

## BAKER VOLLEYBALL



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Baker senior Lacy Churchfield passes the ball during the Bulldogs' sweep of Ontario on Monday, Oct. 4 at the Baker gym. Baker has won 10 straight matches.

## Baker girls sweep Ontario

■ Bulldogs extend winning streak to 10

By COREY KIRK

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The Baker volleyball team gave their fans a treat Monday, Oct. 4 by winning their 10th straight match, a dominating sweep of winless Ontario.

The Bulldogs, who improved to 12-2, won the sets 25-6, 25-6 and 25-13.

Baker hasn't lost in almost a month, its last defeat coming Sept. 8 at home against Weiser.

"Honestly it was a great day for us ... it's hard to ask for much more," Baker coach Ali Abrego said.

With its winning streak at stake, Baker now plays two straight matches against league rival La Grande, which has played fewer than half as many matches but also boasts

a 4-2 record.

Baker plays host to the Tigers today at 6:30 p.m., then travels to La Grande on Oct. 14 for a 6:30 p.m. match.

Abrego is excited to see her players step into this high-pressure situation, and be ready.

"I'm excited to see them compete," she said. "We have this long existing rivalry with La Grande and so that always adds to the pressure. It will be (a) great opportunity to get us ready for postseason if we are able to make it there."

Baker and La Grande have three common opponents, Mac-Hi, Pendleton and Vale.

Baker went 3-0 against those teams, sweeping all three.

La Grande went 1-2 against that trio, sweeping Mac-Hi, but losing 3-0 to Vale and 3-1 to Pendleton.

# OSAA changes could move Baker to different league

By ANNIE FOWLER

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Travel time and expense, time lost in the classroom by student-athletes, and league size are some of the biggest concerns by local athletic directors when it comes to the Oregon School Activities Association's classification and districting proposals currently being considered.

The OSAA classification and districting committee began meeting last month and sent updated drafts of both proposals to member schools on Sept. 17, as it moves forward in the plan for the four-year time block that begins in 2022-23.

The committee revised the drafts after meeting Sept. 13. It will meet again Oct. 11, Nov. 1 and Nov. 22 before presenting a final recommendation to the executive board Dec. 13.

At present, the OSAA has six classifications, ranging from 6A, which incorporates the largest schools in the state, to 1A, which has the smaller schools.

Everyone else falls in between, and that's where some of the issues lie.

The six-classification proposal would keep schools from Bend and the Salem area together in the 6A Mountain Valley Conference. The Salem-area schools are no longer in favor of going to Bend.

The five-classification plan would have the Bend schools in a conference with those from the Eugene area and southern Oregon.

Pendleton is a 5A school, playing most of its sports in the Intermountain Conference with Hood River Valley, The Dalles, Ridgeview, Redmond and Crook County.

The football team plays in Special District 1 with four of the IMC teams, with Parkrose, Putnam and La Salle Prep thrown in.

If the OSAA condensed to five classifications, the Bucks would find themselves in a league with Crook County, La Grande, Madras, Redmond, Ridgeview and The Dalles.

"We are very much in favor of that," Pendleton Athletic Director Mike Somnis said of the five classifications. "That is very much our preference. I

think we have a lot more schools similar in student numbers. We want to be in a big league with a lot of schools. The bigger the league, the better for us. The smaller the leagues, it's too hard to get nonleague games."

The move would have Pendleton dropping to a 4A school, but Somnis said that is not a concern.

"We would still be in the second biggest classification," Somnis said. "Part of the scenery has Hood River moving, but it is a good-looking league and we are in favor of it. Either scenario works, but we are in favor of the five classifications. There are a lot of decisions to be made before December."

The current 5A classification that Pendleton plays in has schools ranging from 515 to 999 students. The Bucks are on the bottom end of that spectrum with 588 students.

In the new proposed 4A classification, the student numbers would range from 401 to 899 (in grades 9 through 11), still leaving Pendleton in the bottom half.

"We are still very competitive across the board," Somnis said.

While Pendleton is in favor of five classifications, La Grande Athletic Director Darren Goodman would like things to stay as they are.

"There are different trains of thought," he said. "The overwhelming thought is that the travel involved in the league with Pendleton is extensive. Our travel budget would increase two or three times and the kids would miss so much school. The closest game, other than Pendleton, is The Dalles, which is a 6-hour round trip. If you are going to Madras or Redmond, it's 5-plus hours each way. Kids would miss the entire day of school and they are already out too much."

Goodman does like the thought of a bigger league and better competition, but those issues don't outweigh the others. Currently, the Tigers are in the Greater Oregon League with Baker, McLoughlin and Ontario.

"Who doesn't like good competition?" he said. "We can schedule games with those teams for better competition, but we aren't forced to do it every week. 'It's

hard to play against schools twice your size, and that's what going to five classifications does."

La Grande has 432 students, which would make them the second-smallest school in the 4A classification after Madras (418).

If La Grande were to be moved, its GOL counterparts would move to 3A and be put in a league with Burns, Nyssa, Riverside, Umatilla and Vale. Ontario would be the largest school of the group with 364 students.

"La Grande is not a priority for the committee," said Goodman, who also noted that the winter months can be hard with extensive travel. "At the end of the day, we will go where we have to go, but the class time the student-athletes will miss will be dramatic."

Baker Athletic Director Buell Gonzales Jr. is on the fence about the changes.

On one hand, he would hate to lose La Grande out of their league. On the other hand, a larger league makes it easier to schedule for football, volleyball, basketball, baseball and softball.

"The smaller the league, it makes it more difficult to find games later on," Gonzales said. "I would prefer to stay where we are and have the ability to create our own league for that specific purpose. What makes sense for me is that your league is not tied to your classification. It's silly that La Grande would not be in our league. If we are going to go five classifications, still put them in our league."

Right now, Baker's longest trip is Mac-Hi, which is roughly 2 hours. Umatilla and Riverside add a little more time on the bus, but it's not unreasonable.

"For a lot of schools, the ultimate thing comes down to travel and money," Gonzales said.

The core of the 2A Blue Mountain Conference — Heppner, Stanfield, Weston-McEwen and Grant Union — would stay the same in either proposal.

In the both proposals, Irrigon and Enterprise would round out the conference.

Pilot Rock, which already plays 8-man football, would drop from 2A to 1A in either classification proposal.

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