



Buell Gonzales Jr./Contributed Photo

Mason Van Arsdall was accompanied by his parents, Jef and Raeann, when he signed a letter of intent to play baseball at Eastern Oregon University.

BULLDOGS

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In front of family and members of her team, Keller signed on with Belmont-Abbey for a partial scholarship in the fall. Sharing this moment with her three siblings and her parents, Keller was ecstatic.

"They were all super psyched for me," Keller said.

With the next few months packed with shortened sports seasons, Keller, who is running with the Baker cross-country team now, is going to bask in her remaining time as a Bulldog. She feels grateful for what athletics at BHS have given her the past four years.

"It meant a lot to me, getting to have all these friends throughout high school, and all the memories that we have and all the fun times that I can think of — us going out of town, adventures running, and the bus rides definitely," Keller said. "It will hold a special place in my heart as I move on to the next level."

Keller, a valedictorian for the Baker High Class of 2021, intends to study pre-physical therapy at Belmont-Abbey.

Mason Van Arsdall, baseball, Eastern Oregon University

"Academically, EOU is just a great fit for me. I just thought EOU was the best fit overall."

— Mason Van Arsdall, who will play baseball at Eastern Oregon University in La Grande

Van Arsdall has competed in football, basketball and baseball during his four years as a Bulldog.

But baseball, he decided, was his best option for continuing his career in college. He signed a letter of intent to play for Eastern Oregon University in La Grande.

"Baseball is my favorite sport. I love the aspect that you learn from failure," Van

"From the time he was a freshman until now, he's competed every opportunity we offered here in Baker, whether it was the summer program or the high school program, he's been involved since he entered high school."

— Al McCauley, assistant baseball coach at Baker High School, talking about Mason Van Arsdall

Arsdall said. "You learn from failure in every sport, but in baseball you can fail seven out of ten times and you can still be successful."

He's referring to a baseball player who gets three hits in 10 at-bats — a .300 average — but is still considered above-average.

Al McCauley, an assistant baseball coach for Baker during Van Arsdall's time as a Bulldog, has been impressed with his growth and progress.

"From the time he was a freshman until now, he's competed every opportunity we offered here in Baker, whether it was the summer program or the high school program, he's been involved since he entered high school," McCauley said.

When the idea of recruitment for colleges became a possibility, Van Arsdall relied on the support of his coaches, including head coach Tim Smith.

"They just gave me a lot of advice on how to get a hold of coaches, and how to keep conversations going," Van Arsdall said.

He had conversations with Linfield University and Western Oregon University.

But when Van Arsdall learned that EOU, which had cut its baseball program in 2006, was resuming the sport in 2021, he was excited.

"Academically, EOU is just a great fit for me. I just thought EOU was the best fit overall," Van Arsdall said.

McCauley also thinks EOU is a good choice for Van Arsdall, and a place where he can continue to develop his skills as a catcher and, potentially, at other positions.

"He's a big kid, he's caught all of his career, he has an open mind where he is going to fit in — it may be as a catcher, a first basemen, it may be as a third basemen," McCauley said. "Something

that baseball players need to work on as they progress through the levels is adapting to different pitching and different pitches."

Due to COVID-19, EOU's baseball program has money available for competitive scholarships, meaning he'll have to compete for the financial assistance.

"There's money on the table, but everybody is going to be competing for it," Van Arsdall said.

Decked out in Eastern Oregon's blue and gold, Van Arsdall signed his letter of intent in front of family, friends and even some of his coaches.

"It was a relief getting to put pen to paper finally, and have a decision made for the next four years," Van Arsdall said.

Van Arsdall will join two former BHS teammates in playing college baseball. Spencer Shirtcliff plays at Blue Mountain Community College, and McCauley's son, Sam, plays for Dordt University.

Seeing multiple Bulldogs go on to compete at college is a source of pride for Al McCauley.

"It's a pretty rewarding experience as a coach," McCauley said.

Because Van Arsdall will be attending EOU, just a 45-minute drive from Baker City, he hopes his time with BHS athletics won't end with his graduation. He hopes to come back occasionally to volunteer to work with Bulldog baseball players.

"When I'm down at Eastern maybe I'll come to visit some practices, come help kids and kind of be a role model to those in Baker, because I'm not going to be too far away," Van Arsdall said. "I know a lot of the younger kids coming up through the program."

He intends to study wildlife biology at EOU.

BAKER GIRLS SOCCER

Bulldogs rout Ontario, 6-1

By Corey Kirk
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The Baker girls soccer team dominated Ontario Thursday, March 18 at the Sports Complex, topping the Tigers 6-1 to improve to 3-2 on the season.

All of the Bulldogs' offense took place in the first half. Freshman Daphne

Thomas and sophomore Sydney Pierce each scored a pair of goals, and freshman Jozie

Livingston added another score. Baker's other goal came on an own goal by Ontario. Baker led 6-0 at halftime.

"It was good, they were starting to get their legs, so I think they could run the whole game, it was nice to see that they can keep the pressure," Baker coach Eric Layton said.

In the second half, rather than pushing for more shots on goal, Layton challenged

the Bulldogs to focus on passing.

Layton is looking forward to Baker's next action, a rematch against La Grande, at La Grande, on April 1. The Tigers beat Baker 9-1 on March 10.

"Getting a win against Ontario is pretty big, but the big bull's-eye would be La Grande, traveling there and just performing well," Layton said.

BAKER BOYS SOCCER

Tigers tame Baker boys

By Corey Kirk
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The Baker boys soccer team, playing at home for the first time this season, lost 4-1 to Ontario on Thursday.

After allowing three goals early, Baker's defense tightened up.

Senior Dakota Rilee, a defenseman and captain, was pleased with the Bulldogs' effort.

"I am very proud," Rilee said. "With all of our defenders it's not just one person, it's working around and trusting players is what we are trying to get used to."

Going into halftime trailing 3-0, Baker coach Victor Benites said he emphasized the need for his players to communicate better.

Ontario scored its final goal early in the second half.

After a Tiger touched the ball with his hand, Baker junior Isael Duran took the free kick and an Ontario player tipped it in for a Baker goal.

"It was a good placement, and a hard shot," Benites said. "That's what you are looking for, a deflection or something with the ball landing in the back of the net."

Despite falling to 1-4 on the season, the Bulldogs are excited about playing their remaining four matches at home, Rilee said.

"It's awesome that we will be able to see fans here, and really show them we can fight hard here," Rilee said.

Baker plays host to Nyssa today at 2 p.m.

POWDER VALLEY FOOTBALL

Badgers roll past Elgin

NORTH POWDER — Elgin scored first but Powder Valley scored a lot more often Thursday as the Badgers won 44-12 in their first home game of the season to improve to 3-0.

"Elgin played a really good first half," Powder Valley coach Josh Cobb said.

The Badgers led 12-6 after one quarter and 20-6 at halftime, and dominated the second half.

Gusty winds interfered with the passing game so the Badgers mainly stayed on the ground, Cobb said.

Quarterback Reece Dixon had 122 yards rushing and two scores, Clay Martin 93 yards and a touchdown, and Ethan Stephens 69 yards and two scores. Case Olson had a rushing touchdown.

Dixon threw for 98 yards and two scores, one to Kaden Krieger and one to Cole Martin.

Powder returns to action Tuesday, March 23 at noon at home against Dufur, Cobb's alma mater. It will be Cobb's first game coaching against his former coach, Jack Henderson.

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