

BAKER BOYS SOCCER

Tigers nip Bulldogs, 1-0

By COREY KIRK

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For most of the match, the Baker boys soccer team was the equal of the La Grande Tigers Wednesday, Sept. 22 at Community Stadium in La Grande.

But a header from La Grande senior Brady Hutchins was the difference as the Tigers claimed a 1-0 win over Baker in the Greater Oregon League opener for both teams.

La Grande improved to 3-1 overall. Baker fell to 1-4.

"It was a good game, I thought we played well, we just couldn't finish," Baker coach Victor Benites said. "We came really close and we just lost 1 to 0 on a corner kick."

Neither team scored during the first half, although La Grande had six shots on goal to Baker's one.

With just 10 minutes left in the second half, Hutchins made contact with the corner kick and put the ball in the net for the lone goal.

Baker will return to the Baker Sports Complex Monday, Sept. 27 for a non-league match against Weiser at 4 p.m.



Alex Wittwer/The (La Grande) Observer

Baker senior Wyatt Hawkins, right, collides with La Grande's Gage Smithson during a Greater Oregon League soccer match Wednesday, Sept. 22 at Community Stadium in La Grande.

BAKER CROSS-COUNTRY

Baker girls take top 4 spots to win team title

Baker City Herald

STANFIELD — Baker girls claimed the top four places at the Stanfield Fun Country cross-country meet on Thursday, Sept. 23, giving the Bulldogs the team title.

The Baker boys, led by Thaddeus Pepera's sixth-place finish, placed second overall.

Girls

Baker senior Emma Baeth was first across the finish line in a time of 20:34.6. She was followed by fellow senior Sydney Lamb in 20:50.5, freshmen Sofia Kaaen in 21:07.5, and sophomore Emma Timm in 21:36.7 as Baker dominated the race.

The Bulldogs finished with 24 points to easily outdistance second-place Enterprise (46). Heppner was third in the team standings with 52 points.

Other Baker runners: 17th, Paige Marlia, sophomore,

26:14.2; 18th, Katie Spaugh, sophomore, 26:14.5; 19th, Anastasia Johnson, freshman, 26:17.2; 22nd, Lilly Collins, freshman, 27:41.0; 24th, Avery Collier, freshman, 29:11.8.

Boys

Pepera, a junior, was the first Bulldog to finish, in 17:35.4. Freshman Daniel Brown placed eighth in 18:07.9.

Other Baker runners: 12th, Jordan Mills, junior, 18:40.7; 19th, Seth Mastrude, junior, 19:20.3; 21st, Peyton Waters, freshman, 20:22.2; 27th, Reeve Damschen, junior, 21:12.2; 32nd, Tanner Lucas, sophomore, 21:25.8; 44th, Mathew Wernicke, freshman, 21:56.2; 59th, Seth Holden, freshman, 26:53.5; 65th, Tristan Mulkey, freshman, 32:55.4.

Baker finished with 55 points. Enterprise won the boys team title with 21 points.

NFC West fan? Get ready for a wild ride

Ask any fan of the National Football League as we move into the third week of the regular season, and the consensus is pretty clear on which division is the most entertaining.

That's the NFC West.

Being a fan of either the Arizona Cardinals, Los Angeles Rams, San Francisco 49ers or, of course, the Seattle Seahawks, we get to see these teams battle each other twice during the season. As it stands, the division's four teams have a combined record of 7-1. The really intriguing part is looking forward to the games pitting these rivals against each other.



COREY KIRK

First off, the Seahawks really focused on maintaining their core during the offseason. Though quarterback Russell Wilson was the subject of the rumor mill, he put the speculation to rest and stayed in Seattle.

The Seahawks also kept the rest of their backfield in place by retaining running back Chris Carson. Seattle is ready to make a run despite a disappointing overtime loss to Tennessee on Sept. 19.

The 49ers have been one of the most injury-ridden teams in recent years, so staying healthy is clearly their goal. When quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo is under center, they have been at their most successful, with a 24-8 record.

On the other side of the ball, defensive end Nick Bosa's injury last year knocked the wind out of their sails, and having him line up once again has rejuvenated San Francisco's defense.

Unfortunately, injuries, notably in the secondary and at running back, continue to plague the franchise.

The Rams might have made one of the best trades

of the year, with Matthew Stafford taking over behind center for Jared Goff, who moved to the Motor City.

The Rams' offense continues to shine, and all three division foes will have their work cut out for them in defending the L.A. passing attack.

A year ago the Arizona Cardinals were the wild card, the most unpredictable team of the division. But quarterback Kyler Murray continues to improve, and the tandem of Chandler Jones with newly acquired defensive end JJ Watt has made their defensive line very dangerous.

The Cardinals also were

able to add wide receiver AJ Green to line up with star receiver DeAndre Hopkins, a combination that solidifies Arizona as a contender.

There is a strong possibility that the NFC West could take every wildcard spot. Being a fan of any team in this division is pretty stressful. There is no easy game in the division. As the smoke settles at the end of the season, the last place team could have a winning record — but look at this in the wider scope.

To survive this division with potentially the best record, your team likely will be considered a favorite to represent the NFC in the Super

Bowl. Even if your team goes to the playoffs as a wildcard, it could be a very dangerous squad come January.

So, regardless of the team that you root for, buckle your seatbelt, and firmly place yourself on the edge of your seat. We are destined for incredible divisional football play in the NFL West, and if your team finds itself at the top of this division, that alone will be an incredible feat to accomplish on a potential path to the Super Bowl.

It's going to be a wild ride.

Corey Kirk is the sports editor for the Baker City Herald.

No. 3 Oregon opens Pac-12 play against struggling Arizona

By ANNE M. PETERSON

Associated Press

Heading into the Pac-12 season, the No. 3 Oregon Ducks are mostly happy with where they're at.

And why wouldn't they be? Oregon put Ohio State away in Week 2 and survived the nonconference season at 3-0.

Now the idea is to improve on the details.

"We've started fast and we've closed out games well, but somewhere in the middle we're not up to our standard and we've been focusing on that and trying to get the result that we want by focusing on the process," coach Mario Cristobal said. "But all in all, we're in a solid position and one that we have the opportunity to improve on on Saturday."

Next up is Arizona, which fared terribly during its nonconference slate, falling to BYU, San Diego State and Northern Arizona.

In fact, Arizona (0-3, 0-0 Pac-12) has lost a school-record 15 straight games, most in FBS, heading into the meeting Saturday night, Sept. 25 at Autzen Stadium. The Ducks are four-touchdown favorites.

Arizona is playing this season under new head coach Jedd Fisch, who rightly maintains that rebuilding takes time.

"No one thought this was going to be an easy turnaround just because of the fact that we're able to catch a football from 600 feet in the air, or because we were able to have incredible energy and enthusiasm in the offseason, or have a great bunch of recruits that want to be a part of our program," Fisch said. "We knew that

this season was going to be a great challenge for us and our goal is, each week to get better."

Oregon (3-0), the two-time defending Pac-12 champion, is the lone unbeaten team left in the conference. The Ducks have a 14-game unbeaten streak at Autzen.

Healthy?

The biggest question for Oregon heading into the week was the health of quarterback Anthony Brown, who left Saturday's victory over Stony Brook at halftime after he was sacked twice to end the second quarter.

Cristobal said this week that the sixth-year senior would be back against the Wildcats.

Meanwhile, Ducks defensive end Kayvon Thibodeaux remains day-to-day with an ankle injury. Freshman Brady Swinson, who started for Thibodeaux against the Buckeyes but missed the game against Stony Brook with an unspecified injury, is doubtful.

Mase Funa and Keith Brown, who also sat out last week's game after injuries against Ohio State, are both available, Cristobal said.

Quarterback questions

Arizona's depth chart included all three quarterbacks as possible starters. Will Plummer, Gunner Cruz and Jordan McCloud.

Plummer started last weekend's game against Northern Arizona, throwing for 191 yards and a touchdown but he also had a pair of interceptions. McCloud was inserted in the fourth quarter, throwing for 66 yards and a score. Cruz started the Wildcats' first two games.

- Arizona at No. 3 Oregon
- Saturday, Sept. 25, 7:30 p.m.
- TV on ESPN

What Fisch doesn't want is a revolving door.

"It's a very frustrating situation being in this quarterback derby," Fisch said. "You don't want to get to the point where it's like, how do you ever get into that rhythm?"

On the sidelines

Arizona will be without defensive end Mo Diallo and safety Jaxen Turner for the first half of the game at Oregon because of targeting calls last week in the loss to NAU.

Be like Barnes

Fisch pointed to examples of teams that struggled in transitioning to a new head coach, including Arizona coach Adia Barnes, an alum who led the Wildcats to a berth in the NCAA Tournament final in the spring.

Barnes also struggled early on at Arizona, going 6-24 in her second season. Just three years later, she had the Wildcats in the championship game.

Similarly, Fisch is looking at the big picture.

"We're gonna try to emulate and replicate what Adia Barnes did," Fisch said.

History

Arizona has surprised Oregon before.

The last time the Wildcats beat a ranked opponent was in 2018 when they routed the No. 19 Ducks 44-15. Arizona's last win over a top-5 team was in 2014 when they came to Eugene and beat the No. 2 Ducks 31-24.

Kedon Slovis, USC return home to face Oregon State

By DAN GREENSPAN

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The last time Southern California played at home, there were so few fans left at the end of a 42-28 loss to Stanford that individual critiques could be heard as Clay Helton headed up the tunnel for what would be the last time as head coach.

Whether the stands are full to embrace the Trojans under interim coach Donte Williams in his first game at the Coliseum against Oregon State on Saturday, Sept. 25 is one of the questions lingering for a program that seems to attract drama.

"I hope everybody's in there, is happy to cheer on the Trojans, and we play the way that everybody is

accustomed to us playing," Williams said.

A 45-14 win at Washington State in Williams' first game in charge of USC (2-1, 1-1 Pac-12) seemed capable of generating the enthusiasm that had been lacking for nearly all of Helton's tenure.

However, freshman quarterback Jaxson Dart, who ignited the Trojans by coming off the bench to throw for 391 yards and four touchdowns, isn't expected to play against the Beavers (2-1). Dart hasn't practiced this week after injuring his right knee in his collegiate debut, and Williams has not provided any details about the nature of Dart's injury.

That means junior Kedon Slovis should remain the starter. Although Slovis was

- Oregon State at USC
- Saturday, Sept. 25, 7:30 p.m.
- TV on Fox Sports 1

the target of some booing along with the rest of the offense for poor play against the Cardinal, running back Keaontay Ingram believes the new energy Williams has brought should lead to a more positive atmosphere.

"Even though Coach Helton got fired, we still got to keep pushing, keep moving forward," Ingram said. "And Coach Donte coming in with new rules, new traditions, new circumstances and stuff, and everybody on the team is buying into that, so I feel like it's gonna be one fun weekend this weekend."



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