

POWDER VALLEY BASKETBALL

Badger boys, girls beat Griswold

BY DAVIS CARBAUGH
The (La Grande) Observer

HELIX — The Powder Valley girls and boys basketball teams returned to the court on Thursday, Jan. 27, after a two-week break, and both teams had easy wins over Old Oregon League rival Griswold.

The Badger boys last played Jan. 13, and the girls' most recent game was on Jan. 14.

The teams had to cancel or postpone some games due in part to COVID-19 issues in the district.

Girls

The Badgers topped Griswold 40-22 after building a solid early lead. Powder Valley's Dallee Jo Bing-

ham had a team-high 10 points as the Badgers, who have won three straight, improved to 4-1 in league play and 7-8 overall. Griswold fell to 1-3 in league and 5-9 overall. Griswold's Ellery Flerchinger led all scorers with 12 points.

The Badgers played stout defense early on, building a 12-4 lead after the first quarter. Four points from Jaycee Gray in the second quarter helped Powder Valley extend a 22-11 lead heading into halftime.

In the second half it was more of the same, as a strong defensive showing by Powder Valley kept the lead in double digits. The Badgers held the Grizzlies to just two points in the third quarter and walked off

with the 18-point victory.

Powder Valley played host to Pine Eagle on Friday, Jan. 28.

Boys

The second-ranked Badgers showed no effects from the long gap between games, overwhelming Griswold 68-3 and stretching their winning streak to six games.

Powder Valley took a massive scoring margin early on and never looked back, building a 29-1 lead by the end of the first quarter. Senior forward Kaden Krieger scored 11 of his game-high 18 points in the first quarter as the Badgers dominated early on. Senior forward Kaiden Dalke hit two

three-pointers in the first quarter to help Powder Valley's offense find its rhythm after two weeks off.

Powder's senior point guard, Reece Dixon, controlled the tempo early, scoring nine of his 11 points in the first half. Senior guard Clay Martin scored 11 points and Dalke finished with 10. Powder Valley led 43-1 by halftime and never looked back in the second half.

The Badgers improved to 14-1 on the year and 4-0 in Old Oregon League competition. Powder Valley will have a busy upcoming schedule, playing host to Pine Eagle on Friday, Jan. 28, and to Nixyaawii on Saturday, Jan. 29, and then traveling to Wallowa on Tuesday, Feb. 1.



Alex Wittwer/The (La Grande) Observer, File

Powder Valley senior Kaden Krieger dunks during the Badgers' 56-35 win over Jordan Valley on Dec. 3, 2021, in the Powder Valley gym. Krieger scored a game-high 18 points in the Badgers' 68-3 win over Griswold on Thursday, Jan. 27, at Helix.

MEN'S TENNIS

Nadal, Medvedev to meet in history-making Australian final

BY JOHN PYE
Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Rafael Nadal is within one victory of a men's record 21st Grand Slam singles title.

He'll have to beat second-seeded Daniil Medvedev in the Australian Open final on Sunday, Jan. 30, to make history. And Medvedev is chasing a piece of history of his own after beating Stefanos Tsitsipas 7-6 (5), 4-6, 6-4, 6-1 in a heated semifinal on Friday, Jan. 28. The U.S. Open champion is aiming to be the first man in the Open era to win his second Grand Slam title at the next major tournament.

Nadal advanced to the final in Australia for the sixth time with a 6-3, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 win in a mostly lopsided contest against seventh-seeded Matteo Berrettini in the first of the men's semifinals.

Medvedev had a more tempestuous and challenging run to back-to-back Australian Open finals. He had to deal with a hostile crowd in his second-round win over Nick Kyrgios, had to save a match point and rally from two sets down to beat Felix Auger-Aliassime in a nearly five-hour quarterfinal win. Then he had to regain his composure af-

ter an angry outburst in the second set of the semifinals.

The Russian yelled at chair umpire Jaume Campistol in the changeover after serving a double-fault to concede a late break, getting a code violation for a visible obscenity when he made a gesture with his arm to the pro-Tsitsipas crowd, and then demanded that his opponent be cautioned for receiving coaching from his father — in Greek — from the stands.

Medvedev returned after Tsitsipas converted his third set point to level the match and he again urged the umpire to give the French Open runner-up a code violation.

He then took a five-minute break, took control late in the third set and then reeled off the last five games after Tsitsipas was eventually cautioned for coaching.

Nadal's run to a 29th Grand Slam final has been comparatively serene.

After the last point, he stopped, beamed a wide grin and then punched the air three times.

Nadal arrived in Australia not knowing how long he would last after months off the tour dealing with a serious foot injury and then a bout of COVID-19. He



Mark Metcalfe/Getty Images-TNS

Rafael Nadal (left) of Spain and Denis Shapovalov of Canada exchange words in their Men's Singles Quarterfinals match during day nine of the 2022 Australian Open at Melbourne Park on Jan. 25, 2022, in Melbourne, Australia.

skipped Wimbledon after losing in the French Open semifinals to Novak Djokovic, and didn't play at all after August.

"Every day has been an issue in terms of problems on the foot. Doubts still here ... probably for the rest of my career," Nadal said. "But for me it's amazing ... (to) just compete and play tennis at the high level again, facing the most important players of the world."

Last month, he wasn't even sure he'd be able to return to the tour. But he won a tune-up tournament in Melbourne and has taken six straight matches at the first Grand Slam event of the year.

One more and he'll break the record of 20 major championships he shares with Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic. Nadal would also become just the fourth man to win all four Grand Slam titles at least twice.

Nadal's win over Wimbledon runner-up Berrettini, under a closed roof at Rod Laver Arena, because of heavy rain, was his 500th on hard courts at tour level.

But he's only won the Australian Open once, in 2009, and adding a second was his primary focus.

"For me, it's all about the Australian Open more than anything else," Nadal said in

his on-court interview. "I have been a little unlucky (here) in my career with some injuries. I played some amazing finals with good chances."

He lost classic five-set finals at Melbourne Park to Djokovic in 2012 and Federer in '17. Nadal lost to Stan Wawrinka in 2014 and against Djokovic three years ago.

"I feel very lucky that I won once," he said. "I never thought about another chance in 2022."

Nadal broke Berrettini's opening service games in the first two sets and, after dropping the third set on a rare service lapse, he rallied to finish off the match in just under three hours. That in itself was a relief after his long quarterfinal win over Denis Shapovalov.

Nadal was the only member of the so-called Big Three who had a chance to break the deadlock in Australia this time.

Federer is out while recovering from knee surgery. Djokovic, who has won nine of his Grand Slam titles at Melbourne Park, was deported after an 11-day visa saga on the eve of the tournament because he failed to meet Australia's strict COVID-19 vaccination requirements.

"To be able to be where I am today, I really can't explain in words how important is for me in terms of energy, in terms of personal satisfaction, in terms of being very thankful," Nadal said. "For me it's something completely unexpected."

He said he was taking a different approach to life now, but not at game time.

"Of course always with competitive spirit that I have, because I can't go against that. It's my personal DNA," he said. "But in some way, I don't know, just be what I am and be able to have the chance to compete at this level, it's a positive energy for me to keep going."

Medvedev will need to take a calmer approach after beating Tsitsipas in the semifinals for the second year in a row at Melbourne Park. He lost to Djokovic in last year's final, but then beat the No. 1-ranked player for the U.S. Open title.

He said he regretted his outbursts at the umpire, explaining it was in the heat of the moment in a very emotional tournament.

"I'm going to play again against one of the greatest," Medvedev said of Sunday's final. "Again, I'm going to play somebody going for the 21st Slam. I'm ready."

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