Baker rallies to nip Burns

■ Bulldogs hand Hilanders their 2nd loss of season

By COREY KIRK

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For the second match in a row, the Baker volleyball team went to a deciding fifth set, and for the second time the Bulldogs came away with the win, rallying past Burns in a thriller Tuesday evening, Sept. 7 in the Baker gym.

Baker, which lost two of the first three sets, handed the Hilanders just their second loss of the season. Burns is 6-2 overall.

Baker, which followed its five-set win at Union on Sept. 2, improved to 3-1.

Baker coach Ali Abrego said the Bulldogs came together as a team in their first match following the Labor Day weekend.

"Really focused on defense, serve receive in particular, and serving," Abrego said. "Just like getting into a groove and working as a cohesive unit."

Baker captain Lacy Churchfield, the team's only senior, said she felt Baker was prepared for Burns, which is a top team in the Class 3A ranks, after a tough practice on Monday.

Churchfield said Tuesday's match was also important as its the first in a hectic week for the Bulldogs, who play on five straight days.

"If we didn't show up today, it was going to be a very long week," Churchfield said.

The Bulldogs started strong against the Hilanders, winning the first set 25-21. But Burns bounced back

immediately, winning sets two and three in decisive fashion, 25-13 and 25-10. Abrego was frustrated

with Baker's lack of consistency, which contributed to the team's struggles in the middle of the match.

In particular, she said the Bulldogs struggled to recognize when Burns players went for a tip rather than a spike. "Obviously it's hard when

you are in the game, but if you see somebody's hand go up, they are going to tip but not swing, that's an adjustment



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald

Baker junior captain Jozie Ramos, center, gets ready to spike the ball on Tuesday, Sept. 7 against Burns in the Baker gym. Waiting for a possible return are teammates, left to right, Ashlyn Dalton, Macey Moore, Lacy Churchfield and Rylee Elms. Baker rallied to beat the Hilanders in five sets.

that they need to make quicker," Abrego said. "They had a few rotations that sucked us out of a few points. It happens, you can't be perfect all of the time, but coming out of that big of a loss and coming back to winning the match, that's awesome."

With their backs to the

wall, the Bulldogs held off the Hilanders 25-22 in the fourth set to force a decisive fifth set.

Churchfield said she was confident as that set started.

"I didn't have the mindset that we were going to lose, I kept it positive, and that's what we needed as a team," she said. "My team kept it positive on the fourth set, into the fifth set and that's really, really important. We gave it our all."

In the deciding set, the teams traded the lead several times.

But Baker eventually forged a lead and held on, 15-13.

With consecutive wins in long, competitive matches, Abrego said she's excited for the league season to start, with a Sept. 14 match at Ontario.

"I hope they can figure out a way to remember what it feels like to win big games like this, because each set to 25 is an opportunity to get a big win for us," Abrego said. "We come off this big win for us against Burns, we got to show up tomorrow, we have another one," Abrego said. "We just have to remember muscle memory, train your body and train your mind."

Baker, in the midst of a busy series of home matches, played Weiser, Idaho, on Wednesday, Pendleton on Thursday, a tournament on Friday and then on Saturday, a chance to avenge an earlier loss to McCall-Donnelly.

Though the schedule is packed this week, Churchfield knows that the team will be ready.

"We have that win and now we have that long week ahead of us, we just have to keep that in the back of our minds, tomorrow is a new game," Churchfield said.



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald

Baker junior Skylar Roy controls the ball during the second half against Four Rivers on Tuesday, Sept. 7 at the Baker Sports Complex. Baker won the match, 8-0.

Bulldogs blank Four Rivers, 8-0

■ Sydnee Pierce has 4 goals, and Daphne Thomas 3

By COREY KIRK

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Baker's girls soccer team continued its domination over Four Rivers of Ontario on Tuesday, Sept. 7, netting eight goals and shutting out the Falcons.

Baker (2-3) won its second straight match against Four Rivers

Four Rivers.

The Bulldogs beat the Falcons 5-1 at Ontario on Sept. 2.

Junior Sydnee Pierce led Baker's offensive onslaught with four goals, three of those coming in the second half.

Fellow junior Daphne Thomas had a hat trick, all three goals coming after halftime.

"I wasn't feeling great the first half, so it was kind of nice to come back through the second half," Thomas said. "Following through definitely helped a lot, if I wouldn't have followed through, I probably wouldn't have gotten any goals."

Baker's coaches were excited to see the Bulldogs continue to improve after starting the season with three losses.

"One of the key things that was self identified by the girls was because we were able to win, once we were up a little bit, they stopped playing hard," assistant coach Christine Teegarden said. "One of the goals going into today was to keep playing your game the whole time."

Baker got on the scoreboard early with goals from Pierce and junior Brooklyn Jaca.

The Bulldogs kept the ball mainly on the Falcons' side of the field, and Teegarden said she was proud of Baker's defense.

"Our defensive mids, learning how to drop into cover so that when anybody from the defensive line (is) making a play up (so) that we still have that coverage there, and we were not leaving an empty

weak space,"Teegarden said.
One of those midfielders
floating around the defense
was senior Maya Smith. She
said a collective effort kept
Four Rivers from getting
many shots on goal.

"It was really big, especially considering all the other games that we played where defense has always been every man for themselves, it was really nice to work as a team and not all be winded in forty minutes," Smith said.

With Baker leading 2-0 at halftime, the coaching staff focused on encouraging the Bulldogs to be more consistent with their passing.

"You need to stick that stitching passes together smartly, and navigating up the field, so we did see some of that today, moments of brilliance, so we know that it's there," Teegarden said. "We are honing it in, but they start to leave it behind the moment they feel frantic."

Baker had no trouble offensively in the second 40 minutes, netting six more goals.

Teegarden said she hopes the Bulldogs are gaining confidence as they prepare for the start of league play on Sept. 21, when they host La Grande.

"Now we have had a couple of wins, so what I want them to take away from that is what we have been practicing," Teegarden said.

Baker will continue its nonleague schedule by traveling to Fruitland, Idaho, on Sept. 14 for a 4 p.m. PST kickoff.

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AP Top 25 Reality Check: Are 4 newcomers built to last?

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

Week one of the college football season featured eight ranked teams losing. Having five games matching ranked teams will do that.

The result was four new teams moving into the first AP Top 25 of the regular season: No. 16 UCLA, No. 19 Virginia Tech, No. 20 Mississippi and No. 25 Auburn.

At the top of the poll presented by Regions Bank, Alabama strengthened its grip on No. 1 and Georgia moved up to No. 2 to give the Southeastern Conference the top two teams in the country for the 30th time.

As for the newcomers, Reality Check is here to remind everyone that history is littered with teams that made brief, early season appearances in the poll only to fade away.

UCLA has played two quality games and gets a week off before playing Fresno State at home ahead of Pac-12 play. The Bruins look as if they are here to stay.

Ole Miss flashed a muchimproved defense to go with quarterback Matt Corral's offense in a blowout victory against Louisville. If Coach Lane Kiffin's team can keep playing competent defense, it could be built to last, even against a challenging SEC West schedule.

Auburn was near flawless against Akron in its first game under Bryan Harsin, but we won't know much about the Tigers until Sept. 18, when they play at Penn State.

Then there is Virginia
Tech. The Hokies should feel
good about beating then-No.
10 North Carolina in their
opener, but beware: Virginia

Tech averaged a paltry 4.77 yards per play against the Tar Heels.

The Hokies have been ranked in parts of the last three seasons without finishing ranked under coach Justin Fuente. Don't get too comfortable, Hokies.

• No. 1 Alabama (1-0)
Next: vs. Mercer, Saturday.
Reality check: Mercer.
Miami. Does it even matter?
Alabama has been making
most of its opponents look like
FCS teams, winning 13 of the
last 14 games — all against
Power Five teams — by
double digits.

• No. 2 Georgia (1-0) Next: vs UAB, Saturday. Reality check: Bulldogs have about a month (UAB, South Carolina, Vanderbilt and Arkansas) to get their receivers healthy and their offense cranked up.

• No. 3 Ohio State (1-0) Next: vs No. 12 Oregon, Saturday.

Reality check: Buckeyes have some things to sort out on the second and third levels of their defense. Can the Ducks exploit it? Does it matter with all the weapons Ohio State has at receiver and running back?









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