



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald

Baker's Hailey Zikmund, center, attacks at the net against La Grande on Monday night, March 8, while teammate Jozie Ramos, far right, looks on.

Baker falls to La Grande in 4 sets

By Corey Kirk
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Coming off a win over Ontario on Saturday, the Baker volleyball team couldn't maintain its momentum against another group of Tigers, falling in four sets to La Grande on Monday, March 8, in the Baker gym.

Baker coach Ali Abrego expected a tough match against the Greater Oregon League rival.

"I knew it was going to be very strategic as far as the mental game goes," Abrego said.

La Grande, which improved to 3-0 on the season, has a veteran squad, with five seniors and five juniors.

The Bulldogs, meanwhile, are a young team, with one senior and four juniors.

Despite La Grande's edge in experience, Abrego said she was confident that Baker could compete well.

"Ability wise, we were right there with them, it was a great game to watch," Abrego said.

That showed in the first set, as Baker junior Lacy Churchfield had three consecutive kills to give the Bulldogs a 3-0 lead.

Baker pushed its lead to 12-6 before La Grande reversed the momentum, winning the set 25-21.

Baker sophomore Rylee Elms said she was impressed with how the Bulldogs played throughout the match.

"I feel like it actually looked like we were covering today, we did a lot better talking, we started reading their tips really early in which really saved us," Elms said.

In the second set Baker took the lead early and held it, taking a 25-20 win and handing La Grande its first loss in a set this season.

"For us to go out there and just win one, to be the first



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Baker's Hailey Zikmund goes up for a hit while teammates (right to left) Lacy Churchfield, Jozie Ramos and Makenzie Flanagan watch.

team to bring La Grande to four (sets), I am so proud of us," Elms said.

The competitive play continued in the third set, with the teams trading points most of the way.

La Grande eventually prevailed, 25-23, to take a 2-1 lead.

Abrego said she was proud of Baker's performance in the set.

"I was super impressed, I was really proud of them stretching it out to the very end playing disciplined because it's hard to do that when you are young and you haven't had that intense play before," Abrego said. "They played well and played composed."

Fighting to keep the match going, Baker took a brief lead about midway through the fourth set.

But again the Tigers pulled away, winning the set, 25-18, and the match.

The loss dropped Baker's season record to 1-5.

Abrego said the La Grande match showed her ways that Baker can continue to improve through its month-long season.

"Definitely focusing on five

points at a time, you've got to be the first to five, first to ten, first to fifteen no matter how many matches we play," Abrego said. "Most important-ly we have to play throughout the whole match, we can't give up a ten-point run, we don't let up, really building that mindset of no, you are going to have to take that from me."

Abrego said the Bulldogs were happy to be playing at home, and with a limited number of fans, mainly parents and other family, cheering from the bleachers.

"It was nice to see family, it was nice to hear people cheering for us," Abrego said. Baker, nearing the midpoint of its 13-match schedule, travels to Vale on Friday, March 12, for a 5 p.m. PST match.

The Bulldogs then play host to Nyssa on Monday, March 15, at 6 p.m.

Both matches will be livestreamed for free through the NFHS network. Information about signing up for a free account is available on the Baker Bulldog Nation Facebook page.

Elms said she's excited to keep practicing with her

teammates, and seeing their work translate into wins on the court.

"I hope that we take confidence with us," Elms said.

BAKER GIRLS SOCCER AT RIVERSIDE

Pirates get past Bulldogs, 8-2

■ Baker traveled to Boardman with just enough players to field a squad, forcing all 11 to play the entire match

By Corey Kirk
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With just enough players to field a team, the Baker girls soccer squad lost 8-2 Tuesday, March 9 to Riverside, evening the Bulldogs' record at 1-1.

With just 11 players, Baker had no reserves, and that forced the coaching staff to rotate players into unfamiliar positions so they weren't running quite as much.

"In order to compensate for where we knew we might be lacking, we switched up our initial formation we used in Saturday's game (a 9-1 win at Nyssa), and we were moving people around to try and give them breaks," assistant coach Christine Teegarden said.

Riverside took a 6-1 lead into halftime. Sophomore Brooklyn Jaca had Baker's lone goal.

With a big deficit, Baker coaches reverted to their original lineup for the second half.

"We addressed a couple things that we were seeing which really are just breakdowns that happen when the team perceive that they are losing and there's a little disheartening that happens," Teegarden said.

Coaches also emphasized the importance of defense — and putting consistent pressure on the other team rather than trying to jab the ball away — and Teegarden said the Bulldogs improved in the second half.

She said she was impressed with junior Emrie Osborne.

"She (Emrie) said she never thought about defense that way, or using basketball defensive positioning, so suddenly our backline became way stronger," Teegarden said.

Although Baker wasn't able to rally, the Bulldogs did play the Pirates much more evenly, giving up just two goals and getting a goal from sophomore Sydnee Pierce.

"I am extremely proud to say the least, I am really excited to see their response and reminding them to trust their teammates and let them be responsible for their area," Teegarden said.

Teegarden said she's optimistic about the team's future, both this season and in years to come. The Bulldogs have no seniors and just three juniors, with the bulk of the roster being freshmen and sophomores.

"It's exciting thinking about the coming years, and just the potential that's there," Teegarden said.

After starting the season with consecutive road matches, the Bulldogs will play three straight at the Baker Sports Complex.

Baker played La Grande on Wednesday.

Next week the Bulldogs will take on Ontario at 4 p.m. on Monday, March 15, followed by a match against Four Rivers, Idaho, on Tuesday, March 16, at 5 p.m.

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