

## Lady Bulldogs Win Third Straight League Championship

By Judy Rogers

The Golden Plains Lady Bulldogs won their third straight Western Kansas Liberty League Championship on February 8 in Colby with a 41-22 win over Logan. They had defeated Northern Valley 71-17 in the quarter-finals and Wheatland/Grinnell 48-36 in the semi-finals to qualify for the championship game. The Lady Bulldogs also won the league championship in 2018 and 2019.

The first game for the girls in the tournament was against Northern Valley in the quarterfinals held in Grainfield on February 3. The Lady Bulldogs had no trouble containing the Huskies as they jumped to a 21-0 lead before the Huskies could score. The Bulldogs continued to play hard in the second to lead 45-5 at half time.

They outscored the Huskies 19-9 in the third as they began to mix in the younger players. The Dogs maintained their lead 7-3 in the fourth for the final 71-17 win. Kassie Miller scored 16 along with Ashley Stoll 15. Brooke Stoll put in 14, Zoey Hillis and Morgan Wark each had 8, Carli Nieman 7, Taryn Fleckenstein 2, and Sidney Taylor 1.

The girls faced the Wheatland/Grinnell Thunderhawks in the semi-finals in Grainfield on February 4. Although the Bulldogs had defeated the 'Hawks at home in the first game of the season, this game would be a bit more challenging on the 'Hawks home court. The Hawks opened with a three but were answered with a three from Ashley Stoll. The Hawks then went on a six-point run before the Dogs could score again. The girls traded baskets throughout the first with the Hawks pulling ahead 13-9 by the end of the quarter.

The Bulldogs continued to work hard in the second as they added 12 more points, but the Hawks added 13 to hold the lead 26-21 at the half. Kassie Miller, who only scored 2 in the first half, came out of the locker room with total determination as she hit for 10 points in the third. Ashley Stoll added two more while the Bulldog defense shut down the Hawks holding them to 4. This gave Golden Plains the lead 33-30 heading into the last quarter of the game.

The fourth quarter was all about the free throw as the Hawks stepped up their aggressiveness to send the Dogs to the line repeatedly. The Lady Bulldogs shot 21 free throws in the fourth, making 11 of them. Additional baskets from Miller and Ashley Stoll gave the Dogs 15 more points while the Hawks added six for the final 48-36 Bulldog win sending them to the Championship game.

Miller again led the Bulldog offense with 17 points along with 15 from Ashley Stoll, and 11 from Brooke Stoll. Zoey Hillis added 3 and Carli Nieman 2. "This was a fun game," said Carli Nieman. "It was fun to compete with the Thunderhawks as they gave us more of a challenge." "We had trouble getting into a rhythm on offense," continued Brooke Stoll. "We just kept shooting and working hard on the defensive end." "We played more in position in the second half," added Miller.

The Lady Bulldogs had a few days to prepare for the championship game against the Logan Lady Trojans at the Colby Community Building on Saturday, February 8. This was the third time this season that the Bulldogs had played the Trojans. The first quarter was a defensive effort as neither team scored in the first two minutes until Kassie Miller hit a three for GP. The Trojans answered with two baskets to take the lead. Zoey Hillis hit a late quarter shot to allow the Bulldogs to hold a 5-4 lead at the end of the first.

Once the baskets got started, the Bulldogs worked hard to keep them coming as they put in 13 in the second. Holding the Trojans to 5, the Bulldogs led 18-9 at the end of the first half.

Both teams were determined in the third as they each added 7 points. The Bulldogs again spent much of the fourth quarter on the free throw line making 10 of their 12 attempts. Two more baskets by Hillis and one from Miller gave Golden Plains the 41-22 Championship win.

Miller posted 11 points with Hillis adding 10 and Brooke Stoll 9. Ashley Stoll scored 8, Amie Cheney 2, and Morgan Wark 1. “This was a fun tournament,” said Morgan Wark. “It was nice to come away with the three-peat championship!” “It was a good accomplishment to have met this goal,” added Ashley Stoll. “We hope to continue to win the league championship again next year.”

The Lady Bulldogs, who remain undefeated at 15-0 for the year, will continue their season as they travel to Hill City on February 11 and host Cheylin in Rexford on February 14.