

BAKER GIRLS BASKETBALL

Bulldogs have new coach

By JAYSON JACOBY

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The Baker girls basketball team will try to defend its 2019 Class 4A state championship with a new head coach on the bench.

Mat Sand, who led the Bulldogs to their first state title and compiled a 108-29 record during his six seasons, resigned on Monday, Nov. 8 due to commitments with his business, said Buell Gonzales Jr., athletic director for the Baker School District.

Gonzales, who has more than 20 years of varsity basketball coaching experience, will take over for Sand for the 2021-22 season.

Practice starts on Monday, Nov. 15, and Baker's first game is scheduled for Dec. 2 at home against Homedale, Idaho.

"We're going to make the best out of a difficult situation," Gonzales said on Wednesday, Nov. 10. "I love to teach, and this is a really good opportunity for me to get back working with kids and start teaching."

Sand, who owns fleet repair shops in Eugene and Salem, said uncertainties related to the pandemic and the effects on his business have made it harder for him to devote the amount of time to coaching as he has done in the past.

He said he would like to return as head coach in future seasons and would likely apply for the job.

"I hope I can return to the position I have had and we can do more good things," Sand said in a phone interview on Wednesday, Nov. 10. "I love coaching. It's been a great experience."

Gonzales said the plan is to advertise the varsity head coaching job next year, after the 2021-22 season ends in March.

"It's a really sad, difficult situation that we've got to deal with," Gonzales said. "Mat's a great man and a great coach. He was a state champion here, doing it the right way."

Sand said he has talked with Gonzales and other school district officials, including his assistant coaches, Jason Ramos and Amy Younger, since early in the pandemic in the event that he would have to focus more on his business than on coaching.

Sand coached the Baker varsity girls during the abbreviated 2021 season,



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald, File
Mat Sand, center, works with players during a girls basketball practice in January 2021.

which was played in late May and June rather than during the winter as usual.

Until recently, Sand said, he intended to coach during the upcoming season, which returns to its regular winter schedule.

But ultimately he decided he could not fully commit to doing so.

Sand said he wanted to avoid unnecessary disruptions to the team.

"They've already had so many disruptions," he said.

Sand said he's grateful for the support from Gonzales, the other coaches, and the Baker School District.

"I'm just thankful that everyone is willing to step up as coaches," he said. "I think the team's in good hands and that makes me feel good."

Sand said it has been a rewarding experience to contribute to the progress of the Baker girls basketball program, culminating in the 2019 state title.

He credits the players, other coaches, district officials and community residents with their support over the years.

After going 25-1 during the championship season of 2018-19, Sand coached the Bulldogs to a 24-2 record and a berth in the 2020 state tournament at Forest Grove.

But on the day Baker was slated to play its opening tournament game, the Oregon School Activities Association canceled the tournament due to the

then-unfamiliar specter of the coronavirus.

Gonzales has extensive experience

Gonzales, who played basketball at Prairie City, where he grew up, and later at Western Oregon University, started his coaching career as a one-year graduate assistant at Western Oregon.

From there he was hired as the head boys varsity coach at St. Paul, a Class 1A school in the Willamette Valley. He later coached the boys varsity basketball team at Santiam High School, in Mill City east of Salem, for four years, then coached the girls varsity at Scappoose for two years, and the boys varsity at Brookings for seven years.

"I feel confident that I'll do a good job," Gonzales said.

Gonzales said he's grateful that Ramos and Younger both return as assistants this season.

Baker also returns multiple players with varsity experience, including junior post Jozie Ramos, who as a freshman started on the 2019-20 team that was deprived of the chance to defend its state title.



Buell Gonzales Jr.

Oregon can clinch Pac-12 North with win vs Cougars, and help

By ANNE M. PETERSON

Associated Press

Things to watch in Week 11 of the Pac-12 Conference:

Game of the week

The fifth-ranked Oregon Ducks continue a march toward the Pac-12 title game, and perhaps a playoff berth, at home against Washington State on Saturday night. Oregon (8-1, 5-1) was No. 3 in the latest College Football Playoff rankings. A win over the Cougars, combined with a Stanford victory against Oregon State, would give Oregon the Pac-12 North crown and a spot in the conference championship game. The Cougars (5-4, 4-2) are coming off a 31-24 win at Arizona State and sit in second place in the North Division. Despite the turbulence over the dismissal of coach Nick Rolovich, the Cougars are just one win from bowl eligibility.

Matchup of the week

Stanford at Oregon State. Like the Cougs, the Beavers need just one more victory to be bowl eligible, but they fell 37-34 in overtime last weekend to Colorado. Hosting the Cardinal might be the best chance Oregon State (5-4, 3-3) has to secure a postseason spot: the Beavers also play Arizona State at home before facing Oregon in Eugene to wrap up the regular season. Stanford (3-6, 2-5) has just three overall wins this season, but one of them came against the formidable Ducks. The Cardinal are coming off a discouraging 52-7 loss to Utah last weekend.

Inside the numbers

Utah (6-3, 5-1) can clinch the South Division with a win over Arizona and a Washing-

ton win over Arizona State. The Wildcats have not been able to beat the Utes since 2015 in Tucson. ... Saturday's game between California and USC has been postponed because of a coronavirus outbreak in Berkeley. The game has been rescheduled for Saturday, Dec. 4. ... Stanford has won the last 11 games against Oregon State. ... UCLA, coming off a bye, faces Colorado and looks for its first win at home since beating No. 16 LSU back in September. A victory would make the Bruins bowl eligible for the first time since 2017.

Player to watch

Travis Dye ran for a career-high 211 yards and a touchdown against Washington last week as Oregon racked up a season-high 329 yards rushing. Dye has rushed for 438 yards and eight touchdowns in four games since fellow running back CJ Verdell was ruled out for the rest of the season because of injury. Dye ranks second overall in the Pac-12 with an average of just over 91 yards rushing per game.

Upset watch

Arizona State at Washington. The Huskies (4-5, 3-3) are in disarray. Head coach Jimmy Lake has been suspended for the game. Offensive coordinator John Donovan was relieved of his duties on Sunday. So what better way to make things more confounding than a victory over the Sun Devils? Arizona State (6-3, 4-2) has won 11 of the last 13 against the Huskies, but the teams haven't met since 2018. The Dawgs have won the last two games in Seattle. The Sun Devils are 5½-point favorites.

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