

Sports

BAKER FOOTBALL AGAINST LA GRANDE

Early miscues prove costly as Baker falls to La Grande, 34-21

■ Tigers turn a Baker fumble and interception into two first-half touchdowns after Baker leads early

By Gerry Steele
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La Grande's opportunistic defense took advantage of four first-half Baker turnovers Friday on the way to a 34-21 Greater Oregon League football win at Bulldog Memorial Stadium.

"Our defense was solid," said La Grande coach Rich McIlmoil.

But it was actually Baker's defense that first lit the scoreboard.

Two plays into the game Baker's Alex Hammans stole the ball from a La Grande runner and scooted 35 yards for the touchdown.

Hon Rushton's extra point gave the Bulldogs a quick 7-0 lead.

But it didn't last long.

Less than two minutes later La Grande evened the score when Payton Cooper raced off right tackle and outran Baker defenders for a 51-yard TD.

That's when La Grande's defense took over.

The Tigers recovered a Baker fumble at the Baker 7. Two plays later quarterback Parker Robinson scored the first of his three touchdowns, going 5 yards off left tackle.

La Grande's Dawson Gaertner then intercepted Kaden Myer's pass, giving the Tigers the ball at the Baker 5.



Kathy Orr/Baker City Herald

Baker's Alex Hammans outruns La Grande defenders and Baker teammates for a fumble return touchdown Friday at Bulldog Memorial Stadium.

Two plays later Robinson scored again, this time from the 1.

La Grande led 21-7 at halftime.

"We got off to a great start," said Baker coach Jason Ramos. "Then we had too many mistakes, too many turnovers in the first half."

"We gave them a short field a couple of times. You can't do that against a good team," Ramos said.

McIlmoil said the Tigers took advantage of the Baker miscues, then got its running game on track.

"We made some adjustments in the second half and started pushing the ball up the field," McIlmoil said. "We ran the ball pretty well."

The Tigers outgained Baker 220 to 13 on the ground.

In an attempt to jumpstart a stagnant offense, Ramos switched to Spencer Smith at quarterback in the second half. Smith, a senior, had not played quarterback since his sophomore season.

"Spencer did fine. In fact he

did more than fine," Ramos said. Smith finished 9-of-19 for 174 yards and tossed a pair of TD passes.

Robinson's third touchdown run gave La Grande a 28-7 lead before Smith connected with Myer for a score with 4:09 left in the third period to cut the Tigers' lead to 28-14.

La Grande added a TD run in the fourth quarter before Smith connected with Riley Flanagan for Baker's final score.

"We challenged the kids to play better in the second half," Ramos said. "We fixed some things. I was proud of the kids the way they played hard to the finish."

Baker outscored La Grande 14-13 in the second half.

La Grande received a minor scare when Robinson was knocked out of the game twice in the second half.

"I think he'll be fine," McIlmoil said after the game.

La Grande (2-0 in the GOL and 5-0 overall) is ranked No. 1 in the Class 4A rankings. The Tigers travel to Ontario Friday. La Grande defeated Ontario 56-6 in its GOL opener.

Fifth-ranked Baker (1-1 in the GOL and 3-2 overall) travels to Pe Eli/Willapa Valley, Washington, for a nonleague game Friday.

La Grande 14 7 7 6 - 34
Baker 7 0 7 7 - 21

B — Hammans 35 fumble return (Rushton kick)
L — Cooper 51 run (Kick good)
L — Robinson 5 run (Kick good)
L — Robinson 1 run (Evans kick)
L — Robinson 15 run (Evans kick)
B — Myer 23 pass from Smith (Rushton kick)
L — Shaw 4 run (Kick failed)
B — Flanagan 28 pass from Smith (Rushton kick)

MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER

Timbers beat San Jose to clinch playoff berth

By Anne M. Peterson
AP Sports Writer

PORTLAND — Dairon Asprilla celebrated with a flip after his goal pulled Portland in front and the Timbers went on to beat the San Jose Earthquakes 3-1 on Sunday for a spot in the playoffs.

Both teams went into the final match of the regular season vying for a postseason berth. The Timbers (14-13-7) finished sixth in the Western Conference and will face Real Salt Lake in the opening round.

The Earthquakes (13-16-5) were eliminated with the loss, but Chris Wondolowski's first-half goal extended his MLS career scoring record. San Jose ended the season with a six-game losing streak.

The match was among the most closely watched on Decision Day, the final day of the regular season when all the matches are played simultaneously. In addition to the Earthquakes and Timbers, FC Dallas and the Colorado Rapids, were also vying for the final two playoff berths in the Western Conference. Dallas took the other spot with a 6-0 victory over Sporting Kansas City.

The Timbers, who also got goals from Larrys Mabiala and Sebastian Blanco, were winless in their previous five matches, setting up Sunday's deciding game.

Brian Fernandez, who has 11 goals for the Timbers this season, was suspended for the match because she was shown a red card in last weekend's 2-2 draw with Sporting Kansas City.

Portland also was without Diego Valeri because of a calf injury, as rumors continued to swirl about whether the Timbers' captain would be back with the team next season. Valeri is seeking a contract extension with the team.

WEEK AHEAD IN HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

TUESDAY, OCT. 8

■ **Volleyball:** Baker at Ontario, 5:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, OCT. 11

■ **Volleyball:** Adrian at Powder Valley, 1:30 p.m.; Jordan Valley at Powder Valley, 4 p.m.; Wallowa at Pine-Eagle, 4 p.m.

■ **Football:** Dayville/Monument at Huntington, 1 p.m.; Wallowa at Pine-Eagle, 2 p.m.; Adrian/Jordan Valley at Powder Valley, 7 p.m.; Baker at Pe Eli/Willapa Valley, Wash., 7 p.m. (no radio)

■ **Cross country:** Baker at La Grande Invitational, tba

SATURDAY, OCT. 12

■ **Boys soccer:** La Grande at Baker, 2 p.m.

■ **Girls soccer:** La Grande at Baker, noon

■ **Volleyball:** Pine-Eagle at Powder Valley, 1 p.m.

AT A GLANCE

Linfield routs Pacific 52-14

FOREST GROVE — Wyatt Smith passed for 303 yards and four touchdowns and Artie Johnson ran for a career-high 98 yards and two scores to spur the Linfield Wildcats to a 52-14 Northwest Conference victory over the Pacific Boxers Saturday afternoon at Hanson Stadium.

The 25th-ranked Wildcats (2-1, 1-0 NWC) rebounded from their first loss of the season two weeks ago, piling up 529 yards on the winless Boxers (0-4, 0-1 NWC).

Smith completed 24 of 35 passes without an interception. Keegan Weiss caught eight of Smith's passes for 97 yards and three TDs. Eight receivers caught passes for Linfield, including four grabs by Colton Smith, and three each by Johnson, Connor McNabb, Keaton Wood and Tyler Torgerson.

Led by Johnson's 98 yards, the 'Cats finished with a season-best 186 yards.

Cole, Bregman lead Astros win

HOUSTON (AP) — Houston's pair of aces dealt the Astros a pair of wins.

Gerrit Cole carried his splendid September into an outstanding October with a 15-strikeout performance and Alex Bregman handed fans chanting MVP the mighty swing they craved. The Astros survived a wild ninth inning to beat the Tampa Bay Rays 3-1 on Saturday night for a 2-0 lead in their AL Division Series.

Houston is one win from reaching the AL Championship Series for the third straight year.

Yankees take 2-0 lead over Twins

NEW YORK (AP) — The 103-win New York Yankees ran out identical, relentless lineups in consecutive games for the first time all year, and manager Aaron Boone believes he knows what's next for the A-team Bombers. Didi Gregorius hooked a slump-busting grand slam during a seven-run third inning and the Yankees pummeled the Minnesota Twins again, cruising to an 8-2 victory Saturday for a 2-0 lead in their AL Division Series.

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