

BAKER GIRLS BASKETBALL

Baker surrenders lead, falls to Nyssa

By **Corey Kirk**
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Baker's girls basketball team was unable to hold on to a 13-point lead in the first half and ended up losing 43-41 at Nyssa in the season-opening game on Friday, May 28.

Baker, the 2019 Class 4A state champions, was playing its first game since beating Gladstone 53-31 in a playoff game on March 6, 2020. Baker's defense of its 2019 state title was canceled due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Bulldogs were in Forest Grove, preparing for their first state tournament game, when the event was canceled.

In the first half Friday at Nyssa, Baker coach Mat Sand was pleased with his team's performance

"We came out playing like what I was expecting," Sand said. "They're (Nyssa) a decent team."

Baker's biggest challenge was Gracie Johnson, Nyssa's 6-foot-5 sophomore post.

Sand was proud of how Baker sophomore Rylee Elms took on the task of defending Johnson.

"I put Rylee Elms on her and then just gave her help and we did an excellent job on her in the first half," Sand said.

After leading by as many as 13 points in the second quarter, Baker squandered most of its lead by scoring just two points in the third quarter.

"Most of it is attributed to the fact that we aren't in basketball shape," Sand said. "It was our first game of the year, so we had some really great moments. In the third quarter, when you only score two points, it's hard to keep it rolling."

Sand said he is excited to see how this shortened season progresses with a team that's much different — and much younger — than the squad that didn't get a chance to defend its state title more than a year ago. That team had four seniors.

"I'm not focused on the win/losses of this season, I am focused on the maturing process that is necessary for the team to be successful in the start of next year," Sand said. "I told them at the end of the game that we are going to learn from it, learn what we can do differently, and think about the things that we can grow from here. There's a lot of great things we can take away individually and as a team."

Baker's lone senior is Sydney Keller. Other returning players with varsity experience are sophomores Elms, Jozie Ramos, Macey Moore and Makenzie Flanagan.

Sand said he is glad to have Keller's experience.

"I just really appreciate her coming out and being the team leader that she is," Sand said. "She leads by example but she also has earned that voice that is necessary for that team. So I'm glad she is there to instill and be positive in this next group of girls."

Baker will play in front of a home crowd today at 5:30 p.m. against Vale. The teams have Nyssa as a common opponent. Nyssa beat Vale 45-18 on May 25.

This is Baker's first home game since the win over Gladstone in the playoff game on March 6, 2020.

BAKER BOYS BASKETBALL

Bulldogs win home opener

By **Corey Kirk**
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Playing in front of a home crowd for the first time since Feb. 22, 2020, the Baker boys basketball team routed Nyssa, 65-34, Friday, May 28.

Baker improved to 1-1.

A pair of freshmen led Baker's offense, as Paul Hobson scored 17 points and Hudson Spike had 16.

Baker coach Jebron Jones, who has coached the two since they were third-graders, wasn't surprised.

"I know what they are about, and I am proud of them," Jones said. "Being just freshmen and playing sports on the varsity level is tough, and through two nights so far, they responded really well."

Jones said he knew Nyssa likes to shoot three-pointers, and he emphasized the need for Baker defenders to force Nyssa to look inside for points.

"We wanted to push them off the three-point line as much as possible to force them into the key, where we are a little bit bigger than they are, and hopefully they would take bad shots or (make) suspect decisions," Jones said.

The strategy worked.

Baker turned a seven-point lead after one quarter to 19 points at half-time after holding Nyssa to just five



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald

Gabe Gambleton goes to the hoop against the defense of Nyssa's Nico Gomez, as teammate Hayden Younger, No. 11, looks on.

points in the second quarter.

Meanwhile, Jones was encouraging his players to pass up three-point shots in favor of higher percentage, closer attempts. He said the Bulldogs relied too heavily on long shots in a 79-69 loss to La Grande on May 27.

"I told them we shot way too many three-pointers, and I told them that lay-ups deflate teams," Jones said.

"I think we scored a lot of lay-ups (against Nyssa)."

Despite the big halftime lead, Baker maintained the defensive pressure, holding Nyssa to eight points in the third quarter.

"I told them I was proud of them for how hard they played," Jones said.

Baker travels to Vale today to take on the Vikings.

2021 EASTERN OREGON PHOTO CONTEST

Official Rules:
Photo Contest open now and closes at 11:59 pm Sunday, June 20, 2021.
Staff will choose the top 10. The public can vote online for People's Choice from 12:01 am Monday, June 21 through 11:59 pm Thursday, June 30.
Digital or scanned photos only, uploaded to the online platform. No physical copies.
Only photographers from Oregon may participate.
The contest subject matter is wide open but we're looking for images that capture life in Eastern Oregon.

Entrants may crop, tone, adjust saturation and make minor enhancements, but may not add or remove objects within the frame, or doctor images such that the final product doesn't represent what's actually before the camera.

The winners will appear in the July 8th edition of Go Magazine; the top 25 will appear online.

Gift cards to a restaurant of your choice will be awarded for first, second and third place.

Submit all photos online at: bakercityherald.com/photocontest

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