

BAKER SPRING SPORTS BEGINNING

Baker High baseball team excited to return to Arizona

Annual spring break trip was canceled previous 2 years

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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The Baker High School baseball team probably will play games in three states this season before it has one complete practice on its home field.

Which isn't an altogether bad situation, coach Tim Smith said — in part because one of those states is Arizona.

He'd be more disappointed by the delay in getting onto the diamond at the Baker Sports Complex if not for the revival of what had become a spring break tradition for the Bulldogs.

That's the long drive to the desert Southwest to play several games in temperatures that sometimes don't grace Baker City until the high school baseball season is already over hereabouts.

Smith scheduled the first Arizona expedition in 2015, and the Bulldogs returned each of the next four Marches as well.

But then came the pandemic.

The tournament that brought Baker to Arizona was canceled in 2020 and 2021.

There was no spring high school sports season in Oregon in 2020, and the 2021 schedule was shortened to little more than a month. The Bulldogs went 10-6 during the abbreviated slate in April and May.

But this year, with COVID-19 waning, the Arizona trip is back on Baker's schedule.

And Smith is excited to bring the Bulldogs to cactus country for the first time in three years.

"It's a good team-building trip," he said. "We spend a lot of time together. It's a fun time."

In addition to playing four games in Arizona, the Bulldogs will watch the Arizona State Sun Devils play, Smith said.

In past years the trip usually included taking in a Major League Baseball spring training game, but this year a labor dispute delayed the start of spring training. By the time the sides had settled, Smith said it was too late to make arrangements for the Bulldogs to watch the major leaguers play.

But he's still excited about the chance to get away, however briefly, from the chilly and sometimes damp Baker County spring.

"It's always good baseball, and it's nice to get in the good weather," Smith said.

Since practice started on the last day of February, the Bulldogs have spent much of their time in the batting cage building at the Sports Complex, Smith said.

They've done some drills on the grassy outfield at the Complex, and on the soccer fields where a temporary diamond was set up.



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

Baker baseball player Connor Chastain takes a swing in the batting cages at the Baker Sports Complex on Tuesday, March 15, 2022.

But the dirt infield on the field has been too damp and muddy to use.

Smith said this is just the second spring in the past eight where the entire field wasn't playable before the first game.

The Bulldog roster is at full strength this week now that three players — Jaxon Logsdon, Hayden Younger and Hudson Spike — have finished the basketball season.

Baker was slated to open the season Wednesday, March 16, at Parma, Idaho, followed by a doubleheader at Heppner/Ione Thursday, March 17, starting at noon.

Baker will then travel to Arizona, playing two Colorado teams, Doherty and Monitou Springs, on Monday, March 21, then taking on Buena Vista, Colorado, on March 23, and Apollo, Arizona, on March 24.

The Bulldogs' home opener is set for Wednesday, March 30, at 4 p.m. against Homedale, Idaho.

Baker then returns to the road for five straight games, including a weekend trip to the Oregon Coast to start April.

The Bulldogs will play a doubleheader at Astoria on Friday, April 1, starting at 4 p.m., followed by a single game at Seaside/Jewell at noon on Saturday, April 2.

Greater Oregon League play starts April 6 with a doubleheader at Mac-Hi starting at 2 p.m.

Other Baker High spring sports teams are in action

Baker's other spring sports teams are also preparing for their first competition or, in some cases, are already into their schedule.

Softball

The Bulldogs are slated to open the season Thursday, March 17, with a doubleheader starting at noon at Heppner/Ione.

Tennis

Baker's first match, set for Tuesday, March 15, at Four Rivers in

Ontario, was postponed by rain until Thursday, March 17, at 3 p.m. PDT.

Golf

Baker had its first girls tournament on Monday, March 14, at Weiser, Idaho. Two of Baker's six girls players competed in the 9-hole event. Caitlin Lien shot a 50, and Gretchen Morgan carded a 68. The Baker boys team has 11 players out, said Mike

Long, who coaches both the boys and girls teams. Eight boys players competed in an 18-hole tournament at River Bend Golf Course near Homedale, Idaho. Results will be published in a later issue.

Track and field

The Bulldogs are slated to open the season with the Ontario Icebreaker on Thursday, March 17, starting at 3:30 p.m.

OREGON MEN'S BASKETBALL IN NIT

Ducks roll past Utah St. in 2nd half

BY JAMES CREPEA

oregonlive.com

LOGAN, Utah — Oregon weathered a first half shooting barrage from Utah State, then it unleashed one of its own.

De'Vion Harmon scored 16 of his 19 in the first half to keep Oregon in it and Jacob Young scored 13 of his 17 in the second half to close out an 83-72 comeback win for the Ducks over No. 4 seed Utah State in the first round of the men's National Invitation Tournament on Tuesday night, March 15, before a raucous crowd of 7,023 at the Dee Glen Smith Spectrum.

Oregon (20-14) shot 50.8% from the field and 42.1% from three, its best outing from the floor since Jan. 29 against Oregon State and best from behind the arc since Jan. 23 against Washington.

"I've been fortunate to play in some NIT games," said Oregon coach Dana Altman, who notched his 300th win at UO while securing a 12th straight 20-win season. "The student section today was really good. It was a great environment. Our guys responded and hit some shots, which we haven't been doing, we've just shot it so poorly. We just finally hit some shots."

The Ducks advance to face top-seeded Texas A&M (24-12) in the second round this weekend in College Station, Texas.

Utah State built a 32-23 lead with 4:41 to go in the first half thanks to 12 assists on 14 baskets, but failed to

create open shots in the second half. The Aggies (18-16) went from 7 of 16 from three-point range in the first half to just 2 for 12 from behind the arc and 10 of 34 (32.4%) overall from the field during the second half.

"We made some scouting report mistakes in the first half not running (Steven Ashworth) off the line," Altman said. "We knew what he wanted to do. Second half we did a much better job. We gave him that one where we screwed up in transition late there, but other than that our contests on threes were so much better. The first half he got it going; he hit four there and we never ran him off the line one time."

Oregon held USU leading scorer Justin Bean, who entered averaging 17.7 points and 9.8 rebounds with 20 double-doubles, to just nine points on a season-low 18.2% (2 for 11) from the field. It was just the third time this season Bean was held to under 10 points, though he still had 16 rebounds.

"They were a really physical team," Bean said. "Give them credit. It made us uncomfortable. Obviously, offensively we weren't great, but defensively we really were there they took over. We weren't filling up the gaps like we had planned. Their athleticism — they were getting downhill on us. They made eight threes, but they had a lot of points in the paint for sure."

"It was just one of those

games. You try to make a little run and they come back with a big momentum play or a dunk or an easy layup. It's hard to overcome those. In the second half, we just didn't quite get over the hump and they ran away with it."

Utah State hosted a Pac-12 team for the first time since 2013-14 on a stage fitting of postseason college basketball: a raucous on-campus environment where the game, albeit in a consolation tournament, mattered a great deal to those on the floor and those in the stands, who were overwhelmingly standing.

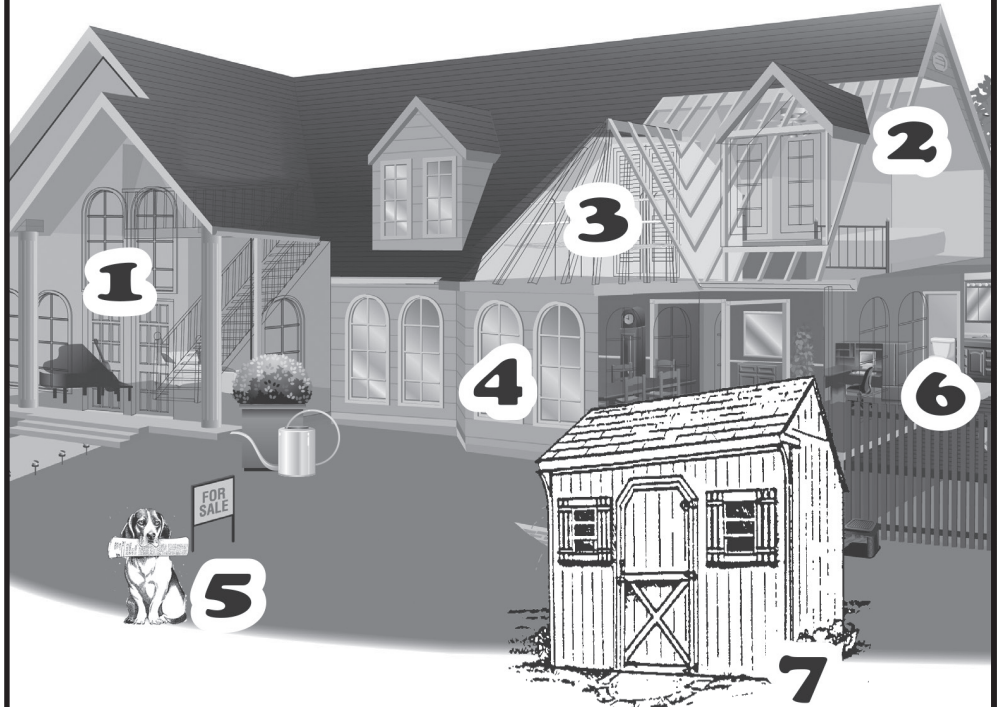
"We're grateful to be here," Quincy Guerrier said. "Obviously we were trying to be in the March Madness, but we're in the NIT now and we're going to take full advantage of the opportunity for everyone. It's on ESPN and it's a big thing for everyone, especially for the vets to showcase, and we're going to try to win the NIT."

Oregon opened with a 10-2 lead, but Ashworth (20 points) hit three straight three-pointers to fuel an 11-0 Utah State run.

A second 11-0 run by the Aggies made it 32-23 with 4:41 to half, but Harmon scored nine of Oregon's final 10 points of the half to get the Ducks within 37-33 at the break.

Just as it did in the first half, Oregon opened the second half with a 10-2 run, regained and steadily increased the lead and cruised from there.

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NCAA MEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

Indiana tops turnover-prone Wyoming in First Four

BY MITCH STACY

Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio — University of Dayton Arena was rocking, thanks to hordes of Indiana fans who made the drive to the First Four to see the Hoosiers play in the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2016.

The 13,400-seat newly renovated venue just got louder as Indiana pulled away late to cap a 66-58 win over turnover-prone Wyoming on Tuesday night, March 15, sending the 12th-seeded Hoosiers (21-13) to a first-round East regional game to face fifth-seeded St. Mary's on Thursday, March 17.

Trayce Jackson-Davis had 29 points and nine rebounds, Jordan Geronimo — who averaged 3.9 points this season — scored a career-high 15.

"I thought our defense was really the key when we were struggling offensively to

make shots," Indiana coach Mike Woodson said. "But we just kept grinding, and I found another player to-night off the bench and that was Geronimo, who gave us a major, major lift tonight. And Trayce was who he's been pretty much all year."

Indiana opened a 10-point lead over the Cowboys (25-9) with less than two minutes left. Wyoming's Drake Jeffries hit a pair of foul shots

to get the Cowboys within six with 14 seconds to go, but Jeffries had to foul Indiana's Xavier Johnson, who hit a pair from the stripe to put it out of reach.

Hunter Maldonado paced the Cowboys with 21 points but turned the ball over 10 times. Graham Ike had 17 to go along with and nine rebounds. The Cowboys had 19 turnovers leading to 17 Indiana points.



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