

POWDER VALLEY VOLLEYBALL

Badgers finish perfect season

■ With a 14-0 record, coach Marji Lind believes the Badgers are state's top 1A team

By Jayson Jacoby
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Powder Valley doesn't have a shiny new, official Class 1A state volleyball championship trophy to grace the school's display case.

But the Badgers, who recently completed a 14-0 season, believe they are the best team in Oregon at their level.

"I really don't hesitate to say that," Powder Valley coach Marji Lind said. "I think the girls feel that they're the top dog in Class 1A."

Because the Oregon School Activities Association didn't schedule state tournaments due to the pandemic, schools were free to arrange their own "culminating events" during the final week of the abbreviated season.

Powder Valley played host to an event for Class 1A and 2A schools on Friday, April 9. The Badgers won three matches, beating Alsea, Joseph and Class 2A Union.

Lind lauded parents and school officials for working so hard to make the event "as big a deal as possible."

When the Badgers finished their three-set sweep of Union in the final match, spectators released colorful streamers and balloons in the Powder Valley gym.

Badgers overcame disappointment

The cancellation of the usual fall volleyball schedule was particularly disappointing for the Badgers, Lind said.

The team expected to be a top competitor to win the Class 1A state title.

This was not a case of misplaced optimism, either, as Powder Valley had finished as state runner-up in 2018 and 2019. The Badgers lost to St. Paul in the state championship match both years.

Lind said the team, and in particular the core group of five seniors, felt strongly that "this was their year."

The seniors are Brooke Allen, Belle Blair, Keanna Bingham, McKenzie Leggett and Bailey Cole.

"They've played together forever," Lind said.



Contributed Photo

The Powder Valley Badgers volleyball team celebrates a three-set sweep of Union on Friday, April 9, completing a 14-0 season. Powder Valley won three matches in a "culminating event" tournament in the Powder gym that included some of Oregon's top Class 1A and Class 2A teams.

"It was a really fun schedule to play for the girls. They enjoyed being challenged and they enjoyed being together. It felt real again."

— Marji Lind, Powder Valley volleyball coach

The Badgers were excited to learn that the volleyball season would happen, albeit in the spring rather than the fall.

But their enthusiasm waned when OSAA announced that it would not have a state tournament.

"There was disappointment," Lind said.

But rather than dwell on something they couldn't control, Lind said the Badgers decided instead to make the shortened season as challenging as possible.

"We said, let's just play every tough team that we can find," Lind said.

Powder Valley athletic director Brad Dunten assembled a schedule quite different from what the Badgers would play during a normal season.

Rather than playing primarily Class 1A schools, the Badgers' slate included Class 4A Baker (twice), Class 3A Burns and Vale, and Class 2A Union.

"It was a really fun schedule to play for the girls," Lind said. "They enjoyed being challenged and they enjoyed being together. It felt real again."

Powder Valley didn't just win all 14 matches in that imposing schedule — they dominated most of their opponents. In 11 of those 14 matches the Badgers won in three straight sets.

Just two teams pushed Powder Valley to a decisive fifth set — Crane, on March 5, and Burns, on March 15.

That was the only loss of the season for Burns, which went on to win the Class 3A culminating event.

Another highlight, Lind said, was traveling to St. Paul and sweeping the Buckaroos on March 12. That victory was especially satisfying after St. Paul denied the Badgers a state title in 2018 and 2019.

"That was really fun to go down there and beat St. Paul on its home court," Lind said.

As dominant as the Badgers' performance was on the court this season, Lind said she was equally impressed with her players' attitudes as they dealt with an unprecedented situation.

"I think the girls were super grateful and excited to play," Lind said. "These kids had a lot of fun together."

During the Badgers' final practice, it's a tradition for the seniors to impart advice to their younger teammates.

This year, the five Powder Valley seniors didn't waste a single word talking about the disappointments of their final season.

"There was no negativity," Lind said. "They said don't take anything for granted, and enjoy it while you can. They have an amazing, really mature, perspective."

Celtics nip Blazers

By Anne M. Peterson
AP Sports Writer

PORTLAND — Jayson Tatum scored 32 points, including a key 3-pointer in the final moments, and the Boston Celtics held off the Portland Trail Blazers 116-115 on Tuesday night to extend their winning streak to four games.

Damian Lillard had 28 points and 10 assists, and Carmelo Anthony had 25 points off the bench for Portland.

Tatum's 3-pointer early in the final quarter put the Celtics up 99-91, their biggest lead of the game to that point. Anthony closed the gap for Portland with a jumper and a 3-pointer.

It appeared as if the Celtics were pulling away when Walker's 3 put Boston up 107-99 with just over five minutes left, but Lillard's 3-pointer got Portland within five points.

CJ McCollum's jumper and a pair of free throws from Lillard narrowed it to 107-106. After Robert Williams III's layup, Lillard's 3 tied it at 109 with 2:03 left.

Williams' tip kept the Celtics in front until McCollum's 3 gave Portland a 112-111 lead with 1:01 to go.

Tatum made a pair of free throws before a step-back 3-pointer with 8.5 seconds appeared to seal it. Norman Powell hit a 3 for the Blazers with 5.4 seconds to go to close within 116-115, but Portland couldn't catch up.

Baker tennis starts season

The Baker girls and boys tennis teams had their first matches in almost two years on Monday, April 12 when the Bulldogs played host to Four Rivers Charter School of Ontario at the Ash Grove courts.

Baker winners were the boys doubles team of Weston Downing and Noah Lien, who won their match 7-6 (7-4), 6-4, and the girls doubles team of Tristen Tritt and Riley Shaw, who beat a boys team from Four Rivers, 6-4, 7-6 (7-5).

Other Baker results (Four Rivers' players names were not available):

GIRLS SINGLES

- Sarah Plummer lost, 6-4, 6-4
- Phoebe Wise lost 5-7, 6-3, 3-6

GIRLS DOUBLES

- Tristen Tritt/Riley Shaw lost, 6-0, 6-0

BOYS SINGLES

- Anthony Christopher lost, 6-2, 6-0
- Noah Lien lost, 6-1, 6-2
- Karsten Cikanek lost, 6-3, 6-0
- Weston Downing lost, 6-0, 6-1

BOYS DOUBLES

- Davis Macias/Austin Hays lost, 6-0, 6-1

Baker travels to Ontario on Friday.

SPRING

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"They're excited and we're excited to coach but I reminded them that we have to enjoy what we are doing, we have to work hard, we have to take the COVID protocols seriously because this can be yanked out from under us just like it was a year ago," Smith said.

Cole also expects to coach a smaller team than usual.

"My numbers are definitely low, I think there are a variety of reasons for that," Cole said. "Like everything with this COVID, it's been across the spectrum but I feel fortunate that we have a choice, our athletes have a choice to make, whether they come out. And we do the best we can or they take

the season off, that is their choice and I respect that.

"I have some competitive seniors that are putting their heart and soul out there all the time. It's huge for them to know although it's not perfect it's still pretty close to being special and a chance to finish off some really long careers," Cole said.

Gonzales said Baker coaches will emphasize the importance of following safety precautions.

"We just have to continue to be diligent in the following of our protocols," he said. "If you are sick, stay home, wear a mask, wash your hands. We just have to be diligent."

The season for traditional winter sports — basketball, wrestling and swimming — is May 10 through June 26.

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