

Sports

BAKER FOOTBALL PREVIEW



Kathy Orr / Baker City Herald file photo

Kaden Myer, left, and quarterback Spencer Smith are two key cogs in Baker’s chances of defeating La Grande Saturday and gaining a share of the Greater Oregon League title.

Bulldogs travel to La Grande with Greater Oregon League title hopes

By Gerry Steele

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Potential playoff positioning will be on the line Saturday afternoon when Baker travels to La Grande for a Greater Oregon League football game at Community Stadium on the Eastern Oregon University

campus.

Baker has secured at least second place in the GOL, and a win Saturday would give the Bulldogs a share of the GOL championship with La Grande.

Baker (5-2 overall), ranked ninth in the Class 4A coaches’ poll and eighth in the OSAA

poll, must defeat La Grande by at least 10 points to tie the Tigers for the GOL crown using the AZZJ tie-breaking system.

La Grande (7-0 overall), ranked second in both polls, defeated Baker 34-21 on Oct. 4 at Baker.

Baker will have quarter-

back Spencer Shirtcliff back in uniform. Shirtcliff returned to action in Baker’s 47-0 homecoming win over Ontario on Oct. 18, after suffering a separated shoulder at Ontario on Sept. 27.

Saturday’s kickoff is scheduled for 1 p.m.

Blazers open 50th season with loss to Denver Nuggets

■ Denver ends Portland’s NBA record streak of 18 straight wins in home openers

By Anne M. Peterson

AP Sports Writer

PORTLAND — Early foul trouble in the season opener wasn’t going to get Nikola Jokic down.

He had 20 points and 13 rebounds despite sitting much of the first half, and the Denver Nuggets spoiled the first game of Portland’s 50th season with a 108-100 victory over the Trail Blazers on Wednesday night.

Will Barton added 19 points for the Nuggets, who also snapped Portland’s 18-game winning streak in home openers, the longest streak in league history. Denver made 18 3-pointers.

“I didn’t want to force it. I just wanted to win the game,” said Jokic, who had 16 points in the fourth quarter alone. “I wanted to go out there to be the positive energy to win the game.”

Damian Lillard led the Blazers with 32 points and eight assists, and Hassan Whiteside had 16 points and 19 rebounds

in his Portland debut.

Whiteside, acquired in an offseason trade with Miami, tipped in Lillard’s 3-point attempt to help the Blazers to an 88-87 lead with just under five minutes left. But the Nuggets answered with consecutive baskets from Jokic and Gary Harris.

Jokic hit back-to-back 3-pointers to extend Denver’s lead to 97-90. Lillard landed a 3-pointer with 1:58 left to narrow the gap but the Blazers couldn’t catch up.

“Nikola in the fourth quarter was phenomenal,” Denver coach Michael Malone said. “I think he had 16 and 8 in the quarter. He showed everybody why he’s an MVP-caliber player.”

It was the first meeting between the teams since the Western Conference semifinals, won by the Blazers in seven games.

“When the game was being decided, we just had too many lapses on both ends of the floor,” Lillard said. “We put

ourselves in a position where it was going to be hard to come back from them.”

The Nuggets didn’t make a lot of changes over the summer, returning the nucleus of the team that won 54 games last season and earned the West’s second seed, ending a six-year postseason drought. The team’s biggest move was acquiring Jerami Grant from Oklahoma City.

Portland, meanwhile, has six new faces on the roster, including Whiteside, who started at center. The Blazers also picked up veteran big man Pau Gasol as they await Jusuf Nurkic’s return from a broken leg.

The Blazers finished 53-29 last season and clinched the West’s third seed, playing through to the conference finals for the first time in 19 years.

Jokic collected three early fouls and went to the bench with 8:15 left in the first quarter, and the Nuggets struggled. “In the beginning of the

game it brought out a lot of memories from last year’s series,” Jamal Murray said. “We just wanted to come out and have a good game and come out with a win.”

Rodney Hood hit a 3-pointer and made a free throw to give Portland a 19-7 lead. Lillard’s first points of the game came on a dunk that made it 21-16.

The Blazers closed to 70-69 on Lillard’s 3-pointer late in the third quarter and then tied it on Anfernee Simons’ free throw. But they didn’t regain the lead until Simons’ driving layup made it 74-73 and capped a 16-6 run going in to the final period.

CJ McCollum’s 3-pointer pushed the lead to 79-73 and Portland held on until Murray’s 3 made it 83-all. Jokic’s jumper gave Denver back the lead before Whiteside’s tip.

“They had won 18 straight openers here so to come in here and win on the road against a division rival to start the year off I couldn’t ask for a better start,” Malone said.

POWDER VALLEY FOOTBALL



Ronald Bond / The (La Grande) Observer

Reece Dixon accounted for 501 yards of offense and seven total touchdowns in the Badgers’ come-from-behind 48-36 win over Pilot Rock/Nixyaawii Thursday night.

Badgers rally for big upset

By Ronald Bond

The (La Grande) Observer

LA GRANDE — The Powder Valley Badgers rallied from a 10-point fourth-quarter deficit to pick up their biggest win of the season, scoring the final 22 points to upset previously unbeaten Pilot Rock/Nixyaawii 48-36 on Thursday in a nonleague contest at Community Stadium in La Grande.

“It was really fun,” head coach Josh Cobb said. “We knew we could play with most people, and it finally came together tonight.”

The Badgers fell behind 36-26 in the third quarter when Rockets’ quarterback Tanner Corwin, who threw for 324 yards and four touchdowns, hit on a 43-yard scoring strike to Logan Weinke with 4:48 to play in the third quarter.

But Powder Valley dominated the final quarter. Reece Dixon, who threw for 251 yards and four scores, connected with Roper Bingham for an 85-yard touchdown to make it a two-point game with 7:03 to play.

The duo hooked up again three minutes later — this time on a 51-yard pass — for Powder Valley’s first lead, 40-36, with four minutes to go.

“Once we decided that we were going to get our heads up and play well (and) we got a few things rolling it just kept going for us,” Bingham said.

Cobb said the team having matchups against high-ranked teams in previous weeks benefitted the Badgers in the fourth.

“Three out of the last four weeks we’ve played teams ranked in the top 10, and we had to play the entire four quarters. We know how to play all the way through the game,” he said.

Dixon, who also rushed for 250 yards and three touchdowns, iced the game with 1:28 to play with an 80-yard run for the final margin.

“We knew we had more talent than they did. We had confidence that we knew we could beat them and we played well,” Bingham said.

The finish capped not only a 10-point fourth-quarter comeback, but a rally from 14 points down after one quarter for the Badgers. An 83-yard TD pass from Corwin to Tyasin Burns and a 9-yard Corwin to Weinke TD gave the Rockets a 14-0 lead after one quarter.

The Badgers chipped away on the ground, with touchdown runs of 5 and 81 yards by Dixon getting Powder Valley going in the second quarter. He later connected with Bingham for their first TD of the game — this one another big strike of 84 yards — to bring the Badgers within 22-20 late in the second quarter.

The Badgers trailed at halftime, 28-20, but again got within two, at 28-26, in the third quarter on a 17-yard TD catch by Kaden Krieger.

Bingham finished with the three touchdown receptions and 220 yards through the air. Clay Martin added 83 yards rushing and Ethan Stephens had 47 yards on the ground. Stephens also intercepted Corwin twice.

Weinke finished with 10 catches for 220 yards for the Rockets.

WORLD SERIES GAME TWO

Nationals take 2-0 lead

By Kristie Rieken

AP Sports Writer

HOUSTON — Stephen Strasburg’s time had come.

Famously held out of the postseason seven years ago, Strasburg delivered on the biggest stage of all Wednesday night.

The right-hander outpitched fellow ace Justin Verlander, overcoming a shaky start to help the Washington Nationals beat the Houston Astros 12-3 for a commanding 2-0 lead in the World Series.

Strasburg went six innings to earn the win — and a group hug in the dugout when he was done on the mound.

Kurt Suzuki hit a tiebreaking homer in what became a messy six-run seventh, and the Nationals headed back home needing two wins in three potential games in Washington to claim their first championship.

Adam Eaton paraded around the bases pointing to the Houston crowd after a late home run as the Nationals won their eighth in a row.

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