

Lady Bulldogs Place Second at State By Judy Rogers

The Golden Plains Lady Bulldogs placed second in the Kansas Class 1A Division II state basketball tournament in Great Bend on March 12. This is the third time in Golden Plains High School history that the girls finished as state runner-up. They also placed second in 1974 and 2014. The Lady Bulldogs finished third last year.

The Lady Bulldogs entered the tournament as the #1 seed with a record of 22-0 as the only undefeated team in the tournament. They took on the #8 seeded Bucklin Red Aces on Thursday, March 10, having traveled to Great Bend the night before to avoid the snow. Despite the sparse crowd due to the weather, the Lady Bulldogs were no less determined to advance as they opened the game with a 6-0 run.

The girls continued to work hard as they shot well to gain a 20-8 lead by the end of the first. Their fierce defense held the Aces to only 5 points in the second while the Dogs added 9 for a 29-13 half time lead.

Senior Rayna Taylor continued to shoot fire from behind the three as did junior Breanna Rath in the third leading the Bulldogs to an additional 10 in the third quarter. The Aces added 8 as the Dogs maintained their solid lead 39-21. The Lady Dogs were patient throughout the game, and even more so in the fourth as they finished with a 49-28 win over the Red Aces to advance to the semi-finals on Friday.

Rayna Taylor led the Bulldogs with 20 points, including 5 three-pointers. Kassie Miller added 13 and Breanna Rath 7. Jordyn Fleckenstein and Sidney Taylor each added 4 and Morgan Wark 1. Wark led with 9 rebounds, Fleckenstein 5, Carli Nieman 4, Miller 3, Rath 2, Rayna Taylor 2, and Sidney Taylor and Anette Hernandez with 1 each. Miller handed out 5 assists along with 2 each by S. Taylor, Rath, and Wark and 1 by Fleckenstein. Miller had 8 steals, Rath 2, R. Taylor 2, and Wark 1.

The Semi-Final game was held on Friday, March 11, against the Hutchinson-Central Christian Cougars. With a full crowd of fans on hand to support them, the Lady Bulldogs got off to another great 5-0 start before the Cougars could get a basket. They went on a 7 point run as the Cougars finally got into the offense near the end of the first to finish 12-8 in favor of Golden Plains.

Once they found the basket the Cougars took advantage and added another 8 in the second while holding the Bulldogs to 4—all from sophomore [Jordyn Fleckenstein](#). The girls were all tied up at 16 at the half. The Dogs came back in the third with additional determination as their defense held the Cougars to 2 while the offense added 8 to lead 24-18 at the end of the third.

The Lady Bulldogs finished the game with 9 additional points allowing 5 to win the game 33-23 and a spot in the championship game on Saturday. Fleckenstein led the Bulldogs with 8 total points. Kassie Miller and R. Taylor each added 6, Rath 5, Wark 4, and S. Taylor and Nieman with 2 each. Rath and Miller each had 3 assists while S. Taylor and Wark each had 1. Miller pulled down 9 rebounds, S. Taylor 5, Fleckenstein 4, R. Taylor 3, and 1 each from Rath, Wark, and Nieman. Miller stole the ball 6 times and R. Taylor and Wark each had 2 steals.

The girls Championship game was the final game of the tournament on Saturday, March 12. The Bulldogs faced the Central Plains Oilers for the championship. They had

lost to the 8-year consecutive state champions Oilers last year in the semi-finals so they knew they had to bring it their all once again.

The Oilers jumped out to a 5-0 lead as Kassie Miller hit the first shot for the Bulldogs. The Oilers continued to add in points but baskets by [Jordyn Fleckenstein](#) and Carli Nieman closed the gap to finish the first trailing the Oilers 6-11.

The Bulldogs continued to work through the second quarter with a three from Breanna Rath. The Oilers added a three and a free throw but the Bulldogs shut them down and added points from Miller and Nieman to close the game to 16-18. A late-quarter three from Rath gave the Bulldogs the lead 19-18 at the half.

The Oilers tied the game up with a free throw to start the third then pulled ahead only to have a basket from Fleckenstein tie the game back up at 21. Another 3 from Rath put the Dogs in the lead once more. Both teams fought hard and tied the game up again at 26. The Oilers pulled ahead by 4 but two free throws and a basket by Miller gave the Dogs a 33-31 lead. The Oilers hit a final basket to tie the game up at 33 by the buzzer.

The Oilers took over in the fourth quarter pulling ahead by 11. Miller was a leader for the Dogs as she put in a basket and three consecutive free throws for the only Bulldog points in the quarter. The Oilers added four more to win the game 50-38 over the Bulldogs for their 8th consecutive championship as the Bulldogs placed runner-up.

Miller finished her senior season with 19 points. Rath added 9, Fleckenstein 6, and Nieman 4. Nieman had 7 rebounds, Fleckenstein 5, Miller, R. Taylor, and Wark 4 each, S. Taylor 2, and Rath and Amie Cheney 1 apiece. R. Taylor had 3 assists, Wark 2, Rath, Miller and Fleckenstein 1 each. Miller had 2 steals, and Rath, Wark, and Nieman each had 1.

The Lady Bulldogs finished their season with a 24-1 record for the fourth consecutive year. The senior girls are 96-4 for their high school career. They will graduate six senior players.

”This last year was definitely my favorite year!,” exclaimed Kassie Miller. “We entered the season with low expectations from the community but high expectations for ourselves. This team came together and became more than just a high school basketball team and for that I will forever be thankful. I also was very fortunate to have another season with my sister, KayCee, as we only had one season to play together. Thank you to all my teammates throughout the years, coaches, and parents and fans for their continued support!

“I had lots of fun this season,” said Rayna Taylor. “Being my last, I saw myself and all of my teammates improve through the season and last year’s. I couldn’t have asked for a better group of girls to spend the last few days of my season with! I am very thankful for our Coaches and how much they helped me improve as a player all four years. I am also thankful for my family and all of our fans for how much they encouraged me and the team through the season, we couldn’t have done it without them!

“This basketball season was by far my favorite season,” added Morgan Wark. “This year we all came together as a team and did whatever we could to prove to everyone that we would always out work and out compete our competition. Going into state, we were determined to prove to everyone that we were one of the best teams in our division, and we did just that. I am so grateful that I got to spend the last four years as a Lady Bulldog. I am also so thankful for our coaches for pushing us to be the best every single day and for the community for coming to support us at every single game.”

“It's been a great four years and our experience at the state tournament was a great way to finish my career,,” continued Carli Nieman “I'm very thankful for everything I've learned and all the support we've received from the community. It's hard to believe it's all over but I'm glad I can look back and be so proud of everything my team and I accomplished.”

“The past four years playing for GPHS or lady basketball has been very meaningful and so much fun,” said Amie Cheney. “I want to say thank you to the coaches, players, and the community for coming to each game for all the support throughout this season, we couldn't have done it without them.” Also graduating from the team is senior Lauren Patmon.

The Lady Bulldogs will be returning two key juniors including Sidney Taylor and Breanna Rath. “I had a blast playing with these seniors one last year and also had a great time with Coach K (KayCee Miller) helping us,” said Sidney Taylor. “The seniors all played a big part in this team but I know all of us are excited to get on the court next year and show everyone what we can do. I know we can be just as successful and everyone will step up to help. The goal is the same, getting right back to Great Bend.”

“The amount of growth and improvement from every single player on the team this year was unbelievable,” continued Breanna Rath. “Coach K was a tremendous part of that. The seniors will be greatly missed as team members and as friends, but I am extremely confident that next year's team will have another great season.”

Also returning next year is sophomore Jordyn Fleckenstein. “The Seniors will be greatly missed,” said Fleckenstein. “It was a great season and it was one we will never forget. Also a very fun season. I'm looking forward to next year as we will still do what we do best to out work and out compete and to play our game.”