

## Bulldogs Qualify for Sub-State

By Judy Rogers

The Golden Plains Bulldogs qualified to play in the Sub-State Basketball tournament in Russell with a 2-game win streak to get them into the Regional championship game in Quinter on February 29.

The Bulldogs entered the Regional tournament with a 4-16 record. They played the quarter-final game against Palco in Rexford on February 24. The Dogs had defeated Palco early in the season but had lost to them at home the previous Friday. They were ready to hit the court and prove how they had improved.

The Bulldogs won the tip but the Palco Roosters hit the first score of the game. Harley Weese answered with a Bulldog basket and the Dogs were ready to roll. They extended their lead to 14-6 by the end of the first.

The Bulldogs kept up the pace in the second quarter as they took care of the ball and added another 14 in the second. The Roosters worked hard and added 9 giving Golden Plains a 28-15 half time lead.

Both teams came out of the locker room to step up their defense as they held each other to an additional 4 in the third. The Dogs added 10 more in the fourth but the Roosters pushed to finish the game with 17. It wasn't enough to make up for the Dogs early lead giving Golden Plains the win 47-36. "It was good to get this win after losing to them on Friday," said Austin Patmon.

Bulldog points came from Weese 16, Wade Rush 12, Ashton Schiltz 8, Jaime Infante 4, Jovanny Infante 4, Fabian Cepeda 2, and Kole Butts 1.

Advancing to the semi-final game in Quinter on Friday, the Dogs were destined to play the Wheatland/Grinnell Thunderhawks. This would prove to be an exciting game ending with a Bulldog win 66-63 in double-overtime.

The Hawks won the tip but the Bulldogs jumped to an early lead 12-6 in the first. The Bulldogs played a clean game with no fouls called on them until near the end of the second quarter. They worked the ball to the basket for an additional 16 points. The Hawks put in 15 during the second quarter giving the Dogs a 28-21 half time advantage.

The Hawks came out in the third with determination and quickly closed the spread to a 1 point game. The Dogs answered and worked the ball into the basket as they added 13. With 15 from the Hawks, the Dogs still led 41-36 going into the fourth.

The Bulldogs continued to hold on to their lead throughout much of the fourth but with 3 minutes to play, the Hawks tied the game up at 45. The Dogs pulled back ahead with baskets from Weese and Schiltz only to have the Hawks hit a three. Another Wheatland score gave them a one point lead with a minute on the clock.

The boys battled out the last minute of the game. A Thunderhawk foul sent Fabian Cepeda to the line for the Bulldogs. He hit both free shots to regain the lead. A Bulldogs foul then sent the Hawks to the line with 7 seconds on the clock. He missed the first shot but made the second to tie the game up at 51 sending it into overtime.

In the overtime, the Hawks won the tip and hit two quick buckets to lead 55-51. With both teams in double bonus, there were a number of trips to the line. Harley Weese, Rojelio Loya and Wade Rush each hit their free shots tying the game back up at 55. As the boys hustled every second, Weese hit another basket for the Bulldogs. The Thunderhawks answered and sent the game into a second overtime.

The Hawks won the tip in the second overtime as well but Wade Rush quickly regained possession for Golden Plains and hit a three. The Hawks came back with a couple of free shots midway through the OT and pulled ahead 63-61 with just over a minute left to play.

The last minute was all about the Bulldogs as Rush hit a basket followed by a steal and a layup from Weese. Weese got fouled with 2.5 seconds on the clock, hit his second free throw to give Golden Plains the win 66-63 and a spot in the championship game for the first time since 2007.

Weese finished the game with 24 points along with 20 from Rush. Schiltz added 10, Jaime Infante 6, Colby Lathrop 3, Fabian Cepeda 2, and Rojelio Loya 1.

The championship game was held on Saturday against the Quinter Bulldogs on their home floor in Quinter. With a full crowd on hand to support both the Golden Plains girls and boys teams in the championship games, the Dogs were ready to play.

GP jumped to a 5-0 lead before Quinter could score. The Golden Plains team played with energy and led 13-5 at the end of the first. Quinter came back in the second and gained their first lead of the game three minutes before half. The Dogs regained and held on to the lead 19-16 by the end of the second.

The game took a turning point in the third as Golden Plains was only able to put in 5 points throughout the entire quarter. Quinter pushed their way to 14 to take over the lead 30-24.

GP's Wade Rush hit a three to start the fourth making it a 3 point game. Quinter continued to hit their shots extending their lead. As the clock wound down, each time Quinter would score, GP would answer but couldn't break Quinter's 10 point lead. A final basket from Schiltz finished the game with a 45-37 Quinter win.

Weese again led Golden Plains' scoring with 14 points. Rush added 10, Schiltz 9, Roberto Loya 2, Kole Butts 1, and Jaime Infante 1.

"It is quite an accomplishment to make it this far in the post-season," said Colby Lathrop, "especially after the year we have had." "It's good to be one of the remaining 32 teams," added Harley Weese. "We have figured out each other's strengths and how to win.

"Our tournament turned out better than most people thought it would," continued Wade Rush. "We have come together as the season progressed and worked hard to get to this point. Everyone is healthy and feeling good." "The crowd support was a huge part of the games at regionals," continued Lathrop. "They really kept us going on the floor."

"The seniors stepped up as leaders this season," said Jaime Infante. "The coaches were patient and supportive as we developed our talents and teamwork and throughout all the ups and downs of the season. Our goal is to finish the season on a good note."

As Regional Runner Up, the Bulldogs, with a 6-18 season record, will travel to Russell on Thursday, March 5, to take on the Greeley County Jackrabbits at 6:00 pm.