Sports

BAKER BOYS BASKETBALL

Bulldogs blow out Vale, 71-43

■ Baker races to 25-13 lead after the first quarter and cruises from there to finish three-game homestand with a 2-1 record

By Jayson Jacoby
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Caden Long leaped high and threw down a slam dunk that left the backboard shaking for several seconds.

Less than 30 seconds later Long rejected a Vale shot in the lane.

And on Baker's next possession Long whipped a pass to Jamisun Rigueiro, who swished a three-pointer from the left wing.

This brief sequence in the third quarter epitomized Baker's dominant 71-43 win over Vale Saturday night, the Bulldogs' third home game in three nights.

Baker won two of the three games.

Baker not only showed no ill effects from its hectic schedule, but the Bulldogs had their most potent first quarter of the season Saturday, taking a 25-13 lead over the Class 3A Vikings.

Long had 14 of his game-high 20 points in the fast-paced first period. Baker coach Jebron Jones called for a full court press early in the game and the defensive pressure yielded a few steals that led to fastbreak layins.

"We're not the biggest team, but we're faster than the majority of the teams we play."

— Baker senior Riley Flanagan

Riley Flanagan, Baker's high-flying senior, had one of the breakaways. He also was fouled while making a three-pointer, barely missing a four-point play when his free throw rolled off.

Flanagan said the speedy style that prevailed early against Vale suits the Bulldogs.

"We're not the biggest team, but we're faster than the majority of the teams we play," he said. "Nothing defeats a team more than when they just can't keep up."

Flanagan, who added 17 points, put on a display of his jumping ability, scoring most of his baskets in the lane, including a pair of rebound putbacks that are his specialty.

"The easiest way for me to get points is to crash the boards," Flanagan said. "I'm always looking for that second chance."

After taking the 12-point lead after the first quarter, Baker went on an 8-2 run to start the second quarter. Vale never got closer than 16 points after that.

Jones said he anticipated his team might be a bit worn out after playing the previous two nights, so he got minutes for all 10 players on the bench.

The strategy paid dividends, as nine Bulldogs scored at least 3 points.

"I wanted to get everybody playing time and rest," Jones said.

Although he was happy with Baker's 25-point first quarter, Jones said the frenetic style is not what he encourages.

"We can't sustain that pace," he said.

Two nights after scoring a career high 32 points in a 71-61 win over Weiser, Baker point guard Gabe Gambleton did more damage Saturday with his creative passing. Gambleton had at least 8 assists to go along with his 7 points.

"He did a great job tonight," Jones said of Gambleton.

Kathy Orr/Baker City Herald

Baker's Jake Wright, center, battles Vale's Dawson Lunt for the ball Saturday in the Baker gym.

More than half of Baker's baskets came on assists.

Gambleton had assists on three straight Baker hoops in the second quarter.

"We make a point of emphasis to share the ball," Jones said. "We had good ball movement and good player movement, and that leads to easy baskets. Overall we took better shots tonight."

Flanagan said passing was an emphasis during practices last week.

"We really showed that today," he said.

Jones wasn't as pleased with Baker's defense.

"We allowed them to penetrate too easily," he said. "We can't do that and expect to win against better teams."

As Baker (8-6 overall) prepares to open Greater Oregon League play Friday at La Grande, Jones said he was glad his players finished the three-game home stretch with a win that he acknowledged was fun for them.

"Deep down I think they know the potential is there to do something special," he said.

VALE (43)
Diaz 3 1-1 7, Kelso 2 0-0 6, Kolton Kurata 0 0-0 0, Gregory 2 2-2 6, Kade Kurata 0 2-2 2, Wolfe 5 2-2 12, Kesey 5 0-0 10. Totals 16 7-7 43.
BAKER (71)
Younger 2 0-0 4, Gambleton 3 0-0 7, Flanagan 8 0-3 17, Robb 3 1-2 7, Rigueiro 1 0-0 3, Wright 1 1-1 3, Shirtcliff 0 0-0 0, Long 9 1-1 20, Smith 2 0-0 4, Van Arsdall 3 0-1 6. Totals 31 3-8 71.

Vale	13	6	13	11	— 43
Baker	25	18	10	18	— 71

Three-point baskets — Gambleton, Flanagan, Rigueiro, Long, Kelso 2. **Total fouls** — Vale 13, Baker 11.

Scoring drought costly in Baker's loss to Fruitland

By Jayson Jacoby
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For a while Friday night it seemed as though the north basket at the Baker gym had either been cursed or had an extremely slippery, albeit invisible, substance liberally applied to the rim.

That basket was, to the misfortune of the Baker boys, the one they were shooting at.

Shooting and, for an awfully long period, missing.

The Bulldogs failed to make a field goal for more than eight minutes, from the middle of the third period until the middle of the fourth. Baker's only point during that drought was Caden Long's free throw.

And one free throw wasn't nearly enough to keep pace with the Fruitland Grizzlies.

Fruitland capitalized on Baker's prolonged shooting woes to turn a close game into a 59-45 win.

The Grizzlies from Idaho's Treasure Valley led by as many as 19 points in the fourth quarter.

Baker's long dry spell wasn't dictated, at least in the main, by Fruitland's defense, although the Grizzlies' full-court press and half-court trap did lead to a handful of Baker turnovers.

The Bulldogs had several layin attempts during the key stretch. A few longer shots rattled around inside the cylinder, including a Gabe Gambleton three-pointer that seemed to be halfway through the net before popping back out like a party favor.

Baker coach Jebron Jones said that Baker suffered from some bad luck during the long field goal freeze.

But he also blamed the Bulldogs for shooting at times when making an extra pass could have given a teammate a better chance.

"The ball didn't go in because we didn't take the best of shots at times," Jones said. "We were not consistently unselfish enough, and that will lead to stretches like that."

Friday's game started much as Thursday's did against Fruitland's Idaho neighbor, Weiser, which made its first seven shots.

The Grizzlies weren't quite that potent. But when Pri Weatherall swished his second three-pointer, Fruitland led 12-3 midway through the first quarter.

Baker then scored six straight points, the last on Riley Flanagan's steal and layin, to cut the lead to 12-9 with 2:37 left in the period.

Jones switched to a 2-3 zone defense about halfway through the first quarter and the

"The boys played hard. But we didn't play smart. And you have to do both against a good team."

— Baker coach Jebron Jones

change interrupted the previously smooth flow of the Grizzlies' half-court offense.

Flanagan in particular took advantage of Fruitland's attempts to beat the zone with perimeter passing. The senior anticipated a few of those passes, grabbing the ball and sprinting downcourt for a layin.

Baker briefly tied the game at 22 on Gambleton's 16-foot jumper with 4:06 left in the first half, but Fruitland scored 7 straight points and ended the half on a 10-3 run to lead 32-25.

The Bulldogs kept it close early in the second half, narrowing the lead to 3 points twice, the last time, at 36-33, on Long's putback basket with a little over 4 minutes left in the third period.

Baker didn't score again until well into the final quarter, and by then Fruitland's lead had swelled to 51-33.

Jones was disappointed with the result but not with his team's effort on the second of three home games in three nights.

"The boys played hard," he said. "But we didn't play smart. And you have to do both against a good team."

Which Fruitland is, in Jones' estimation.

"I like Fruitland a lot, they're a well-balanced, well-coached team," he said.

Jones said he was generally pleased with how Baker handled Fruitland's defensive pressure — something the Bulldogs expected.

"We knew they were going to press," he said.

But Jones said the Bulldogs needed to be more aggressive in tracking down loose balls.

"They got most of the 50-50 balls," he said.

Baker also struggled at times with Fruitland's height, especially in rebounding.

The Grizzlies frequently had on the court together Nolan Bower, 6-foot-6, Hyrum Lindsey, 6-foot-5, and Josh Henggeler, 6-foot-4.

"There was a lack of boxing out, and we can't afford to do that," Jones said.

FRUITLAND (59)
Joe Hengeller 3 0-0 7, Brinaga 3 1-1 8, Weatherall 5 0-0 13, Beltran-Sanchez 1 5-5 7, Lindsey 4 0-0 9, Watson 1 2-2 5, Hartman 1 0-0 2, Bower 3 0-1 6, Josh Henggeler 1 0-0 2. Totals 22 8-9 59.
BAKER (45)
Younger 0 0-0 0, Gambleton 5 2-2 13, Flanagan 5 1-2 11, Robb 0 0-0 0, Rigueiro 2 0-0 5, Wright 1 0-0 2, Shirtcliff 0 0-0 0, Long 4 2-6 10, Smith 1 0-0 2, Van Arsdall 1 0-0 2. Totals 19 5-10 45.

Fruitland	19	13	16	11	— 59
Baker	13	12	8	12	— 45

Three-point baskets — Joe Henggeler, Barinaga, Weatherall 3, Lindsey, Watson, Gambleton, Rigueiro. **Total fouls** — Fruitland 14, Baker 11.

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