

BAKER'S JAKE WRIGHT SIGNS LETTER OF INTENT TO PLAY FOOTBALL AT OREGON STATE



Buell Gonzales Jr./Contributed Photo

Baker High School senior Jake Wright, center, on Feb. 4 signed a letter of intent to play football at Oregon State University, the alma mater of his parents, Dennis and Kelli.

Bulldog will be a Beaver

■ Jake Wright will follow in his parents' footsteps by attending Oregon State

By Corey Kirk
ckirk@bakercityherald.com

Clad in black and orange and with a pen in his right hand, Jake Wright signed the most important signature of his life so far.

On Feb. 4 at Baker High School, Wright, flanked by his parents, Kelli and Dennis, signed a letter of intent to play football at Oregon State University.

By becoming a Beaver, Jake, who's a senior, not only will fulfill an athletic dream, but he'll follow in his parents' academic footsteps by studying at their alma mater in Corvallis.

"It's something that not everybody gets to experience, it kind of starts to sink in that you are actually going to play at the next level," Jake Wright said.

Wright has been a three-sport athlete at BHS, moving from the football field to the basketball court and then to the baseball diamond.

But football, where Wright anchored the offensive and defensive lines, is his passion, and the sport he hoped to continue playing in college.

Jason Ramos, Baker's varsity head coach, has watched Wright progress with pride.

"He came into the program as having a lot of potential, he's a big kid and is pretty athletic," Ramos said, "He had the idea he was going to turn into a special football player."

After his junior season in 2019, when the Bulldogs advanced to the Class 4A quarterfinals, Wright hit the ground running with recruiting.

For an athlete in a relatively small school such as Baker, that can be challenging, said Buell Gonzales Jr., the Baker School District's athletic director. Some athletes use websites such as Next College Student Athlete to pique the interest of college coaches.

"It's something that not everybody gets to experience, it kind of starts to sink in that you are actually going to play at the next level."

— Jake Wright

"In a smaller school like Baker, you have to be your own advocate, you have to be willing to go out, you got to listen and you got to be lucky," Gonzales said.

Wright quickly drew interest, including offers from Western Oregon University and Southern Oregon University.

Figuring it would be a long-shot, Wright reached out to Oregon State, a Pac-12 school, via email to express interest in playing for the Beavers.

His lineman coach, Rick Ritter, even had conversations with Beavers recruiters.

The interest was mutual. OSU offered Wright a chance, but in a different capacity than the two smaller schools.

But as a lifelong Beavers fan, Wright said he didn't want to miss the chance to play at the Division I level.

"Southern and Western offered me scholarships, and then Oregon State reached out and offered me a preferred walk-on spot, and I couldn't pass it up," Wright said.

Although Western and Southern offered Wright a definite spot on their roster, OSU didn't have an available scholarship.

But even though Wright will have to earn his way onto the Beavers roster, with the possibility of later receiving a scholarship, he's ready to work hard to achieve that goal.

"I'm super excited to get in there at the end of June, I

think my sophomore year I could start maybe seeing the field a little bit," Wright said.

Although Wright hasn't played in an official football game since November 2019 — the COVID-19 pandemic canceled the fall 2020 season — he said he's added 35 pounds to his 6-foot-5 frame since he sent a recruitment film to OSU.

He's excited to have a chance to play again this spring, even though his final high school season will be shorter than usual.

"The film they looked at last year I was 205 pounds, and I am 240 pounds now," Wright said. "It's in my genes to gain weight, both of my brothers put on 20 pounds their senior summer."

Ramos is confident that Wright will thrive as a preferred walk-on at OSU, being willing to play either offense or defense.

"Jake made that decision, he had a chance to go somewhere else, but he's got another picture in mind, I'm willing to work, I'm willing to put in the time," Ramos said. "It's not going to happen right away, that's the reality, but I'm willing to do whatever to have that opportunity — that's his kind of his mindset, and I think he's going to have a great chance."

Ramos said he's proud of Wright, and believes he can inspire the players who follow him at BHS.

"That's the product we like to turn out here at Baker High School, it's great for these kids to see our guys to strive to maybe be the next Jake," Ramos said.

Gonzales agreed. "If you work hard enough, and you do the things you are supposed to do, then that opportunity can present itself," he said.

Wright isn't the first Bulldog lineman to find that opportunity in Corvallis.

OREGON MEN'S BASKETBALL

Ducks nip Buffs

EUGENE (AP) — Chris Duarte scored 18 points and Will Richardson scored 5 of his 11 in the last 61 seconds and Oregon defeated Colorado 60-56 on Thursday night.

In a game where neither team had a double-figure lead, the Ducks took a 55-53 lead with 1:51 to play when 50% free-throw shooter Chandler Lawson made a pair from the line.

After a Colorado miss, Oregon ran the clock down before Richardson made a spinning floater in the lane with 1:01 to go.

Another miss led to two Richardson free throws with 33 seconds to go, making it 59-53 — the Ducks' biggest lead — before D'Shawn Schwartz knocked down a 3 for Colorado. Richardson's free throw at 20.8 seconds wrapped it up.

Eugene Omoruyi added 13 points for Oregon (13-4, 8-3 Pac-12 Conference), which won its fourth straight.

Schwartz had 16 points and 11 rebounds to lead Colorado (16-7, 10-6), which lost back-to-back games for the first time this season after losing to last-place California on Saturday. The Buffaloes, who topped Oregon at home 79-72, have lost six straight at Oregon.

Colorado never trailed and had a possession with an eight-point lead in a defensive first half, using 10 points from Schwartz to take a 30-25 lead.

Oregon shot 50% in the second half, taking its first lead with 11:44 to play on a Duarte layup that made it 44-43 in the midst of a 9-0 run.

OREGON STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

Beavers roll Utes

CORVALLIS (AP) — Ethan Thompson had 25 points, eight assists and five rebounds and Oregon State won its fifth straight at home, 74-56 over Utah on Thursday night.

Warith Alatishe added a career-high 19 points with nine rebounds, four blocks and three steals for the Beavers (11-10, 7-8 Pac-12).

Thompson scored 15 points in the second half and capped a 23-2 run with a pair of dunks 13 seconds apart that made it 55-39 with 7:59 left. Thompson scored nine and Rodrigue Andela had all seven of his points during the run.

Jarod Lucas added 10 points for Oregon State.

Timmy Allen had 24 points, nine rebounds and five assists for the Utes (9-9, 6-8). Branden Carlson added 16 points on 5-of-7 shooting from the field and 5-of-5 from the foul line.

Carlson scored seven straight points to cap a 10-0 run that gave Utah a 37-32 lead with 17:14 left in the game. The Utes missed their next eight shots and committed six turnovers over a nearly 10-minute span while the Beavers pulled away.

Tires LES SCHWAB

★ FOUNDER'S CELEBRATION ★

SALE!

SAVE UP TO \$150

WHEN YOU BUNDLE SELECT TIRES AND BRAKES DURING THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY

★★★★★

*Call or come see us at
Lew Bros Tire in Baker City*

Limited time offer. While supplies last. Discount applies to a set of four select tires and depends on tire size and type. Cannot combine with other offers. Details at LesSchwab.com.

Lew Brothers Tire Service
541-523-3679
210 Bridge St. Baker City, OR

AUSTRALIAN OPEN TENNIS

Medvedev to face Djokovic in final

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Daniil Medvedev simply does not lose right now. Not to Top 10 opponents. Not to anyone, really. Certainly not to a drained Stefanos Tsitsipas in the Australian Open semifinals.

Now let's see what happens against Novak Djokovic in Rod Laver Arena.

Medvedev made it to his second Grand Slam final as he pursues his first major championship, overwhelming fifth-seeded Tsitsipas 6-4, 6-2, 7-5 on Friday, Feb. 18, at Melbourne Park to run his winning streak to 20 matches. That includes a dozen victories against members of the Top 10.

"He's a player," Tsitsipas said, "who has un-

locked pretty much everything in the game."

Tsitsipas, a 22-year-old from Greece, came out flat, looking drained after an epic four-hour victory over Rafael Nadal in the quarterfinals Wednesday, coming back from a two-set deficit.

Still, Medvedev was terrific, getting broken just once and accruing 17 aces among his 46 winners.

In Sunday's final (12:30 a.m. PST), the No. 4-seeded Medvedev will take on No. 1 Djokovic, who already owns eight Australian Open titles among his 17 Grand Slam trophies as he tries to gain on the men's record of 20 shared by Nadal and Roger Federer.