

Lady Bulldogs Named League Runner-Up By Judy Rogers

The Golden Plains Lady Bulldogs placed second in the Western Kansas Liberty League Basketball tournament for the third consecutive year. They defeated Palco 47-19 in the rescheduled quarterfinals on Thursday, defeated Northern Valley 50-33 in the semifinals, and lost to Wheatland/Grinnell 36-43 in the championship game on Saturday. This was the second year in a row the Bulldogs lost the championship game to the Thunderhawks.

“We played as a team throughout the tournament,” said KayCee Miller, “even though we didn’t get the outcome we wished for.” “It was nice to have the whole team back,” added Kami Miller.

The girls had no trouble with Palco in the first game outscoring them in every quarter. They led 12-2 in the first. The Bulldogs added another 12 in the second, allowing the Roosters 7 for a 24-9 halftime score.

The ‘Dogs were consistent as they put in another 12 in the third and finished the game with 8 in the fourth for the 47-19 win. Points were contributed by KayCee Miller-15, Maddy Walz-8, Kynndra Rush-7, Kaylie Schaben-6, Kami Miller-6, Morgan Ritter-3, and Gabrielle Schiltz-2.

The Bulldogs faced the Northern Valley Huskies in the semifinal round on Friday. They had easily defeated the Huskies in the regular season and expected this game to be no different. The Huskies were not about to give it up easy as they kept the game tied up throughout the first half. The Bulldogs trailed the Huskies 11-13 at the end of the first. The Bulldogs worked hard to pull ahead and held a slight 19-17 lead at the half. All of the first half points came from KayCee Miller and Kynndra Rush.

Adjustments were made in the locker room and the Bulldogs came out in the third ready to play defense and extend their lead. They held the Huskies to four points, adding 17 with consistent shooting to lead 36-21 going into the fourth.

The Huskies were not about to give up as they worked their way through the last 8 minutes. The Bulldogs were determined and led by as much as 20 finishing with the 50-33 win. Kynndra Rush and KayCee Miller led the Bulldogs with 17 and 14 points. Maddy Walz added 8, Gabrielle Schiltz-7, and Kami Miller-4. “We got off to a slow start,” said Schiltz, “but were able to stop them in the second half.”

This second win of the tournament put the Lady Bulldogs in the Championship game for the fourth straight year—repeating last year’s championship game against the Wheatland/Grinnell Thunderhawks. The game was close throughout as these two teams are evenly matched. The ‘Hawks led 10-8 at the end of the first. KayCee Miller tied it up to start the second. The ‘Hawks pulled ahead again, but two more from KayCee sent them to the locker room with a 14-22 Thunderhawk lead.

The Bulldogs came out ready to play and stepped up their defense to hold the Thunderhawks to 5 points in the third. They hustled on both ends of the court to tie the game up at 24 early in the quarter. The ‘Hawks fought back sending the Bulldogs to the free throw line. The girls hit 5 of 7 attempts to lead 25-24 with

under a minute remaining. The 'Hawks hit a three at the end of the quarter to get back on top 27-25.

The 'Hawks extended their lead with an early fourth quarter basket. Kynndra Rush brought it back to within 2 only to have the "Hawks score again. Rush again brought the score within 2. The 'Hawks added six before the 'Dogs could score again. KayCee Miller added two with just over 2 minutes remaining. The 'Hawks continued to add points gaining an 8 point lead.

Gabrielle Schiltz made a layup and an and one to close the spread to 5. The 'Hawks added four more. Kami Miller made a final basket as the clock wound down and the girls ran out of time to give the championship to the Thunderhawks with the Bulldogs as runner-up. Rush and KayCee Miller again led the Bulldog offense with 13 and 10 points. Maddy Walz put in 6, Gabrielle Schiltz-5, and Kami Miller-2.

The Bulldogs had defeated the Thunderhawks in the Castle Rock tournament early in the season and have suffered from injury and illness in recent weeks. "We were tired and weren't ready to play," added KayCee Miller of the game. The girls had not had practice for three days and then came to play three days in a row. "They were definitely the aggressor. We will get them on fresh legs," she said.

They will play them in Rexford in the coming weeks and hope to meet in the finals of sub-state. "We played well as a team in the tournament," added Kami Miller. We need to make sure we are healthy and ready to play in these challenging games." The Bulldogs will play another challenging game on Tuesday when they host the 12-1 Hill City Ringnecks in Rexford.