

Sports

BAKER GIRLS BASKETBALL

Baker rally falls short at La Grande

By Corey Kirk
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Baker girls basketball coach Mat Sand is no fan of losing, but he can still have fun watching his team even when they don't win.

Such was the case Friday, June 18 in La Grande when the Bulldogs' rally fell short against the unbeaten Tigers, 44-35.

"I hate losing but that had to be the most fun of a loss I've ever had in my career just because I saw how well the girls played, the decisions they made and them realizing they can play with a team packed with seniors and experience," Sand said. "To see the advancement of the team was the most exciting thing of the season."

Baker, playing with just one senior, Sydney Keller, was up against a La Grande squad led by seniors Camryn Collman and Ella Dunlap.

Coming off wins against Ontario and Vale earlier in the week, Sand knew he had to change his game plan.

Keller, who usually guards the opponent's top scorer, was dealing with an ankle injury.

Sand assigned sophomore guard Sydnee Pierce with the daunting task of trying to slow Collman, who scored 24 points in La Grande's 51-32 win over Baker on June 8.

Collman started well, scoring all 11 of La Grande's points in the first quarter, including a trio of three-pointers.

La Grande dominated the second quarter, outscoring



Alex Wittwer/The (La Grande) Observer

Baker's Sydnee Pierce, right, guards La Grande's top scorer, Camryn Collman on Friday, June 18 at La Grande. The Tigers won, 44-35.

Baker 17-2 to take a 28-11 lead at halftime.

But the second half was a different matter.

"You encourage them, you tell them what you see potentially and what they are capable of doing," Sand said. "I told them you guys can play with these guys."

Pierce clamped down on Collman, holding her to just five points in the second half.

"She (Pierce) was on (Collman) the whole game for the

most part, and as a sophomore going up against someone like Collman, who is a seasoned senior, she basically shut her down," Sand said.

With sophomore Jozie Ramos scoring nine of her team-high 16 points in the third quarter, Baker outscored the Tigers 16-6 to narrow the lead to 34-27.

Baker couldn't continue the momentum in the fourth quarter, but Sand said the third-quarter rally, and the contributions of Baker's underclassmen, illustrate the team's potential in 2022 and beyond.

Sophomore Macey Moore had eight points, and sophomore Rylee Elms had seven.

"It just shows you the dynamic of this team, the potential of this team," Sand said.

Baker finished the condensed season with an 8-4 record. The Bulldogs didn't qualify for a nonsanctioned Class 4A state tournament in North Bend.

Sand said he will have high expectations for the Bulldogs when they return to the court in late fall. Baker won the 2019 state championship and

wasn't able to defend that title when the 2020 tournament was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic just before Baker's first-round game.

"You are going to see a much different team next year," Sand said. "I believe we have a lot of momentum, that there is no reason why when things go back to normal, and the OSAA starts doing what they are doing, I expect us to be on the top of our league, I expect us to go into the state tournament, I expect us to jump right back to the routine."



Alex Wittwer/The (La Grande) Observer

Baker's Jozie Ramos, left, scored 16 points to lead the Bulldogs on Friday, June 18 at La Grande.

Lightning sparked 2 small fires

By Jayson Jacoby
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Temperatures aren't the only thing more typical of late July than of late June in Northeastern Oregon.

Wildfire conditions are also ahead of schedule.

"Things are definitely dry out there," said Joel McCraw, fire management officer for the Whitman District on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

Dry enough that a pair of small blazes sparked by lightning early on June 15 smoldered for a few days before growing.

The first, reported on Thursday, June 17, burned about a third of an acre in Trout Creek Meadows near the North Fork of the John Day River north of Granite.

Two days later, on Saturday, June 19, a forest visitor reported a blaze near Beaver Meadows, about four miles south of Granite.

That fire burned about 1.1 acres.

Both fires were started by lightning during the June 15 storm, McCraw said.

Fire bosses called in helicopters to drop buckets of water on both blazes, he said. Both were controlled within two days.

Although lightning is not unusual in mid June, McCraw said the fires, both of which started in stands of lodgepole pine, burned more rapidly in what he calls "heavy" fuels — larger down logs — than is typical for the final week of spring.

"Everything we're seeing is ahead of where we usually are," McCraw said.

He said burning conditions are approximately four weeks ahead of normal for late June.

Graphs that plot the "energy release component" — which projects how much potential energy is available to be released in a fire — show that measure as being above average in all fuel types in Northeastern Oregon, and near record levels for this time of year in the central Blue Mountains, John Day Valley and juniper-sagebrush areas.

The fire danger is likely to worsen with hot temperatures forecast over the next week.

BAKER SWIMMING

Baker second in district meet

■ Bulldogs claim multiple titles, now prepare for a state meet this weekend

By Corey Kirk
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Not even a brief power outage at the Sam-O-Swim Center could stop the Baker Bulldogs from having a strong outing as they played host to the district swim meet on Saturday, June 19.

Baker faced off against swimmers from La Grande and Cove.

Baker coach Paula Moe was thankful for the collaborative effort that made the event possible.

"It was amazing teamwork," Moe said. "La Grande came and brought their officials and their administration officials, and they helped us run it and it went smooth as silk."

Baker finished second overall, with 93 total points (girls and boys teams) to La Grande's 126. Cove had 40 points.

Baker junior Brianna Stadler, a two-time state champion (in the 100-meter butterfly in 2020, and the 100-meter backstroke in 2019, when she set a state record), finished first in both the 200 individual medley and 100 butterfly in Saturday's meet at Sam-O.

Senior Salena Bott also won two events — the 200 freestyle and the 100 freestyle. Junior Sydney Lamb is district champion in the 500 freestyle.

Baker's relay team of Bott, Stadler, junior Caitlin Lien and senior Avril Zickgraf won two events — the 200 medley and the 400 freestyle.

On the boys side, Baker sophomore Gabe Bott won the 100 freestyle.

Moe was proud of the entire team's effort.

"We have swam against these folks for the last couple of weeks, and lost to several of them, so it was wonderful to come in first," Moe said. "Baker was the highlight of the meet."

Baker will compete in a nonsanctioned state meet this weekend at Cottage Grove High School.

Moe knows that her swimmers are ready to give their best effort this weekend.

"They are very anxious and very excited, we are swimming against folks we generally don't swim against, so it's kind of fun to go and compete against different people," Moe said.

She is thankful for many organizations and people who helped put on the district meet, including Baker High School employees, Baker City officials who worked to get the city-owned pool ready, Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative for helping with the power outage, and the Baker County YMCA, which operates Sam-O Swim Center for the city.

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