

Lady Bulldogs Win Sub-State By Judy Rogers

The Golden Plains Lady Bulldogs remained undefeated following two wins at the Sharon Springs Sub-State to qualify for the state tournament. The girls received a bye in the quarter-finals, defeated Dighton 53-36 in the semi-finals, then came from behind to beat Wheatland/Grinnell 46-45 for the Championship.

The Lady Bulldogs were the only team in the state holding an undefeated record entering Sub-State, which gave them the bye. Dighton had defeated Greeley County to advance to the semi-finals against the Bulldogs. Junior Sidney Taylor opened the game up for the Bulldogs only to have the Hornets match it. She added another bucket along with a 3 by junior Breanna Rath lead the game. The Hornets matched baskets until senior Kassie Miller made a couple of shots along with free throws from senior Morgan Wark to give GP the lead 13-8 at the end of the first.

The Bulldogs had found their rhythm and were unstoppable in the second as seniors Rayna Taylor and Carli Nieman joined in to extend the Bulldog lead to 24-8 with just under 2 minutes remaining in the quarter. The Hornets finally got a couple shots to fall but the Dogs held onto the lead 26-14 at the half.

The Lady Bulldogs came back in the second and continued to play a consistent game as both Taylor girls and Miller added another 14 for the Dogs. Dighton worked hard but GP's strong defense held them to 9. Miller hit 7 out of 10 free throws in the fourth along with additional shots from both Sidney and Rayna Taylor to finish the game with the 53-36 win over the Hornets.

Three Lady Bulldogs were in double figures as Miller finished the game with 20 points along with Sidney Taylor 14 and Rayna Taylor 12. Breanna Rath added 3, Carli Nieman 2, and Morgan Wark 2.

The win over Dighton advanced the Lady Bulldogs to the championship game against Wheatland/Grinnell. The girls had defeated the Thunderhawks for the WKLL championship and again in the regular season but knew they would still face a worthy opponent.

The Lady Thunderhawks opened the game with a 3. Kassie Miller answered with two quick buckets but the Hawks continued to score. Nieman put in an and-one along with a basket by Rayna Taylor, but the Hawks controlled the quarter and held a 16-9 lead at the end of the first.

Two quick baskets from Rayna Taylor and Sidney Taylor brought the Bulldogs within 3. The Hawks answered but the Dogs kept working the ball to outscore the Hawks 13-11 but the Hawks still held the lead 27-22 at the half.

The Dogs came back into the third with determination to fight for the win. The girls hit 5 of 6 free throws plus a couple of baskets tie the game up at 31 with a minute left in the third. The Hawks hit a late quarter baskets to lead 33-31 going into the fourth.

The intensity of the game continued throughout the entire final quarter. The Hawks opened the fourth with a quick 5. Sidney Taylor hit a shot to add to the GP side of the board. A free throw from Miller put the game within 5. Wheatland again extended their lead only the have the Bulldogs answer with two easy free shots from Jordyn Fleckenstein.

With less than half the quarter to go, Breanna Rath stepped up and hit a basket, two free throws, and a three pointer to give the Dogs their first lead of the game 43-41 with 3 minutes left to play.

The Hawks instantly tied the game up, then pulled ahead with a couple of their own free shots. Miller hit a free throw with 1:20 to go as the Dogs trailed by one 44-45. Miller hit a final basket with 45 seconds left on the clock to give Golden Plains the lead 46-45. The girls continued to fight back and forth for the remainder of the time but the Dogs held on for the win, the Sub-State Championship and a spot in the state tournament 46-45.

Miller finished the game with 15 points, Rath 9, Sidney Taylor 7, Fleckenstein 6, Rayna Taylor 6, and Nieman 3. “The game was very tough,” said Rayna Taylor, “but we played all the way to the end never giving up.” The Lady Bulldogs advance to the state tournament for the 11th time in school history. They will play the Bucklin Red Aces in the quarter-finals on March 10 in Great Bend.