

BAKER GIRLS BASKETBALL

Bulldogs rout Trojans

By JAYSON JACOBY

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The Baker girls basketball team opened its season Thursday, Dec. 2 by treating the visiting Homedale Trojans like younger siblings who can't keep their older sisters from grabbing the ball whenever they want it.

The pressing early question wasn't when Homedale would score its first point.

Or even when the Trojans would take their first shot.

The intrigue was when they would advance the ball beyond halfcourt.

It took almost two minutes for Homedale to accomplish that basic feat, and by then Baker's suffocating press had yielded five steals.

This dismal start didn't doom the Trojans' chances completely, though, as the Bulldogs failed to convert most of the steals into points.

Baker led just 4-0 when Homedale's Laney Swallow scored inside for the Trojans' first basket.

Homedale even led briefly, 9-8, on Swallow's reverse layin with 1:20 left in the first quarter.

But the Bulldogs dominated the second half and went on to win 66-36 to give new coach Buell Gonzales Jr. his first win in Baker.

"I love their positive attitudes and their coachability," Gonzales, who is also the Baker School District's athletic director, said of the team he started coaching less than a month ago. Mat Sand, who led the Bulldogs to the 2019 Class 4A state title, decided his business commitments in Western Oregon wouldn't allow him to coach this season.

"This is a talented group," Gonzales said. "There were a lot of positive things tonight."



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Baker junior Jozie Ramos, in white, goes up for a shot while being fouled by Homedale's Cheyenne Kelly (No. 32) during Baker's 66-36 season-opening win over the Trojans Thursday, Dec. 2 in the Baker gym. Ramos led all scorers with 28 points.

The list included junior Jozie Ramos, who began her third year as a starter by scoring a game-high 28 points, including the Bulldogs' first six points and their last nine.

Gonzales said he was pleased with the full-court press that Baker deployed to start the game against the Trojans, who fell to 0-3 after losing last month to Idaho opponents New Plymouth (44-22) and Emmett (60-23).

He was less satisfied with the shooting struggles that prevented Baker from turning its defensive domination into a large early lead.

"We had trouble putting the ball in the basket," Gonzales said.

After junior Sydnee Pierce's steal and layin gave Baker an 8-2 lead, Homedale scored the next seven points to take its

only lead of the game.

It was a brief advantage. Pierce converted another



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Baker's Rylee Elms dribbles against the defense of Homedale's Amaia Aberasturi on Thursday, Dec. 2 in the Baker gym.

steal into an easy basket to give Baker a 10-9 lead less than 30 seconds later.

Makenzie Flanagan finished off the first quarter with a pair of free throws and a basket off an assist from fellow junior Rylee Elms to give Baker a 14-9 lead.

The Bulldogs extended their run in the second quarter, scoring 14 straight points to lead 22-9.

But Homedale outscored Baker 11-3 the rest of the quarter, and Cheyenne Kelly's layin at the halftime buzzer trimmed Baker's lead to 25-20.

The Trojans couldn't carry their momentum into the second half.

Baker scored 10 of the first 12 points, with juniors Brooklyn Jaca and Taylor Gyllenberg each scoring four points in the run.

Ramos drew her fourth foul and went to the bench with 1:23 left in the third quarter, but the Trojans didn't take advantage of her absence.

Baker senior Katie Wilde hit an 18-footer in the last minute of the third quarter to boost Baker's lead to 43-26.

The Bulldogs dominated the fourth quarter, 23-10. Six Bulldogs scored in the quarter, led by Ramos, who had 11 points and never picked up her fifth foul.

Gonzales said Baker was much more efficient in executing its half-court offense in the second half.

"They settled down and took their time," he said.

Jaca had eight points. Gyllenberg, Flanagan and Pierce had six points each, and Elms scored five points.

Baker returns to the court Tuesday, Dec. 7, traveling to Pendleton for a 6:30 p.m. tipoff against the Class 5A Buckaroos.

BAKER BOYS BASKETBALL

Baker turns back Homedale rally, 55-49

By JAYSON JACOBY

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Baker raced to an early lead then thwarted Homedale's late rally to open the boys basketball season with a 55-49 win over the Trojans at Homedale, Idaho, on Thursday, Dec. 2.

"It was a great start to the season," Baker coach Jebron Jones said.

With four freshmen joining a roster of veterans, Jones said he expected struggles in the first game.

But aside from several turnovers — which Jones attributed in part to the fast pace of play he prefers — he said the Bulldogs played well.

"We shared the ball extremely well, giving up good shots for great shots," Jones said. "Offensively I think we did a great job."

Baker took a 10-point lead in the first quarter, fueled by an aggressive defense that led to multiple turnovers and easy baskets.

"I think our pressure kind of flustered them most of the game," Jones said of the Trojans, who were also playing their first game of the season. "I think they were kind of shocked."

Baker led the entire game, but Homedale chiseled away at the lead and got within two points in the fourth quarter.

Sophomore Hudson Spike led Baker with 15 points. Freshman Isaiah Jones had 14 points, including a trio of 3-pointers, in his first varsity game, and sophomore Paul Hobson had 12 points.

Jebron Jones said he was especially impressed with his players' willingness to take offensive charges, doing so five or six times.

"That takes a real unselfish play to do that," Jones said.

He thinks that will be a key to the Bulldogs' success this year.

"The biggest thing is that they need to check their egos at the door, and to do whatever is best for the team," Jones said. "That's my biggest challenge, and I'm looking forward to it. They're all great young men, on and off the court."

Baker played Banks on Saturday morning, Dec. 4 at North Powder.

The Baker gym was being used for a wrestling tournament.

The Bulldogs travel to Fruitland, Idaho, on Tuesday, Dec. 7 for a 6 p.m. PST tipoff.

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