

Girls Compete in League By Judy Rogers

The Western Kansas Liberty League has some of the preeminent high school volleyball teams in the state with three of their teams in the top ten and additional teams all playing competitively throughout the season. The league tournament, hosted by Wheatland/Grinnell this past weekend, was a showcase of volleyball talent in Northwest Kansas.

The tournament consisted of two pools with the top two teams in each pool advancing to the semi-finals. The Golden Plains Lady Bulldogs entered the tournament as a #7 seed out of ten teams with two of the state ranked teams in their pool.

Their first match was against the Weskan Lady Coyotes. The girls played well but lost points several times with net violations to finish with a 17-25 loss. In the second set, the girls regrouped and played a very close game as they kept it tied throughout most of the set. A cross court kill by Maddy Walz gave the Lady Bulldogs a 25-23 win and a third set. The Lady Coyotes pulled ahead early in the third set. With sophomore Morgan Ritter behind the serve line, the Lady Bulldogs rallied back closing the gap. Gabrielle Schiltz was all over the court getting where she needed to be and the girls brought the game to within two points at 19-21 but the Lady Coyotes finished the game with a win 20-25.

The second match of the pool was against the Palco Lady Roosters. These two teams were very competitive and played close to start the set. With a 6-6 tie, the girls were able to gain several consecutive points with Kami Miller, Morgan Ritter, and Kaylie Schaben with the serves and pulled ahead for an 8-point lead. The Lady Roosters fought back and tied it back up at 19. Miller served an ACE and Palco called a time out. With another tie at 21, the game came down to the wire but the Lady Roosters pulled ahead for the 23-25 win.

The Lady Bulldogs took control for the second set against the Lady Roosters pulling ahead early and never backing down as they won the set 25-16. Both teams played well defensively in the third and rallied down to the last point. The Lady Roosters started off with a slight lead but the Lady 'Dogs came back from a five point deficit and tied it up at 15. They pulled ahead only to have the Lady Roosters come back with additional tied scores at 19, 21, and 23 points. The girls traded points and with a 25-25 score it was nail biting time. Schiltz served the last two points for the 27-25 win for the Lady Bulldogs.

The next match was against the host team Lady Thunderhawks. The girls had lost to the Lady 'Hawks in Wakeeney earlier in the week and they lost again with an 8-25 score in the first set. They played with more confidence in the second set but never could pull ahead of the Lady 'Hawks to lose 20-25.

As the day grew long, the girls had one more game to play in their pool. This time they met the Lady Bobcats from Western Plains. The Lady Bobcats gained as much as a seven point lead in the first set, but the Lady Bulldogs worked hard to close the spread and lost by two 23-25. They continued to make plays in the second set, hustled on the floor, and came from behind to pull away with a 25-19 win. The long day was wearing on the girls as the hour grew late and the girls just couldn't move well on the floor. Despite their exhaustion, they kept fighting back but ended the game with a 17-25 loss to the Lady Bobcats.

"We had some weaknesses at the beginning," said junior Kami Miller, "but by the end, we had made some improvements. We were covering the floor much better towards the end of the day." "We still have things to work on in practice to be ready for sub-state," added Gabrielle Schiltz. "We need to make sure we keep the intensity throughout the whole match." The Lady Bulldogs will compete in Sub-State in Almena this Saturday.