

## BAKER BOYS BASKETBALL

## Tigers top Baker, claim GOL title

**Baker will have a home play-in game on either Friday, Feb. 25 or Saturday, Feb. 26**

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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The La Grande boys basketball team feels so at home in the Baker gym that the Tigers walked out Saturday night, Feb. 19, with one of the nets.

This episode of nylon larceny was minor, though, compared to the other things the Tigers left with:

The Greater Oregon League championship and a home game in the first round of the Class 4A playoffs March 5.

The Tigers had key runs at the end of the second quarter and the start of the third en route to a 69-52 win over Baker.

The Bulldogs never led.

The game was reminiscent of La Grande's 76-44 win over the Bulldogs, also in the Baker gym, 11 days earlier.

In both games the Tigers used their height and quick hands to clog passing lanes and stifle Baker's normally efficient offense.

The Bulldogs are the highest scoring team in the Class 4A ranks, averaging 68 points per game.

But after Baker's 67-41 romp over La Grande on the Tigers' home floor on Jan. 28, in the two rematches in Baker the Bulldogs had their two lowest-scoring games of the season, with 44 and 52 points.

(Baker also scored 52 in a loss to Homedale, also in Baker, on Dec. 9.)

"Their length worked in their favor for sure," Baker coach Jebbron Jones said of La Grande after the GOL title game. "They got a lot of deflections."

Jones said Baker players aided La Grande by failing



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

**Baker's Isaiah Jones goes to the basket against La Grande's Jace Schow in the GOL title game on Saturday, Feb. 19, 2022, in the Baker gym.**

to use enough ball fakes and by "staring at the person we're passing to."

The Bulldogs also missed multiple shots that they normally make at a high percentage, but on Saturday night refused to drop. Jones said that, with the exception of too many turnovers, he was generally pleased with Baker's offensive execution.

"We did a good job getting great looks," he said. "But those missed shots are such morale boosters for them and such morale devastators for us. It was a big disappointment."

La Grande, which played without injured point guard Logan Williams, also had an overwhelming advantage at the free throw line. The Tigers shot 36 free throws, making 22. Baker shot just four, and made all of them.

Baker made enough field goals early to keep the highly anticipated third game between the rivals competitive.

A large contingent of La Grande fans packed into

the southeast corner of the Baker gym, combining with the raucous Bulldog fans to create an atmosphere appropriate for a game with playoff implications.

After Brady Hutchins' 3-pointer — the first of his five — gave La Grande an early 5-0 lead, Baker answered with Jaxon Logsdon's inside basket and Paul Hobson's 3-pointer to forge a 5-5 tie with 3:35 left in what was a somewhat sloppy first quarter.

Baker's first points, on Logsdon's hoop, came almost halfway through the period.

La Grande's Devin Bell, who led all scorers with 23 points, scored late to give the Tigers a 9-7 lead after one quarter.

Much more ominously for Baker, the Bulldogs picked up their seventh foul with 1:24 left, meaning La Grande would shoot free throws on most fouls for the remaining 9½ minutes of the half.

The Tigers took advantage

## LA GRANDE (69)

Tsitsos 1 2-5 4, A. Rodriguez 2 1-2 5, Bell 5 12-17 23, C. Rodriguez 1 2-4 4, Huntsman 1 0-0 2, Schow 3 2-4 9, Hutchins 7 3-4 22, Staab 0 0-0 0. Totals 20 22-36 69.

## BAKER (52)

Logsdon 5 0-0 11, Gambleton 0 2-2 2, Quintela 0 0-0 0, Younger 0 0-0 0, Molina 0 0-0 0, Spike 7 0-0 17, Jones 3 2-8 8, Long 1 0-0 2, Hobson 4 0-0 12, Mitchell 0 0-0 0. Totals 20 4-4 52.

La Grande 9 22 17 21 — 69

Baker 7 13 10 22 — 52

Hobson made another 3-pointer to tie the score at 12 with 6:40 left in the second quarter.

It was the final tie. After Bell's 3-pointer gave La Grande a 15-12 lead, Baker's Hudson Spike swished a 12-footer from the key to cut the lead to 15-14.

Then Hutchins and Bell, two of the Tigers' senior leaders, took over.

Hutchins made consecutive 3-pointers in less than a minute to give La Grande its biggest lead thus far, at 21-14.

Bell then made six straight free throws in the final 3 minutes of the half, and Alex Rodriguez and Jace Schow each had a basket as the Tigers went on a 16-6 run to push their lead to 31-20 lead at halftime.

Baker's bid for a quick comeback to start the second half was foiled when La Grande grabbed three straight offensive rebounds on one possession, leading to Hutchins' basket that boosted the Tigers lead to 35-20.

"They did a great job of crashing the offensive boards," Jones said of the Tigers.

Isaiah Jones made two free throws, but La Grande then scored 10 straight points, including 3-pointers by Hutchins

and Schow in a 43-second span.

After Sam Tsitsos scored on a driving layin, the La Grande lead was 45-22 with 3:44 left in the third quarter.

Logsdon scored off a steal and Spike made consecutive 3-pointers to get Baker within 46-30, but Bell's late basket inside gave the Tigers a 48-30 lead at the end of the third quarter.

The lead swelled to as much as 24 points, at 57-33, in the fourth quarter.

And although Baker never got closer than 63-48 on Jaron Long's layin, Jones said he was happy with Baker's effort despite the big deficit during the second half.

"They did a great job of playing hard, and they finished the game the right way," he said.

Spike led Baker with 17 points. Hobson added 12, Logsdon 11 and Isaiah Jones eight.

Baker will now have a home play-in game either on Friday, Feb. 25, or Saturday, Feb. 26. The time and opponent will be determined later this week, said Buell Gonzales Jr., the Baker School District's athletic director.

If the game is Friday, Feb. 25, it will take place after the Baker girls game against Pendleton, which starts at 5 p.m. The girls game will be followed by a ceremony honoring the 1972 BHS boys basketball team, which finished second in the state. If the boys play-in game is Friday, it will take place immediately after the ceremony, Gonzales said.

The Baker boys game against Pendleton, originally set for Friday, Feb. 25, has been canceled due to the play-in game.

The winner of the play-in game will advance to the first round of the Class 4A playoffs on March 4.

## POWDER VALLEY BOYS BASKETBALL

## Badgers fall short in OOL title game

BY DAVIS CARBAUGH

The Observer

The pursuit of a perfect league season came just one game short for the Powder Valley Badgers.

The Powder Valley boys basketball team battled out a hard-fought Old Oregon League Championship game, but ultimately lost to Nixyaawii 59-51 at Baker High School on Saturday, Feb. 19. The Badgers were one game shy of winning all 11 of their league games this year.

The matchup went down to the wire, as the two top Old Oregon League teams battled to the last possession in front of a packed house at Baker High School. Senior point guard Reece Dixon led the Badgers with 16 points in a gutsy performance after sustaining a leg injury midway through the contest.

"I think we just didn't shoot well. Hats off to them, they came out and played a hard game," Powder Valley head coach Kyle Dixon said. "I thought we struggled from the floor and they're a fast team, they're solid."

Nixyaawii came out quick to start the game, taking an early advantage. The Golden Eagles led for the majority of the game, but the Badgers remained within reach. Nixyaawii led 16-7 midway through the first and ended the first quarter up 16-10.

The Golden Eagles looked strong early in the second quarter, until the Badgers woke up and put together a late rally. Powder Valley scored several baskets just before halftime to head into the locker rooms trailing 29-26, igniting the crowd. Cole Martin was strong for Powder Valley offensively in the first half, scoring all 12 of his points in the first two quarters. Nixyaawii's Baron Moses had another strong performance, scoring 11 of his game-high 19 points in the first half.

Nixyaawii and Powder Valley were neck-and-neck in the third quarter, exchanging buckets. The Badgers went on a run midway through the quarter and took a 38-37 lead with 1:55 remaining in the period.

On an open fast break that would have given Powder Valley a one-point lead with 45 seconds left in the third quarter, tragedy struck the Badgers. Reece Dixon injured his leg on a layup attempt and missed the remainder of the quarter and was limited after returning midway through the fourth quarter.

"It's a big difference, we need him in the game," Kyle Dixon said. "When his knees are hurting like that, it's hard to play defense and it's hard to get the jump shot going. We'll recover."

The Badgers hung within two possessions for almost the entirety of the fourth quarter, but the team was unable to overcome the deficit. Nixyaawii's Dylan Abrahamson was very efficient in the fourth quarter, scoring eight points off two field goals and a 4-4 free-throw performance.

"We just needed to stay focused and work harder," Kyle Dixon said. "We did a lot of things we don't normally do. We turned the ball over a lot and our shooting was terrible tonight."

The loss was a heartbreaker for Powder Valley, who came into the championship game 10-0 against league opponents and 21-1 on the season. The win is a major accomplishment for Nixyaawii, who is 22-6 through the end of district play.

"We just have to recover," Kyle Dixon said. "We have state coming up, we'll be alright."

The Badgers are set to face Condon (15-6) on Feb. 22 in round one of the 1A state tournament.

"Of course they hate losing, but sometimes it's good for teams to lose," Kyle Dixon said. "I think it will make us work harder."

## BAKER SWIMMING

## Stadler caps high school career with two 2nd-place finishes

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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Brianna Stadler finished her Baker High School swimming career by finishing second in two events at the Class 4A/3A/2A/1A swim meet Saturday, Feb. 19, at Beaverton.

Stadler, a 4-time state champion, placed second in the 100-yard butterfly and 100-yard backstroke.

And although just a fraction of a second kept Stadler from claiming a fifth individual title — and winning at least one in each of her high school years — she was satisfied with her times.

"I'm actually really

happy with both of my races," Stadler said. "My times were where I wanted them to be. I would have liked to get another first place, but the two girls who beat me worked really hard and are really fast."

In the backstroke, Stadler swam the 100-yard event in 1:57.82 seconds. She said that was her best time since she set a state record in winning the event as a freshman in 2019.

On Saturday, Stadler finished second to Sweet Home senior Chloe Taylor, who broke Stadler's record of 56.64 by an eyeblink — 0.15 of a second.

In the 100-yard butter-



Ryan Brennecke/The (Bend) Bulletin

**Brianna Stadler competes in the 100-yard butterfly.**

fly, Stadler said she almost achieved her goal of finishing in less than 58 seconds. Her time was 58.30, just .01 second behind her all-time best and less than half a second behind Adrienne Tam, a sophomore from Catlin Gabel, who finished in 57.77 seconds.

That race almost had a

disastrous start for Stadler when her goggles broke while she was poised on the starting blocking, preparing to dive in.

Fortunately her dad, Randy Stadler, who's also the Baker High School swimming coach, dashed in with an extra pair.

"I was a little panicked

for a second," Brianna Stadler said.

Randy Stadler said he was especially proud of Brianna for making sure she personally congratulated both Taylor and Tam for their races.

Brianna, who was the lone Baker swimmer at the state meet, amassed 10 points for her two runner-up finishes, giving Baker a tie for seventh in the team standings.

Brianna, who will swim for Colorado Mesa University this fall, said she plans to take a week or two off before resuming training and competing in some club meets.

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