

Lady Bulldogs Win Regionals/Advance to Sub-State By Judy Rogers

The undefeated Golden Plains Lady Bulldogs won the Rexford regional on February 24 to advance to Sub-State in Wakeeney. This was the first time any of the girls had to play in a regional tournament to advance to sub-state play since the state change in the 1A basketball playoff system.

The Dogs were seeded #1 in the tournament so received a bye for the quarter final round. They played Cheylin for the semi-finals on Thursday, February 21. They had played the Lady Cougars twice this season and knew they would have to play some of their best ball to defeat them a third time.

The girls stepped on the court with determination and put up a 9-0 lead before the Cougars could score. Five more from sophomore Brooke Stoll gave the Dogs a 14-2 lead at the end of the first. They Dogs extended the lead to 14-2 early in the second. The Cougars went on an 9 point run to close the spread. KayCee Miller hit two free throws to make the half time score 20-11 in favor of the Bulldogs.

The Bulldogs came out of the half ready to put the game away. They posted up 23 points in the third as their aggressive defense held the Cougars to 7. The girls finished the game with an additional 10 in the fourth for the 53-23 win. This victory earned them a spot in the championship game against Rawlins County/Atwood and a spot in sub-state.

Bulldog points came from Brooke Stoll 14, Kassie Miller 11, KayCee Miller 9, Mabel Lugo 9, Ashley Stoll 6, Taryn Fleckenstein 2, and Zoey Hillis 2. "I thought we played very well as a team," said Kassie Miller. "Everyone worked and played hard. We were aggressive on defense and offense working the ball and playing the way we like." "It was exciting," added Mabel Lugo. "I was proud of the way everyone stepped up to get the win so we can advance to Sub-State."

The championship game was moved to Sunday, February 24, due to the weather. The Bulldogs hosted Rawlins County from Atwood to determine which team would claim the regional championship. The girls had easily defeated the Buffaloes in Atwood less than two weeks earlier but knew the Buffaloes would be ready to fight to claim the regional title.

This aggressive game stayed tied throughout the first ending the quarter 8-8. The Lady Bulldogs pulled ahead 17-13 by the half but the Buffaloes hit a three to bring it to within one at the start of the third. Midway through the quarter, Atwood pulled ahead by one. Two shots by junior Mabel Lugo put the Dogs back on top. A late quarter basket from Atwood gave the Buffaloes the lead 26-25 going into the fourth.

The Bulldogs pulled back ahead to start the final quarter only to have the Buffaloes tie it back up. Both teams played with intensity as the Dogs would extend their lead to 36-35 with less than a minute to play. A free throw from KayCee Miller extended the lead to two. With 5.4 seconds remaining, Mabel Lugo went to the line and made both shots to give the Bulldogs the Regional Championship 39-35.

KayCee Miller led the Bulldogs with 14 points. Mabel Lugo added 10, Ashley Stoll 8, Kassie Miller 5, and Brooke Stoll 2. "This was our first year to play in regionals," said KayCee Miller. "I feel knowing that out of all the 1A teams in the state, it is an accomplishment for those teams that advanced out of regionals. Sub-State will be more of a challenge. This win showed our team that we can play tough in a close game."

"The home crowd was a tremendous support," added senior Amanda Cheney. "Especially with the rescheduled game. It was great to play at home. Let's keep it up in Sub-State!"