

BAKER VOLLEYBALL

Bulldogs edge Pirates in playoff thriller

■ Baker wins in 5 sets to advance to Class 4A quarterfinals

By COREY KIRK
ckirk@bakercityherald.com

In front of a large crowd in the Baker gym on Homecoming weekend, the Bulldogs beat Marshfield in a thrilling five-set playoff match on Saturday afternoon, Oct. 30.

The Bulldogs, who rallied from an 8-6 deficit in the decisive fifth set, which is played to 15 points rather than 25, advanced to the Class 4A quarterfinals.

And the home fans will get another chance to watch their team, as Baker (16-6) plays host to Philomath (11-9) this evening, Nov. 2, at 6 o'clock.

The winner advances to the four-team state finals Nov. 5-6 at Corvallis High School.

"It feels great, I just hope we continue to build on it," Baker junior co-captain Jozie Ramos said after the Bulldogs' exciting win over Marshfield (12-7).

After Baker lost its final regular-season match at Pendleton on Oct. 25, coach Ali Abrego focused on making sure the Bulldogs responded with a better performance in the playoffs.

"The biggest thing you can take away is either you rise to the occasion or you don't, and if you don't rise then you regret it for a long time," Abrego said.

In the first set against Marshfield, neither team had a lead of more than three

points, but Baker eventually pulled away late to win 25-22.

Abrego said it was vital for Baker to take an early lead.

"You have to set the tone, especially when they are on the west side of the state, they haven't seen us and we haven't seen them," Abrego said. "Coming out and being hot in the first set and setting the tempo of the second set is a rhythm we need to follow."

Ramos said the win in the first set gave Baker confidence, and the Bulldogs dominated the second set, winning 25-14.

"It showed," Ramos said. But the Pirates from Coos Bay, who traveled more than 450 miles for the match, didn't wilt under the pressure of a 2-0 deficit.

The Pirates handily won both the third and fourth sets, by scores of 25-15 and 25-16.

"It was just a mental thing for us, we get into a bad habit of when the score is tied we start to panic," Abrego said.

With the match going to a decisive fifth set, the Marshfield fans rose to their feet to cheer on the Pirates, and the Baker fans responded in kind.

Ramos said it was an electric environment.

"It really pumped up the energy, it brought us all invested in everyone in the gym," Ramos said.

Abrego said the fan enthusiasm is an incentive for the players.

"The fans have to be engaged, then we have to be engaged," she said. "I thought they did a good job of being able to give it all in the last set."



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald

Baker volleyball players celebrate after the final point of their five-set playoff win over Marshfield on Saturday, Oct. 30 in the Baker gym. From top left, clockwise, Jozie Ramos, Macey Moore, Taylor Dalton, Lacy Churchfield and Rylee Elms.

Baker hosts Philomath tonight

The match will start at 6 p.m. in the Baker gym. Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$5 for students; no season or student passes will be accepted.

Crane ends Badgers' season

The Powder Valley Badgers ended their volleyball season with a 24-10 record after losing in three sets at Crane on Saturday, Oct. 30. The Mustangs avenged a 2-0 loss to Powder Valley on Sept. 17.

Much like the first set, the final set was close throughout. After Marshfield took the 8-6 lead, Baker rallied to win 15-11.

Abrego said that at the start of the season, she wrote a list of goals on a white board, including winning the Baker tournament, the Greater Oregon League and making it to the Elite Eight.

The Bulldogs have accomplished all three goals.

"I really don't have a word, it was really, really fulfilling for me being a new coach to a program when you've

done a lot of things different, and they're paying off which is nice to see," Abrego said. "Seeing the girl's reaction to be able to check off that box ... 100 percent, I couldn't ask for anything better."

Baker and Philomath have one common opponent this season — Burns.

Burns beat Philomath 2-1 at the Sisters tournament on Sept. 18.

Baker played Burns twice, beating the Hilanders 3-2 on Sept. 7 in the Baker gym, and losing 3-1 in the Powder Valley tournament on Oct. 9.

Seahawks snap losing streak with 31-7 thumping of Jacksonville

By TIM BOOTH
Associated Press

SEATTLE — With the possibility of their franchise quarterback returning soon, the Seattle Seahawks rallied around the idea of winning for Geno Smith.

For the first time in years, Smith walked off the field Sunday, Oct. 31 as a victorious starting quarterback, and he played a big part in ending Seattle's three-game skid.

"It's a great day for Geno, and he just deserves it," Seattle coach Pete Carroll said. "He's been such a great Seahawk, and all of that. He played his way to (win) this game. Nobody gave him nothing. He earned this thing today."

Smith ran for one score and threw a pair of touchdown passes to DK Metcalf, and the Seahawks thumped the Jacksonville Jaguars 31-7 to help stabilize a season starting to spiral into trouble for Seattle.

In what may be his final start while Russell Wilson recovers from finger surgery, Smith was terrific picking apart the Jaguars defense for one of the best performances of his career. Smith completed his first 14 passes for the longest streak to start a game in the NFL this season. He finished 20 of 24 for 195 yards, and his 83.3% completion percentage was a career best with at least 20 pass attempts.

Smith said he knew the streak he was on before throwing a pass attempt away late in the first half. It was the first game Smith started and his team won

since 2016 in a game he suffered a knee injury and didn't finish.

The last win Smith started and finished was 2014.

"I'm out there just doing my job," Smith said.

While Tyler Lockett was Smith's favorite target, Metcalf found the end zone. Metcalf made a terrific leaping grab over former teammate Shaquill Griffin in the second quarter to give Seattle (3-5) a 14-0 lead. Metcalf added a 5-yard TD reception early in the third quarter.

Lockett finished with 12 catches for 142 yards, the fourth time in his career with at least 12 receptions.

"The more that Geno understands my game, the more that I understand his game it helps us to be able to find a middle ground and how we can make each other successful," Lockett said.

Jacksonville (1-6) avoided being shut out for only the fourth time in franchise history in the regular season on a short touchdown pass from Trevor Lawrence to Jamal Agnew with 1:49 remaining. Lawrence finished 32 of 53 for 238 yards, and his ninth interception this season came when he clearly expected Tavon Austin to run a different route.

"We played like crap today," Lawrence said. "That's gonna happen every now and then, but we can't let this happen again for sure."

It didn't help that Jacksonville played most of the final three quarters without star running back James Robinson because of a bruised heel, coach Urban Meyer said.



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