

Lady Bulldogs Win Healy Tournament

By Judy Rogers

The Golden Plains Lady Bulldogs went undefeated in the first tournament of the season in Healy on August 29 winning the season opener for the second year in a row. "I thought we played really well for our first games of the season," said Carli Nieman, "and especially improved throughout the day. I missed our fans but I think our team really pulled together and did a great job of supporting everyone throughout the day."

They defeated Triplains/Brewster, Western Plains/Healy, and Rolla in pool play to earn a spot in the semi-finals. Following a close three-set win against Syracuse, the girls advanced to play Otis-Bison in the championship game defeating them in two sets for the repeat win.

The first game of pool play was against the Lady Titans from Triplains/Brewster. The game got off to a great start with ACE serves by Ashley Stoll and strong kills from Morgan Wark. There was some confusion on the court in the beginning, but once things were sorted out, the Bulldogs held on to their early lead to win the first set 25-10. The Bulldogs kept the pace in the second set with 7 ACE serves from Ashley Stoll to give them a 10-2 lead. The Titans fought back but another 8 consecutive serves from Carli Nieman kept the Dogs in the lead for the 25-10 win. "For the most part I think our serves went pretty well," said Ashley Stoll. "There were a few rough patches, but with more practice and endurance I think it will go much smoother!"

The second game of pool play was against the Western Plains/Healy Bobcats. The Dogs again took an early lead with their strong serves and front line attacks. The Bobcats were determined and tied the game up at 18. The Dogs held strong for the win 25-18. The second set was another close game as the Bulldogs lost their momentum behind the serve line. The Bobcats kept the game tied throughout. With a 23-23 score, the Bulldogs regained the serve and a final point gave them the win 25-23. "WPH is so scrappy," added Kassie Miller. "It was hard to read the ball."

For the final game of pool play, the Bulldogs faced the Rolla Pirates. The Bulldogs again took an early lead with big time blocks from Sidney Taylor and repeated kills from Wark. The Dogs won the first set 25-13. The Dogs took another lead early in the second set but Rolla picked up their pace to bring the game to within 4. Brooke Stoll took over the serve following a big time kill from Carli Nieman. Rolla fought back once again but a final serve from McHaley Carter gave the Dogs the 25-11 win and the #1 seed coming out of their pool.

"I am very proud of how all of the girls were willing to step in at any time," said Brooke Stoll. "Every girl was a big part of success, whether they were on the court the whole day or doing an awesome job cheering on the bench. Our entire team did a great job all day of supporting one another which helped to lead to our success!"

The GP girls faced off against the Syracuse Bulldogs for the semi finals. This game was more challenging for both teams as the gym heated up and fatigue set in. Syracuse opened with the serve but the GP girls quickly took the lead. Syracuse fought back and the game remained close throughout with a lot of long rallies. The GP girls pulled ahead 22-16 only to have Syracuse come back to tie it up at 23, then again at 24 and at 25. Syracuse pulled ahead at the end to win the set 27-25.

Golden Plains served an ACE by Brooke Stoll to start the second set. Kassie Miller kept back setting Morgan Wark for the kill as Golden Plains captured and held the lead 18-7. Syracuse didn't give up closing the spread but GP held on to win the set 25-17 sending the game into a third set. Golden Plains again gained the lead and held on to win the set and the match 25-19 along with a place in the championship game. "We've been working on the back set all summer," said Miller. "We feel it's a good way to throw the other team off."

The championship game was between the Golden Plains Bulldogs and the Otis-Bison Cougars for the third year in a row. The Cougars won it in 2018, but the Bulldogs won in 2019. The Cougars took an early lead but with serves from Rayna Taylor, the Dogs tied the game up. An attack by Miller gave the Dogs the lead. Carli Nieman went on a six point run before the Cougars called a time out. The Bulldogs maintained their lead and a final point served by Breanna Rath gave the Bulldogs the win in the first set 25-16. The Bulldogs took another strong lead in the second set and maintained the lead for the win 25-9 and the tournament championship.

"OB has been a tough competition for us so we went in with a lot of positive attitude and played with intensity," said Morgan Wark. "It was great to win again!" The Lady Bulldogs will play their first regular season games on September 1 in Brewster with games against Triplains/Brewster, Logan, and Ness City. Varsity and JV matches begin at 3:00 pm.