

Sports

BAKER GIRLS BASKETBALL TRAVELS TO PRINEVILLE FOR TOURNAMENT

Baker dominates 2 games

■ Bulldogs hold Estacada to 1 point in the first quarter and blank Crook County

By Jayson Jacoby
jjacoby@bakercityherald

Mat Sand always watches closely at the start of each game to see how effective the Baker girls basketball team's defense is.

Sand could hardly have expected anything better than what he saw this weekend during the Central Oregon Tip-Off Classic at Prineville.

The Bulldogs, defending Class 4A state champions, allowed a single point in the first quarters of their two dominating wins.

On Friday, Estacada managed one point as Baker took a 19-1 lead after one quarter en route to a 68-27 win.

On Saturday Baker was even better, holding Crook County scoreless for the first eight minutes.

The Bulldogs breezed to a 63-8 win over the host team, also blanking Crook County in the second period and improving to 3-0 on the season.

"The girls are doing an excellent job for this early in the season," Sand said. "It's fun to watch."

He employs full court pressure early in the game, relying on the guard tandem of Sydney Younger and Sydney Keller, to see whether the opposing team has skilled ball-handlers who can cope with the two Sydneys' quick hands and feet.

Neither Estacada nor

"I'm really pleased with the improvement just from the first game to the last one. I think we're on our way."

— **Mat Sand, Baker girls basketball coach**

Crook County was up to that task.

"We try to set the tone of the game from the start, and that's the way we started both games," Sand said. "I believe we have one of the best backcourts, if not the best, in 4A basketball right now."

Defensive pressure leads to easy baskets and free throws, and the Bulldogs had plenty of both in their two dominating wins.

"You can't ask for a better shot than a free throw," Sand said. "I always tell the girls that free throws and re-bounds are what win games."

Although Baker scored 21 points from the free throw line against Estacada, the Bulldogs' percentage — 62% on 21 of 34 — wasn't up to the 70% to 75% that Sand has set as a goal.

Baker exceeded that goal, however, in the rout over Crook County, going 15 for 18, an 83% clip.

Keller, Younger, Anna Carter and Lauren Benson were all perfect from the charity stripe.

Although Baker was never threatened in either game thanks to the dominant first quarters, the Bulldogs were consistent throughout, scoring in double figures in every quarter of both games.

Freshman post Jozie Ramos led the Bulldogs in scoring with 33 points in the two games — a team-high 17 against Estacada and tying with Younger with 16 against Crook County.

Younger, whom Sand calls the "best point guard in the state in 4A," tallied 31 points in the two games, and Keller had 21 points.

Baker had contributions across the roster, as Lauren Benson scored 14 points in the two games, Anna Carter 10, Isabella Nemec and Hailey Zikmund 8 each, and Jocelynn Hellberg 6.

Younger said Baker's emphasis on pressure defense, even in easy wins, helps the team prepare for tougher games ahead, and fosters team unity.

"You really get to rely on your teammates," she said. "Even when we have big leads we have to keep our intensity high."

Sand doesn't expect such lopsided scores when Baker travels even farther west this week to compete in the three-day Junction City/Harrisburg tournament.

The Bulldogs will play one

game Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The opponents and times haven't been set.

"We'll get tested more than we have been," Sand said. "There's some good teams there. It'll be a good test for us, for our mental toughness."

And although 3 games is a relatively small sample size, Sand said he's happy with how the team is playing.

"I'm really pleased with the improvement just from the first game to the last one," he said. "I think we're on our way."

Younger agrees. "We have very strong chemistry like we did last year," she said.

FRIDAY'S GAME	
ESTACADA (27)	
Jennings 0 0-0 0, Gripple 3 0-0 8, Liber 3 2-4 10, Youngberg 0 0-0 0, Crandell 0 1-2 1, Konde 1 0-0 3, Mireles 0 0-0 0, Hawkins 1 0-0 2, Guarnieri 0 0-0 0, Lake 1 0-0 2, Canifax 0 1-6 1. Totals 9 4-12 37	
BAKER (68)	
Hellberg 0 0-0 0, Keller 5 4-6 14, Younger 5 5-10 15, Zikmund 2 4-6 8, Carter 1 1-2 4, Nemec 2 0-0 4, Ramos 6 5-8 17, Benson 2 2-2 6. Totals 23 21-34 68	
Estacada	1 10 11 5 — 27
Baker	19 19 16 14 — 68
Three-point baskets — Gripple 2, Liber 2, Konde, Carter. Fouled out — none. Total fouls — Estacada 22, Baker 12. Technical s — none.	

SATURDAY'S GAME	
CROOK COUNTY (8)	
Remoss 0 0-0 0, Woodward 0 0-0 0, Kesberger 0 0-0 0, Freeman 0 0-0 0, Purplee 0 0-0 0, Hutchins 0 0-0 0, Nwen 0 0-0 0, Jonas 0 0-0 0, L. Barker 1 0-0 2, A. Barker 0 0-0 0, Martina 1 0-0 2, Brooks 1 2-6 4. Totals 3 2-6 8	
BAKER (63)	
Hellberg 2 1-2 6, Keller 2 2-2 7, Younger 6 2-2 16, Zikmund 0 0-0 0, Carter 2 2-2 6, Nemec 2 0-0 4, Ramos 5 6-8 16, Benson 2 2-2 8. Totals 21 15-18 63	
Baker	13 18 15 17 — 63
Crook County	0 6 0 2 — 8
Three-point baskets — Hellberg, Keller, Younger 2, Benson 2. Fouled out — none. Total fouls — Crook County 13, Baker 6. Technical s — none.	

Rams stifle Seahawks in 28-12 win

By Greg Beacham
AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES — When Todd Gurley flattened Tre Flowers with a brutal stiff arm on his path to Los Angeles' final touchdown, the Rams delivered a clear message right to the face of the Seahawks and the NFL.

Although it's too soon to say whether the Rams solved their offensive problems in time to make the playoffs, the team

that dazzled the league in the past two seasons will be dangerous down the stretch.

"We're finally playing the way we should have been playing," Rams defensive tackle Aaron Donald said.

Jared Goff passed for 293 yards and two touchdowns, Gurley ran for 79 yards and that decisive fourth-quarter TD and the Rams prevented Seattle from clinching a playoff berth with a 28-12 victory

Sunday night.

From start to finish in their final game under the Coliseum lights, the Rams (8-5) looked like their most dangerous selves of the previous two seasons. In their fifth win in seven games, the Rams had little trouble derailing the powerful Seahawks' five-game winning streak.

"I think this is a different team now with a different mentality," left tackle Andrew Whitworth said.

Thunder turns back Blazers' late rally

By Anne M. Peterson
AP Sports Writer

PORTLAND — It was less than two weeks ago that the Oklahoma City Thunder last visited Portland, but this time they wouldn't leave with a loss.

Dennis Schroder and Shai Gilgeous-Alexander each scored 21 points and the Thunder opened a four-game trip with a 108-96 victory over the Trail Blazers on Sunday night.

The Thunder, who led by as many as 18 points in the first half, have won four of their last five games, the team's best stretch of the season. Chris Paul finished with 20 points.

"Obviously, the last time we came here we were really beat

handily, from start to finish. We did get it back to nine, but we never really were in control of the game, constantly fighting an uphill battle," Thunder coach Billy Donovan said, recalling the 136-119 loss on Nov. 26. "It was good that we were able to come into a tough place and play and find a way to win the game."

Damian Lillard had 26 for the Blazers, who have lost three of four.

After trailing 55-47 at the break, the Blazers closed the gap in the third quarter and the Thunder held just an 82-78 advantage going into the final period. But Danilo Gallinari's 3-pointer put Oklahoma

City up 95-87 with 4:14 left.

Gilgeous-Alexander hit a 3-pointer and a floater that extended Oklahoma City's margin to 100-89 with 3:13 left and essentially put the game out of reach for the Blazers.

"I think we kind of just play

well in stretches, and we don't really have the luxury of playing well in stretches. We're a team that if the ball's not going in, we gotta be getting to the 50-50 balls, we can't be letting teams get second and third opportunities. We foul every 30 seconds," Lillard said.



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