

Bulldogs Win Three at League

By Judy Rogers

The Golden Plains Bulldog basketball team won three of four games in the Western Kansas Liberty League tournament this past week. The boys began the tournament on Monday as a #7 seed with a play-in game against Healy. This first win advanced them into tournament play where they faced the Triplains/Brewster Titans on Tuesday. "I am very happy with the result of the tournament," said Coach Mike Doll. "Obviously we would have liked to win the tournament, but we knew we would get Brewster's best shot after Friday.

The Bulldogs had recently played the Titans in Winona where they had won with a last second shot. This was not to be the case in tournament play as the Titans were determined to advance and defeated the Bulldogs 49-40. The Bulldogs opened up the game with a three from senior Grant Spresser, but the Titans quickly tied it up and both teams worked hard throughout the game, spread the floor, and moved the ball. The Titans gained the advantage and led 26-21 at the half.

Spresser opened up the second half with another three and the Bulldogs were only down by two. The Titans, however, continued to advance their score with successful shots as the Bulldogs pushed forth with baskets of their own. The Bulldogs never gave up and tried to claw their way back into the game, but the Titans prevailed in the end, assisted by 20 points from Nathan Jorgensen, for the 49-40 win.

The Bulldogs advanced on Friday to play the Wheatland/Grinnell Thunderhawks in the semi-final round of the consolation bracket. This was the first time these two teams had seen each other this year and they weren't quite sure what to expect. They got off to a slow start as they pushed the ball back and forth to an 8-9 score at the end of the first. The Bulldogs struggled to get the ball to fall in the second and only added three points throughout the quarter with a free throw from Tristan Schwarz at the beginning of the quarter and a final basket from Shane Ryburn to end the quarter trailing 11-15.

The Bulldogs slowed their pace a bit in the third to take time to work the ball around to take smarter shots and were able to pull ahead 24-20 by the end of the quarter. The Thunderhawks weren't finished and after the Bulldogs extended their lead to 8 points, fought back into the game. With less than a minute to go, the Bulldogs led 32-30. Coach Mike Doll called a time out and the boys settled down to play tough defense to finish the game with the win.

The final game of the tournament for the Bulldogs was with the Western Plains Bobcats. The Bulldogs had lost to the Bobcats in the first game of the season, but they have demonstrated considerable improvement throughout the season, which was evident in this game. "The WP game was a fun one to see where we have come since the beginning of the year," said Doll. "We could see the improvements the boys had made and the confidence they stepped on the floor with was day and night difference from the beginning of the year."

Tristan Schwarz got the tip for the Bulldogs and Kade Wessel took it to the hole only to be fouled. He made both free shots and the 'Dogs were up 2-0. Schwarz followed with a bucket and the Bulldogs were off and running. Schwarz continued to hit multiple shots and led the Bulldogs to a 7 point lead before the Bobcats started to answer for a 9-8 score by the end of the first.

The Bobcats gained a lead to start the second quarter, but the Bulldogs answered each score to maintain a 17-15 lead at the half. The Bobcats tied the game up and gained a lead in the third with multiple three point shots to put the Bulldogs down 29-26 to start the final quarter of the tournament.

The game was nowhere near over as the Bulldogs fought back and tied the game up at 31. Kade Wessel did a great job drawing fouls under the basket and he gained a one point advantage from the free throw line. His brother, Koi, extended the lead with a free shot of his own. Shane Ryburn then hit a layup and the Bulldogs were up by four with 1:20 to play.

The Bobcats closed the gap with a couple of free shots but the Bulldogs sent Zach Spresser to the line to focus on his shots and regain the spread. The game finished out on the free throw line and the Bulldogs won the game 40-33 for a fifth place finish in the tournament.

“Getting 3 wins out of a tournament is always a plus. We put forth a tremendous defensive effort all 4 nights and gave us a chance to win every game,” added Coach Doll. We are finding our selves as a team and it is fun to see. The players are stepping up, starting to feel their role and we are all playing great defense. This will continue to be a staple for the rest of the season.”

“We never gave up,” said Kade Wessel. “We consistently relied on our defense to win games.” He added, “Getting three wins should help our confidence.” The Bulldogs have won four of their last five games and look to continue their streak this Friday in Rexford when they host the Palco Roosters.