BAKER GIRLS BASKETBALL

Defense keys Baker's rout over Vale

Bulldogs hold Vikings scoreless in third quarter

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Vale scored nine points in the first eight minutes of their girls basketball game at Baker on Tuesday evening, Jan. 18.

But it took the Vikings almost the whole rest of the game to double their point total to 18.

Baker, meanwhile, passed that threshold less than halfway through the second quarter.

That simple equation yielded a blowout, as the Bulldogs dominated the latter three quarters en route to a 57-21 romp over the Class 3A Vikings.

Baker, ranked fifth in the state in the Class 4A division, improved to 11-4 with its fifth win in the past six games.

Vale scored the first four points of the game.

And after Baker scored 10 straight, the Vikings rallied to forge a 12-12 tie on Kailey McGourty's 15-foot jumper just 42 seconds into the second quarter.

To that point the game had been the competitive challenge that Baker coach Jason Ramos expected.

"We knew it was going to be a battle because they're a scrappy team," Ramos said. "And in the first quarter it was a battle."

Although Vale entered the game with a 5-7 record, five of those losses were to strong Idaho teams, Weiser, Fruitland and Homedale.

The Vikings also lost just 36-31 to La Grande, Baker's top rival for the Greater Oregon League championship, and has wins over both Ontario (37-22), also from the GOL, and Burns (38-33), a top Class 3A team that Baker beat 43-31 on Dec. 29.

But after McGourty's shot tied the score, the contest in the Baker gym was anything but competitive.

The Bulldogs scored 39 of the next 42 points, a stretch that extended well into the fourth quarter.

This period of dominance was distinguished by a few notable statistics.

Baker outscored Vale 20-3 over the final seven minutes of the second quarter to lead 32-15 at halftime.

The Bulldogs followed that with the rare feat of holding the Vikings scoreless in the third quarter, while scoring 15 points themselves to extend the lead to 47-15 entering the fourth quarter.

Vale's scoreless stretch, which started late in the second quarter, ultimately spanned almost 14 minutes of game time — nearly half of the 32-minute contest.

The Vikings didn't reach double figures in any quarter.

When Halle Peterson ended the scoring drought with a bank shot from the key with 4:16 left in the game, Baker was still ahead 51-17.

Fittingly, Sydnee Pierce swished a 15-footer from the baseline at the buzzer for Baker's final two points.

But it was defense, not shooting, that keyed the Bulldogs' rout, Ramos said.

"When you put pressure on the other team's guards, they're going to have trouble getting into their offense," he said. "Offense comes from the defense — the energy that comes from playing really good defense. And that's how we want to play."

Ramos, formerly the assistant coach who took over as head coach from Buell Gonzales Jr. in mid December, said that over the past month, as he's become more familiar with his team's strengths, he's realized that the Bulldogs excel at playing pressure defense in the half court.

Baker didn't use its full court press much against Vale.

The Bulldogs didn't need to.

"We know what Baker basketball needs to be about, and we're now getting to that point," Ramos said. "We're on a great path."

With Taylor Gyllenberg, Sydnee Pierce, Macey Moore, Brooklyn Jaca, Skylar Roy, Katie Wilde and Makenzie Flanagan smothering the Vale guards, the Vikings struggled to find open shots outside.

The pressure defense yielded more than a dozen steals, several of which led to easy breakaway layins.

And in the key, Jozie Ramos and Rylee Elms made sure the Vikings had few second chances from offensive rebounds.

Baker had one of its most balanced offensive games, with eight players scoring. Moore led the way with 15 points. Jozie Ramos added 12, and Elms and Flanagan eight each.

Baker also had one of its best games of the season at the free throw line, making 10 of 14 shots. Jozie Ramos made all four of her tries, and Moore both of her shots.

The defensive dominance, though, was not only the defining characteristic of the game, Jason Ramos said, but also something that could serve the Bulldogs well in coming games, some of which will almost certainly be much closer.

Teams can rely on defense to keep them in a game even on nights — and every team has them — when shots simply won't fall, Ramos said.

"If you're having an off night, that's when you have to focus your energy on defense," he said. "That's something we'll lean on."

In the JV game against Vale, Baker won 46-23.

Baker, 1-0 in the GOL after beating Mac-Hi 66-10 on Jan. 14, is scheduled to resume its league schedule by playing host to Ontario Friday, Jan. 21 at 6 p.m.

Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Macey Moore goes to the basket against Vale on Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022, in the Baker gym. Moore led Baker with 15 points in a 57-21 win.

"Offense comes from the defense — the energy that comes from playing really good defense. And that's how we want to play."

— Baker coach Jason Ramos

VALE (21)
Meisinger 0 0-0 0, B. Johnson 2 0-0 4, Cleaver 0 0-2 0, Peterson 3 1-3 7, Banena 0 0-0 0, Giacomo 0 0-0 0, R. Johnson 0 0-0 0, Sears 0 0-0 0, McGourty 3 3-4 10, Jacobs 0 0-2 0, Ross 0 0-0 0. Totals 8 4-9 21.

BAKER (57)
Elms 3 2-4 8, Flanagan 4 0-0 8, Wilde 0 0-0 0, Gyllenberg 2 0-0 4, Pierce 2 1-2 5, Ramos 4 4-4 12, Roy 1 1-2 3, Jaca 1 0-0 2, Robb 0 0-0 0, Moore 6 2-2 15. Totals 23 10-14 57.

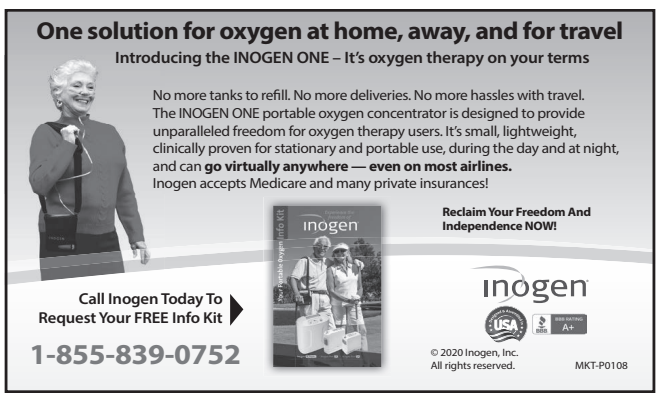
Vale	9	6	0	6	— 21
Baker	12	20	15	10	— 57

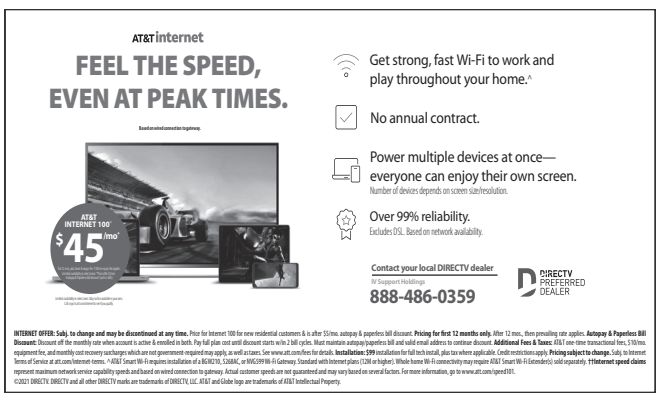
Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Makenzie Flanagan goes to the hoop for one of her four baskets during Baker's 57-21 win over Vale on Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022, in the Baker gym.

Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Sydnee Pierce dribbles during Baker's 57-21 win over Vale on Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022, in the Baker gym.





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