

POWDER VALLEY FOOTBALL

# Powder Valley crushes St. Paul, advances to state championship

■ Badgers will play top-ranked Adrian on Saturday, Nov. 27 at Baker High School

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**

The (La Grande) Observer  
BEND — After a resounding victory, the Powder Valley Badgers are heading back to the 1A football title game for the first time since 2003.

Powder Valley took care of business in the OSAA 1A state semifinals, blowing out St. Paul 46-8 at Caldera High School on Saturday, Nov. 20, in Bend. A strong defensive showing, along with three touchdowns from quarterback Reece Dixon, tilted the game heavily in the favor of the Badgers. Powder Valley has now held its last two playoff opponents to a combined eight points.

"That was a true marvel," Powder Valley head coach

Josh Cobb said. "Our defensive preparedness was outstanding."

Powder Valley took the lead early and never looked back. This was not the case the first time these two teams played this year, when Powder Valley topped St. Paul 50-40 on Sept. 17. The Buckaroos' season ended in the semifinals at 10-2, with both losses coming at the hands of the Badgers.

"They're very good at what they do, but our boys just played more physical," Cobb said.

Dixon set the tone for Powder Valley on the team's first drive, scoring an eight-yard rushing touchdown to give the Badgers an 8-0 lead just minutes into the game.

St. Paul looked to bounce back on the ensuing drive, hauling in a huge screen pass that moved the ball down to the Powder Valley 30-yard

line. A chase-down tackle by Cole Martin saved a touchdown on what would have likely tied the game.

Just when it looked like the Buckaroos might level the score after driving to the 11-yard line, Powder Valley came away with a huge stop on the fourth down to change the possession. Points would prove to be hard to come by for St. Paul, as this drive was one of the few times the Buckaroos made it deep into Powder Valley territory.

"The defense was unreal," Cobb said. "The effort and game plan was incredible."

Still, the Buckaroos showed life on the following drive when Powder Valley fumbled at its own 25-yard line. This would prove to be Powder Valley's only drive in the game that did not end in a touchdown, besides kneeling out the final seconds off the clock at the end of the game.

Once again, the Badgers held the Buckaroos on fourth down and stopped St. Paul at the Powder Valley 15-yard line. The Badgers were able to capitalize off the possession change, scoring on the ensuing drive. On a trick play, Cole Martin threw a 39-yard touchdown to Case Olson to put the Badgers up 16-0 with 5:27 remaining in the first half.

St. Paul managed its lone score of the game with just over four minutes left in the first half, as Warren Rose hauled in a 40-yard touchdown pass. The Buckaroos cut the lead to 16-8, but the Badgers would go on to score 30 unanswered points.

After a big pass to Kaden Krieger moved the ball into St. Paul territory, Dixon finished off the drive with a 17-yard rushing touchdown with just 50 seconds left in the first half. The Badgers headed into halftime leading 24-8.

"Reece's performance was good, but he'll say it. It's all because of his front three guys," Cobb said.

In the second half, it was all Powder Valley as the Badgers secured their spot in the championship game. Cole Martin scored a nine-yard touchdown to end a methodical drive that started off the second half, pushing Powder Valley's lead to 32-8 with 5:37 remaining in the third quarter.

At this point in the game, St. Paul began to feel the urgency. The Buckaroos started taking deep shots and going for it on fourth down in order to make a comeback. However, Powder Valley stood its ground and kept St. Paul out of the end zone in the second half.

Tucker Martin scored on a one-yard rushing touchdown with two minutes left in the third quarter to extend Powder Valley's lead to 40-8. St. Paul drove toward midfield on the following drive but turned



Ryan Brennecke/The (Bend) Bulletin

Powder Valley's Kaden Krieger (No. 5) pulls in a reception over a St. Paul defender during the first quarter of the Class 1A state semifinal game at Caldera High School in Bend on Saturday, Nov. 20, 2021.

the ball over on downs again as the third quarter winded down.

One last rushing touchdown from Dixon with 10:39 remaining in the fourth quarter pushed the Badgers' lead to 46-8. The 38-point advantage led to a running clock, which allowed the Badgers to effectively close out the game.

Powder Valley held St. Paul to 217 total yards of offense and had a 10-minute advantage in time of possession. Cobb credited Olson for leading the charge on defense, as the senior tallied 10 total tackles and four pass breakups.

"Case Olson probably had the best defensive game I've

ever seen a high school kid play," the coach said.

For Powder Valley, the team is back in the 1A state championship game for the first time since 2003. The Badgers will confront Adrian, which defeated Powder Valley 38-0 on Oct. 1. Both teams have been on a collision course, ranking in the top two of the 1A state rankings for most of the season.

The Badgers and Antelopes will face off on Nov. 27 at 1 p.m. at Baker Bulldog Memorial Stadium.

"We're peaking at the right time, and hopefully we have enough to come out on top," Cobb said.



Ryan Brennecke/The (Bend) Bulletin

Powder Valley's Reece Dixon (No. 7) drops back for a pass during the second quarter of the Class 1A state semifinal game against St. Paul at Caldera High School in Bend on Saturday, Nov. 20, 2021. The Badgers are set to square off with top-ranked Adrian in the 1A state championship at Baker Bulldog Memorial Stadium on Nov. 27.



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