

Lady 'Dogs Win Undefeated League Championship

By Judy Rogers

The Golden Plains Middle School A-Team girls basketball team capped off an undefeated season with the WKLL Championship in Brewster on February 13. This is the first time in Coach Travis Smith's 16 years as a basketball coach at Golden Plains he has had a basketball team go undefeated. "This was one of the more enjoyable middle school basketball seasons I have had here at Golden Plains," said Smith. "The girls worked as hard as any group I've had. They were very coachable and always eager to learn. Their goal all year was to go undefeated and it was special that they could achieve their goal."

"Winning league and going undefeated was exciting because we were the first undefeated team for Mr. Smith," said Ashley Stoll. "We had to work hard for it and had to work together," added Brooke Stoll. "Last year we won second in the tournament," said Mabel Lugo. "This year we wanted to win first place and with hard work we got it." "It feels great to be the best in the league," added Taryn Fleckenstein.

The girls entered the league tournament ranked #1. This matched them to Northern Valley for the opening round. With a 17 point win in December over the Huskies, the girls knew they had to take them seriously. The first quarter ended 4-2 in favor of the 'Dogs. The girls controlled their defense in the second holding the Huskies to 1 while gaining a 13-3 lead at the half.

Once they got comfortable, the girls rolled on through the second half with 12 and 11 points per quarter for the 36-7 win. Points came from Ashley Stoll-9, Kassie Miller-8, Mabel Lugo-8, Rileigh Korte-5, Brooke Stoll-2, Taryn Fleckenstein-2, and Tylor Todd-2.

The girls played Palco in the semi-final round on Saturday. They jumped on the Lady Roosters 12-0 in the first and continued for a 23-2 lead at half time. The Roosters stepped it up in the second half outscoring the Bulldogs 8-7 in the third.

The Roosters stayed strong in the fourth adding 13 and holding the 'Dogs to 3, but the 'Dogs first half lead helped them win 33-23 and advance to the Championship game. Karri Schaben scored 9 in the semi-final game along with Lugo-8, A. Stoll-6, Miller-5, Fleckenstein-3, and Sable Finlay-2.

The Championship game was against Grinnell/Wheatland. The girls had defeated the Thunderhawks twice during the season but knew they were a competitive team and they would have to stay focused for the win. Once again, they started off with a good lead (6-2) in the first. An additional 7 in the second improved their lead to 13-5 by half.

The girls came out in the third with determination as they added 10 to their total and held the 'Hawks to 2. The Thunderhawks didn't give up as they played their best quarter in the fourth with 8 points. The Bulldogs added six for the 29-15 Championship win. Points were scored by A. Stoll-7, Lugo-7, Schaben-6, Fleckenstein-4, Miller-3, and Korte-2. Additional team members assisting throughout the tournament were Jaiden Koerperich and Malilah Green.

“It was exciting to beat Grinnell for the third time,” said Kassie Miller. “They were our toughest team to play in our league.” “It was exciting,” added Sable Finlay, “because they have been a tough opponent.”

“We were dedicated to be the best in the league,” said Malilah Green of the season. “We had some problems, but we worked through them as a team.” “We didn’t play as well as we should have in the middle of the season,” said Tylor Todd. “We just worked harder than ever and never gave up,” continued Schaben.

Several of the A-team members will be leaders on the middle school team again next season. “My goal is to be a leader on the A-team,” said Miller. “I’m so glad I got to play with these girls.” Brooke Stoll said, “My goal for next season is to go undefeated and win league like this year.” “It was very fun,” added Ashley Stoll. “My goal is for both the A and B team to win league,” said Tylor Todd.

“This has been the best season I ever had,” said Lugo. “I’m very proud of my teammates and I am very sad to leave, but next year, I know they will achieve their goals.” Lugo will join the other 8th graders in high school next year. Schaben will also be playing in high school next year. “My goal is to work harder than I ever have,” she said. Finlay also plans to play in high school next year and to “work hard in practice, and enjoy being part of the team.” “Our goal for next year is to win league and go to state,” added Fleckenstein.