

Sports

BAKER GIRLS BASKETBALL

Baker opens GOL play with hard-fought win at La Grande

By Ronald Bond

The (La Grande) Observer

LA GRANDE — The La Grande Tigers girls basketball team put themselves in position in the fourth quarter Friday at home to finally put an end to a long losing streak to the rival Baker Bulldogs.

But a rash of turnovers late by the Tigers and the big-game experience by the defending state champions Bulldogs proved to be the difference. Baker held off every push by the Tigers to earn a 42-35 win in the Greater Oregon League opener for both teams and run its winning streak over La Grande to 11 games.

"I think they were a little more relaxed in a big-game atmosphere," La Grande head coach Brian Wright said of the Bulldogs. "Some of our kids were obviously bothered by nerves."

La Grande fell behind by as much as nine points on two occasions in the second quarter, but the Tigers whittled away at the deficit and got within one on three separate occasions in the second half — at 25-24 on a pair of Ella Dunlap free throws in the third, at 28-27 on a McKaylee Orton 3-pointer with three minutes to play in the third, and at 33-32 on a Dunlap layup early in the fourth.

But the Bulldogs had a response every time.

Hailey Zikmund countered Dunlap's third-quarter free throws with a 3-pointer that ended an 8-0 La Grande run. Lauren Benson had a 3-point play that helped keep Baker ahead by four after Orton's triple. And the Bulldogs held La Grande to just three free throws in the final seven minutes of the game while forcing seven turnovers in the fourth quarter — most of them in the closing minutes.

"We always start with defense, so we knew that we wanted to put ball pressure on them and see what they did with it," Baker coach Mat Sand said.

The defensive pressure resulted in the Bulldogs collecting 20 steals and forcing La Grande to commit 26 turnovers.

The Bulldogs held La Grande scoreless for more than four minutes in the fourth quarter as they pushed the slim margin to 39-33 on



Ronald Bond / The (La Grande) Observer

Baker's Lauren Benson dribbles against the defense of La Grande's Kenzie Williams on Friday night at La Grande.

"We always start with defense, so we knew that we wanted to put ball pressure on them and see what they did with it."

— Baker coach Mat Sand

a pair of Sydney Younger free throws with 1:18 to play.

Camryn Collman countered with two free throws for La Grande to cut the margin back to four. The Tigers had opportunities to get closer, but a steal and a pair of free throws by Sydney Keller with 36.8 seconds to go made it a six-point game, and La Grande got no closer.

"I guessed (we had) about 25 (turnovers), and you just can't turn the ball over 25 times, and especially on our last four or five possessions there when we had opportunities," Wright said. "We were within one or two or three, and then (committed) some turnovers in transition that if we'd have scored totally would have changed the game."

Sand said the value of having several players with experience from his team's 2019 Class 4A title run a year ago also played a role in his team being able to hold off what he called a "great" La

Grande squad.

"You just can't replace that, and you can't teach that," Sand said of the Bulldogs' experience. "It's about being on the floor, giving yourselves opportunities. We've done that the last four years. It creates an atmosphere in a program and allows the younger kids to embrace it. Having that senior leadership with the experience we have is unbelievable."

One of those seniors, Younger, led the Bulldogs with 13 points and also had seven rebounds and five steals. "She's a floor leader. She always has been," Sand said of Younger, who is Baker's leading scorer. "I groomed her all four years for that, and it's nice to have someone with that kind of experience and that kind of talent at the point guard."

Freshman Jozie Ramos added eight points for the Bulldogs, and both Zikmund and Benson had seven.

Collman, who led La Grande with 13 points, 11 rebounds and three steals, said nerves played a major factor in the contest for her team.

"It was also hard because we were so nervous for this home game," she said. "We put a lot of expectation on it,

(and) we didn't come out as strong as we wanted to."

Baker led almost the entire night. The Tigers battled back from an early deficit to tie the score at 8-8 after one quarter and briefly took a 10-8 lead on a long jumper by Grace Neer to open the second quarter.

Zikmund hit a 3-pointer for Baker a minute later to start a 10-0 run and put the Bulldogs ahead. The margin reached nine before Collman's late 3 made it 25-19 at the half.

Baker made 15 of 23 free throws, led by Benson's 5-for-5 and Younger's 4-for-4.

Dunlap added seven points and eight boards for La Grande. Kenzie Williams added six points and six rebounds.

"We were definitely there, we just didn't execute toward the end," Collman said. "We're definitely going to be ready for them in the future."

BAKER (42)

Keller 1-2-3-4, Younger 4-4-4-13, Zikmund 2-1-2-7, Carter 0-1-2-1, Nemeec 1-0-0-2, Ramos 3-2-7-8, Benson 1-5-5-7. Totals 12-15-23-42.

LA GRANDE (35)

Collman 2-7-8-13, Reagan 1-0-0-2, Rinker 0-0-0-0, Orton 1-0-0-3, Chamberlain 1-0-0-2, Kump 0-0-0-0, Neer 1-0-2-2, Williams 3-0-1-6, Dunlap 2-3-4-7. Totals 11-10-15-35.

Baker 8 17 8 9 - 42
La Grande 8 18 11 5 - 35
Three-point baskets — Orton, Collman, Younger, Zikmund 2. Total fouls — Baker 16, La Grande 21.

OREGON MEN'S BASKETBALL

Ducks hold off Sun Devils, 78-69

EUGENE (AP) — There's no easy way to defend Payton Pritchard.

He hits 3-point shots, going 6 of 9 on Saturday night. He drives for baskets. He makes his free throws.

And it all came into play for the senior, who scored 29 points as No. 9 Oregon held off Arizona State 78-69.

"He controls the game," ASU coach Bobby Hurley said. "Even when he's got the slightest of an angle he can get by you."

"He's so crafty and then he's a threat from so far away he creates a lot of problems."

So did ASU's Remy Martin, who matched Pritchard's career-high point total. Much of the game was a personal duel between the two high-scoring guards.

Pritchard was 9 of 16 from the field. He also made all five of his free throws. Martin was 9 of 21 from the field and made his eight free throw attempts.

Chris Duarte added 20 points for the Ducks (14-3, 3-1 Pac-12), who have won 11 of their last 12 games against the Sun Devils.

Arizona State (10-6, 1-2) remained one of only two Pac-12 teams, along with Washington State, that has never won at Matthew Knight Arena, which opened in 2011.

After Arizona State pulled within 65-60 with 4 minutes remaining, Pritchard responded with a three-point play and the Ducks milked that advantage to the end, even hitting five of their final six free throws after being 10 of 18 before that.

"You hit some free throws and it's a 15-point game and (the outcome) looks a little different," Oregon coach Dana Altman said. "We've had some nights where we shot (free throws) OK but tonight we shot poorly."

"We've just got to do a better job from the line."

OREGON STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

Beavers upset No. 24 Arizona

By Gary Horowitz

Associated Press

CORVALLIS — Oregon State used a big second half to pull away with a big win against No. 24 Arizona.

Tres Tinkle scored 20 points and the Beavers beat the Wildcats 82-65 on Sunday night. The senior forward also had six rebounds, seven assists and three steals.

Ethan Thompson had 18 points and eight assists for Oregon State (12-4, 2-2 Pac-12).

"Just showing what we're capable of doing when we're locked in," Tinkle said.

Oregon State was certainly locked in during the second half, outscoring the Wildcats 51-34.

Zeke Nnaji had 21 points and nine rebound to lead Arizona (11-5, 1-2), and Jemari Baker scored 10 points.

After Nnaji made two free throws to tie the score at 49-all with 12:05 left in the second half, Oregon State took over and outscored Arizona 33-16 the rest of the way.

Alfred Hollins' 3-pointer culminated a 7-0 run and gave Oregon State a 56-49 lead with 10:17 remaining. The Beavers extended the lead to 70-56 on Kylor Kelley's dunk with 4:45 left and led by as much as 20.

It was a dominant second-half performance from the Beavers, who were coming off an 82-76 loss to Arizona State.

"They were outstanding in the second half and we really couldn't guard 'em," Arizona coach Sean Miller said of the Beavers. "So much of it was just, I'd use the word outclassed. We just weren't able to match up with the players that they had."

Arizona, which lost at No. 9 Oregon in overtime on Thursday, remained winless on the road this season.

Kelley, who leads the nation in blocked shots, had 13 points, six boards and two blocks.

"Big-time win in a big-time bounce-back situation for us," Oregon State coach Wayne Tinkle said.

NFL DIVISION PLAYOFFS

49ers' stingy defense stifles Vikings in 27-10 win

By Josh Dubow

AP Pro Football Writer

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Richard Sherman anticipated the route for an interception and then watched the San Francisco 49ers run eight straight times for the touchdown that put them in control of their first playoff game in six years.

The dominant defense and powerful running game that carried the Niners to an 8-0 start this season delivered a 27-10 victory over the Minnesota Vikings in the divisional round Saturday.

"People keep disrespecting us. At the end of the day, all you can do is

go out and execute," Sherman said. "It felt good. That's what we look like when we're totally healthy."

The return of injured defensive starters Dee Ford, Kwon Alexander and Jaquiski Tartt had the Niners (14-3) playing as they did in the first half of the season as they set a franchise playoff record by allowing only 147 yards.

Jimmy Garoppolo threw a TD pass on his opening drive as a play-off starter and then mostly watched his defense and running game take over from there. The top-seeded 49ers turned a pair of second-half turnovers by Minnesota (11-7) into

10 points.

"They're pretty good right?" tight end George Kittle said of his defense. "It's such a blast just to watch them, how they work together. ...

"If our defense keeps playing like that, all we have to do is not turn the ball over to win games"

Sherman set up Tevin Coleman's second short touchdown run of the game when he beat Adam Thielen to the spot to intercept Kirk Cousins for his third career playoff interception.

Coleman had five of the eight carries on the 44-yard drive as part of a 105-yard rushing performance.

"Those guys did very well," Coleman said of his offensive line. "They moved the guys back so I had clear holes to run through. So, yeah, they did a real good job."

Marcus Sherels' fumbled punt later in the third quarter led to a field goal that made it 27-10 early in the fourth quarter.

San Francisco didn't allow Minnesota to gain a first down for more than 27 minutes of game action starting late in the second quarter.

The Niners will host the NFC championship game next week against the winner of Sunday's game between Seattle and Green Bay.

Garoppolo threw an interception deep in his own territory late in the first half and then spent most of the second half handing the ball off to Coleman and Raheem Mostert.

There was little reason for coach Kyle Shanahan to take chances the way his defense completely bottled up talented runner Dalvin Cook. That took away Minnesota's play-action game and forced Cousins into becoming a drop-back passer.

"We didn't do enough offensively to give ourselves a chance to win the game," Cousins said. "It hurts right now. It's so raw right now, just falling short."

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