



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald

Baker junior Jozie Ramos makes a pass during the Bulldogs' match against La Grande on Thursday, Oct. 7 in the Baker gym. Teammate Campbell Vanderwiele is at left.

Baker holds off La Grande

■ Tigers win third set, but Bulldogs run winning streak to 11

By COREY KIRK

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With the Baker gym draped in pink for "Pink Night," a fundraiser for the Billie Ruth Bootsma Foundation, and a raucous crowd in the stands, the Baker volleyball team ran its winning streak to 11 matches with a hard-fought four-set win over La Grande Thursday evening, Oct. 7.

The Bulldogs, ranked fourth in the Class 4A ranks, lost their first set in almost a month, as the Tigers rallied from a 2-0 deficit to win the third set, 27-25.

Baker then prevailed 25-20 in the fourth set to close out the Tigers (4-4).

For senior night, along with statistician Sydnee Hallet, Lacy Churchfield was honored prior to the opening serve.

During her four years in the program, Churchfield said she doesn't remember defeating the Tigers, so Thursday's match, besides being her last league match on the home court, had added incentive.

"We were excited, but definitely nervous, more so me," Churchfield said. "We were definitely excited to play our rivals ... to have some competition."

Baker won the first two sets, but neither was a run-away, with scores of 25-23 and 25-20.

Baker coach Ali Abrego said Baker relied on good communication and ball placement to take the 2-0 lead.

"That's exactly what we want, we want to start strong and finish strong, and the thing about us is we have to figure out a way to channel that throughout every set and we knew that



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald

Baker volleyball players huddle during their four-set win over La Grande on Thursday, Oct. 7 in the Baker gym. Facing the camera, in the center, is Rylee Elms. Clockwise are Jozie Ramos, Macey Moore, Ryann Paulsen, Taylor Dalton and Lacy Churchfield.

this was going to be a battle so maintaining our energy was going to be a struggle," Abrego said.

Baker also led for much of the third set, by as many five points before the Tigers rallied late.

Baker hadn't lost a set since the championship match against Grant Union at the Baker tournament on Sept. 10.

"Going up against La Grande it's more of a mental thing and that showed in set three when we lost, we were not mentally sound and we did not trust each other enough to be definitive in our decisions," Abrego said.

Going into the fourth set, Abrego pushed for her team to focus on the task at hand, and that resonated with Churchfield and her teammates.

"She (Abrego) was just saying to us to calm down, be ourselves, play our game and not play down to their level," Churchfield said. "Go in there with confidence and don't go in there complacent."

With the win over La Grande, which was 2-0 in the Greater Oregon League play, Baker, with a 4-0 league record, is in sole possession of first place.

But Abrego is already thinking about the next tasks for her team.

"It's a lot to think about tonight, a win is great but we got to figure out how to piece it together all the time, making sure we take not the ending of the season but the beginning of a postseason," Abrego said.

Churchfield is excited to keep playing hard with her teammates, pushing forward in the remainder of the season.

She hopes to return to the Baker gym for a playoff match.

"I don't think this will be my last (match on my home court), if we win league we get home court and this wasn't my last game, I still get to go on from there," Churchfield said.

The Bulldogs are set to compete today at the Powder Valley tournament.

BAKER BOYS SOCCER

Pioneers blank Bulldogs

By COREY KIRK

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Engulfed at times by a dust cloud whipped across the Baker Sports Complex by an autumn wind, the Baker boys soccer team was unable to fend off the Mac-Hi Pioneers Thursday afternoon, Oct. 7.

The Pioneers (6-2) shut out Baker, 8-0.

Knowing the offensive firepower Mac-Hi would bring, Baker coach Victor Benites implemented a different defensive formation than the Bulldogs usually employ.

"Honestly I knew that Mac-Hi was going to be a hard team to beat, so we tried to focus on more of a defensive game," Benites said.

The Pioneers started off with three goals early in the first half, when Baker senior goalkeeper Silas Carter suffered a nose injury that kept him on the bench the rest of the game. Coming in to relieve him was sophomore Noah Lien, who Benites was excited to see get more varsity experience.

"He (Lien) did a really good job, of course they got some goals but I thought he did really well," Benites said.

Mac-Hi led 5-0 at halftime.

Benites exhorted his team to be more aggressive in the second half, and the Bulldogs did get more shots. But none found the net.

"Early in the second half we had some pretty good shots," Benites said.



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald

Sophomore goalkeeper Noah Lien played most of the game after senior Silas Carter suffered a nose injury midway through the first half on Thursday, Oct. 7 at the Baker Sports Complex.

With games against La Grande and Ontario still left on the schedule, Benites wants the team to focus on its next opponent and not worry about the past.

"We are just going to have to be ready, pass the ball better, got to move and create opportunities and take advantage of that," Benites said.

Baker will host La Grande on Wednesday, Oct. 13 at 5 p.m.

BAKER GIRLS SOCCER

Baker girls tie with Mac-Hi

By COREY KIRK

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The Baker girls soccer team took an early lead and then rallied late to forge a tie with Mac-Hi on Tuesday, Oct. 5 at Milton-Freewater.

Baker coach Eric Layton said the end of the match was dramatic.

"The last eight minutes was the most exciting soccer we had, it was back and forth,"

Layton said. "Teams were like throwing haymakers with shots, breakaways and free balls, it was good stuff."

Baker came into the game with a 2-7 record, while the Pioneers were 6-3.

The Bulldogs took an early lead on a deflection, but the Pioneers scored two straight goals, the second early in the second half, to take a 2-1 lead.

Baker, which had more

than 25 shots on goal, including 10 by junior Sydnee Pierce, kept the pressure on.

And with eight minutes left, sophomore Skye Smith found the net to tie the match at 2.

Neither team could break the deadlock before the final whistle sounded.

Baker travels to La Grande on Tuesday, Oct. 12 to take on the Tigers at 5 p.m.

Stafford, Rams beat Seahawks, 26-17

By TIM BOOTH

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Matthew Stafford was able to manage the discomfort with the finger on his throwing hand and pick apart the Seattle Seahawks' beleaguered defense.

Meanwhile, Russell Wilson was left as a spectator. His own finger injury was too severe for the Seattle's star quarterback to continue against the division rival.

"It was just a little bit out of place and was able to put it back in and keep going," Stafford said. "It didn't affect me too much, to be honest with you."

Stafford seemed just fine, throwing for 365 yards and a touchdown and the Rams beat the Seahawks 26-17 on Thursday night, Oct. 7 in a game Wilson left in the second half with the finger injury on his throwing hand.

Wilson missed significant game time due to injury for the first time after injuring the middle finger on his throwing hand. Wilson was hurt by contact on a follow-through midway through the third quarter. He attempted to direct one more drive before turning the game over to backup Geno Smith.

Seattle coach Pete Carroll said it was a "badly sprained finger," and that further tests would be coming.

"He wasn't able to hold on to the football the way he needed to to throw," Carroll said.

Held to just three points in the first half for only the fifth time in the regular season under Sean McVay, the Rams (4-1) woke up in the final 30 minutes and rebounded from their first loss of the season last Sunday to Arizona.

Stafford said his finger first started bothering him in the second quarter, but was manageable. He threw

a 13-yard touchdown pass to Tyler Higbee late in the third quarter to give the Rams a 16-7 lead. Stafford hit DeSean Jackson for 68 yards earlier in the quarter on third-and-10 that led to Darrell Henderson's 5-yard run that gave Los Angeles its first lead of the game.

And after Seattle (2-3) pulled to 16-14 in the fourth quarter, Stafford was 4 of 4 for 71 yards on the ensuing drive leading to Sony Michel's 2-yard touchdown run with 6:08 remaining.

Robert Woods had 12 catches for 150 yards and the Rams won their second straight in Seattle after last January's playoff victory over the Seahawks.

"He was big when we were backed up, made some explosive plays," Stafford said about Woods. "He played great tonight."

The Rams finished with 476 yards of offense, the most they've amassed in their last 20 games since Week 3 vs Buffalo in 2020 when they had 478. It's also their third-biggest offensive game in the last two calendar years since Week 5 at Seattle in 2019 when they posted 477 yards.

Seattle pulled to 23-17 on Jason Myers' field goal from 32 yards with 2:45 left. Seattle forced a quick punt after Carlos Dunlap batting down Stafford's third-down pass.

But Smith couldn't lead a storybook final drive, with his first pass intercepted by Nick Scott as Tyler Lockett tripped making his break. Smith was 10 of 17 for 131 yards in the fourth quarter.

"I really thought we had a chance and I thought we were going to come back and get it done. Unfortunately, we didn't," Smith said.

Smith was needed because Wilson's fingers hit Aaron Donald's arm on the follow

through of a pass that nearly went for a touchdown but was slightly overthrown midway through the third quarter.

Wilson remained in for one more series and attempted one pass. He was sacked on third-and-5 by Donald, No. 88½ of his career setting a new franchise record — although the Rams records don't include Deacon Jones as sacks weren't an official stat when he played. Wilson never took another snap and finished 11 of 16 for 152 yards, one touchdown and his first interception of the season.

"It felt good and it's a blessing. It's even better when you can accomplish something like that coming off a divisional win," Donald said of the record.

Smith entered with Seattle backed up at its own 2. Since arriving in Seattle at the start of the 2019 season, Smith had thrown a total of five passes, all of them coming in a blowout win over the Jets last season.

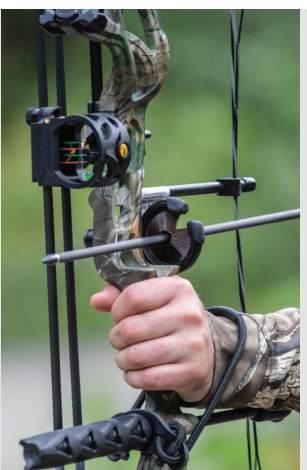
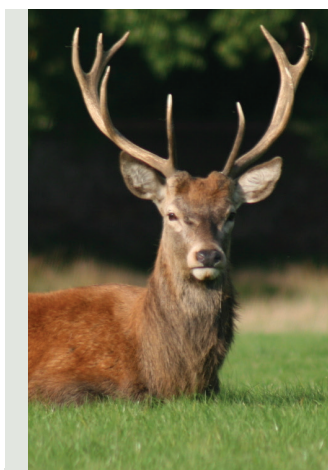
On his first drive, Smith was perfect. He was 5 of 5 for 72 yards, the last a 23-yard strike to DK Metcalf for his second touchdown of the game with 9:23 remaining to pull Seattle to 16-14.

Key penalty

Seattle appeared to take a 14-3 lead at the end of the first half but a 15-yard touchdown pass to Lockett was called back on a holding penalty against Duane Brown. Jason Myers then missed a 35-yard field goal and the Seahawks had to settle for a 7-3 halftime advantage.

Injuries

Rams CB Darious Williams suffered an ankle injury in the fourth quarter and did not return. ... Seattle played without starting RB Chris Carson due to a neck issue.



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