

Sports

BAKER FOOTBALL ADVANCES TO CLASS 4A QUARTERFINALS

Bulldogs shrug off miscues to finish off Cascade, 38-21

■ After fumbling twice inside the Cascade 10 in the first half, Baker capitalizes on its chances in the second

By Jayson Jacoby
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His team was in the lead but Baker football coach Jason Ramos was not happy.

The Bulldogs had just scored a touchdown to take a 14-7 lead over Cascade at halftime of a Class 4A playoff game Saturday afternoon.

Ramos was convinced the Bulldogs' 7-point advantage should have been at least twice as big.

And probably more. Ramos said his players were equally frustrated, and their annoyance showed in a second-half performance in which their earlier miscues were conspicuous by their absence.

Baker scored 24 points in the final two quarters, including a time-munching touchdown drive that swallowed more than half the fourth quarter and added the final points to the Bulldogs' 38-21 win over the Cougars (7-2), the Oregon West Conference champions.

The victory moves Baker (6-3) into the quarterfinal round and a rematch with the Banks Braves this Saturday, Nov. 16 at 1 p.m. at Banks.

A year ago the Braves beat Baker 49-13 on their way to the state championship.

Ramos, in his first year as Baker's head coach, said he was perturbed at halftime Saturday at Cascade because the Bulldogs had squandered a chance to take a commanding lead.

Actually chances, plural. Baker fumbled twice inside



Photo by Buell Gonzales Jr.

Baker's Alex Hammans, No. 23 at left, carries the ball against Cascade Saturday. Hammans had a touchdown run in Baker's 38-21 playoff win.

"All of their scores were on big plays, but they couldn't sustain drives. I'm very happy with the way we played defensively."

— Baker coach Jason Ramos

the Cascade 10.

"We wasted some opportunities," Ramos said. "We shot ourselves in the foot a couple times."

The two red zone fumbles, along with a missed field goal in the second quarter, potentially cost the Bulldogs 17 points.

"We had three opportunities when we really should have come up with some points," Ramos said.

The comfortable cushion those points would have provided became a sore spot a couple of times during the second half as Cascade scored two long touchdowns, each of which pulled the Cougars to

within 3 points.

"We couldn't get any breathing room," Ramos said.

After Mahonri Rushton's 29-yard field goal early in the third quarter boosted Baker's lead to 17-7, Cascade responded with its longest play, a 76-yard touchdown pass from Jacob Hage to Elijah Nolan.

Baker extended its lead back again when Alex Hammans scored on a 4-yard run. Rushton's extra point gave Baker a 24-14 lead entering the fourth quarter.

But Cascade, playing in front of its home crowd, kept the pressure on, this time with Blake Lewis' 33-yard touchdown run.

The Cougars were back within 3, at 24-21, and Ramos again had reason to rue those first-half fumbles.

They turned out not to matter, though.

On the first play of Baker's next possession, with the Bulldogs backed up at their own 12, Ramos decided to test the Cougars' pass defense.

He called for Riley Flanagan, the Bulldogs' top receiver, to take off on a go route.

Quarterback Spencer Shirtcliff, back to full health after missing all of two games and parts of two others due to a separated shoulder he suffered Sept. 27 at Ontario, found Flanagan behind the Cascade defense about 35 yards down the field.

Flanagan broke a tackle and, as Ramos puts it, "he was gone."

The 88-yard touchdown buoyed Baker's lead back to 10, at 31-21.

Ramos said he was confi-

dent Baker had an advantage with Flanagan against the Cougars' man-to-man pass coverage.

"I thought it was an opportune time to make the play," Ramos said.

Following the long score, Baker forced a Cascade punt.

Then the Bulldogs settled in for a long drive that culminated in Gauge Bloomer's 8-yard touchdown run.

Bloomer led Baker with 95 yards on 18 carries.

Ramos said he was happy to see the Bulldogs learn from their first-half mistakes.

"In the second half guys made plays when they needed to," he said.

Despite Cascade's two long touchdowns in the second half, and a 57-yard touchdown run by Joe Baxter that was the Cougars' only score in the first half, Ramos was satisfied with Baker's defense.

"Our defense played well," he said. "All of their scores were on big plays, but they couldn't sustain drives. I'm very happy with the way we played defensively."

Ramos noted Shirtcliff's strong game passing. The senior completed 11 of 24 passes for 302 yards. In addition to the bomb to Flanagan, Shirtcliff found Caden Long for a 4-yard score just before halftime that gave Baker a 14-7 lead. Shirtcliff also added a 1-yard touchdown run.

Flanagan hauled in 6 catches for 193 yards, Long 5 for 52 yards, Hammans 2 for 48 yards and Kaden Myer had a catch for 9 yards.

Hammans had 11 carries for 37 yards.

Ramos said Baker's first-half fumbles, which were a focus of his discussion during halftime Saturday, will continue to serve as teaching moments as the Bulldogs prepare for Banks, the top seed in the Class 4A playoffs.

Baker at Banks

- Saturday, Nov. 16, kickoff at 1 p.m.
- Class 4A quarterfinal
- Winner plays the winner of Marist Catholic/North Marion
- Banks is near Forest Grove

"We'll learn from it for sure, how important every play is in games like this," Ramos said. "We got away with it this time but we won't against better teams."

Ramos puts Banks in that category, although he said the Braves, having lost several top players from last year's state championship squad, do not appear quite as imposing as they were in 2018.

Banks, unbeaten and seeded number one this year, beat No. 16 seed Marshfield by just 6 points, 28-22, Friday night at Banks.

Banks and Baker have no common opponents this season. However, Marshfield serves as an intriguing comparison, as the Pirates did play two teams this year that are also on Baker's schedule — Ontario and Elmira. Marshfield beat Ontario 44-38, and Elmira 16-0.

Baker, by contrast, routed Ontario twice, 41-6 and 47-0, and beat Elmira 53-6.

"We like how we match up with (Banks)," Ramos said. "It'll be a challenge. We'll just have to play well. If we do that we like our chances."

Baker	0	14	10	14	—	38
Cascade	0	7	7	7	—	21
C	— Baxter 57 run (Smittle kick)					
B	— Shirtcliff 1 run (Rushton kick)					
B	— Long 4 pass from Shirtcliff (Rushton kick)					
B	— Rushton 29 yd FG					
C	— Nolan 76 pass from Hage (Smittle kick)					
B	— Hammans 4 run (Rushton kick)					
C	— Lewis 33 run (Smittle kick)					
B	— Flanagan 88 pass from Shirtcliff (Rushton kick)					
B	— Bloomer 8 run (Rushton kick)					

Powder Valley at Camas Valley

- Saturday, Nov. 16, kickoff 1 p.m.
- Class 1A quarterfinal
- Camas Valley is in Douglas County, about 30 miles southwest of Roseburg

POWDER

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Dixon passed for 271 yards, rushed for 61 and accounted for six touchdowns. Stephens had 120 yards receiving, 71 rushing and 68 passing and had a hand in five touchdowns.

Dominick Grende (114 yards receiving, one touchdown) and Roper Bingham (88 yards, two touchdowns) also had big nights through the air, while Clay Martin added 96 yards rushing.

The Badgers totaled 630 yards of offense in a game that saw the teams battle back and forth all night. Powder Valley led 16-12 after one quarter, trailed 34-32 at halftime, and took a 60-56 lead into the final quarter.

"Lowell was a very good team with tremendous athletes. My hats off to them," Cobb said.

BAKER

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But regardless of the finish, Cole said this year's team has helped to further lay the foundation of the program.

"I think it's speaking volumes for our program and that our kids are starting to believe they can be contenders," she said. "It just wasn't meant for us today."

Beyond the results Cassidy and the rest of the Bulldogs have brought to the course, they've also helped create a family culture within the program.

"I'm hoping we can have a good cross-county family for the next however many years because it's such an amazing program," Cassidy said. "My teammates — they're great people. And they're people I know I can trust. They're people who are willing to work for something, and I know that because today we were working together to hopefully win the state meet. I'm just really proud of what we have."

But for now, Cassidy said he's going to take a long nap before the team gets ready to compete at the Nike Cross Northwest Regionals in Boise next Saturday.

Thank you, Veterans



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