

BAKER FOOTBALL

Bulldogs blow past La Grande

By **Corey Kirk**
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Baker football coach Jason Ramos said the Bulldogs had a good week of practice preparing for the season's final game Friday, April 9 against league rival La Grande at Community Stadium on the EOU campus.

But it didn't look like it early.

Baker struggled in the first half and trailed the Tigers 7-0 at halftime.

The Bulldogs proved their coach's assessment of practice accurate in the second half, though, dominating La Grande and coming away with a 22-7 win that evened Baker's season record at 3-3 overall, 3-1 against league opponents.

"We had a good week of practice. We really focused on getting better at what we were doing," Ramos said. "We just did some fine tuning."

The first half was a mess of penalties and turnovers, and both teams struggled to maintain any sort of momentum.

A Baker fumble, one of two fumbles and three total turnovers, led to the game's first score, a 12-yard run by quarterback Payton Cooper that gave La Grande a 7-0 lead in the second half. There the score remained at halftime.

"We basically knew at that point that it was our own miscues that kind of put us in that position, we fumbled the ball in our own end there, and that's how they scored," Ramos said. "We talked about how we can't give them opportunities because that's what is going to keep teams in a ballgame. We needed to clean it up and play better."

In the second half, the Bulldogs shined on the ground.

Junior running back Gauge Bloomer (season-high 190 yards on 22 carries) and senior quarterback Gabe Gambleton (90 yards on 14 rushes) were dominant as Baker outgained La Grande 272 yards to 58 on the ground.

Bloomer's 6-yard run in the third quarter cut the Tigers' lead to 7-6.

Baker was even more dominant in the final quarter, with Gambleton accounting for all 16 of the Bulldogs' points, scoring on 40-yard and 2-yard runs and then converting the two-point conversion after both touchdowns.

While Baker was scoring 22 consecutive points, the Bulldog defense was holding the Tigers at bay. La Grande had just 121 total yards on 51 plays.

Ramos credits Baker's offensive line for creating opportunities for Bloomer and Gambleton.

"We knew we could run on them," Ramos said. "Our upfront guys were awesome, our O-line guys took it upon themselves to oppose their will so to speak."

Although Baker loses 14 seniors, Ramos said he's glad the graduating class, after losing their normal fall season in 2020 due to the pandemic, had a chance not only to complete their high school careers, but to cap the season with a win over a rival that had beaten the Bulldogs seven straight times.

"It was a great win for our seniors going out, to be able to go to La Grande and beat those guys, it's never easy," Ramos said. "To have that as their final game, knowing that they hadn't gotten that job done over the course of their high school career, to be able to finish on that high note — that was a good takeaway for them."

With an unusual spring football season over, Ramos said he and the rest of the coaching staff are eager to work this summer to prepare Baker for a more normal fall slate.

"We do a pretty good job at developing players," Ramos said. "Our younger kids developed and grew and got valuable experience that they are going to bring back in the fall."

Ramos said he had a simple message for his players after this unique experience: "Every moment and every opportunity matters, because you just never know, and to not take it for granted."

DUCKS

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Gabe Matthews tied it with a sacrifice fly in the fourth.

Oregon State (21-10, 7-5 Pac-12) broke through in a three-run seventh as Wade Meckler hit an RBI single, Preston Jones followed by reaching on a fielder's choice RBI sacrifice bunt and Ober capped the frame with another RBI single.

Everything turned for the Ducks (19-7, 6-3 Pac-12) in the eighth inning.

Isaac Ayon entered with runners on second and third and nobody out and got back-to-back strikeouts and a groundout to end the top half of the inning.

Meanwhile, OSU bullpen's imploded for the third time in as many days.

Anthony Hall and Kenyon Yovan drew back-to-back, one-out walks off Jack Washburn. Joey Mundt came in and gave up an RBI single to Aaron Zavala, struck out Josh Kasevich, walked Gabe Matthews to load the bases, then walked Sam Novitske on four pitches to make it 4-3. Closer Jake Mulholland came in and got ahead of pinch hitter Tyler Ganus before plunking the freshman to force in the tying run.

It was the first hit batter by Mulholland this season.

UO's Hunter Breault worked around a one-out double and two in scoring position with two outs in the top of the 10th and was relieved by Decker Stedman in the 11th.

PROFESSIONAL SOCCER

Portland Thorns win before first crowd since March 2020

By **Anne M. Peterson**
AP Sports Writer

PORTLAND — Rocky Rodriguez and Tyler Lussi scored and the Portland Thorns welcomed their fans to Providence Park for the first time in 545 days with a 2-1 victory over Kansas City on Friday night.

It was the first professional sporting event in Oregon to have fans in attendance since the Portland Trail Blazers on March 10, 2020. State officials are allowing outdoor venues to host events at 25% capacity, but fans are still not allowed at indoor arenas.

The game was part of the National Women's Soccer League preseason Challenge Cup tournament, which opened Friday. In the earlier match Friday, the Houston Dash played at home to a scoreless draw with the Chicago Red Stars.

KC NWSL was founded in the offseason after the Utah Royals disbanded. Utah's players were moved to the new team.

Rocky Rodriguez scored in the eighth minute to give the Thorns the early lead before Lussi's goal in the 58th. Veteran Amy Rodriguez scored the first goal for KC in the 60th.

Matsuyama makes golf history with his victory at the Masters

■ 29-year-old is the first man from Japan to win one of golf's major tournaments

By **Tim Reynolds**
AP Sports Writer

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Hideki Matsuyama almost turned down his first chance to play the Masters. It was a month after a devastating earthquake and tsunami in Japan, disasters that killed thousands and destroyed much of the region he called home in March 2011.

He decided to play a month later, only because he thought it would lift spirits.

A decade later, he lifted his country again — becoming Japan's first man to win a golf major. Matsuyama's one-shot victory over Will Zalatoris at Augusta National made him the Masters champion, easily the biggest moment for the sport in his golf-crazed homeland.

"I can't say I'm the greatest," Matsuyama said. "However, I'm the first to win a major, and if that's the bar, then I've set it."

He was the greatest this week at the Masters, bar none.

History will say he won the tournament on Sunday with a final-round 73, but really, he won it on Saturday with a blistering finish that put him atop the leaderboard for good. He went 6-under on a seven-hole stretch of the back nine in the third round, the decisive spurt that nobody could match. Even the final margin on Sunday was perhaps a bit misleading; it only tightened up when Matsuyama made three bogeys in his final four holes, though the lead never seemed threatened.

Matsuyama finished at 10-under, 278. Zalatoris was at 9 under, Jordan Spieth and Xander Schauffele were tied for third at 7 under, and Jon Rahm and Marc Leishman tied for fifth at 6 under. Justin Rose, who jumped out in front Thursday with a 65, finished seventh, five shots back.

"It's thrilling to think that there are a lot of youngsters in Japan watching today," Matsuyama said. "Hopefully in five, 10 years, when they get a little older, hopefully some of them will be competing on the world stage. But I still have a lot of years left, so they are going to have to compete against me still."

Message to those kids: Good luck. Matsuyama is only 29.

He moved from No. 25 to



Kevin C. Cox/Getty Images-TNS

Hideki Matsuyama of Japan celebrates on the 18th green after winning the Masters at Augusta National Golf Club on Sunday, April 11 in Augusta, Ga.

No. 14 in the world rankings, and will be welcomed back to Augusta National for Masters week for the rest of his life — one of the many perks that come once someone claims a green jacket.

"I think it's really good for the game of golf globally," Spieth said. "He's a great young player who inevitably was going to win major championships, in my opinion."

It turned out to be a Masters finish like none other, capping a week that

was memorable for who was there, who wasn't there for long and who couldn't be there at all.

Lee Elder — the first Black player in the Masters when he broke the tournament's color barrier in 1975 — joined Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player for the ceremonial tournament-opening tee shots on Thursday morning. By the time nightfall arrived Friday, defending champion Dustin Johnson was done after missing the cut by

two strokes. And five-time Masters winner Tiger Woods wasn't at Augusta National to play or even take part in the Champions dinner, his recovery from a car crash in Los Angeles ongoing at his Florida home.

Woods wasn't seen. Not long after Matsuyama won, he was heard, or at least read.

"Making Japan proud Hideki," Woods wrote on Twitter. "Congratulations on such a huge accomplishment for you and your country. This historical (at) The Masters win will impact the entire golf world."

He's not wrong.

Japan is already set to play host to the Olympics this summer, delayed a year because of the coronavirus and still a thorny subject for many in that country who wonder if the Tokyo Games should be held at all.

The golf event at those Olympics is scheduled for the Kasumigaseki Country Club, the place where Matsuyama won as an amateur to secure that first trip to Augusta National in 2011 — where he visited Butler Cabin to receive the prize as the low amateur that week.

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