

BAKER VOLLEYBALL

Baker sweeps Badgers in opener

By COREY KIRK

ckirk@bakercityherald.com

In front of parents and a rambunctious student section, the Baker volleyball team started its first fall season in two years on Thursday night, Aug. 26, by sweeping Powder Valley.

It was the Badgers' first loss since November 2019.

"We need to appreciate every win," Baker coach Ali Abrego said. "Obviously we had to earn it, they weren't going to give it to us, so it was nose to the grindstone."

Powder Valley swept Baker in two matches during the pandemic-abbreviated season earlier this year, winning on March 4 at North Powder and on March 31 in Baker City.

Abrego, a 2013 Powder Valley graduate who played volleyball for the Badgers, knew the match against the perennial Class 1A power wouldn't be easy.

"Powder is a very fundamentally sound team so we had to be ready for long rallies, we had to be ready for the hard to reach pockets and the hard tipped shots," Abrego said. "Despite being young, they are well rounded (and) Marji (Lind, Powder Valley's longtime coach) runs a good program, so we should expect that."

Baker forged a big lead in the first set and held it throughout, winning 25-12.



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald

Baker freshman Ashlyn Dalton, right, prepares to make a set during the Bulldogs' match against Powder Valley on Thursday, Aug. 26 in the Baker gym.

Abrego said it's important to set the tempo of a match, and the Bulldogs did that with the strong first set.

"They grew in confidence for sure," Abrego said.

The Badgers rallied early in

the second set, taking a lead that reached five points.

Abrego called timeout. She told her players they needed to regain the focus they had in the first set.

"We don't want to be complacent," Abrego said. "We don't want

our momentum to shift. We need to be consistent moving forward."

The Bulldogs heeded their coach's advice, rallying to regain the lead in the middle of the set and going on to win 25-16.

Senior co-captain Lacy Church-

field said she was proud of how her teammates responded to Powder Valley taking the lead.

"We took that first set for granted, we felt confident we were going to win the next one which wasn't that easy," Churchfield said. "We just have to keep fighting, encouraging one another."

In the third set, the Badgers remained close throughout the first half, with Baker leading by no more than two points through the 15th point.

But Baker then pulled away late to win the set 25-19 and complete the sweep.

Although happy with the win, the Bulldogs will strive to maintain their focus as the season continues.

"I'm glad that we won but I am going to look forward to the next game, this is just one, kind of like a warm up game," Churchfield said. "I don't know how good McCall is going to be, so I am expecting them to be a tough team."

"Big things are coming," Abrego said. "We are really hungry for it. We are looking forward to competing against our own league. We have McCall and then next Thursday we have Union and that will be a good one, so that is where our minds are focused."

Baker travels to Idaho today, Aug. 28, to take on the McCall-Donnelly Vandals at 1:45 p.m. PDT.

Bulldog boys, girls win cross-country meet

By COREY KIRK

ckirk@bakercityherald.com

Baker's girls and boys cross-country teams both finished first in the team standings at the Vale Dash-N-Splash meet on Thursday, Aug. 26.

It was the first meet of the season for the Bulldogs, who competed against Nyssa and Vale.

In the boys race, Baker junior Thaddeus Pepera finished first in a time of 11:13.71.

In the girls race, Baker senior Emma Baeth crossed the line first in 13:09.14.

Two Bulldogs also were the first freshmen to finish — Sofia Kaaen in the girls race (14:22.3; fourth overall) and Daniel Brown in the boys race (12:23.74; fifth overall).

Baker Coach Suzy Cole was pleased with the results.

"I thought they did excellent — our veteran runners had very good times and it was our first chance to see where they were, and they were where we were hoping they would be," Cole said. "Our novices competed really strong. I was very happy across the board."

Baker boys results

1. Thaddeus Pepera; 3. Jordan Mills, 11:44.14; 5. Daniel Brown, 12:23.74; 7. Seth Mastrude, 12:32.6; 9. Payton Waters, 13:25.55; 12. River Clark, 13:34.84; 16. Tanner Lucas, 14:59.65; 19. Karsten Cikanek, 15:52.33; 22. Tristan Mulkey, 20:00.51

Baker girls results

1. Emma Baeth, 13:09.14; 2. Sydney Lamb, 13:22.86; 4. Sofia Kaaen, 14:22.3; 5. Emma Timm, 15:12.96; 7. Paige Marlia, 16:28.2; 9. Lilly Collins, 18:05.78; 10. Katie Spaugh, 18:32.74; 11. Avery Collier, 18:38.68; 13. Jessica Dotson, 19:32.2

La Grande cancels football opener due to COVID

■ Tigers had players test positive before practice started

The (La Grande) Observer

LA GRANDE — The football season opener between La Grande and Pendleton, set for Sept. 2, has been canceled because of COVID-19 precautions.

"We had some kids who had it before practice started," La Grande Athletic Director Darren Goodman said. "We are just taking precautions in bringing them back properly. There are OSAA rules with players having so many practices in pads and such. We didn't want to put people in situations they weren't ready for."

Goodman let Pendleton Athletic Director Mike Somnis know of the change Aug. 23.

"I wanted to give them as much time as I could to find something else," Goodman said.

Somnis said the Buckaroos are in search of a Week 1 game.

According to La Grande head coach Rich McIlmoil, a number of his players who had COVID-19 late in the summer have not recorded enough practices to compete in the season opener. Athletic trainer Brook Jorgensen monitors players heart rates and lung condition prior to returning from COVID-19.

"I work closely with her to



Alex Wittwer/The (La Grande) Observer

La Grande's Kaden Burgess practices at La Grande High School on Thursday, Aug. 19, 2021. La Grande Athletic Director Darren Goodman announced that the team had canceled its opening game against Pendleton due to COVID-19 precautions amidst rising cases.

make sure our kids are healthy enough to go full speed," McIlmoil said. "It comes down to making sure we have kids healthy and in a good spot to play."

La Grande's protocol involves participation in a minimum of nine practices before a player can compete in a regular season game. A number of athletes on the team did not meet that minimum, which ultimately played a role in the cancellation of the opening game.

"Most of them are healthy, it's

about getting them to that point where they can play full speed now," McIlmoil said.

According to McIlmoil, the cancellation of the opener is a preventive measure to ensure the health and safety of the athletes involved throughout the entirety of the season.

"That's my big thing, I don't want to put the season at risk and get kids in a bad spot early in the season," he said.

The game had been the season opener for both squads

in the four seasons prior to the pandemic. They didn't play in the spring of 2021.

Pendleton has historically dominated the series, but La Grande won two of the last three contests, including in 2019 when the Tigers routed the Buckaroos 36-14 to kick off what became an undefeated state-title winning season.

La Grande's next game is at 7 p.m. on Sept. 10, a Greater Oregon League battle at McLoughlin.

NATIONAL HISTORIC
OREGON TRAIL
INTERPRETIVE CENTER
PRESENTS:

Free Family Fun

Live Music

LABOR DAY WEEKEND
Geiser-Pollman Park
Saturday-Sunday, September 4-5
10a.m.-3p.m.
WAGON ENCAMPMENT

oregontrail.blm.gov

For more information call 541-523-1843

OVBC
Oregon Values and Beliefs Center

You can help shape Oregon's future.

Share your opinion. Earn money.
Join the OVBC Panel.
panel.oregonvbc.org