

BAKER BASEBALL AT LA GRANDE

Bulldogs drop pair to Tigers

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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Baker's baseball team was about two steps away from doing something no other team had done to La Grande in a month.

Score a run. Which, of course, is a prerequisite to pulling off something even more important.

Winning. Baker should have scored the run both times, Baker coach Tim Smith said.

But it didn't happen either time.

"Disappointing," Smith said of the Bulldogs' failure to execute what he said is a pretty simple play in both the first and second innings of the second game of a doubleheader loss to the Tigers on Friday, May 13, at La Grande.

The Tigers went on to win 4-0 after beating Baker 8-0 in the first game.

La Grande improved to 23-1 overall and completed a perfect 12-0 mark in the Greater Oregon League. The Tigers, ranked fourth in Class 4A, have won 19 straight games and, more impressively, haven't given up a single run in 12 straight games, since a 7-5 win over Pendleton/Griswold on April 13.

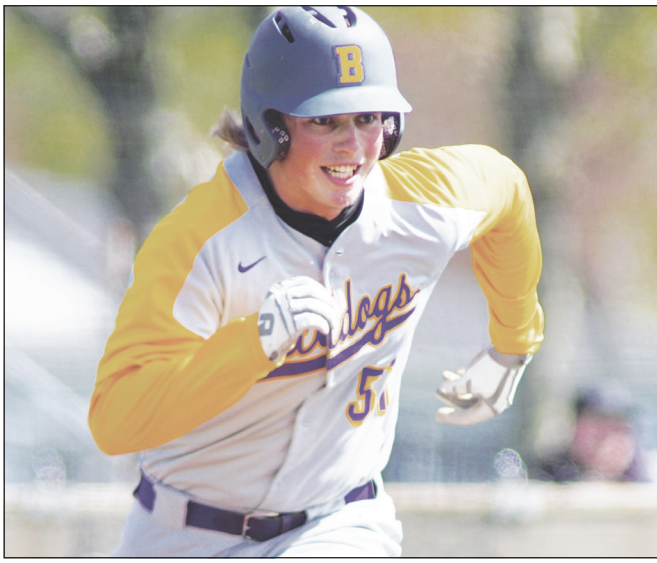
"It's crazy," Smith said of the Tigers' scoreless streak. "Ridiculous. You just don't see that."

Baker never really threatened to end the streak in the first game Friday. The Bulldogs had just two baserunners as La Grande pitcher Devin Bell threw a no-hitter, striking out 14.

Designated hitter Cody Skidgel, batting cleanup, would have been the first runner.

But he took a Bell fastball to the cheek leading off the second inning, and Smith had to substitute Aldo Duran as a pinch runner. Skidgel had a goose egg on his cheek but didn't sustain a concussion, and Smith said he hopes Skidgel will be able to play in Baker's playoff game later this week at the Baker Sports Complex.

"It didn't help to lose your number four hitter," Smith said. Hudson Spike drew the



Robert Hilson/Contributed Photo

Baker's Cody Skidgel hustles out of the batter's box on his second double of the afternoon on Saturday, April 2, 2022, at Seaside.

only walk against Bell, leading off the fourth inning, but he was stranded on second after advancing on Jaxon Logsdon's sacrifice.

Smith said Baker struggled to adjust to Bell's velocity. He didn't pitch against Baker in La Grande's 10-0, 16-0 doubleheader sweep at Baker on April 20.

The second game on Friday was different — or at least it could have been, Smith said.

Hayden Younger led off with a single against La Grande's Jace Schow, who allowed only one hit against the Bulldogs on April 20.

Younger was thrown out trying to steal second when Spike struck out, and La Grande had two outs.

But Logsdon and Logan Capon followed with singles, Logsdon advancing to third on Capon's hit, and Baker had runners at the corners with two outs.

That prompted Smith to call for a play that he said Baker has practiced.

Here's how it's supposed to happen: The runner at first races for second, with a goal of drawing a throw from the catcher and getting caught in a rundown. As soon as the catcher's throw passes the pitcher's mound, the runner at third is supposed to sprint toward

home plate. So long as the runner from third touches the plate before the other runner is tagged out, the run counts.

But Smith said Logsdon broke for home a tad too late, and Capon was tagged out just before Logsdon's foot touched the plate, negating the run.

"We should have scored easily," Smith said.

His frustration level rose when the exact same scenario played out in the very next inning.

With two outs in the top of the second, Silas Carter and Connor Chastain drew consecutive walks. Carter stole second and third to set up the same situation, with Baker runners at the corners.

This time, Carter touched home just after Chastain was tagged out in the rundown.

Either of those two runs, besides ending La Grande's month-long scoreless streak, might have put pressure on the Tigers, Smith said.

La Grande led just 1-0 after five innings, before breaking the game open with three runs in the bottom of the sixth. Cole Jorgensen led off with a double, and a hit batter and walk loaded the bases. La Grande scored runs on a walk, error and sacrifice fly.

Logsdon and Kai Ogan both drew walks in the top

GAME ONE

Baker 0 0 0 0 0 0—0
LG 1 0 0 2 5 0 x—8
Carter and Logsdon. Bell and Jorgensen.

GAME TWO

Baker 0 0 0 0 0 0—0
LG 0 0 1 0 0 3 x—4
Capon and Logsdon. Schow, Williams (6) and Jorgensen.

of the seventh, but both were stranded as the game ended.

Despite the two losses, Smith said he was generally satisfied with Baker's performance.

"I was happy with our day," he said. "We certainly have momentum, I feel like, even though we lost twice."

Smith said Baker's pitching and defense were stellar, with Carter throwing a complete game in the first game, and Capon doing the same in the second game. Carter allowed six hits, and Capon three. Baker committed only one error in the first game, and three in the second.

La Grande's four runs in the second game was the Tigers' fewest since its only loss, 5-2 to Dakota Ridge of Colorado on March 23 in Arizona.

"Our pitching is spot on right now," Smith said. "And we played better defensively (compared with the April 20 doubleheader against La Grande, when Baker committed seven errors)."

Baker, which completed its regular season with a 14-11 record, and 8-4 in the Greater Oregon League, likely will play host to either Estacada or Elmira. That game will most likely be on Saturday, May 21, Smith said. However, there is a possibility that the game could be Thursday, May 19, or Friday, May 20.

The opponent, and game time, will be decided Tuesday night, May 17.

"Hopefully we can come out and hit the ball," Smith said. "Offensively we've still got work to do."

BAKER SOFTBALL AT LA GRANDE

Baker battles but comes up short

BY IAN CRAWFORD

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The Baker softball team played excellent defense behind pitcher Kaycee Cuzick against league-leading La Grande, but the Bulldogs struggled on offense in a 2-0 loss in the first game of a doubleheader Friday, May 13, at La Grande.

The dam burst in the second game as the Tigers, who finished 11-1 in Greater Oregon League play and are ranked second in the state, scored 13 runs in the first inning and went on to win 18-0 in three innings.

Baker, which dropped to 8-13 on the season and 2-10 in the GOL, could potentially qualify for the Class 4A playoffs. Coach Sonny Gulick said he would learn the Bulldogs' fate Tuesday night, May 17.

After losing to La Grande 8-1 and 22-1 in a doubleheader on April 22 at the Baker Sports Complex, the Bulldogs were much more competitive in the first game at La Grande.

"Game one was a pitchers' duel," Gulick said. "Kaycee had them off balance all day. Defense was outstanding. Our infield played almost flawless and kept us in the game behind Cuzick's and (Kaci) Anderson's stellar performance."

Baker committed only one error in a game that was scoreless until La Grande's Carlee Strand led off the fourth inning with a solo home run.

La Grande pitcher Grace Neer was dominant, getting 18 of the 21 outs on strikeouts and allowing just two hits, to Kaci Anderson and Alexis Rupel.

Neer struck out the first 10 batters.

Cuzick was Baker's first baserunner, drawing a walk — the only one Neer allowed — with two outs in the top of the fourth. Kaci Anderson followed with a single that

GAME ONE

Baker 0 0 0 0 0 0—0
LG 0 0 0 1 1 0 x—2
Cuzick and K. Anderson. Neer and Anderson.

GAME TWO

Baker 0 0 0 0—0
La Grande 13 5 x—18
Cuzick, Coley (1) and K. Anderson. Strand and Anderson, Meyer (3).

advanced courtesy runner Oakley Anderson to third.

But Neer ended the threat with a strikeout.

Baker had another scoring chance in the fifth inning when Rupel singled with one out, and Emrie Osborn was hit by a pitch with two outs, giving Baker two baserunners. But another Neer strikeout closed out the inning.

Kaci Anderson also reached base when she was hit by a pitch with two outs in the sixth, but Neer again finished the inning with a strikeout. She then struck out the side in the seventh to end the game.

The second game scarcely resembled the first.

Baker committed multiple errors early — and nine in just two innings — and La Grande batters took advantage.

"The hitters made adjustments and figured Kaycee out," Gulick said. "That's what happens when batters get enough opportunities to see pitches. Defensive miscues hindered our ability to get out of the first inning."

Brooklyn Rayl and Osborn each had a hit for Baker.



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