

Sports

BAKER GIRLS BASKETBALL

Bulldogs win home opener

By Corey Kirk
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The Baker girls basketball team rebounded from a season-opening loss at Nyssa to beat Vale 51-27 in the home opener Tuesday, June 1 in the Baker gym.

Literally rebounded.

Baker coach Mat Sand said he pushed the Bulldogs to improve their rebounding, a weak spot in the 43-41 loss to Nyssa, in which Baker squandered a 13-point lead.

“Last game we didn’t rebound well, this game we did, we turned that around,” Sand said. “Second thing was executive defensively and executive offensively, we showed vast improvements from last time.”

On Tuesday, Baker (1-1) took the lead early and extended the advantage to 13 points at halftime.

Vale stayed within reach thanks to junior forward Kailey McGourty, who scored 17 points.

“We just tried to put a fresh person on her (McGourty), and try to stay tight, and she knocked down some shots,” Sand said.

Baker’s sophomore post, Jozie Ramos, was among the Bulldogs tasked with guarding McGourty.

Ramos said Baker struggled at times with communication on defense.

“Sometimes we would lose where she was, and we were always trying to have some-



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald

Baker’s Makenzie Flanagan, right, guards Vale’s Riley Johnson on Tuesday, June 1, in the Baker gym. Flanagan scored eight points in Baker’s 51-27 win.

one on her, annoying her so she couldn’t get her shot off,” Ramos said.

Baker scored 16 points in the third quarter, the most in any quarter, to extend its lead to 25 points.

Ramos said she was excited to see the team’s confidence rise during those eight minutes.

“The third quarter is the turning point in most games because it’s right after halftime, and we were trying to focus on getting our energy

up, and playing as a team,” said Ramos, who led Baker with 15 points.

“She plays hard and she’s a talent, so the thing that she learns to deal with is she is going to get double-teamed, and she did well,” Sand said of Ramos.

On the other end of the court, meanwhile, Baker held Vale to just four points in the third period.

Sand cited the teamwork that went into that performance, with the Bulldogs feeding off the defensive intensity of senior guard Sydney Keller.

“She’s (Keller) going to bring the defense into it, and create stuff for us that no one else will, that’s part of her senior leadership, that’s why she’s a captain and that’s why she’s playing,” Sand said.

Baker breezed through the final period, maintaining its sizable lead.

Sophomore Makenzie Flanagan scored eight points.

With the condensed nature of this basketball season, Sand recognizes that with a roster including nine sophomores and two freshmen, the season is a “maturation process.”

He believes the team is destined for greatness in the future, and he wants to take this opportunity, despite its



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald

Baker’s Sydney Keller helped spur Baker’s defense during a key third-quarter surge Tuesday, June 1 against Vale.

Nuggets hold off Blazers despite Lillard’s 55 points

■ Lillard sets Portland points record, NBA playoff record for 3’s

By Amie Stapleton
AP Sports Writer

DENVER — On Damian Lillard’s record-breaking night when he was hitting one shot after another from behind the arc and almost beyond belief, it was Michael Porter Jr. who quietly sank the biggest basket of all.

MPJ’s 3-pointer from the left corner barely fluttered the net with 1:33 left in the second overtime and proved the game-winner as the Denver Nuggets squelched an epic comeback by the Portland Trail Blazers with a 147-140 win Tuesday night in Game 5 of their best-of-seven playoff series.

“That’s what playoff basketball is,” Porter said after the thriller that included a dozen lead changes and 11 ties, including long 3s by Lillard that forced overtime and the second OT.

Lillard’s night included a franchise playoff record

55 points and NBA playoff record 12 3-pointers. He eclipsed the mark of 11 set by Golden State’s Klay Thompson at Oklahoma City on May 28, 2016.

“It was the best playoff performance I’ve ever seen,” Trail Blazers coach Terry Stotts said.

“At this point, all that matters is we can’t lose another game in the series,” Lillard shrugged.

And he, for one, isn’t going to dwell on his big night and even bigger letdown.

Lillard scored 17 of Portland’s 19 points in the two overtimes, but he didn’t score again after his 12th 3-pointer in 17 attempts put the Blazers ahead 140-138 with 3:47 left.

And his teammates didn’t score again, either.

Nikola Jokic, who scored 38 points and came one assist shy of a triple-double, tied it at 140 with a layup and

Porter broke the tie with a 3 from the left corner with 1:33 left off a sweet pass from Jokic.

The Blazers still were within three points — and Lillard’s range — until a pair of costly mistakes sent them back to Portland for Game 6 tonight, June 3, trailing the Nuggets 3-2 in the best-of-seven series.

First, Robert Covington missed a dunk with 41 seconds left and then CJ McCollum stepped out of bounds with 9.1 seconds left and Lillard setting up for another 3. “It’s a shame we wasted one of the all-time best performances by not being more supportive of him,” McCollum said of Lillard.

Monte Morris, who scored 28 points off the bench, hit a pair of free throws with 8.8 seconds to seal it, and Shaq Harrison added two free throws with 3.8 seconds remaining.

BAKER BOYS BASKETBALL

Baker rallies to top Vale, 73-66

By Corey Kirk
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The Baker boys basketball team left Vale Tuesday evening, June 1, with a 73-66 win in a hard-fought game against the Vikings.

Baker (2-1) won its second straight after opening the season with a loss at La Grande.

It was the first loss for Vale (3-1), which started the season with three wins, against Ontario, Nyssa and Burns, by an average of 28 points.

On Tuesday, Vale led Baker 33-32 at halftime.

Baker coach Jebron Jones said the Bulldogs in the first two quarters weren’t playing the unselfish brand of basketball he prefers.

“We weren’t making the extra pass, taking ill-advised shots, just trying to do way too much,” Jones said.

During halftime, he stressed to the Bulldogs that playing together was the only way they could turn the game back in their favor.

“That’s the most important thing, because I think that some young people think they have to do it by themselves, but there are five dudes on the court for a reason,” Jones said.

The Bulldogs responded, scoring 41 points in the second half.

Senior Gabe Gambleton led Baker with 20 points, and a pair of freshmen, Hudson Spike (17 points) and Paul Hobson (11) combined for 28.

“I think the key to our success is balanced scoring. It was a lot more balanced in the second half, that’s what it’s going to take to win some games, to stay balanced and consistent,” Jones said.

Baker pushed its lead to as much as 20 points in the second half, but the Vikings, led by junior Tanner Steele’s game-high 27 points, rallied before the Bulldogs put the game away.

Jones said he hopes Baker’s strong second-half performance will carry over into future games.

“I hope they like that feeling, just be unselfish, play together and good things will happen,” Jones said.

Baker will have a couple chances to fulfill the coach’s wishes this week, playing host to Powder Valley Wednesday night and to Ontario this evening at 5:30 p.m. in the Baker gym.

Results from those games will be published in the Saturday, June 5 issue of the Baker City Herald.

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