

BAKER BOYS WRESTLING AT REGIONAL TOURNAMENT

14 Bulldog wrestlers qualify for state

Baker finishes 2nd to La Grande in team standings

Baker City Herald

Fourteen Baker High School boys wrestlers qualified for the state meet with strong performances at the regional tournament on Saturday, Feb. 11, at Sisters High School.

Baker, led by regional champions Jaden Martin and Aldo Duran, and runners-up Joey Duncan, Marcus Chamberlain, Gauge Bloomer and Alex Ritter, placed second in the team standings with 303 points. La Grande won the team title with 447 points.

The top four wrestlers in each weight class qualified for the state tournament on Saturday, Feb. 26, at Cascade High School near Salem.

"We were really proud of our effort at the regional tournament," Baker coach Brandon Young said. "Our kids just kept going despite the score, and overall outworked their opponents. That's something that this group does well, they work very hard and have been extremely dedicated."

Young said Baker will be seeking to earn a trophy at the state tournament, which are awarded to the top four teams.

"COVID has had a huge impact on everyone, but this group has been very resilient in maintaining a positive mind set, and all of us are happy to have the opportunity to wrestle," Young said. "That is what has made wrestling so important for this group and a huge motivator for their success. They understand firsthand how quickly something can be taken away, that nothing is guaranteed, and they are determined to make their shot at something count."

With Sheylin Karolski and Sarah Plummer having qualified for state during the girls regional tournament last weekend, Baker will send a record 16 wrestlers to state, Young said. The girls state tournament is Feb. 24 in Culver.

Baker's district champions

Duran, wrestling in the 113-pound division, received byes in the first and quarterfinal rounds.

In the semifinal round, he pinned Sisters' Carter Van Meter in the first period.

In the championship match, Duran pinned teammate Marcus Chamberlain in the first period.

"Aldo Duran has a shot to be state champion this season as a freshman," Young said. "Aldo works so hard every single day, he is very driven, and great things are coming for him."

Chamberlain finished second and also advanced to the state tournament. After receiving



Baker's Gavin Stone (top) placed third at the regional tournament Feb. 12, 2022, to qualify for the state tournament.

byes in the first and quarterfinal rounds, Chamberlain pinned Jake Lawrence of Madras in the second period.

"We decided to bump Marcus Chamberlain to 113 pounds for a couple of reasons," Young said. "Marcus hit a growth spurt here at the end of the season and 113 was a better fit for him, and he had seeding criteria to be the top seed at 113. Marcus proved that he was a force to be reckoned with as he pinned his way to the finals. Marcus is on fire right now."

Martin continued his dominating performances over the past few weeks.

After receiving a first-round bye, Martin pinned La Grande's Cain End in the first period in the quarterfinals, and pinned Ontario's Jose Moncada in the first period in the semifinals.

In the district championship match, Martin pinned Corbett's Ian Brown in just 33 seconds.

"Jaden Martin hammered down on everyone, pinning every opponent to become a two-time regional champion," Young said. "He has his eyes set on a state championship. Jaden has improved tremendously this season and has become a real handful."

District runners-up

At 106 pounds, Duncan received byes in the first and quarterfinal rounds. In the semifinals, he won by fall over La Grande's Bobby Gulzow in the third period, avenging a loss to Gulzow earlier in the season.

"This time we had a better game plan," Young said. "The match was back and forth going all the way into the third period when Joey found his moment and earned the fall with 24 seconds left in the match."

In the championship match, Duncan lost by fall to La Grande's Mason Walcott late in the first period.

At 195 pounds, defending state champion Gauge Bloomer received two byes to advance to the semifinals. There, he pinned Gladstone's Brodey Kitzmiller in the first period. In the championship match against a familiar foe, La Grande's Brody MacMillan, Bloomer battled into the third period before MacMillan got the pin.

At 220 pounds, Ritter, who entered the tournament unseeded, had a first-round bye, then pinned Ontario's Tommy Ishida in the first period in a quarterfinal match. In the semifinals, Ritter pinned Henry Rard of Sisters in the first period.

In the championship match against Tanner Wells of Mac-Hi/Weston-McEwen, Wells won by fall in the second period.

"Alex Ritter missed quite a bit of the season and we are starting to get him back to where he was before Christmas and he is regaining his confidence," Young said. "That is the thing with wrestling, so much of it is a mental battle, if you believe it, you can make it happen. That is something that Alex is going to take with him from all this, confidence in himself that he can attain anything he sets his mind to."

Other state qualifiers

At 120 pounds, Baker's Sage Darlington had a first-round bye and then pinned Jayvon Tovar of Madras late in the second period in the quarterfinals.

In the semifinals, Darlington faced La Grande's Kai Carson, and Carson won by fall in the first period.

Darlington then won an 8-7 decision over Madras' Chase Strawbridge in the consolation semifinal, gaining the key 2 points with just a second left in the match. Then Darlington pinned Tovar again, also in the

second period, in the third-place match.

At 145 pounds, Baker's Gavin Stone advanced to the semifinals with a first-round bye and a win by fall over La Grande's Austin Higgins in the quarterfinals.

In the semifinals, Ben Cooper of Sisters won by 3-2 decision. Stone rebounded by pinning Dolan Pool of Sisters in the consolation semifinals, then pinning Jonas Porter of Gladstone in the first period of the third-place match.

At 132 pounds, Baker's Cole Hester received byes in the first and quarterfinal rounds. In the semifinals against La Grande's Jaxson Leonard, Hester lost by fall. He then won by forfeit in the consolation semifinals and beat teammate Samuel Nelson by fall in the third-place match.

Nelson advanced to the third-place match by pinning Jayden Esquiro of Madras.

At 182 pounds, Baker's Adrian Allen had a first-round bye. In the quarterfinals, he pinned Ontario's Steven Luna in the first period, then lost by fall to La Grande's Jarrett Armstrong in the semifinals.

Allen then won a 9-3 decision of La Grande's Preston Westenskow in the consolation semifinals, and pinned Madras' Demarcus Scott in the third-place match.

"Adrian Allen had a great weekend and qualified for state a second time," Young said. "Adrian has come a long way since middle school and we are proud of the young man he has become."

At 132 pounds, Baker's Riley Martin had a bye in the first round. In the quarterfinals, he lost a 4-3 decision to Ontario's Jamis Gonzalez.

Martin then won two straight matches in the consolation bracket, pinning La Grande's Michael Gisi and Darious Squiemphen of Madras. In the consolation semifinals,



Aldo Duran was one of Baker's two individual champions at the regional wrestling tournament Feb. 12, 2022, at Sisters.

Martin won a 4-3 decision over Carson Brown of Sisters in an intense match with Riley leading late and then riding out Brown to finish the win.

In the third-place match, Martin lost in sudden death to Gonzalez in the second overtime period.

"Riley Martin was a man on a mission," Young said.

At 160 pounds, Baker's Ryan Brown had a first-round bye. In the quarterfinals, Brown lost by fall to Cael White of Madras, before beating Jared Miller of Sisters by fall and Brady David of Madras by disqualification to advance to the third-place match.

"Ryan Brown has really come around this season," Young said.

In the semifinal match against David, David had the lead but with less than 45 seconds left, David did an illegal mat return, slamming Brown to the mat. Due to concussion protocol, Brown was not able to continue to wrestle. David was disqualified.

"We hope Ryan is able to recover from this before state, but if not he really turned a corner this season," Young said.

At 285 pounds, Baker's Russell Walden had a first-round bye and pinned Ontario's Jorge Ortiz in the quarterfinals.

In the semifinals, Walden lost a 15-12 decision to Corbett's Ian Brown. Walden then pinned La Grande's Cain End in the consolation semifinal to advance to the third-place match, where he lost by fall to Ontario's Jose Moncada.

In the semifinal match against Brown, Walden was leading by 2 points with just 20 seconds left. He tried a head and arm but was countered, and Brown earned the takedown and held Walden on his back until time ran out.

"Russell has a big heart and gave it everything he had," Young said.

Other Baker wrestlers

Baker's Cody Eskew at 170 pounds, and Ethan Morgan at 182, both just missed qualifying for state with their fifth-place district finishes.

Eskew won two matches to advance to the fourth-place match, where he lost by no contest to Alex Arreola of Madras.

Morgan won an 8-6 decision over Ontario's Leonardo Baccerra in the quarterfinals, then lost to Reece White of Madras in the semifinals and to Demarcus Scott of Madras in the consolation semifinal. Morgan then pinned La Grande's Preston Westenskow in the fifth-place match.

"Ethan Morgan had a great tournament and gave it everything he had," Young said.

At 220 pounds, Baker's Jayden Clark won his first two matches by fall. In the semifinals, Clark faced Tanner Wells of Mac-Hi/Weston-McEwen, and Wells won by fall.

In the consolation semifinals, Clark was leading Ontario's Tommy Ishida but Ishida was able to get the fall in the second period. Clark then pinned La Grande's Kenai Huff to claim fifth place.

At 132 pounds, Baker's Michael Endersby placed eighth. Jimmy Sullivan wrestled at 145 pounds, and Ben Coburn competed at 152 pounds.

"Michael Endersby had a tough draw into the tournament," Young said. "Michael is a great teammate and has a great motor. He will have his time here in the next few seasons."

"Jimmy Sullivan had a great tournament losing two close battles where they were back and forth," Young said. "Jimmy sustained an injury early in the season and was able to get released just before regionals. He has a great work ethic and he's not afraid of a good fight. Hopefully we can get him to put in sometime in the off season and stay healthy next year."

"Ben Coburn had a tough draw into the tournament," Young said. "Ben really improved a ton this season, I think with his great attitude and work ethic he is going to have a shot at qualifying for state."

"River Clark was unable to compete due to an injury, and we feel like he would have also been one of the top guys," Young said.

SUPER BOWL 56

Rams squeak by Bengals on late touchdown

BY BARRY WILNER

AP Pro Football Writer

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — Their defense laying siege to the Bengals, the Rams needed something — anything — from their slumbering offense.

How about a precise 79-yard drive to the Lombardi Trophy?

It wasn't a classic march, aided by three successive Bengals penalties and mired by some bad throws. No matter: When Cooper Kupp caught a 1-yard pass from Matthew Stafford with 1:25 remaining, LA's offense indeed had awakened just in time for a 23-20 Super Bowl victory Sunday, Feb. 13.

"That's hard work, that's hours together," Stafford said. "I just thank coach (Sean McVay) for putting it ... 'Hey, Matthew, you and Coop go get this thing done.' He kept calling plays for him, kept finding ways to get him the ball. He

made unbelievable plays; that's what he does."

What Los Angeles did on that drive finally measured up to what its defense was doing most of the night: overwhelming Cincinnati's blockers, sacking Joe Burrow a Super Bowl record-tying seven times. The pressure, led by Aaron Donald and Von Miller, was nonstop.

"You got to be relentless," said Donald, who added a crowning achievement to his certain Hall of Fame career. "You want something bad enough you've got to go get it. You know it was right in front of us ... all off-season you work, you train, you got camp, you got a long season just for this one game. You know we the last team standing."

Standing in a venue built for champions, with the Rams (16-5) earning their first NFL title since the 1999 season — and their first representing Los Angeles since 1951.

They did so in their home, the \$5 billion SoFi Stadium, making the Rams the second consecutive host to win the championship after Tampa Bay became the first a year ago.

"As far as building this stadium," said Rams owner Stan Kroenke, the man who moved them back from St. Louis in 2016, "I think it turned out all right."

The winning series, during which game MVP Kupp's 4-yard touchdown reception was negated by offsetting penalties, ended soon after with the NFL Offensive Player of the Year easily beating Eli Apple in the right corner of the end zone for the winning score.

Kupp had four receptions for 39 yards, and a 7-yard run on fourth-and-1 from the Rams 30 on the championship drive.

Cincinnati (13-8) was penalized the second-fewest times (72) for the fewest yards (620) in the regular season but flags hurt badly — including pass interference on Kupp in the end zone.

"I've said it all year, whatever is asked of me whatever my job is gonna be, I just want to execute to the best of my abilities," said Kupp, who won the triple crown of receiving in 2021, leading in catches, yards and touchdowns. "I trust as the game goes on I'll have opportunities as well, and I just want to

stay ready for those things stay locked in."

As locked in as that pass rush.

Fittingly, Burrow was under pressure on fourth-and-1 and threw incomplete, setting off a football fiesta this city has not seen since the LA Raiders won the 1983 championship.

A tearful Donald said after the game, "I wanted it so bad. I dreamed this."

Ten points because of two plays in a span of 22 seconds at the outset of the third quarter put Cincinnati ahead for the first time.

Tea Higgins' 75-yard score made it 17-13 and was followed one play later by Chi-

dobe Awuzie's pick. Evan McPherson tied Adam Vinatieri's postseason record with his 14th field goal, a 38-yarder. The rookie didn't miss in the postseason.

Higgins beat All-Pro cornerback Jalen Ramsey on the first play of the second half — the receiver clearly tugged Ramsey's face mask on the play. After Stafford was intercepted on the next play, the Bengals got McPherson's field goal.

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