

Sports

BAKER VOLLEYBALL SEASON BEGINS

Burns rallies to slip past Bulldogs in 5-set thriller

■ Hilanders rebound after Baker wins two straight to take a 2-1 lead after three sets

By Corey Kirk

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The Baker volleyball team started its shortened season Tuesday evening with a hard-fought five-set loss to the Burns Hilanders in an unusually quiet Baker gym, with spectators not allowed due to the pandemic.

With just a week of practice to prepare, sophomore Jozie Ramos said she was anxious about returning to the court for the first time in more than 15 months.

"I was personally excited but I was also nervous because we only had a few practices, and I didn't really know what to expect," Ramos said.

After splitting the first four sets, with Baker winning the middle two, the teams moved to a winner-takes-all fifth set.

Baker took a three-point lead early, but the Hilanders rallied to win the deciding set, 15-10.

Despite the loss, Baker coach Ali Abrego said she was happy with the Bulldogs' effort.

"I think it goes to show their character, that they are not going to give up anything without a fight," Abrego said. "I am very pleased with what I saw, I think it's very promising."

Although Burns competes at the Class 3A level and Baker is a Class 4A school, the Hilanders are one of the top teams in their classifications.

Burns returns eight players from the team that went 26-8 and advanced to the Class 3A state tournament in 2019.

In the opening set Tuesday, Baker and Burns played to an 18-18 tie before the Hilanders raced to a 25-21 win.

Abrego said that during the break between the first and second sets she encouraged the Bulldogs to stay focused.

"It's really hard to keep your momentum, keep your energy and keep your focus, so taking that as an opportunity to be mentally tough and to not give up when we have them," Abrego said. "I think that when we get a rhythm it's great but we are still young so keeping a rhythm is still something that we will be working on all season."

Baker responded to Abrego's advice, winning the next two sets, 25-23 and 25-19.

Ramos said the Bulldogs were more energetic during those two sets.

"It really brought the energy



Baker's Jozie Ramos, left, waits for action at the net during the Bulldogs' match against Burns on Tuesday, March 2, in the BHS gym. Burns won the match in five sets.

Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald



Baker's volleyball players Hailey Zikmund, center, Jozie Ramos, left, and Campbell Vanderwiele, rear, during the Tuesday, March 2, match against Burns in the BHS gym.

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up and made it feel kind of normal, we were making our own energy, making plays and just feeding off of each other," Ramos said.

Abrego said she was impressed by Ramos, who she chose as team captain.

Ramos not only was landing serves consistently, but she also set up her teammates for scoring opportunities.

"She puts the team above herself, she's always hustling, she's always setting an example of what it means to be a Baker Bulldog and I'm excited she's only a sophomore, she's very gifted, a very good-hearted kid," Abrego said.

With Baker holding a 2-1 set advantage, the Hilanders rallied with a dominating per-

formance in winning the fourth set, 25-8.

Looking ahead to the rest of the season, which includes 11 more matches through April 5, Abrego said Baker needs to strive to be mentally sound and to avoid making self-inflicted mistakes.

"There's going to be long rallies, there's going to be long matches, and I think our performance tonight shows that we can handle it, we just have to figure out a rhythm and maintain it," Abrego said.

Ramos said the Bulldogs will also benefit from having more matches to get used to playing with each other.

"We just need to communicate and go for the ball and not be scared," Ramos said. "It was

really good to play again with teammates and we haven't done that in a while so I'm just happy we got a game not knowing if we had a season. I'm just looking forward to improving each game and getting closer with my teammates."

The Bulldogs return to action this evening, March 4, by traveling to North Powder where they'll take on Powder Valley at 6:45 p.m., followed by a match against Union around 8 p.m.

Baker then travels to Ontario on Saturday, March 6, to play Greater Oregon League rival Ontario at 1 p.m. PDT.

Links to live streams of matches are available on the Baker Bulldog Nation Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/bhsbulldognation>

OREGON STATE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Beavers top Cal, set up rematch with Oregon

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Taylor Jones had 17 points and 13 rebounds and Oregon State moved on in the Pac-12 tournament with a 71-63 opening-round victory over California on Wednesday.

Talia von Oelhoffen had a career-high 20 points for fifth-seeded Oregon State (11-6), which has won four straight and seven of its last eight. The Beavers face fourth-seeded and 19th-ranked Oregon in the quarterfinals on Thursday.

Leilani McIntosh had 14 points to lead No. 12 seed Cal (1-16), which trailed by as many as 15 points but threatened late. Evelien Lutje Schipholt added 13 points and 10 rebounds and Ugonne Onyiah scored 13.

The Beavers had nine games canceled because of the coronavirus protocols and played the fewest games of any other team in the conference. But Oregon State gained momentum late, with road victories over No. 10 UCLA and No. 14 Oregon to wrap up the regular season and increase the team's chances of making the NCAA Tournament.

The Beavers used a 14-0 run to take a 31-17 lead in the second quarter. But Cal's Sierra Richey made a 3-pointer and Lutje Schipholt scored on a layup to close the gap. Oregon State led 39-27 at the break.

Von Oelhoffen, who graduated early from high school and joined the Beavers in February, led all scorers in the opening half with 13 points.

It was the first meeting between the two teams this season.

Carmelo leads Blazers past Charlotte Hornets

By Anne M. Peterson

AP Sports Writer

PORTLAND — After Portland's Carmelo Anthony scored 29 points against Charlotte, he exchanged jerseys with Hornets rookie LaMelo Ball, who had 30.

It was a bit of mutual Melo admiration.

Anthony had six of Portland's franchise-record 24 3-pointers and the Trail Blazers snapped a four-game losing streak with a 123-111 victory on Monday night, March 1.

"I try to embrace the next generation of guys and the young players," Anthony said of the jersey exchange. "It was fun playing against (Ball) tonight. I've been watching him since he was in high school. Just being across from him tonight, getting a chance to really see his game up close in person, getting to see him and what kind of person he is, so it was only right that we did that tonight."

At one point Ball hit a 3-pointer and did Anthony's signature 3-to-the-dome gesture.

"He can do it. He can only do it one time, but he can do it," Anthony laughed. "I blessed him, let him know that he can carry it on."

Ball said: "Pretty much it's just all love and respect both ways."

Damian Lillard had 21 points and 10 assists and Robert Covington contributed a season-high 21 points and 10 rebounds for the Blazers, who got off to a sluggish start but led by as many as 19 points in the final quarter. Lillard also had six 3s.

The Hornets have not won in Portland since March 2008. Portland had fallen into sixth place in the Western Conference, a half-game back of San Antonio.

LaMelo looking like the best of the Ball brothers so far

For the last five years, one family name seems to stand out in the world of basketball. During the 2016-2017 NCAA men's basketball season, one voice stood out above the rest, as his boys were dominating basketball in Southern California on the high school and college level.

I'm talking about Lavar Ball and his sons, Lonzo, LiAngelo and LaMelo.

Lonzo, the oldest, became known when he helped lead the UCLA Bruins to the Sweet 16 in March Madness that year, then leaving after his freshman year for the NBA. Scouted as an elite guard who thrived in transition, the Los Angeles Lakers drafted the Bruin alumnus with the second pick of the 2017 NBA draft.

While his older brother made it to the league, LaMelo went a different route along with his other brother, LiAngelo. After LiAngelo left UCLA after a brief stint, these two brothers went to play in Lithuania professionally, then play for their father's Junior Baller Association later that year.



COREY KIRK

While LiAngelo struggled to maintain any sort of momentum, LaMelo then really broke out when he played a year in Australia pro league, cementing the draft stock as a top pick in the 2020 draft, being taken by the Charlotte Hornets with the third overall pick.

Despite his dad's proclamations of his greatness, it's safe to say that Lonzo's career has been somewhat disappointing. His tenure with the Lakers ended after just two seasons. Now a member of the New Orleans Pelicans, he is back in the trade rumor mill in just his second year in New Orleans. Lonzo is averaging about 14.5 points per game, along with five assists and four rebounds.

Meanwhile, LaMelo, his younger brother, is leading NBA rookies in



Jared C. Tilton/Getty Images-TNS

The Charlotte Hornets' LaMelo Ball (2) goes to the basket in a National Basketball Association game in January 2021.

points, steals, assists and rebounds. The early favorite for the Rookie of the Year award, LaMelo has helped propel the Hornets into the playoff hunt going into the All-Star break. Along with Devontae Graham,

LaMelo is part of a top-notch backcourt that gives him room to grow. He's averaging 15 points per game, along with six rebounds and six assists.

While Lonzo was highly touted

for his passing, LaMelo has shown how adept he is distributing the ball, with his assist average better than his older brother's.

Lonzo and LaMelo are both talented players. Though it's hard to support Lavar's narrative that both of his boys were going to be among the NBA's best players, it looks likely that both will have long careers in the league.

As for impact, Lonzo seems destined to be an NBA journeyman rather than a star. Can he stay with a team for more than a couple of years? Lonzo has also battled injuries since he entered the NBA, not playing more than 63 games in a season.

LaMelo, on the other hand, has shown the sort of promise that could result in an All-Star selection. He continues to impress fans with his ability to find the open teammate, or to create his own shot.

It's evident to me that LaMelo is destined to accomplish more in the NBA than his older brother.