

BAKER VOLLEYBALL



Baker's Jozie Ramos tips the ball against the defense of Vale's Kinsey Meisinger on Tuesday, Sept. 27, 2022, in the Baker gym. Baker swept the Vikings in three sets.

Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Bulldogs sweep past Vale

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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Baker had no intention of playing another marathon volleyball match against Vale.

The Bulldogs avoided repeating that fate on Tuesday evening, Sept. 27 in the Baker gym with a convincing sweep of the visiting Vikings in a nonleague match, 25-23, 25-19, 25-16.

"Sweeping a team like Vale is very hard," Baker coach Ali Abrego said. "They're good. They don't make many mistakes and they swing hard."

The Bulldogs knew well what Vale was capable of after an Aug. 30 match, also in the Baker gym.

That night Baker rallied from a 2-1 set deficit to nip the Vikings 17-15 in the decisive fifth set of a nearly two-hour match.

Nothing so dramatic happened on Tuesday, as Baker controlled the match from the start in improving its season record to 11-2.

Vale, a Class 3A school, fell to 6-10. The Vikings swept La Grande, Baker's league rival, on Sept. 13.

Baker led 8-1 in the first set, prompting Vale coach Shannon Steele to call timeout.

But the break didn't interrupt the Bulldogs' momentum, as Vale struggled to handle senior Taylor Dalton's well-placed serves. Baker increased its lead to 10-1, and the Bulldogs led 20-10 after a kill by senior Jozie Ramos that led to a second Vale timeout.

This time, though, the Vikings rallied, closing to within 23-20, and Abrego called timeout.

With Vale junior Joey Cleaver serving, the Vikings continued the rally, tying the score at 23.

But a Vale attack error gave Baker the lead at 24-23, and sophomore Taylor Churchfield's ace serve finished the set.

ished the set.

Baker started fast in the second set, leading 7-3, but Vale came back to take its first lead of the match, 16-15, on a block of a Ramos kill attempt. Abrego called timeout after Vale led 18-16.

It was the last time the Vikings were ahead.

Baker scored five straight points, taking a 19-18 lead on Ramos' kill and extending the lead to 23-18 before closing out the set.

The third set was anti-mantic, as Baker never trailed. Vale got as close as 14-13, but Baker scored five straight points and cruised from there.

Abrego said she was generally pleased with Baker's

play, although she was disappointed with Vale's rally in the first set.

"The first set shouldn't have been 25-23," she said. "But we overcame mentally and finished it."

Abrego said one of her main challenges is convincing her team to play with confidence, to trust their abilities.

"We have a problem with lacking confidence in ourselves even when we're doing good things," she said.

Abrego was gratified by the raucous Baker crowd, in particular the student section at the southwest corner of the gym.

"I haven't seen a student section that big," she said.

"Sweeping a team like Vale is very hard. They're good. They don't make many mistakes and they swing hard."

— Ali Abrego, Baker coach

BAKER GIRLS SOCCER



Ian Crawford/Baker City Herald

Baker's Jaycee Gray (in black), seen here in an earlier match, had two of Baker's three goals in a 3-2 win at Weiser on Sept. 26, 2022.

Bulldogs top Weiser Wolverines 3-2

BY IAN CRAWFORD

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The Baker girls soccer team's second match this season against Weiser was a lot tougher than the first.

The Bulldogs blanked Weiser 4-0 on Sept. 19 at the Sports Complex.

But the rematch on Monday, Sept. 26 at Weiser was quite different, with the teams playing to a scoreless tie until late in the first half.

And when the first shot found the net, it was the home Wolverines taking a 1-0 lead.

"Played almost the whole half before anyone made it onto the scoreboard, with Weiser taking a great shot that couldn't be stopped," Baker coach Robbie Langrell said.

But Baker rebounded in the second half.

Senior Brooklyn Jaca scored first to tie the score, and freshman Jaycee Gray scored twice.

Langrell said one of Gray's goals was on an assist from a corner kick by senior Sydnee Pierce.

Gray netted her other goal on a breakaway.

While Baker's offense was taking control in the second half, Langrell said the Bulldog defenders, including seniors Skye Smith, Maddy Yencopal and Kaci Anderson, and freshman Mary Schwartz were stellar.

Langrell also praised sophomore Oakley Anderson, who has moved into the goalie position after an injury to Neah Thomas.

"Oakley Anderson has stepped up as our new goalie and is playing fantastic despite the trial by fire and coming into the position so unexpectedly," Langrell said.

"She had some great saves this game, but that one was impossible to get to."

Weiser added a second goal in the second half but the Bulldogs held on for the win to improve to 4-3-1 on the season.

Baker returns to Greater Oregon League play on Thursday, Sept. 29, taking on the Pendleton Buckaroos at 6 p.m. at the Sports Complex.

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