

## Lady Bulldogs "Prove 'Em Wrong"

By Judy Rogers

"Prove 'Em Wrong" was the motto for the Golden Plains Lady Bulldogs throughout the season. The Lady Bulldogs had qualified for the state tournament last year and there was doubt that they could repeat again this year. The girls' goal was to qualify again and "Prove 'Em Wrong."

The Golden Plains Lady Bulldogs did just that as they not only qualified, but placed fourth in the Kansas State Class 1A Division II basketball tournament in Dodge City on March 11. "We strived to get better each every practice to reach our goal to get to state," said Kaylie Schaben, junior. "We all gained lots of experience and had a fun, successful season, and made memories along the way."

The girls' season started off with a loss to Wheatland/Grinnell who would eventually place second at state. They went undefeated at the Sagebrush tournament only to lose to Stockton in early January. Stockton's girls also qualified for the 1A DI state tournament. They then went on a 7 game win streak only to fall to Weskan early in the league tournament. Another 9 game streak, including a sub-state championship win over Weskan, proved the doubters wrong as they earned a spot at state.

The Lady 'Dogs were the #3 seed at state and won their quarter final game over Hutchinson Central Christian on Wednesday. This faced them off against league opponent Wheatland/Grinnell for the semi-finals.

The girls played a defensive game throughout the first with neither team getting a shot in the first three minutes before Golden Plains senior Morgan Ritter dropped the first basket of the game. The 'Hawks managed a three pointer to lead 3-2 at the end of the quarter.

The Bulldogs regained the lead at the free throw line in the second. With shots from senior Gabrielle Schiltz and sophomore KayCee Miller, the 'Dogs advanced the score to trail by two 12-14 at the half.

The 'Hawks opened up their lead in the third to 32-22, but the Lady 'Dogs didn't give up. They continued to work throughout the fourth as they narrowed the spread to seven only to have the 'Hawks open it back up. Undaunted, the 'Dogs got it down to a four point game with a minute and half to play. A free throw from Schiltz made it a three-point game.

The 'Hawks answered to make it a spread of five. Junior Kaylie Schaben made a free throw to narrow it to four. With 11.8 seconds to play, a basket by freshman Mabel Lugo closed it to two.

The 'Hawks knocked the ball out of bounds on the inbound play giving it back to the Bulldogs. With 2.8 seconds to play, the Bulldogs had the ball. Schiltz gave it a final throw toward the basket, but as it went wide, the buzzer sounded to give the Thunderhawks the 44-41 win and a slot in the championship game.

Gabrielle Schiltz finished the game with 20 points along with 9 from junior Maggi Nieman, KayCee Miller 5, Morgan Ritter 4, Mabel Lugo 2, and Kaylie Scaben 1.

The girls played their final game of the tournament, and their season, against the Otis-Bison Lady Cougars at noon on Saturday. They girls again played a defensive first quarter, but couldn't get any shots to fall as the Cougars scored one basket along with another at the buzzer to lead the 'Dogs 4-0 at the end of the first.

The Cougars continued to dominate the offense gaining a 10-0 lead before Schiltz made a Bulldogs basket with 3:31 until the half. She added two free throws along with a free shot from Mabel Lugo to trail 7-16 at half time.

The Bulldogs finally got their offense going in the second half as they outscored the Cougars in each of the third and fourth quarters. They steadily worked away on the Cougars lead in the third to end the quarter trailing 21-29. Shooting consistently on the free throw line, the Bulldogs narrowed the spread to lose the game 34-41 for fourth place.

The Bulldogs made 14 of their 18 free throws as Miller and Schiltz ended the game with 10 points apiece. Lugo made 6, Ritter 5, and Nieman 3.

The Bulldogs finished their season with a final record of 21-5. The three seniors—Gabrielle Schiltz, Morgan Ritter, and Carmen Sepulveda—have played in the state tournament three of their four years of high school. They placed second their freshman year, were sub-state runner-up their sophomore year, qualified for state their junior year, and placed fourth their senior year.

“I put on my Bulldog uniform for the last time today,” said Ritter, “and I couldn't be more proud of all that my team has accomplished this year. It's been such a blessing to be a Lady Bulldog. There were many people who thought that we would struggle this year, but my girls and I were able to prove them wrong.” “Ending up 4th in the state tournament isn't a bad way to end my last season at Golden Plains High School,” continued Ritter. “Thank you to everyone that supported us throughout this season! #foreverabulldog #PEW”

“Playing for the Golden Plains Bulldogs is something I will always be proud to say,” added Gabrielle Schiltz. “This year was by far the best season of basketball I have played just because we were all a family no matter if it was a win or a loss at the end of the game.” “I hope I was able to be a great leader for the younger players,” continued Schiltz. “I know I will be supporting them next season and many more to come no matter what.”

“Four years went by way too fast!” exclaimed Sepulveda. “Thank you to everyone who has shown support through out the years. It's been a crazy ride but I wouldn't change it for the world. Once a Bulldog, always a Bulldog.”

The Bulldogs will return juniors Kaylie Schaben, Maggi Nieman, and Jennifer Esparza and sophomores Amanda Cheney and KayCee Miller along with several freshmen including Mabel Lugo. “It was a really fun season,” said Miller. We all became really close during the season and overcame so many obstacles. I would like to thank all three seniors for their work and leadership my two years of high school ball. I will definitely miss playing with them. We had a good season and are proud to have fourth place.” “I'm grateful for all the support of the fans and cheerleaders cheering us on,” added Maggi Nieman. “I'm excited for next year.”