

Bulldogs Open Season at Home

By Judy Rogers

The Golden Plains High School football team opened the 2023 season on their home field in Rexford as they hosted the Weskan Coyotes. The Dogs fought hard, but too many errors gave them the first loss of the season 19-38.

“We played really well, but the penalties absolutely killed us,” said senior Will Bruggeman. “We need to be more fundamentally sound on both offense and defense. We made plays but it’s hard to make touchdowns when your plays keep getting called back.”

The Dogs won the toss electing to receive. Josh Rath returned the kick and Dylan Wark quickly scored the first touchdown of the game. The extra point kick was blocked and the Dogs led 6-0. Jose Rios kicked back to the Coyotes. The Coyotes ran to the end zone on their first down and their PAT kick went wide to tie the game up 6-6.

The Dogs punted back to the Coyotes. They were able to stop their advance several times but the Weskan runner escaped 2 tackles on the fourth down to score again. The PAT again was unsuccessful and the Coyotes led 12-6. Both teams dug in on defense and the Dogs made some gains but were unable to convert to end the first quarter with a 12-6 Weskan lead.

The Bulldogs regained the lead early in the second with a touchdown pass from Josh Rath to Wark. A PAT pass caught by Miguel Garcia put the Dogs up 13-12. Rios kicked a touchback and the Bulldog defense held the Coyotes. Wark intercepted a pass and returned the ball for the Dogs. Rath then ran to inside the 5. A pass play to Wyatt Amlong was knocked out of his hands before a reverse play put Rath in the end zone for a touchdown. The extra point kick by Rios was once again blocked and the Dogs extended their lead to 19-12.

Rios kicked the ball deep to the Coyotes who advanced the ball quickly scoring to tie the game up at 19. With under two minutes until the half, Diego Perez ran the field for a Bulldog touchdown. A block in the back called the ball back. The Dogs moved the ball again ending the series with a turnover. Weskan capitalized on the turnover and put in another touchdown at the half time buzzer to lead 25-19.

The Bulldogs and Coyotes each stepped up their defense in the second half. The Dogs made repeated tackles but were unable to score as the Coyotes added another touchdown. The Dogs blocked the kick giving the Coyotes a 31-19 lead. Weskan scored once more to end the third 38-19.

The Dogs continued to work hard throughout the fourth to make up their deficit. Rath recovered a Weskan fumble. Runs by Perez and Rath crossed the goal line for the Bulldogs but it was once again called back due to a penalty. The game ended with a Coyote win 38-19.

“It was a fun game to play,” said Rath. “We know a lot of their players so it was fun to compete against them and to play a game that we’ve been practicing for. We ran the ball pretty well. We had some good blocks but still need to work out the kinks to be more effective.”

Diego Perez led the team with 67 rushing yards along with 61 by Josh Rath and 59 for Dylan Wark—including 2 touchdowns. Rath threw for 68 yards and 1 touchdown while Wark threw for 10. Wark received for 38 yards, Miguel Garcia 12, Rath 10, Will Bruggeman 10, and Perez 8. Perez led the Dogs with 11 total tackles with Rath 7, Garcia 7,

Wark 6, Wyatt Amlong 6, Bruggeman 4, Abe Taylor 3, and Jose Rios 2. Rath and Perez each had a fumble recovery and Wark an interception.

The Dogs will play at home again on September 8 as they host Ashland for a 5:00 pm kickoff in Rexford. “Our goal for Ashland is to work on the little things to reduce penalties,” added Bruggeman. “We need to be in better shape and stay healthy, because with only 9 players on the field, we don’t have subs.