

Bulldogs ready for regular sports schedule this fall

■ Unlike the previous school year, when all sports took place in late winter and spring, this year will start with usual fall sports

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Five months after the start of the strangest high school sports season, Baker High School teams are preparing for a schedule that looks, well, normal.

Football on fall evenings at Baker Bulldog Memorial Stadium.

Volleyball in the BHS gym. Soccer at the Sports Complex.

Cross-country at Quail Ridge Golf Course.

With the pandemic postponing both the traditional fall and winter sports seasons in 2020-21, all high school sports were moved to



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald, File, March 2021

Football will return to Baker Bulldog Memorial Stadium when the Bulldogs take on Cascade on Sept. 4.

the late winter and spring. That meant the seasons were shorter than usual.

Baker's football team, for instance, played just six games, from March 5 through April 9.

Basketball, normally played in the winter, didn't finish until well into June.

But as abnormal as the abbreviated sports season was, the enthusiasm of the players, coaches and fans reminded Buell Gonzales Jr., the Baker School District's athletic director, of how important sports are.

"It more reveals a lot about us, it reveals character, sports have that ability," Gonzales said. "It affirmed to me that the role that athletics play in our lives, and in the development of the kids, and the effect it has on the culture of the school and the community, those were things I knew already."

Gonzales said the experience also showed that people are willing to do what's necessary — including wearing masks — to ensure that high school athletes have a chance to compete.

"I was proud that we were able to pull off what we pulled off within the guidance and the framework," Gonzales said. "The kids were safe and the coaches were safe."

While students were enjoying summer vacation, Gonzales was striving to ensure that fall sports teams would have a regular slate of games.

"I worked hard to get a complete schedule, and to get those opportunities back where they should be," Gonzales said. "We have gorgeous facilities here and I am trying to increase the number of home games. It's been nice to get back to somewhat normal preparation for a year, it was what it normally should look like."

The Bulldog football team, for instance, had just two home games during its shortened spring season.

This fall's nine-game schedule includes five home games, including an Oct. 29 contest against rival La Grande.

With the delta variant driving a surge in COVID-19 cases, precautions will remain in place, most notably affecting volleyball players, who will have to wear masks, Gonzales said.

Girls Soccer

THURSDAY, AUG. 26

vs. Weiser, Idaho, 4 p.m.

SATURDAY, AUG. 28

vs. McCall, time TBD

TUESDAY, AUG. 31

vs. Pendleton/Weston-McEwen, 4 p.m.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 2

at Four Rivers, 4 p.m. PDT

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 8

at Riverside, 5 p.m.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 14

at Fruitland, Idaho, 4 p.m. PDT

TUESDAY, SEPT. 21

vs. La Grande, 5 p.m.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 25

vs. Payette, Idaho, noon

MONDAY, SEPT. 27

at Weiser, Idaho, 4 p.m. PDT

TUESDAY, SEPT. 28

vs. Fruitland, Idaho, 5 p.m.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 30

vs. Ontario, 5 p.m.

TUESDAY, OCT. 5

at Mac-Hi, 5 p.m.

TUESDAY, OCT. 12

at La Grande, 5 p.m.

TUESDAY, OCT. 19

at Ontario, 4 p.m. PDT

TUESDAY, OCT. 26

vs. Mac-Hi, 5 p.m.

Boys Soccer

THURSDAY, AUG. 26

at Weiser, Idaho, 4:30 p.m. PDT

SATURDAY, AUG. 28

vs. McCall, time TBD

THURSDAY, SEPT. 2

vs. Four Rivers, 5 p.m.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 7

at Four Rivers, 4 p.m. PDT

THURSDAY, SEPT. 9

at Pendleton, 4 p.m.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 14

vs. Fruitland, Idaho, 6 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 22

at La Grande, 4 p.m.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 25

vs. Payette, Idaho, 12:30 p.m.

MONDAY, SEPT. 27

vs. Weiser, Idaho, 4 p.m.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 28

at Fruitland, 4 p.m. PDT

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 29

at Ontario, 4 p.m. PDT

SATURDAY, OCT. 2

at Payette, Idaho, 11 a.m. PDT

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 6

vs. Mac-Hi, 5 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 13

vs. La Grande, 5 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 20

vs. Ontario, 5 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 27

at Mac-Hi, 5 p.m.

Varsity Volleyball

THURSDAY, AUG. 26

vs. Powder Valley, 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, AUG. 28

at McCall-Donnelly, Idaho, 1:45 p.m. PDT

THURSDAY, SEPT. 2

at Union, 5:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 7

vs. Burns, 5:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 8

vs. Weiser, Idaho, 6:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 9

vs. Pendleton, 6:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 10

Baker Invitational tournament at BHS, times TBD

SATURDAY, SEPT. 11

vs. McCall-Donnelly, 2:45 p.m.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 14

vs. Ontario, 6:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 21

vs. La Grande, 6:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 28

at Vale, 5:30 p.m. PDT

THURSDAY, SEPT. 30

vs. Mac-Hi, 6:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, OCT. 5

at Ontario, 5:30 p.m. PDT

SATURDAY, OCT. 9

at Powder Valley tournament, times TBD

THURSDAY, OCT. 14

at La Grande, 6:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, OCT. 21

at Mac-Hi, 6:30 p.m.

Boys and Girls Cross-Country

THURSDAY, AUG. 26

at Vale Dash-N-Splash, 4 p.m. PDT

THURSDAY, SEPT. 2

at Caldwell, Idaho, Twilight Invitational, races starting at 3:30 p.m. PDT

FRIDAY, SEPT. 10

as Catherine Creek Scamper, races start at 1 p.m.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 17

Wallowa County Invitational, races start at 1 p.m.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 25

Three Course Challenge at Camp Rilea, near Seaside, races start at

FRIDAY, OCT. 1

Baker Invitational at Quail Ridge Golf Course,

FRIDAY, OCT. 8

at Tiger Invite at La Grande Country Club, races start at 11 a.m.

Volleyball spectators will also have to wear masks, but Gonzales said that as of now, there will not be limits on the number of spectators as was the case this spring.

The other fall sports take place outdoors, and neither players nor fans will be required to wear masks, Gonzales said.

Officials will work to ensure distancing among spectators, but Gonzales said he doesn't expect this to result in any restrictions on the number of fans at outdoor events.

"We've done this before," Gonzales said. "It's going to be tough, but if we focus on the things that we can control, like our attitude and our effort, then we will be OK."

"We have to continue to provide the safest environment for our student athletes, so at the same time follow the guidance outlined by the OHA, the governor's office, the school district and the (Oregon School Activities Association)," Gonzales said.

With the first contests scheduled for Thursday, Aug. 26, Gonzales encourages parents to support their kids and make sure they enjoy the experience.

"Making it through what we did last year, I would say that parents just need to release their kids to the experience," Gonzales said. "Let them enjoy it, and enjoy watching them play. These opportunities are fleeting, and you only get so many opportunities as a parent."

Varsity Football

SATURDAY, SEPT. 4

vs. Cascade, 2 p.m.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 10

at Homedale, Idaho, 6 p.m. PDT

FRIDAY, SEPT. 17

vs. Weiser, Idaho, 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 24

at Mac-Hi, 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, OCT. 1

vs. Nyssa, 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, OCT. 8

vs. Vale, 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, OCT. 15

at Ontario, 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, OCT. 22

at Burns, 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, OCT. 29

vs. La Grande, 7 p.m.

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