

BAKER SOFTBALL OPENS GOL SCHEDULE

Baker can't hold late lead, drops twinbill at Mac-Hi

Bulldogs led 9-2 in last inning of first game

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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Baker's softball team was poised to start Greater Oregon League play with an easy win over Mac-Hi on Wednesday, April 6, at Milton-Freewater.

But suddenly it wasn't easy. Or, ultimately, a win.

Leading 9-2 going into the bottom of the last inning, the Bulldogs gave up eight runs to the Pioneers and lost 10-9.

That final half-inning was a litany of hits, walks and errors, any one of which, had it gone the other way, might well have resulted in a Bulldog win, Baker coach Sonny Gulick said.

The game-winning single, which came with two outs, epitomized the Mac-Hi rally, he said.

The ball was just out of the reach of second baseman Kiley Jo Aldrich.

The Pioneers had other hits earlier in the inning that also found the open ground between Baker defenders.

"They were hitting all those prime spots to push runs across," Gulick said.

Mac-Hi had four hits in the seventh inning, along with five walks and a passed ball. Baker also had two of its three errors in the inning.

Gulick said his young team, which was missing a couple of

Game one

Baker 0 7 0 0 0 2 0 — 9
Mac-Hi 0 0 0 0 2 0 8 — 10

Cuzick and K. Anderson. Perkins, Giguire (2) and Herndon, Perkins (3).

Game two

Baker 3 0 1 2 0 2 0 — 8
Mac-Hi 3 2 0 5 1 0 x — 11

Rayl, Cuzick (4) and K. Anderson, Giguire and Perkins.

players, also "panicked a little bit."

It was the first time this season that the Bulldogs had to try to stem a last-inning rally.

"I told them, you just have to learn to win in those close situations," Gulick said. "It's not a loss I wanted to take."

In the second game Baker took a 3-0 lead early, but Mac-Hi had another big inning — five runs in the fourth to take a 10-6 lead — and the Pioneers held on to complete the sweep with an 11-8 win.

Gulick said he was happy with his team's response to the extreme disappointment of how the first game ended.

"We got three runs on the board right out of the gate," he said. "I thought we showed great growth with the way we went into game two."

Game one

After a scoreless first inning for both teams, Baker's



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Kaycee Cuzick pitches against Burns on Friday, April 1, 2022, at the Baker Sports Complex.

bats awakened in the second inning as the Bulldogs scored seven runs.

The first three hitters reached base, Kaycee Cuzick and Candace Peterson with singles, and Kaci Anderson with a walk. Courtesy runner Kaydence Thomas scored the first run of the game on Oakley Anderson's ground ball. Kaci

Anderson scored on a wild pitch, and Sydney Fry drove in Peterson with a single to boost Baker's lead to 3-0.

Oakley Anderson scored on Salissa Chesterman's ground-out. With two outs, Brooklyn Rayl and Cuzick each had an RBI single, and Kaci Anderson drove in the seventh run with a double.

Mac-Hi cut the lead to 7-2 with two runs in the fifth, and Gulick said the Pioneers would have scored more in that inning and in the sixth if not for a pair of key defensive plays in the outfield.

In the fifth, Fry ended the inning with a tough catch in right field.

And with the bases loaded and two outs in the sixth, Chesterman made a play in left field that likely saved two runs. "We played good softball until the last inning," Gulick said.

Cuzick was dominant in the circle through six innings. She had 13 strikeouts. At the plate she was 3 for 4 with a double, triple and 2 RBIs. Fry was also 3 for 4 with an RBI. Kaci Anderson was 1 for 3 with 2 RBIs, and Makayla Rabourne was 2 for 3.

Game two

After taking the quick 3-0 lead, Baker gave up three runs in the bottom of the first, and Mac-Hi took a 5-3 lead with two more runs in the second.

But the Bulldogs rallied to lead 6-5 after four innings. Rayl had an RBI single and Aldrich stole home in the fourth to give Baker the lead.

Another big inning proved costly, though, as the Pioneers responded with five runs in the bottom of the fourth.

Two runners scored on a wild pitch to give Mac-Hi a 7-6 lead, and the Pioneers scored four more runs with two outs.

Baker cut the lead to 11-8 in the sixth on Aldrich's RBI double and Rabourne's run-scoring single, but the Bulldogs couldn't get anything going in the seventh.

Rabourne was 3 for 3 with two RBIs, Cuzick 2 for 3 with two RBIs, Aldrich 3 for 4 with an RBI, Rayl 2 for 4 with an RBI, and Fry had two more hits.

Baker outit Mac-Hi in both games — 11 to 9 in the first and 13 to 7 in the second. "We hit the ball very well all day," Gulick said. "Nine and eight runs is enough to win most games."

He's confident those wins will come if Baker can cut back on walks and errors. The Bulldogs gave up 11 walks to Mac-Hi's two in the second game, and committed eight errors while the Pioneers had only one miscue in the field.

Gulick said several of Baker's walks in the second game were on close calls at the plate.

He credited Rayl, who wasn't expecting to pitch, for throwing very well to start the second game before giving way to Cuzick in the fourth inning.

Baker, 4-4 on the season, will travel to Nyssa on Monday, April 11, for a single game at 2 p.m. PDT, and then head to Marsing, Idaho, on Wednesday, April 13, with the first pitch set for 4 p.m. PDT.

Baker returns to GOL play on Friday, April 15, playing host to Ontario in a double-header starting at 2 p.m.

Opening Day in MLB: New No. 21 patches, NL DHs and Guardians

BY BEN WALKER

AP Baseball Writer

Andrew McCutchen got the first hit of the year, up against the still-dormant ivy at Wrigley Field. He delivered as a National League designated hitter. Wearing a Roberto Clemente No. 21 patch, too.

A little later on opening day, Nico Hoerner hit the first home run of 2022. He connected off a pitcher who used an electronic wristband to receive his signals from the catcher.

Soon after that, in another yard, the Cleveland Guardians took the field for the first time.

New season, and definitely a new look all across Major League Baseball.

And if the weather wasn't quite summer-like in some spots Thursday, April 7, well, who cares?

"It might be cold, it might be windy. But it's opening day," Cardinals fan Mary Welsh of Belleville, Illinois, said at Busch Stadium before St. Louis hosted Pittsburgh.

Out near Disneyland, where temperatures neared 100 degrees, AL MVP Shohei Ohtani flashed his 100 mph heat and took his swings for the Los Angeles Angels.

Late night in Phoenix, after Padres starter Yu Darvish threw six no-hit innings, rookie Seth Beer cracked a three-run homer in the ninth to give Arizona a comeback win on National Beer Day in the United States.

No joke.

In Atlanta, the Braves celebrated their World Series championship with a pregame parade. At every ballpark, umpires started to get their say —

this year, they've joined referees from other sports in announcing replay review decisions to the crowd.

As seats filled up in rainy Washington, chilly Kansas City and more, it seemed fans decided the 99-day owners' lock-out that delayed spring training and pushed back opening day by a week wouldn't deter them from coming back.

Wearing an Ernie Banks jersey, 23-year-old Philip Lijewski from Guthrie, Oklahoma, enjoyed the view at Wrigley as the Chicago Cubs and Milwaukee Brewers loosened up. He said the anger and acrimony over the labor strife didn't dampen his enthusiasm for the game.

"Not really," Lijewski said. "I'm glad that they came to a conclusion sooner rather than later. I was bummed that we didn't get to do it April 4. But it's April 7, so not too many days after."

More than eight months after announcing a new change, Cleveland played its first regular-season game as the Guardians. Known as the Indians since 1915, the club made the switch in the interest of social justice.

Cleveland wore its road uniforms for the game in Kansas City, with the city name on the jersey.

"Supporting the city is what it comes down to," star pitcher Shane Bieber said a day before the opener. "Going out there with my teammates, doing it the right way is really all we can do. It was a little bit different getting used to the change, but I'd say we're all getting used to it day by day."

Plenty of stars from other sports were at Kauffman Sta-

dium to see top prospect Bobby Witt Jr. and the Royals beat the Guardians 3-1. Kansas City Chiefs coach Andy Reid and several of his players were in attendance, as were members of the Kansas basketball team, which rallied past North Carolina in the men's NCAA championship game Monday night in New Orleans.

A strong wind made it seem much colder than the game-time temperature of 47 degrees, and intermittent drizzle turned to streaking pellets of ice during the national anthem.

After earlier rainouts at Yankee Stadium and Target Field, the Brewers-Cubs game became the first one of the season.

It was a raw 44 degrees when Chicago right-hander Kyle Hendricks threw the first pitch, which Kolten Wong lofted for a wind-blown pop-out.

McCutchen sliced a double in the second inning for the season's first hit, then singled and scored in the fourth for the first run. The 2013 NL MVP, the 35-year-old McCutchen was Milwaukee's designated hitter.

As part of the MLB labor deal, the National League has now permanently adopted the designated hitter — the American League began using it in 1973, and the NL added it for the pandemic-shortened 2020 season before going back to letting pitchers hit last year.

Before the Cubs batted in the bottom of the third, the videoboard in left field showed a clip dedicated to pitchers hitting with Sarah McLachlan's "I Will Remember You" serving as the soundtrack.

"Thank you pitchers. See you in a pinch," it said at the end.

McCutchen is among several active Roberto Clemente Award winners who will wear No. 21 — the number worn by the late Pirates Hall of Famer — on the backs of their hats and helmets for the rest of their careers.

MLB said it was a "special tribute to his enduring legacy." The announcement was timed for the 50th anniversary of the year in which Clemente, the

Pittsburgh great from Puerto Rico, died in a plane crash while on a humanitarian relief effort.

"It's a privilege. An honor," said Nationals slugger Nelson Cruz, the most recipient of the Clemente award. "He means so much for baseball, in general. He was an example to follow — how to be professional, on and off the field. A remarkable player and a remarkable human being who lost his life trying to help others."

"He paid the ultimate price, and whatever we do is not enough," he said.

Hoerner launched the first homer, a two-run drive for the Cubs off NL Cy Young Award winner Corbin Burnes. Brewers catcher Omar Narváez and Burnes used the newly approved electronic pitch calling system — Narváez could push a button on his wristband to signal what he wanted thrown, without fear of wiggling his fingers and having the sign stolen.

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