

## Back To Back State!

By Judy Rogers

The Golden Plains Lady Bulldogs qualified for the state basketball tournament for the second consecutive season. The Lady Bulldogs placed third in state last year and defeated Triplains/Brewster 47-34 on Saturday night to qualify for the return trip.

The Lady Bulldogs entered the Sub-State tournament in Grainfield last week as the #1 seed so they had a bye for the first round. They played Wheatland/Grinnell for the semi-finals on Friday night. The Lady Bulldogs held a 9-4 lead at the end of the first extending it to 15-8 by the half.

In a physical, hard fought third quarter, the Lady Thunderhawks battled their way back as the Lady Bulldogs made 7 of their 8 free throws during the quarter. With a 31-26 lead, the Lady 'Dogs still had a lot of work to do. The Lady 'Hawks continued to send the Lady Bulldogs to the line-throughout the final 8 minutes where they shot about 50%, but the Lady Bulldogs sent the Lady 'Hawks there a couple of times also.

The game was within three points with just .23 on the clock. Hailee Spresser was sent to the line making one shot. With a four point lead, the Lady 'Hawks were desperate to hit a three with hopes of receiving a foul, but #15 shoved Kynndra Rush to the floor with 2 seconds to play, fouling herself out of the game. Rush hit both shots for the Bulldogs 46-40 win.

Senior Jordan Christensen led with 15 points followed by Hailee Spresser-9, Maddy Walz-6, MiKyala Lobato-6, Kynndra Rush-6, Kami Miller-2, and Rachael Ritter-2. "This was a very physical game and took a lot of energy," said Christensen, "but our free throw shots from the line really helped us out."

The girls then headed to the championship round on Saturday evening to face off against the Triplains/Brewster Lady Titans. These two teams had met three times this season with the Lady Bulldogs capturing the regular season wins and the Lady Bulldogs winning the League Championship tournament game-all by 3 points. The Lady Titans had put up some big numbers in the semi-final win over Northern Valley the night before. "We were ready to play," said Hailee Spresser. "We knew what the Lady Titans would bring and they also knew our strengths."

The Lady Titans got the tip but missed their shot. Hailee Spresser rebounded the ball, handing it off to Christensen who scored the first 8 points of the game for the Lady Bulldogs. Spresser added another basket but the Lady Titans hit a three to tie up the first quarter 10-10.

The Lady Titans pulled ahead slightly in the second, but a three from Christensen put the Lady 'Dogs back on top. The girls swapped baskets for much of the 2nd with neither team able to pull away. The Bulldogs held a slight 22-21 lead at the half.

Everything went the Lady Bulldogs way at the start of the third as they ran their offense like a well-oiled machine. The Lady Titans had several girls get into foul trouble and their shots just wouldn't fall as the Lady Bulldogs pulled away adding 16 points while holding their opponents to 4.

The game was far from decided despite the Lady 'Dogs 38-25 lead going into the fourth. Triplains/Brewster would post up some points only to have the Lady 'Dogs answer. Hailee Spresser hit six for six from the line adding another basket to the total. With three girls with multiple fouls, the Lady Titans had to be cautious, but still played

aggressively, never giving up . They added 7 points in the last 8 minutes, but the Lady Bulldogs won the trip to state with a final score of 47-34.

Hailee Spresser and Jordan Christensen, who never stepped off the floor until the last seconds of the game, led the Bulldog offense with 19 points and 15 points each. Additional scoring came from senior Mikayla Lobato-6, Sophomore Maddy Walz-4, and Sophomore Kami Miller-3.

The Lady Bulldogs will play in the state tournament this Thursday with a 20-3 record as a #3 seed where they face the Wilson Lady Dragons. The Lady Bulldogs had defeated the Lady Dragons for third place in the state tournament last season. The Lady Dragons are 17-6 this season and have the #6 seed in the tournament.