



GO! Magazine
Your guide to arts, entertainment and other events happening around Northeast Oregon

Baker City Herald

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QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Roger Holden of Baker City.

State, 3A

A Senate hearing on legislation to alter state gun laws drew a cavalcade of passionate opposition.

Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation heard four hours of virtual testimony Monday on Senate Bill 554, which allows local jurisdictions to prohibit people with concealed handgun permits from carrying firearms into public buildings.

Anyone caught with a firearm in a public building could face Class C felony charges. The bill is necessary, advocates say, because state law allows people with concealed handgun permits to carry firearms into some public buildings.

Sports, 6A

DENVER — Nikola Jokic had 41 points and Jamal Murray celebrated his 24th birthday by scoring 19 of his 24 in the fourth quarter to lead the Denver Nuggets over the Portland Trail Blazers 111-106 on Tuesday night. Damian Lillard had 20 of his 25 points in the second half and added 13 assists but it wasn't enough for the Blazers, who were coming off a 32-point loss Monday night in Phoenix. They have dropped three straight after a six-game winning streak.

WEATHER

Today
35 / 27



Snow showers

Friday
37 / 26



Mostly cloudy

Full forecast on the back of the B section.

The space below is for a postage label for issues that are mailed.

Baker Bulldogs Excited To Return To The Field

Football Fever



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald

Baker varsity head coach Jason Ramos, in yellow cap, watches the Bulldogs run through a drill during a practice on Feb. 17 at Baker High School. Baker's first game is scheduled for March 5 at Vale.

By Corey Kirk, Baker City Herald

Under the glow of the stadium lights, the Baker Bulldog football players are doing something they haven't done in well over a year.

They buckle on their shoulder pads, pull down their practice jerseys, don their helmets and run onto the field.

Their excitement is palpable.

"It's been really nice, I love having the helmet and shoulder pads on," junior Gauge Bloomer said.

After months of uncertainty, high school football has returned.

Baker started practicing Feb. 15, in preparation for an abbreviated season that includes an opening game set for March 5 at Vale.

"Kids have been waiting for this day, and they are pretty jazzed," varsity head coach Jason Ramos said. "Regardless of the weather, they are excited to be out, ready to start running into each other again."

The weather was decidedly different from what's typical for early practices in a typical season.

Instead of August heat, the Bulldogs had to deal with snow and temperatures near or below freezing.

And instead of preparing for a typical schedule featuring rivals such as La Grande, Baker's tentative five-game slate so far includes only one Greater Oregon League opponent, Ontario.

But for players, in particular veterans whose last competitive game was a loss at Banks in a Class 4A quarter-final playoff game in November 2019, the anticipation of playing again makes up for inclement weather and an unusual schedule.



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald

"Now that we are out here it's exciting, we are ready to hit someone in the mouth."

— Mason Van Arsdall, Baker senior lineman

"I think that's kind of fueling us this year, now that we are out here it's exciting, we are ready to hit someone in the mouth," said Mason Van Arsdall, an anchor on the Bulldogs' lines.

Ramos said he's not worried about

Tentative Schedule

MARCH 5

• at Vale, 7 p.m.

MARCH 13

• North Bend (at Crook County High School, Prineville), 2 p.m.

MARCH 19

• vs. Nyssa, 7 p.m.

MARCH 26

• vs. Ontario, 7 p.m.

APRIL 2, APRIL 9

• TBD

FIRST IN A SERIES: In future issues, Herald sports editor Corey Kirk will profile other traditional fall sports that are underway at Baker High School.

his team dealing with factors such as weather and scheduling.

"We can only control what we can control, and the weather isn't one of those things," Ramos said.

See **Football** / Page 6A

Virus cases rising

By Jayson Jacoby
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After a five-week decline in COVID-19 cases that dropped Baker County into the state's lowest risk level starting Feb. 12, the case rate is rising again.

The county reported 16 new cases over three days, Feb. 21-23.

That's the highest three-day total since 20 cases were counted Jan. 14-16.

County Commissioner Mark Bennett said he talked with Nancy Staten, director of the Baker County Health Department, on Tuesday, Feb. 23, and he said contact tracing linked the recent cases to families and small group gatherings.

Those were also the source of many of the county's cases in November, December and January, Bennett said.

"I think we'll see these (clusters of cases) from time to time," he said Wednesday morning, Feb. 24.

See **COVID-19** / Page 2A

Council declines to end deal with county on lodging tax collection

By Samantha O'Conner
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The Baker City Council voted 4-3 Tuesday night to leave in place an agreement with Baker County under which the county administers the tax paid by guests at motels and other lodging businesses, including within the Baker City limits.

Mayor Kerry McQuisten put the matter of the transient lodging tax, which generated about \$440,000 in a recent fiscal year, on the agenda.

Councilors Jason Spriet, Heather Sells, Lynette Perry and Shane Alderson voted in favor of the motion to maintain the deal.

McQuisten and councilors Johnny Waggoner Sr. and Joanna Dixon voted against the motion to keep the nearly 15-year-old agreement in place.

McQuisten said later that she plans to revisit the topic. Dixon and Waggoner both said they would like to have more information about the potential effects, on the city and the county, of the city withdrawing from the 2006 agreement.

Alderson offered to set up a meeting with county commissioners.

See **Council** / Page 3A

School district waives activity fees

By Chris Collins
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A move by the Baker School Board to eliminate the 5J District's pay-to-participate activity fees, which have been in place for the past 10 years, is expected to open opportunities for students

who might have been excluded from participation by the expense in the past.

The Board voted unanimously to rescind the requirement at its Feb. 18 meeting.

"This is a win-win decision," Superintendent Mark

Witty stated in a press release. "Studies demonstrate a strong connection between student participation in extracurricular activities and improved graduation rates."

Under the prior system, each student was charged

\$75 per sport or activity up to a maximum of \$150 per year, said Buell Gonzales Jr., the District athletic director. Families with more than one child paid a maximum of \$250 per year.

See **Fees** / Page 6A



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