

# Sports

BAKER FOOTBALL OPENS ITS ABBREVIATED SEASON AT VALE

## Baker falls short in first game since 2019

■ Two special teams miscues in the third quarter prove costly in 21-12 loss at Vale

By Corey Kirk  
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With the Friday Night Lights finally illuminating the field, the Baker Bulldogs started their abbreviated football season with a 21-12 loss on Friday, March 5 at Vale.

It was Baker's first game since a Class 4A playoff quarterfinal loss at Banks in November 2019.

"That game did not go as expected for us," Baker coach Jason Ramos said of Friday's loss to the Class 3A Vikings.

After two weeks of practice, Ramos said he was confident as the Bulldogs took the field at Vale.

"We had seen them on film and we've prepared all week for what they were going to do," Ramos said. "It's always difficult in the first game of the year to know what to expect from the opponent since we haven't seen them yet. What we saw is what we expected to see."

One thing Ramos didn't expect to see was his starting quarterback, senior Kaden Myer, go down with a shoulder injury early while playing defense.

Ramos had to turn over the signal-calling duties to senior Gabe Gambleton, and freshman Paul Hobson, for the rest of the game.

"We are still trying to figure out how to move forward without Kaden, it's going to change some things, right now we are kind of undecided with thinking which guys are going to get which reps," Ramos said.

After Vale took a 7-0 lead, Baker closed the gap when Gambleton led the Bulldogs on a scoring drive that he finished with a two-yard sneak into the end zone late in the first quarter.

The PAT failed and Baker trailed 7-6.

There the score remained at halftime, and Ramos was optimistic about the second half.

"We knew if we fixed a couple of things and if we kind of got some momentum in the second half we knew we were going to be fine," he said.

Those hopes were dashed during a brief sequence in the middle of the third quarter.

After failing to convert on



Pat Caldwell/Malheur Enterprise

Baker running back Gauge Bloomer tries to run out of the grasp of Vale's Tanner Steele during the Bulldogs' 21-12 loss at Vale in the season opener Friday, March 5.

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— Baker football coach Jason Ramos

third down, Baker punted.

Vale junior John Wolfe ran the kick back for a touchdown, and the Vikings led 14-6.

On the subsequent kickoff, Baker couldn't secure the ball and Vale took advantage with its second touchdown in less than a minute.

The Vikings led 21-6.

"The two special teams miscues just kind of killed us," Ramos said.

Baker didn't give up,

though.

The Bulldogs got back into the game on a play that could foreshadow the next few years for Baker.

Hobson found fellow freshman Hudson Spike on a 25-yard touchdown pass near the end of the third quarter. The PAT failed again, but the Bulldogs trailed just 21-12 with more than a full quarter left.

Baker couldn't sustain the momentum from the Hobson-Spike scoring connection,

though, and neither team scored thereafter.

Ramos said that despite the disappointment of a loss, he was impressed with Baker's offensive line.

"Our front line, we are big and athletic and experienced, we are going to have to lean on that moving forward," Ramos said. "When we executed well during the first half those guys blocked well, Gauge (Bloomer) ran the ball well and ran hard."

Bloomer led Baker running backs with 80 yards on 13 carries.

The biggest factor in the game — aside from the two special teams gaffes that led to 14 of Vale's 21 points — was Baker's struggles on third down. The Bulldogs converted just one of nine such opportunities.

"We have some things to work on," Ramos said. "We do need to execute better on offense, so I think that's going to be a big focus for us this week

is fixing some errors, getting some kids just tuned up a little bit better."

The loss didn't diminish the Bulldogs' excitement about playing in an actual game for the first time in more than 15 months.

"We are happy to be playing, that's for sure, I'm probably going to be continuing to say that every week," Ramos said.

Baker will return to the road this week, traveling to Prineville to take on North Bend at Crook County High School Saturday, March 13 at 2 p.m.

Baker's first home game is scheduled for Friday, March 19 against Nyssa at 7 p.m.

Nyssa routed Ontario 46-14 on March 5.

Baker	6	0	6	0	12
Vale	7	0	14	0	21

### BAKER INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

- Passing: Hobson, 4-6, 90 yards, 1 touchdown; Gambleton, 4-13, 26 yards
- Rushing: Bloomer, 13 for 80 yards; Kaden Myer, 3 for 17 yards; Gambleton, 7 for 15 yards, 1 TD
- Receiving: Gambleton, 2 for 49 yards; Spike, 2 for 41 yards, 1 TD; Delarosa, 3 for 20 yards; Hobson, 1 for 6 yards

### BAKER GIRLS SOCCER

## Baker routs Nyssa

By Corey Kirk  
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Baker's young and shorthanded girls varsity soccer team had a strong start to its pandemic-shortened season, routing Nyssa 9-1 on Saturday in a road match.

"It was a great start," Baker's first-year coach, Eric Layton, said. "It was a huge confidence booster, it felt really good, a lot to feel proud of."

Sydney Pearce and Brooklyn Jaca led the offensive onslaught, each scoring three goals for an individual hat trick. Daphne Thomas added two goals, and Skye Smith had one.

Baker raced to a 6-1 lead after the first half and added three goals, while keeping Nyssa out of the net, in the second.

Layton was especially impressed by Baker's performance considering his concerns about the team's conditioning.

With just 12 players available, Layton had only one substitute.

"We actually thought we weren't going to have any subs, but we had one extra show up at the last minute," Layton said. "We were really worried about fitness because we just started two weeks ago."

Looking ahead, Layton expects to have no more than 14 players for any match.

"Some girls decided to work, some girls decided that the weather wasn't an exciting prospect, and I don't know some of the rationale of the others," Layton said. "We also didn't get the North Powder girls to join us that I thought we would, we are just going to be a small team this year."

Although he was excited about Baker's dominating win, Layton said he saw ways the Bulldogs can improve.

"We are going to focus big time on possession, so maintaining possession and also just honing that first touch — we had a lot of clumsy first touches when we would give the ball away a lot earlier than I would like to see," Layton said. "That's them not having a lot of weeks under their belt."

He also pointed out that Baker is a young team, with only one junior.

"We are mostly freshman and sophomores," Layton said. "So the kids that are out and active are all quite young, and are new to the varsity level game, so that was really encouraging to get them a win."

Baker travels to Boardman today to take on the Riverside Pirates. The Bulldogs' first home match is set for Wednesday, March 10 when the La Grande Tigers arrive for a 5 p.m. match at the Baker Sports Complex. The match will be shown live on the Baker Bulldog Nation Facebook page.

### BAKER VOLLEYBALL

## Bulldogs top Ontario

By Corey Kirk  
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Baker's volleyball team rebounded from a tough opening week to beat league rival Ontario in four sets on Saturday, March 6 at Ontario.

"It was a collective effort," Bulldogs coach Ali Abrego said.

The win improved Baker's record to 1-3. The Bulldogs lost last week to Burns in five sets, Powder Valley (three sets) and Union (four sets).

The Bulldogs started strong on Saturday at Ontario, winning the first two sets by identical scores of 25-12.

The Tigers stayed alive with a 25-23 win in the third set.

"We missed too many serves and had a few hitting errors, but we battled the whole time," Abrego said.

Baker regained the momentum in the fourth set, winning 25-10 to claim the match.

Abrego said she was impressed by the grit her team showed out on the court to secure their first victory of the season.

"The last set, our mentality was spot on, we were hungry, and were able to finish it," Abrego said.

She was impressed with all the Bulldogs, citing in particular the play from reserves Macey Moore, Campbell Vanderwiele and Gretchen Morgan.

"The subs contributed great when they came in off the bench," Abrego said.

Baker played host to another Greater Oregon League rival, La Grande, Monday evening, March 8.

## Baker boys soccer squad looking for its first win

By Corey Kirk  
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Week one is in the books for Baker's boys varsity soccer team, and the Bulldogs are still looking for their first win.

Baker dropped a tough match to Nyssa, 3-1, on Saturday, March 6.

Baker lost to Ontario 4-0 in its opening match March 2 at Ontario.

"It was a really good game, the second half we really came out and played our game," Baker coach Vic-

tor Benites said of Saturday's loss at Nyssa.

Due to the COVID-19-condensed season, Benites had only two outdoor practices before starting the season at Ontario, and he said the lack of preparation showed.

"I can tell that we were a little bit out of shape, we needed more conditioning but in the second game (Nyssa) we did better conditioning wise," Benites said.

The Bulldogs' roster is made up

mostly of underclassmen, with a total of seven juniors and seniors. Two juniors missed Saturday's match at Nyssa, and Benites said their experience could have been pivotal.

"It would have been a different game if I would have had those two kids I do believe, because we really needed all the players to play," Benites said.

Nyssa took an early lead and never relinquished it.

About 20 minutes into the second

half, Baker scored its first goal of the season when freshman Giacomo Riguero passed to sophomore Diego Quintela for the score, cutting Nyssa's lead to 3-1.

But Baker couldn't turn Quintela's goal into a rally.

Benites said the Bulldogs have plenty of room to improve on defense.

"My defenders, we just have to be able to finish up front, but we will get there," he said.

Baker plays its first four matches on the road, traveling to La Grande on Friday, March 12 to take on the Tigers at 4 p.m. Benites expects a tough match.

"A couple of players that I know from La Grande are good, if we can just contain those players I think we will be OK," Benites said.

Baker travels to Idaho to play Four Rivers on March 16, then has its first home match on March 18 against Ontario at 4 p.m.

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