

Lady Bulldogs Build Basketball Tradition By Judy Rogers

The Golden Plains Lady Bulldogs have built a tradition of successful basketball teams over the past several years. Both the high school and middle school girls teams have proven records of success as evidenced by all three girls teams winning the Western Kansas Liberty League Championship this past season.

Successful programs begin in middle school and Golden Plains has developed their younger girls program into repeated championships under the coaching staff of Travis Smith and Parker Christensen. These two coaches have been training the younger girls together for the past 10 years with Smith leading them for 12.

During those ten years, the A-team girls have accumulated 113 wins and 24 losses with five league championships and one runner up. Included in those wins are the past three years of undefeated seasons at 40-0.

The B-team has accumulated 72 wins and 31 losses having been named champion three of the past four years and runner up one of those years. They are 20-1 the past two years as league champions. Both A and B teams have placed third at league twice in the past ten years.

The high school girls have also developed a tradition of successful basketball programs. Coach Parker Christensen has led the girls for 19 years including the past 16 with assistant Coach Steve Shaw. During that time, the girls have qualified for the state tournament seven times. They have placed fourth in the state tournament twice, third once, and were the state runner-up in 2015. The girls were also runner-up in 1974, third in 1981, and qualified in 1993.

In addition to the state qualification, the girls have numerous tournament titles and league championships. This year, every girls team at Golden Plains won the Western Kansas Liberty League Championships including the high school girls, the GPMS A-team girls, and the GPMS B-Team Girls.

"It is my job as the middle school coach to make sure these young ladies are ready to step in to Coach Christensen's program and contribute as soon as possible," said Coach Travis Smith. "For that to occur, the girls have shown a tremendous amount of dedication coming in over their summer break to learn fundamentals and our season drills that we do each and every day during the year. This allows for us to hit the floor running as soon as the basketball season starts in November. This doesn't occur without the support of their parents, siblings, family members and other members of the community who bring them in during the summer, or travel across Northwest Kansas to watch our games. It has been a pleasure to coach these girls over the years, and the support their parents have shown us is overwhelming."

"Our high school girls have really bought into the thinking that the summer is when you make yourself a better player and the real season is when the team improvement happens," added Coach Parker Christensen. "Over the past 11-12 years we have put a lot of work in during the summer. It really shows with the continued success the girls have been able to achieve. The game has changed that way; you have to be playing or your program falls behind. I really think the girls have a lot of fun playing good competition and bigger schools in the summer!"

"Having experience in this program I would just like to thank the coaches

Parker Christensen, Steve Shaw, and Travis Smith for all their work and effort they put in on the court, in the classroom, and the many life lessons they have taught us,” said KayCee Miller, junior. “The last six years of playing basketball at GP have been so enjoyable and has led me to love the game. I can't wait to keep it going into my senior year. I have high hopes for next season as I enter my last year of playing for these coaches.”