

Middle School Girls Finish Season with Enthusiasm

By Judy Rogers

The Golden Plains Middle School girls basketball teams finished their season in mid-February at the Western Kansas Liberty League Tournament in Brewster. Both A and B teams placed third with one loss and one win at the tournament, winning their final game of the season.

The A-Team had 10 wins and 4 losses during the year with two of the losses going to Northern Valley by 13 points and two going to Grinnell/Wheatland by 7 points. The B-team girls had 6 wins and 6 losses as they gained experience on the floor. “This was one of the most enjoyable seasons I’ve had as a basketball coach,” said head coach Travis Smith. “The girls worked hard every single day and always seemed to enjoy practices and games.”

The girls discovered numerous strengths as individuals and as a team. “Our greatest strength was our ability to be coached,” added Smith. “The girls were, for the most part, always eager to learn and change when needed.” Paris Bailey, 7th grade, felt that their height helped them reach for the ball better, while most of the girls agreed defense was a team strength. “We had good defense throughout the whole year,” said KayCee Miller, 7th grade, “We moved together and talked.” Maggi Nieman, 8th grade, thought the team’s “ability to pull together when it counted” was also a strength. Mabel Lugo agreed, “Working as a team and effort was a strength because if we didn’t work as a team, the effort of our whole team would go down.”

The girls did face some challenges during the season. “We struggled as a team to stay positive,” said Nieman. “We overcame that by encouraging each other.” Miller added, “We had trouble moving the ball and having patience.” Karri Schaben felt that “The team’s greatest challenge was inbounds plays, because every time we would get two mixed up or run the wrong one!” “We also couldn’t make our free throws at the beginning,” said Amanda Cheney, “but we worked on it during practice and ended up doing better.” “Our greatest challenge,” said Coach Smith, “was ourselves. We were as good as the two teams that beat us this year, but we could not overcome it in our minds.”

The girls are very enthusiastic about their experiences and are looking forward to next year’s season as some will advance to the high school level. Many of them have set their personal goal to improve their shooting before next year. Karri Schaben plans to “work harder at defense and hustling” so she can sub in on A-team as a 7th grader. KayCee Miller’s goal is to “be as good as were this year and to be in the Championship game at the tournament.” Coach Smith encourages them to continue to get better. “Every player has something they can do to get better over the summer.”

Lugo said, “This was the best basketball season I ever had!!!!” Kaylie Schaben, 8th grade, who plans to play basketball in high school, added, “I had a blast with all the girls, and Mr. Smith, and Parker (*assistant coach Parker Christensen*). Both A and B team did great this year. I wish it wasn’t over.” “We had a blast learning everything with our friends,” added Cheney. Maggi Nieman, 8th grade, also plans to play in high school. Her goal is to “get better at my free throws and drive and shoot effectively.” “I can’t wait for next year to come!” said Jaiden Koerperich, “It was a great experience to work as a team and play such a fun sport. I want to practice as hard as I can next year so then I could be as good as my older sister was in middle school.

“I would like to thank everyone who followed us all over Northwest Kansas this year,” concluded Smith. “It was nice to have such a great crowd everywhere we went. I would also like to thank the girls for their hard work and determination.”