

BAKER BOYS BASKETBALL

Bulldogs hold off Vale's late rally

Vikings score final 15 points in Baker High's 68-65 win

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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As Baker neared the end of what had been a dominating performance against Vale, the only element of suspense was whether the Bulldogs would score at least 80 points for the fifth time this season.

The Vikings, however, made the final stanza quite a lot more dramatic.

Vale scored the final 15 points of the nonleague boys basketball game on Wednesday, Feb. 9, in the Baker gym.

But even that prodigious rally couldn't quite pierce the cushion that Baker had built during what had been one of its best games.

The Bulldogs held on for a 68-65 win that stopped their losing streak at two games.

"We played a great three and a half quarters of basketball," Baker coach Jebron Jones said with a rueful smile.

The last part wasn't the sort of stretch to prompt any sort of smile.

"It was tough to watch," Jones said.

But the win counts the same, of course, regardless of the final score.

And after the consecutive losses to Powder Valley on Feb. 5 and to La Grande just one night before the Vale game, Jones said a victory more than offset the tense finish against the Vikings.

"I was proud of the kids, the way they responded after the last two games," he said. "They came out with energy."

That energy propelled Baker to a 17-0 run that extended from the first quarter into the second and gave Baker a 23-9 lead when Isaiah Jones made the second of his four 3-pointers.

After Vale's Kade Kurata ended the run with a 3-pointer of his own, Jones responded with another long ball to give Baker a 26-12 lead with 7:03 left in the second quarter.

Baker's lead mostly stayed in double digits thereafter until the final minutes, swelling to as much as 22 points, at 58-36, on Hudson Spike's basket off an assist from Jaxon Logsdon with 1:36 left in the third quarter.

Jaron Long, who returned to the starting lineup after missing three games with a knee injury, and coming off the bench against La Grande, made a floater from the key to boost Baker's lead to 68-50 with 4:41 left in the game.

Long's shot prompted Vale coach Colby Shira to call a timeout.

It was a good one.

Baker didn't score again.

Vale had no such problem.

After the timeout, Diesel Johnson hit a 15-foot jumper to cut the lead to 68-52.

That was still the score with just 3:17 left when Colten Stepleton made a 3-pointer to get the Vikings to within 68-55.

It sparked a 7-point flurry in just 28 seconds.

Vale's fullcourt press ignited the rally, forcing consecutive turnovers that led to a layin by Tanner Steele and a rebound basket by Johnson with 2:49 left.



Baker's Hayden Younger goes to the basket against Vale on Wednesday, Feb. 9, 2022, in the Baker gym.



Baker's Isaiah Jones looks for room against the defense of Vale's Diesel Johnson, left, and Colten Stepleton on Wednesday, Feb. 9, 2022, in the Baker gym.

That trimmed Baker's lead to 68-59 and prompted Jebron Jones to call timeout.

But the break didn't dissolve Vale's momentum.

Johnson scored again in the lane to cut Baker's lead to 68-61 with 2:21 left, and after another steal he made two free throws, with 2:08 left, that got Vale to within 68-63.

In the span of a few minutes, what seemed destined to be an easy Baker win started to resemble the teams' Jan. 18 game at Vale, which went to three overtimes before Baker won 88-87.

But after Johnson's free throws, neither team scored for more than a minute and a half of game time.

Baker managed to break the Vikings' press and to drain more than a minute off the clock by passing the ball around the perimeter.

But Vale got another steal with 47.7 seconds left, and John Wolfe made a jumper from near the free throw line with 36 seconds left to make it a one-possession game at 68-65.

That turned out to be the final score.

But it was hardly the end of the drama.

After another Baker turnover, Shira called timeout with 21.6 seconds left.

Then Vale's Adam Ramirez, who didn't score, launched a 3-pointer from the right wing with 14 seconds left. It was very close to the spot where Powder Valley's Reece Dixon made a 3-pointer with 4 seconds left to give the Badgers a 69-68 win over Baker on Feb. 5.

Ramirez's shot clanged off the rim.

Isaiah Jones grabbed the rebound and was fouled with 8.8 seconds left.

Jones missed the front end of a one-and-one, and Baker fouled Steele, who got the rebound, with 7 seconds left.

He also missed the front end of a one-and-one, and this time Spike snared the rebound. Vale tipped the ball out of bounds but Baker retained possession.

On the inbounds play, Long heaved a pass to a leaping Jones near midcourt, who caught the ball and passed to Logsdon, who immediately tossed the ball crosscourt to Spike as time expired.

Jebron Jones said Baker didn't handle Vale's frenetic fullcourt press well in those final 4 minutes.

He said it was one of the few times this season that any opponent has pressed Baker, and in previous cases the Bulldogs had little trouble breaking the press.

VALE (65)

Ramirez 0 0-0 0, Stepleton 4 2-2 12, Wolfe 8 2-3 19, Steele 5 1-3 11, McGourty 1 0-0 3, Johnson 7 3-3 17, Haueter 0 0-0 0, Kurata 1 0-0 3. Totals 26 8-11 65.

BAKER (68)

Logsdon 3 0-0 6, Gambleton 0 0-0 0, Quintela 0 0-0 0, Younger 3 0-0 6, Molina 3 0-0 6, Spike 4 1-2 9, Jones 6 2-3 18, Long 6 2-2 16, Hobson 2 0-0 5, Mitchell 1 0-0 2. Totals 28 5-7 67.

Vale 9 19 14 23 — 65
Baker 20 23 17 8 — 68

He acknowledged, though, that Vale had an advantage that enabled the Vikings to defend even more aggressively.

Vale had just two team fouls when the rally started.

That meant the Vikings could take chances when going for steals without worrying that if they fouled, Baker would shoot free throws.

"They were playing with no inhibitions," Jones said.

He said the Vikings, regardless of the foul situation, have several athletic players with quick hands and long arms, a formidable combination for a team employing a fullcourt press.

But Jones said the Bulldogs also contributed much to Vale's rally by throwing "long, loopy passes" that were easier to intercept, and by failing to move toward the ball on passes.

Long, who scored 16 points in his second game back from the knee injury, said facing Vale's press was similar to what the Bulldogs' opponents deal with when Baker deploys its press and halfcourt trap, both of which have been keys in several of the team's wins.

Long, a freshman, said he was happy to return to the starting lineup.

"It was hard to sit back and watch," he said. "After two losses it was frustrating. I felt like we came out with a vengeance."

Vale led 9-6 early, but Baker scored the last 14 points of the first quarter.

Five Bulldogs scored in the quarter, led by Isaiah Jones with seven and Lane Molina with four.

Most of Baker's nine field goals in the quarter were on assists, a trend that always bodes well for Baker, Jebron Jones said.

"We're at our best when we're unselfish," he said. "When we move without the ball and look for our teammates, we're pretty tough to defend."

Speaking of defense, Baker's focus was on Johnson, the 6-foot-5 sophomore who scored 31 points in the Jan. 18 game at Vale.

"He was a focal point," Jones said. "We know where he likes to get the ball, and when he gets it in that sweet spot he's dangerous, and we don't have anybody who can jump with him. The kids did a good job forcing him off his spot."

Johnson scored just five points in the first half. He finished with 17. Wolfe had a game-high 19 points.

Isaiah Jones led Baker with 18 points, 16 in the first half. Spike added nine points, Hayden Younger, Logsdon and Molina had six each, and Paul Hobson had five points.



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald, File

Baker senior Gauge Bloomer carries the ball against La Grande during the Bulldogs' Homecoming game Friday, Oct. 29, 2021.

GOL schools push for larger football league

BY DAVIS CARBAUGH

The (La Grande) Observer

WILSONVILLE — Local football coaches and athletic directors are advocating for a larger football league in Eastern Oregon.

Based on the Oregon School Activities Association's latest football update, three local schools will likely have their wishes granted.

At the most recent OSAA Football Ad Hoc Committee meeting in Wilsonville on Wednesday, Feb. 2, athletic directors from La Grande, Baker and Pendleton spoke by video to express their concerns about a potential three-team league. In the committee's update on Feb. 4, the newly proposed Greater Oregon League would include Crook County, Madras and The Dalles.

"What we're looking for is something just more equitable and something that's more sustainable, at least for the next couple years, instead of having a three-team league," Pendleton Athletic Director Mike Somnis said at the meeting.

Pendleton recently moved down from the 5A ranks to join Baker and La Grande at the 4A level, but former GOL team Ontario is also set to move down. McLoughlin and Ontario will both be 3A schools when the districts are reshuffled in 2022. The 3A Eastern Oregon League is set to consist of Burns, McLoughlin, Nyssa/Harper Charter, Ontario and Vale.

Between the 2016 and 2019 seasons, GOL teams played home-and-away series — this was emphasized in the OSAA meeting as an area of concern that a larger league could fix. Coming off a shortened 2020 season, La Grande and other GOL schools played five non-league matchups and two league matchups to conclude the season.

La Grande Athletic Director Darren Goodman noted that the Tigers have only had two league matchups each of the last two seasons.

"Our kids deserve a decent league and the only reason we're not getting it is because of where our school is," he told the committee.

Goodman, along with the two other athletic directors, voiced the shared opinion

that GOL schools are willing to travel in order to compete in a larger league.

The trip from La Grande to Crook County is an estimated 4½ hours without traffic, while Madras is roughly a four-hour drive.

OSAA's update also detailed that three teams from the Greater Oregon League will qualify for the 16-team playoffs. The newly-proposed district for the 2022 season reflect a similar plan proposed by Baker Athletic Director Buell Gonzales, who proposed an eight-team league to the committee. The Dalles and Crook County would drop down from 5A, while Madras was formerly a member of the Tri-Valley Conference.

According to Gonzales, the league could be created in a way that limits the amount of times outside schools would have to travel to Eastern Oregon.

"We can be creative in our scheduling and make it so one school does not have to travel to all three in the same season," Gonzales said.

All three athletic directors emphasized that the added travel would be worth the benefits of beefing up the league.

"In the fall, it's never been an issue with weather," Goodman informed the committee. "We haven't had a team ever in the fall not be able to get to us or us getting to another school. That isn't a valid reason to not give us two or three more teams. We're willing to travel."

Baker head football coach Jason Ramos echoed a similar sentiment, noting that the prospect of proposed trips to Central Oregon is not a factor.

"I'm in favor of the expansion proposal," Ramos said. "A three-team league doesn't do us any good. The OSAA has to do something to help us out, and I think this is a reasonable solution to that issue."

With the four-team GOL roster that's been in place for more than a decade, Baker has had to travel farther than that, including to Western Washington in past seasons, to fill its schedule, Ramos said.

The OSAA Football Ad Hoc Committee is set to meet again in Wilsonville at 9 a.m. on Feb. 16.

OREGON MEN'S BASKETBALL

Harmon helps Oregon pick up its fourth straight win

EUGENE (AP) — De'Vion Harmon had a season-high 21 points, Will Richardson scored all 12 of his in the final 10 minutes and Oregon defeated Stanford 68-60 on Thursday night, Feb. 10, for the Ducks' fourth straight win.

Harmon was 8-of-15 shooting with three 3-pointers. Richardson, the Pac-12's top 3-point percentage shooter going in at 46.7%, was only 3 of 14 from the field, including 1 of 8 from the arc, but came on late to help the Ducks (16-7, 9-3) hold off the Cardinal. N'Faly Dante also scored 12 points with seven rebounds.

Maxime Raynaud and Michael O'Connell scored 11 points each and Harrison Ingram and Brandon Angel had 10 apiece with Angel grabbing 10 rebounds for Stanford (14-10, 7-7), which has lost two straight. Jaiden Delaire, who averages 11 points a game and made a buzzer-beating 3-pointer in scoring

20 points in Stanford's 72-69 win over Oregon on Dec. 12, was scoreless in 19 minutes.

Oregon quickly extended an eight-point halftime lead when Dante finished an 8-2 half-opening run with an emphatic dunk. The Ducks didn't get another bucket for over six minutes but still had a five-point edge when Richardson scored midway through the half to end the drought.

Stanford's Raynaud cut the lead to three with a basket moments later, the closest the Cardinal would come. Ingram missed a 3-pointer with 35.6 seconds left that would have cut the lead to two. Richardson then made four straight free throws.

Harmon scored 12 points in the first half when Oregon led almost the entire way and took a 32-24 lead.

Both teams shot in the low 40s but Oregon made 13 of 15 free throws to 4 of 4 for the Cardinal, who had 17 turnovers.

BAKER MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS BASKETBALL

BMS girls win 7 of 9 basketball games

Baker City Herald

Baker Middle School girls basketball teams have won seven of nine recent games, including two games where the Dawgs didn't allow their opponent to score.

Seventh grade

• Baker 62, Pendleton 0
Baker's leading scorers were Jaxyn Ramos and Kyndal Chandler with 12 points each.

• Baker 68, Burns 10
Kaitlynn Schwinn was the leading scorer with 17 points, and Lily Logsdon had 12.

• Baker 57, La Grande 8
Chandler had 20 points, and Ramos 14.

Eighth grade

• Baker 47, Pendleton 0
Raegen Gulick had

13 points to lead Baker, and Raegen Ritter added 10 points.

• Baker 62, Burns 8
Gulick had 18 points to lead Baker, and Gracie Spike scored 16.

• La Grande 46, Baker 38
Gwen Rasmussen had 10 points for Baker, and Spike added nine.

Mixed seventh and eighth grade rosters

• Crane 59, Baker 43
Logsdon and Chandler had 10 points each.

• Baker 47, Crane 42
Logsdon had 13 points to lead Baker, and Chandler scored 10.

• Baker 68, Grant Union 14
Rasmussen led the

Dawgs with 16 points, and Schwinn added 12.

POWDER VALLEY BOYS, GIRLS BASKETBALL

Badgers beat Joseph to extend win streaks

Baker City Herald

NORTH POWDER — Powder Valley boys and girls basketball teams extended their winning streaks with victories over Joseph on Thursday, Feb. 10, in the Powder Valley gym.

The Badger boys ran their winning streak to 11 games with a 51-40 win.

Kaden Krieger had a game-high 27 points to lead the Badgers, including 9 of 17 from the free throw line. Kaiden Dalke added 13 points.

The Badgers, 19-1 overall and the top-ranked Class 1A team, sought to complete an unbeaten Old Ore-

gon League schedule when they played host to Cove on Friday night, Feb. 11.

The Powder Valley girls beat Joseph 54-23 to improve their Old Oregon League record to 7-3, and to 11-10 overall with their third straight win.

The Badgers outscored Joseph in every quarter, including 11-1 in the fourth. Jodi Bingham led Powder with 14 points, and Paige Marlia had 12 points.

The girls team completes its league schedule by playing host to Cove on Friday, Feb. 11, and then traveling to Elgin on Saturday, Feb. 12, for a 6 p.m. tip off.