

Bulldogs Headed to Wild West Bowl

By Judy Rogers

The Golden Plains Bulldogs are headed to the third place game of the Wild West Bowl in Dodge City following a 27-38 Sub-State loss to the Cheylin Cougars in Bird City on October 26. This is their second year to play in this six-man state championship consolation game having placed third last year. They will play Weskan, last year's WWB champions, at 2:00 pm at Memorial Stadium in Dodge.

The Bulldogs won the toss and elected to receive on the cold and windy field. The 'Dogs were ready and made successful runs by Dylan Spresser and Caleb Korte before an incomplete pass turned the ball over. The Cougars made some advances despite tackles by Korte and Nolan Ritter along with pass coverage by Wade Rush. They ended the drive in the end zone to lead 6-0.

The Bulldogs again made some gains, but ended with a punt. Determined, they stepped up their defense to the Cougars' frustration as Korte tackled them for a loss before Rush knocked the ball loose allowing Korte to recover. Spresser ran the ball again, but the Cougars recovered a Bulldog fumble. Nolan Ritter and Miguel Monge made quick tackles at the line as Ritter deflected pass attempts to leave the score at 6-0 at the end of the first.

The second quarter found both of the teams making every effort to stop the other from making advances with quick tackles and deflected passes. With just over 3 minutes to the half, the Cougars connected on a pass to run in their second score. The PAT run succeeded as the Cougars led 13-0. The Bulldogs tried to pass the ball to make up some quick yards but three in a row were bounced off the receiver's cold fingers forcing a punt. Cheylin answered with another score to lead 20-0 at the half.

The Bulldogs kicked to the Cougars to start the second half. Larry Radovich and Toby Korte tackled the return run followed by stops from Weese, Monge, Ritter, and Caleb Korte. Midway through the third, the Cougars added another touchdown for a 26-0 lead.

Just as it looked like the Bulldogs were not going to score, the bundled up cheerleaders and crowd joined the sidelines in their support and of the team. Dylan Spresser returned the kick for the Bulldogs first score of the game. Although the extra point pass did not connect, the 'Dogs were on the boards 6-26.

Cheylin answered with a quick score of their own to extend their lead to 32-6. The Bulldogs dug deep for determination and drive as they connected a short pass from Weese to Jeron Schutte and again from Weese to Nolan Ritter who ran it over the goal line for a 12-32 point spread.

Rush increased defensive pressure with tackles and batted down a Cougar pass to turn the ball over to the 'Dogs. QB Weese handed the ball over to C. Korte who pitched it back to Dylan Spresser to run around the outside and all the way to the end zone. Korte caught the PAT pass to close the spread to 19-32 at the end of the third.

The Cougars made their final score of the night with an early fourth quarter touchdown as the Bulldogs took over the game. Jacob Ritter caught the ball and ran a long touchdown for his first score of the season only to have it called back due to a backfield penalty. Schutte then took the ball to the 26 and Korte took it to the 15. Another GP penalty moved it back so Weese passed the ball to Rush and again to Korte.

Coach Travis Smith called a time out to convey his plan to the players. Back on the field, a Cougar penalty moved the 'Dogs closer to the goal line. Spresser carried it to the 5 allowing Korte to finish in the end zone. A PAT kick through the goal post by Nolan Ritter put the 'Dogs to within two TD's at 27-38 midway through the fourth.

The game continued to be all about defense as both teams made gains only to be stopped by their opponents as the game ended with the Cougars winning 38-27.

"I hate that our guys won't have the chance to play for a state championship," said Coach Smith, "but there are so many positives that came from last night. For one we never gave up. We for sure didn't play our best in the first half, but the heart they showed in the second shows the type of character these young men have. I wouldn't trade my guys for anyone else."

"Secondly, we have the best fans," continued Smith. "They stood behind us the entire game and helped encourage the guys to make their run. Third--the team's improvement. Cheylin put over 70 points on us week 3." The Bulldogs outscored the Cougars 27-18 in the second half of the game.

Harley Weese gained 225 yards for the Bulldogs including 205 passing and 20 rushing. Caleb Korte had 70 yards—12 rushing and 58 receiving. Dylans Spresser rushed for 52 yards along with receiving yards by Jacob Ritter 45, Nolan Ritter 40, Wade Rush 25, and Jeron Schutte 17. Tackles were made by Rush 13, C. Korte 12, Weese 12, J. Ritter 6, Miguel Monge 5, D. Spresser 3, Larry Radovich 1, and Toby Korte 1.

Recovering fumbles were Nolan Ritter and Wade Rush. Touchdowns were scored by Dylan Spresser 2, Nolan Ritter 1, and Caleb Korte 1. Ritter kicked a field goal for two extra points as Korte caught a pass for one PAT.

"We have improved so much over the year," added Smith. "Finally we get a chance to finish with a win. The Wild West Bowl is next week and we have the opportunity to play one more time." The Cougars will play in the championship game against Pawnee Heights next week following the Golden Plains/Weskan game at 2:00.