

BAKER GIRLS BASKETBALL

Fruitland Grizzlies hold off Baker, 41-40

■ Both of Baker's two losses this season were by a single point

By JAYSON JACOBY

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On a night when Baker's shots seemed magnetically repelled from the basket, even one that went through the hoop still fell short.

And so, ultimately, did the Bulldogs in a 41-40 loss to Fruitland in a nonleague girls game Wednesday, Dec. 15 in the Baker gym.

Rylee Elms banked in a shot with about 34 seconds left that provoked a burst of applause from the fans who had braved the snowy evening to watch the Bulldogs' last home game until after Christmas.

But one of her feet was just past the three-point line.

Elms' dramatic shot, instead of tying the score at 41, cut the Grizzlies' lead to 41-40.

Baker coach Buell Gonzales Jr. said Elms told him she thought her feet were behind that all-important stripe of paint.

The Bulldogs had no choice but to foul Fruitland to stop the clock.

Unfortunately, Baker had just three fouls in the second half, which meant the Bulldogs had to commit four fouls to force Fruitland to the free throw line and have a chance to get the ball back.

Baker tried to get a steal in the process, but while chasing Fruitland players around the court, most of seconds ticked off the clock.

There was less than eight seconds left when Fruitland's Payton Fritts went to the line for a one-and-one.

Fritts missed the first free throw.



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Baker's Zozie Ramos is swarmed by Fruitland defenders Wednesday, Dec. 15 in the Baker gym.

Baker grabbed the rebound but just 3.6 seconds were left when Gonzales called timeout.

The referees initially had Baker inbound near midcourt, which would have made it feasible to get a decent shot in such a short time.

But Fruitland coach Amber Drollinger pointed out that the timeout was called before Baker had passed the ball to midcourt.

The referees agreed, and Baker instead had to inbound the ball from the far end of the court, under the Fruitland basket.

The Bulldogs weren't able to get a shot off before the final buzzer.

Despite the disappointment of a loss, Gonzales said he thinks Baker, in many respects, played its best game of the young season.

And he's convinced that Fruitland is the best of the six teams Baker has played in amassing a 4-2 record.

"We had our opportunities, and the kids played hard," Gonzales said. "I was impressed with their effort."

He was generally pleased with how Baker executed its offense, and with the quality of the shots the Bulldogs had.

The simple fact, Gonzales said, is that most of those shots, including at least half a dozen that the Bulldogs normally make at a high percentage, didn't fall.

Baker also committed too many turnovers, he said.

"We missed a lot of layups, a lot of shots, and we had turnovers," Gonzales said. "Usually that's a recipe for a loss against a good team."

Despite its shooting struggles, Baker led most of the game.

Zozie Ramos had six of her game-high 18 points in the first quarter and Baker led 12-8.

Fruitland stayed close thanks to a pair of 3-point-



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Baker's Makenzie Flanagan drives the lane against Fruitland on Wednesday, Dec. 15 in the Baker gym.

ers, one from Fritts and one from Halle Drollinger.

Baker extended its lead to 21-15 on Ramos' basket with 1:08 left in the first half, but Fruitland scored the last five points, capped by Abbigail Roubidoux's 3-pointer at the buzzer, to cut the lead to 21-20 at halftime.

Roubidoux then scored the first basket of the second half to give the Grizzlies' their first lead, at 22-21, just 30 seconds into the second half.

Baker responded with a 7-0 run.

Ramos had four points, Makenzie Flanagan scored on a breakaway layin off a nifty pass from Taylor Gyllenberg, and Brooklyn Jaca made one of two free throws in the run.

The Bulldogs also held Fruitland scoreless for almost four minutes.

But after Baker took a 28-22 lead, the Grizzlies scored eight of the last 10 points of the quarter. Roubidoux had a steal and layin with 43 sec-

onds left in the quarter that tied the score at 30.

Roubidoux, who led Fruitland with 14 points, had the first basket of the fourth quarter to give Fruitland a 32-30 lead.

Elms, who had several key offensive rebounds and defensive plays, stole a pass and raced downcourt for a layin that tied the score at 32 with 6:32 left.

After Fritts scored inside to regain the lead for Fruitland at 34-32, Ramos scored two baskets in 27 seconds, the second on an assist from Jaca, and Baker led 36-34 with 4:28 left.

Again the Grizzlies rallied, scoring six straight points. Graycie Huff's inside basket with 2:30 left gave Fruitland its biggest lead, 40-36.

Ramos swished a 14-foot-er with 1:53 left to cut the lead to 40-38.

Fritts made one of two free throws with 1:38 on the

clock to boost the lead to 41-38.

Then, after a Baker miss, Ramos and Elms combined to block Huff's shot with 52 seconds left. On the ensuing possession Elms banked in the long two-pointer for what turned out to be the final points of the game.

Gonzales said he was pleased by Baker's resilience, especially in the fourth quarter, when the lead changed hands four times.

"They're gritty kids, and they like to play the game," he said.

Elms had 10 points for Baker. Flanagan added seven, and Macey Moore had four.

Baker won the JV game, 30-25. The JV team traveled to Prairie City on Thursday, Dec. 16 and lost 24-18 to the Prairie City varsity.

With both of Baker's losses by a single point — the Bulldogs lost 48-47 at Pendleton on Dec. 7 — Gonzales said the players are "starting to understand the value of each possession."

Baker embarked on its second long trip Friday, Dec. 17, traveling to Klamath Falls to play Mazama. The Bulldogs played Klamath Union Saturday morning.

Baker then will take an extended Christmas break, returning to the Baker gym to take on Crane Tuesday, Dec. 28 at 8 p.m. in a tournament.

Powder Valley's girls and boys teams will also play.

The Badger boys will play Mac-Hi on Monday, Dec. 27 at 2 p.m., with the Powder Valley girls playing Mac-Hi the same day at 3:30 p.m.

On Tuesday, Dec. 28, the Powder boys will play Burns at 11 a.m., followed by the Badger girls against Burns at 12:30 p.m.

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