

Sports

BAKER BASEBALL



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald

Baker's Hayden Younger prepares to tag out a La Grande runner at second base on Saturday, May 1.

La Grande sweeps Bulldogs

■ Tigers improve season record against Baker to 4-0; Baker is 4-0 against other teams

By Corey Kirk
ckirk@bakercityherald.com

With parents and some future Bulldogs watching on the opening day of the Little League season, Baker struggled again with the La Grande Tigers, losing a baseball doubleheader Saturday, May 1 at the Sports Complex.

La Grande swept the two games, 15-0 and 24-3, to improve to 7-1.

Baker dropped to 4-4, with all four of its losses to La Grande. The Tigers swept a doubleheader on April 20.

"I wasn't real pleased with the result," Baker coach Tim Smith said. "I didn't think we got it done on the mound, and I wasn't pleased with the approach of the first game and part of the second game."

In game one, La Grande pitcher Riley Miller stifled Baker's offense, allowing just a single hit.

Smith said the Bulldogs needed to be more aggressive against Miller.

"You have to drive up his pitch count, we didn't do that, he threw 71-72 pitches," Smith said. "He's an effective pitcher, he isn't going to put us on base, we were going to have to earn it."

Miller walked two batters and struck out nine.

Baker didn't get its lone hit until the fifth, when senior Zander Arriaga led off with a single.

But Baker couldn't take advantage.

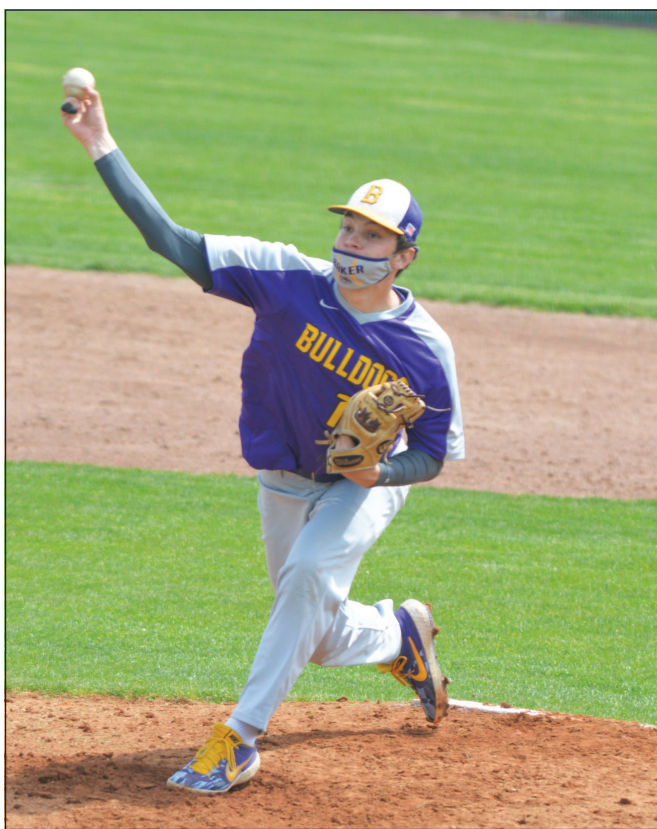
"Our goal was to work our way into deep counts, get on base, walk, hit by pitch, just get something started," Smith said. "We didn't capitalize with hits."

La Grande, meanwhile, had no problems at the plate.

The Tigers scored eight runs in the top of the first to take control early.

The game ended after five innings due to the 10-run rule.

In the second game, the



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Andrew Zellars pitches against La Grande on Saturday, May 1, at the Baker Sports Complex.

Bulldogs' struggles at the plate continued as they totaled 15 strikeouts between both contests.

Smith said he needs to address that as the season continues by making sure Baker has more practice against live pitching rather than batting against a machine. It's a challenge with the schedule including multiple midweek games.

"We have to figure out our way as coaches to try to put a little more pressure on them in practice but it's pretty tough to simulate," Smith said. "We don't have a lot of break days, and our guys are pitching every four days, so it's tough, you put them on a machine, it's predictable, it doesn't work. It's hard for us to get live pitching reps, because we are resting guys, getting ready for their next start."

Junior Cody Skidgel started on the mound for Baker in the second game. Although

very next inning, as Zellars hit with a two-out double and scored on senior Jake Wright's hit.

Arriaga then drove in Wright with a base hit.

"I thought we did a nice job in the bottom of the fourth. That's what we were stressing every half inning — we gotta win this inning, we gotta win this inning, you just always want them to compete," Smith said.

Logan Hull drove in a run in the fifth, but the game ended by 10-run rule.

Baker returns to the diamond today with a single game at Ontario starting at 4 p.m. PDT.

La Grande continued its offensive onslaught, Smith said he was proud of Skidgel for allowing just two walks, and striking out three Tigers.

"He (Skidgel) was cruising, he was doing a pretty good job doing his part, they were just hitting the baseball," Smith said. "Cody threw pretty well, he threw 72 pitches and 43 strikes."

La Grande did most of its damage in the fourth inning, scoring 17 runs against three pitchers.

Baker's defense also struggled during the inning, giving La Grande extra at-bats.

"I thought defensively behind Cody we didn't get it done several times when we could go out of the inning," Smith said. "In the fourth inning I was just trying to find a guy, I was just hoping someone would come in, change it up and get an out and we would be done."

The Bulldogs were able to get on the board the

McCollum leads Blazers past Celtics

By Doug Alden
Associated Press

BOSTON — CJ McCollum scored 10 of his 33 points in the fourth quarter and Portland held on for a 129-119 win over the Boston Celtics on Sunday night, extending the Trail Blazers' winning streak to four.

Damian Lillard had 26 points and 13 assists for Portland. Carmelo Anthony finished with 13 points — including a 3-pointer with 1:08 remaining to help seal it after Boston pulled within two points.

The Trail Blazers improved to 4-0 on their six-game road trip. They entered the game in seventh in the Western Conference playoff standings and are trying to work their way out of the play-in round.

"I think we're playing better basketball at the right time," McCollum said. "Understanding the severity of each game — what we need to accomplish heading into the playoffs and what we need to accomplish to get into the playoffs is very important."

Jayson Tatum scored 33 to lead Boston, which is trying to avoid falling into the play-in round in the final weeks of the season.

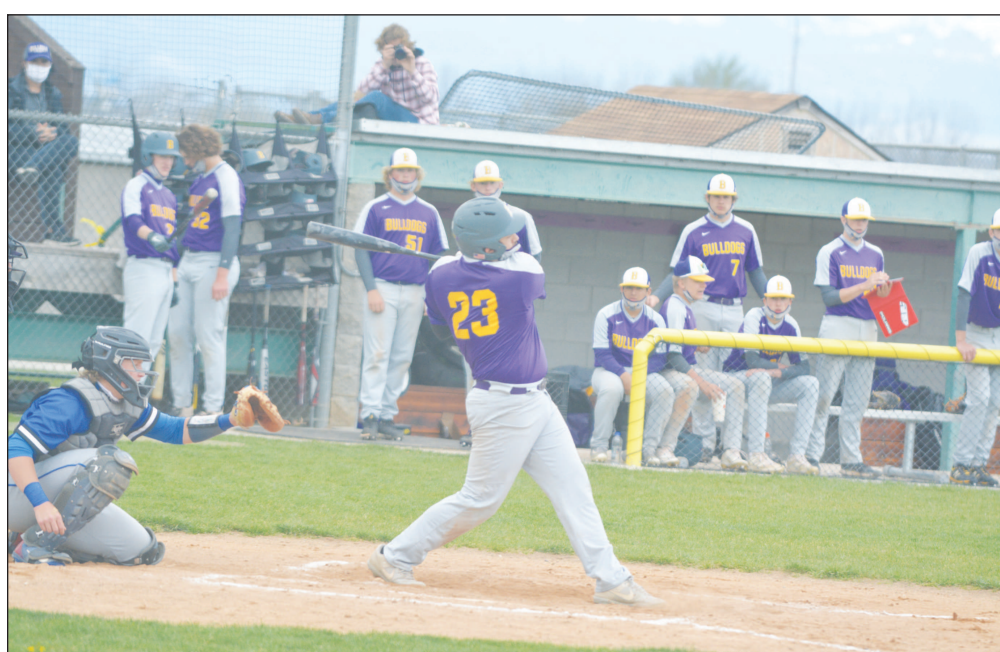
"We need to just take the mindset of whether we won or lost, you can't change that," Tatum said.

After rallying from 32 points behind to beat San Antonio in overtime Friday night, the Celtics couldn't produce another comeback against the Blazers, who shot 52% (44 for 85). The Blazers also helped themselves by forcing 18 turnovers and committing only nine.

"I think the biggest thing is I thought we were very aggressive on the ball," coach Terry Stotts said. "We created turnovers in a variety of ways. But I think the pressure on the ball, our hands and our alertness on the weak side all played a part in it."

Norman Powell scored 23 points, Robert Covington had 10 and Jusuf Nurkic pulled down 11 rebounds for Portland, which will have six games remaining — including four at home — once the road trip ends after stops in Atlanta and Cleveland.

"Like I was saying before we left on the road trip, on the road trip, what are you willing to do to dig yourself out? How desperate are we willing to go out there and look and be and behave?" Lillard said. "We need to win these games."



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Zander Arriaga takes a swing against La Grande on Saturday, May 1.

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