

## BAKER, POWDER VALLEY BOYS BASKETBALL

## Badgers stun Baker on Dixon's 3-pointer

Senior point guard swishes shot with about 4 seconds left to give Badgers 69-68 win

BY JAYSON JACOBY

jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

The ball left Reece Dixon's right hand, and when it swished through the net a couple seconds later the Powder Valley Badgers went from the agony of a bitter loss to the ecstasy of a landmark win.

The senior point guard's 3-pointer from the right wing with about 4 seconds left in the game elevated the Badgers to a 69-68 victory over Baker in a thrilling boys basketball game Saturday night, Feb. 5, in the Baker gym.

Baker, which had taken a 68-66 lead on a similarly dramatic basket and free throw by Paul Hobson with 12.7 seconds left, didn't have time to get off a desperation shot.

Dixon and the Badgers gathered in the southeast corner of the gym for a raucous celebration with dozens of Powder Valley fans.

As Dixon shook hands and had his sweat-soaked back clapped by ecstatic Badger fans, he pondered the question of whether he had ever made a bigger shot.

"Not that I can think of," he said with a grin.

Dixon said he didn't expect to even try for a potential game winner in the final seconds.

After Hobson's three-point play gave Baker the lead, Powder Valley coach Kyle Dixon called timeout with 8.7 seconds left.

Reece Dixon said the plan was to try to get the ball to senior post Kaden Krieger — a reasonable idea given that Krieger led all scorers with 30 points and dominated in the key for much of the game.

But once he got the ball on a pass, Dixon said he saw that he had enough space to get off a 3-pointer.

He dribbled to his right, leaped and let go.

He said the shot felt good when it left his hands.

But he wasn't sure, as he watched the ball drop toward the hoop, that it was going in.

"I was just hoping that it wouldn't be that one inch short and bounce back to me," Dixon said.

Krieger, though, never doubted his teammate's aim.

"I saw the ball," he said with a wide smile. "I was like, 'that's going in.' I have a lot of confidence in Reece."

Baker coach Jebron Jones said a miscommunication on defense allowed Dixon a much more open look than Jones wanted.

"You never leave the (player with the) basketball," Jones said. "He was left wide open and he nailed the shot. Hats off to North Powder. They out-worked us."

Reece Dixon, who finished with 9 points, said the win for the Class 1A Badgers was especially satisfying coming against Baker, a Class 4A school that has won all the recent meetings between the two schools that are just 20 miles apart.

"It means a lot," Dixon said. "We're trying to prepare ourselves for the state playoffs and it's big to play a great team like Baker. It's the first time we've beaten them."

Krieger, in the afterglow of the win, said it "kind of felt like winning a state title."

But he quickly turned serious. "We're not done yet," he said. "We have a lot of work to do."

Dixon's clutch shot — the sort of shot kids dream about making while shooting baskets alone in a driveway on chilly nights — culminated a tense and close game that had the atmosphere of a state tournament contest despite pitting two teams that won't ever compete against each other at that level.

The lead changed hands three times in the final 34.3 seconds.

With Baker leading 65-63, Powder's Cole Martin banked in a shot from the lane and was fouled with 34.3 seconds left. Martin made the free throw to give the Badgers a 66-65 lead.

On Baker's ensuing possession, Isaiah Jones, who led the Bulldogs with 27 points, drove the lane and had the ball tipped out of bounds from behind.



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Baker's Isaiah Jones led the Bulldogs with 27 points in a 69-68 loss to Powder Valley on Saturday, Feb. 5, 2022, in the Baker gym.

Baker retained possession with 14.1 seconds left.

On the inbounds play, Hobson broke free in the lane and Spike made a perfect inbounds pass. Hobson converted the layin and was fouled. He swished the free throw to give Baker its last lead at 68-66 and set up Dixon's heroics.

The win was the ninth in a row for the Badgers, who are ranked second in Class 1A and improved to 18-1. Their lone loss was 80-75 to Adrian on Dec. 27 in a holiday tournament in the Baker gym.

Kyle Dixon said he was confident that Reece Dixon would make a play if Baker foiled the initial plan to get the ball to Krieger inside.

"Reece is really good at creating things," Kyle Dixon said. "He had been struggling a little bit from outside, and he deserved that 3-pointer. That was a big one for him."

Kyle Dixon said it was gratifying to get a win against Baker on its home floor.

"Baker is a great team and it's always fun to get a chance to play them," he said. "Both teams played hard. It was an exciting game. It's a good little rivalry we've got going. The kids all know each other, play in the summer."

Reece Dixon's game-winner was just the last in a series of key plays and momentum swings in one of the more exciting fourth quarters played in the Baker gym in years.

Powder Valley led 53-52 starting the quarter and extended its lead to 57-53 on what turned out to be Krieger's final basket with a little more than 6 minutes left.

But Baker, which had its own eight-game winning streak on the line, rallied like a team that also has playoff aspirations.

Grant Gambleton banked in a tough shot to cut the lead to 57-55 with just under 6 minutes left.

Then Isaiah Jones took over. He made a twisting layin to tie the score at 57.

Spike made a three-pointer from the corner with 4:59 left, and the Baker fans roared as the Bulldogs led 60-57. It was Baker's first lead since the opening minute of the second half.

Jones then made an acrobatic, one-hand layin with his left hand, was fouled and converted the free throw to boost Baker's lead to 63-57 with 4:21 left.

But the Badgers, who have five senior starters, didn't win.



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Baker's Hudson Spike drives against Powder Valley's Kaiden Dalke during the Badgers' 69-68 win on Saturday, Feb. 5, 2022, in the Baker gym.

Cole Martin banked in a shot from near the free throw line to cut the lead to 63-59.

Then Dixon also went off the glass, from the left side of the key from about 10 feet, to cut the lead to 63-61 with 3:30 left.

Spike spun in a difficult reverse layin to boost Baker's lead back to 65-61 with 3:05 left, but Cole Martin, who had all seven of his points in the fourth quarter, scored inside to cut the lead to 65-63 with 2:46 left.

The game started fast and didn't have many lulls throughout.

Baker had five 3-pointers in the first 4½ minutes — two by Hobson, one each by Jaxon Logsdon, Spike and Jones — to lead 21-12.

But Krieger, who scored 15 of Powder Valley's 20 points in the first quarter, had a conventional 3-point play and another basket, and Kaiden Dalke hit a 3-pointer to cut Baker's lead to 23-20 after one quarter.

The Bulldogs extended the lead to 29-22 on Jones' driving layin early in the second quarter, and Kyle Dixon called timeout.

After the break, Dalke converted an alley oop, Clay Martin had a layin and Reece Dixon hit a jumper as the Bad-

gers scored six straight and cut the lead to 29-28.

Baker responded with a 5-point run to go up 36-30 with 2:05 left in the half, but Reece Dixon and Dalke each scored late to cut Baker's lead to 38-36 at the break.

The Badgers then scored the first 9 points of the second half — 5 by Krieger — to take a 45-38 lead. Powder Valley took its largest lead, 51-43, on Krieger's basket with about 4 minutes left in the third quarter.

Baker ended the quarter on a 9-2 run, capped by Hobson's jumper after a turnover, to cut the Badgers' lead to 53-52 entering the final quarter.

Baker's fullcourt press and halfcourt trap weren't nearly as effective at forcing turnovers against Powder Valley as they were against recent opponents, including Mac-Hi the previous night.

Reece Dixon shouldered the bulk of the ball-handling duties and was able to dissect the Baker defense on most possessions.

Baker was without starting guard Jaron Long, who plays a key role on defense, for the third straight game with a knee injury.

Long could return this week.



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Powder Valley senior Kaden Krieger led all scorers with 30 points in the Badgers' 69-68 win over Baker on Saturday, Feb. 5, 2022, in the Baker gym.



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Powder Valley senior Reece Dixon had the game-winning 3-pointer with about 4 seconds left in the Badgers' 69-68 win over Baker on Saturday, Feb. 5, 2022, in the Baker gym.

Jebron Jones said he was pleased with Baker's ability to rally from the 8-point deficit in the third quarter — a position Baker hasn't been in since the loss to Pendleton six weeks ago.

"The kids battled back, and offensively we did a great job," Jones said.

The problem, he said, was on the other end of the court. Powder Valley had 32 field goals — 14 by Krieger.

"You can't beat good teams playing bad defense," Jones said. "North Powder out-thusted us, beat us to loose balls.

It's good for us to know that we can't compete against good teams playing that way."

Jones said he told his players in the locker room after the game to remember how they felt in those moments.

"I told them, the way you feel right now, bring that anger and frustration to practice Monday and to the game on Tuesday," he said.

Baker, which leads the Greater Oregon League with

#### POWDER VALLEY (69)

Clay Martin 3 0-0 6, Dixon 4 0-2 9, Krieger 14 2-6 30, Olson 2 0-0 4, Dalke 6 0-0 13, Cole Martin 3 1-1 7. Totals 32 3-9 69.

#### BAKER (68)

Logsdon 2 0-1 5, Gambleton 2 0-3 4, Quintela 0 0-0 0, Younger 1 2-4 4, Molina 0 0-0 0, Spike 5 0-0 10, Jones 10 3-3 27, Hobson 7 2-3 18, Mitchell 0 0-0 0. Totals 27 7-14 68.

Powder 20 16 17 16 — 69  
Baker 23 15 14 16 — 68

a 4-0 record, returns to its league schedule on Tuesday, Feb. 8, playing host to La Grande at 7:30 p.m. Baker routed the Tigers 67-41 on Jan. 28 at La Grande.

Powder will finish its Old Oregon League schedule with three games in three days — Thursday, Feb. 10, at home against Joseph at 8 p.m., Friday, Feb. 11, at home against Cove at 7:30 p.m., and Saturday, Feb. 12, at Elgin at 5:30 p.m.

## CASHWAY

Lumber Co.

- Lumber
- Plywood
- Building Materials
- Hardware
- Paint
- Plumbing
- Electrical

**And much more!**

**3205 10th Street**  
**Baker City**  
541-523-4422

Mon-Fri 7:30 am - 5:30 pm  
Saturday 8 am - 5 pm  
Closed Sun

**Winter is here!**  
**Cold weather can mean icy spots in shaded areas!**

**Joe Scott's**  
**Premier**  
**Auto Body, Inc.**  
2390 Broadway, Baker City  
541-523-5223