeout with 3:01 left.

Baker junior point guard Sydney Younger, who had four steals and five assists, sank a free throw, followed by

a Gwillim free throw, trimming the margin to 36-33.

Younger then made a three-pointer to tie the game with 1:59 left.

The Bulldogs finally took the lead, at 39-36, on the last of Nemeč's three-pointers, off an assist from Younger with 1:07 left.

"That three-pointer was the biggest shot for sure that I've made all year," said Nemeč, who finished with nine points.

"Actually we just started to play better defense in the fourth quarter and that's what helped us come back and get the win. We didn't play with a high intensity level in the first half and then we had a tough third quarter. Obviously, we started playing better in the fourth. It feels amazing to reach the semis and it's awesome to finally win a game here for the first time in the last three years. We've worked so hard for this and I feel so proud of our team."

Sand said Nemeč's three-pointers, along with 5 free throws Baker made in the final minutes, were vital.

"We hit key shots, we made clutch free throws late in the game and Isabella made an amazing shot near the end to help us," Sand said. "Those are the shots you have to hit in the tournament, because it's do-or-die right now."

"We finally won in the quarterfinals," said Younger, who had 8 points. "I was kind of worried in the fourth, but I knew that we really wanted to win and so we overcame the deficit to get the victory. We shoot free throws every day in practice, usually about 30 of them, and so it was good to see us shoot well at the line."

Gwillim had a key rebound on the second of two missed free throws by Stayton's Marri Martinez with 1:29 left. On the ensuing possession Nemeč hit her game-winning three-pointer.

"We all have roles and one of mine is getting rebounds and I try to help my team the best I can, since I'm the tallest player on our team," said the 5-foot-10 Gwillim. "Rebounds help you win games and it helps get our transition game going well. I'm ecstatic to be going to the semis. We've worked so hard for this all year. It feels awesome to get this far in the tournament and it's just been like a dream come true for us."

"Our coach always reminds us that free throws and rebounds are always the key to winning games and we all worked really hard on both of those to help us come out on top at the end and get the win," said Gwillim, who won the Moda Health Player-of-the-Game Award. "We hit some big shots to help us pull it out."

After Nemeč's three-pointer gave Baker the lead, Ramos stole the inbound pass. Younger was fouled and she made both free throws to give Baker a 41-36 lead.

STAYTON (36)  
Smart 0 0-0, A. Nyquist 2 0-0 5, Frith 1 0-2 2, K. Nyquist 6 4-7 18, Martinez 5 0-3 10, Bundy 0 0-0 0, McGill 0 1-2 1. Totals 14 5-14 36.

BAKER (42)  
Keller 2 0-0 5, Younger 2 3-4 8, Ramos 1 2-4 4, Nemeč 3 0-2 9, Gwillim 3 8-10 14, Elms 0 0-0 0, Carter 1 0-0 2. Totals 12 13-19 42.

Stayton 10 12 9 5 — 36  
Baker 10 10 1 21 — 42

Three-point baskets — A. Nyquist, K. Nyquist 2, Keller, Younger, Nemeč 3. Fouled out — Keller. Total fouls — Stayton 12, Baker 18.

Technical — none.

## Adoptable Pet Of The Week

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