

BAKER BOYS BASKETBALL RETURNS AFTER 15-DAY BREAK

Hobson leads Baker past Fruitland

Sophomore scores game-high 23, including two key 3-pointers late

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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On the night when his late grandfather, Darrell Hobson, was honored for being a dedicated fan, Baker sophomore Paul Hobson put on a performance that surely would have made his grandpa proud.

Paul Hobson scored a game-high 23 points, including a pair of key 3-pointers in the fourth quarter, to lead the Bulldogs to a 77-70 win over Fruitland, Idaho, on Thursday, Jan. 6, in the Baker gym.

Hobson gave the credit to his teammates for getting him the ball in good positions.

"It just felt right tonight," he said. "We played really good. It was very special. I'm so thankful."

Prior to the tipoff, Baker coach Jebron Jones read a statement thanking Darrell Hobson, who died Dec. 4, 2021, for being "our biggest fan."

For the rest of the season, Baker players will wear an emblem on their uniforms reading "TCB." That stands for "take care of business," one of Darrell Hobson's favorite sayings, Jones said.

Paul Hobson climbed the bleachers on the west side of the gym to hand his grandmother, Anita Hobson, a bouquet of flowers.

A little more than an hour later, on the court below, Paul Hobson made two vital shots to hand the Grizzlies just their second loss of the season. Fruitland fell to 7-2.

Baker improved to 7-3, and jumped from ninth to seventh in the Oregon Class 4A rankings.

Fruitland took its final lead at 66-63 on Nolan Bower's free throw with 3:56 left.

On the ensuing possession, Hobson swished a deep 3-pointer from the top of the key on a pass from Isaiah Jones.

Neither team scored over the next minute plus, and Jebron Jones called timeout with 2:05 left and the score still tied at 66.

Hobson then made another three-pointer, from the right wing with 1:36 left, to give Baker a 69-66 lead.

Fruitland's Jacob Hamann barely missed a 3-pointer, and Isaiah Jones grabbed the rebound with 1:19 left.

He made one of two free throws to give Baker a 70-66 lead, and Hobson rebounded the miss and made two free throws with 1:18 left to boost the Bulldogs' lead to 72-66.

Hobson scored eight of Baker's nine points during the 9-0 run that turned the game around.

Fruitland's Zane Bidwell



Baker's Paul Hobson takes a shot while defended by Fruitland's Nathan Harris on Thursday, Jan. 6, 2022, in the Baker gym.

"It just felt right tonight. We played really good. It was very special. I'm so thankful."

— Baker sophomore Paul Hobson, whose late grandfather, Darrell Hobson, was honored as the team's "biggest fan" prior to tipoff Thursday, Jan. 6

made one of two free throws with 38 seconds left to get the Grizzlies within four, at 72-68. But Fruitland was forced to foul to stop the clock, and Jaxon Logsdon made two free throws with 30.9 seconds left, then hit Jones with a long outlet pass that led to a layin and a 76-68 Baker lead with just 16.1 seconds left.

Although Baker was playing its first game in 15 days and might have been expected to be a bit sluggish, Jebron Jones said he wasn't surprised that the Bulldogs played one of their best games of the season.

"The kids had a great couple weeks of practice," he said.

The game was competitive and fast-paced from the opening minute, with multiple lead changes and an atmosphere reminiscent of a playoff or state tournament contest.

"Both teams played hard," Jones said. "Every possession mattered, and that's the kind of

game we want to be involved in."

Jaron Long scored seven of Baker's first 11 points as the Bulldogs led 11-4 early.

Hobson's first 3-pointer gave Baker a 14-8 lead. It was the first of five straight 3-pointers, three by Fruitland. The last of the run of long balls, from Fruitland's Eddie Rodriguez, tied the score at 17.

Luke Barinaga's 3-pointer gave the Grizzlies a 22-19 lead, but Baker then went on a 13-2 run that continued into the second quarter.

Isaiah Jones had five points during the run, and Diego Quintela's layin with 5:39 left in the first half gave Baker its biggest lead at 32-24.

But Rodriguez swished a 3-pointer just 17 seconds later, kicking off an 8-0 run over less than a minute. Tyler Capps' 3-pointer tied the score at 32 with 4:28 left in the half.

Baker briefly regained the



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Baker's Hayden Younger goes high against Fruitland on Thursday, Jan. 6, 2022, in the Baker gym.

lead on Hayden Younger's driving layin, but the Grizzlies scored five straight, including another 3-pointer by Rodriguez, to lead 37-34.

Baker responded with a quick 6-0 run, including consecutive steals and layins by Hobson and Hudson Spike, but Fruitland then scored the final five points of the half, in 48 seconds, to lead 42-40 at the break.

Fruitland had seven 3-pointers in the first half, Baker just two.

Jebron Jones said the Grizzlies took advantage of Baker's zone defense.

"They attacked the zone the way they should, penetrating the key and then kicking out to shooters," he said.

Jones switched to more man-to-man defense in the second half, and added a mid-court trap that forced a few Fruitland turnovers and, perhaps equally important, interrupted the smooth offensive flow the Grizzlies had for much of the first half.

Fruitland made just two 3-pointers in the second half, and scored 28 points, 14 fewer than in the first half.

"As a coach I have to mix things up," Jones said. "You can't let a team get comfortable."

Just as he did in the first half, Long was the spark for Baker's offense at the start of the second half, scoring six of Baker's first eight points as the Bulldogs quickly turned the two-point halftime deficit into a 48-44 lead that prompted a Fruitland timeout with 5:34 left in the third quarter.

Isaiah Jones scored on two straight twisting drives, and Logsdon scored inside to give Baker a 54-48 lead.

Fruitland didn't fold.

The Grizzlies ended the third quarter with a 10-3 run. Bidwell's layin with 30 seconds left gave Fruitland a 58-57 lead at the end of the quarter.

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FRUITLAND (70)

Rodriguez 6 0-0 17, Jackson 0 0-0 0, Barinaga 5 0-0 3, Davis 1 0-0 2, Harris 0 0-0 0, Rico 0 0-0 0, Hamann 2 0-0 4, Capps 2 1-2 6, Jones 0 0-0 0, Bower 5 1-3 12, Tucker 4 2-3 10, Bidwell 2 2-6 6. Totals 27 6-14 70.

BAKER (77)

Logsdon 3 2-2 8, Gambleton 1 0-0 3, Quintela 2 0-0 5, Younger 1 0-0 2, Spike 4 0-2 8, Molina 0 0-0 0, Jones 6 2-5 14, Long 5 4-5 14, Hobson 8 2-2 23. Totals 30 10-16 77.

Fruitland 22 20 16 12 — 70
Baker 23 17 17 20 — 77

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