

Bulldogs Heart Shown in Sub-State

By Judy Rogers

Heart and Soul are what made up the Golden Plains High School Volleyball season all year. This was evident throughout the Sub-State Tournament in Weskan as the girls gave it their all to finish as the Sub-State Runner-Up.

As the #3 seed, the Bulldogs received a bye for the first round. They faced off against the #2 team Weskan for the Semi-Finals. The Bulldogs had lost to Weskan twice earlier this season in some very close matches so they were determined to not let them have this final win. The 'Dogs started off the first set tied up at 6. They kept it close with additional tied up scores at 10 and 16. As Coaches Orba Smith and Ashley Arnberger tried to keep them focused, the 'Dogs slipped behind the Coyotes and lost the first set 22-25.

The Coyotes took the early lead in the second set pulling ahead 15-10. The 'Dogs kept working but fell even further behind 19-11. The 'Dogs gradually worked their way back in bring the game close but still trailing 22-23. Following a time out, they tied it up only to have the Coyotes regain the lead. Both teams worked hard and gave it all they had as they tied up at 25, then 26, then 28, then 29. The Bulldogs finally got the serve back with a one-point lead. A final serve from senior Morgan Ritter won the set 31-29 for the 'Dogs sending the match into a third.

The final set was no less exciting for both teams. The Coyotes started off with a small lead. The Bulldogs answered and pulled ahead 8-3. The Coyotes fought back and tied the game up at 9. Both sides of the gym cheered the girls on as they again tied up at 15.

The Coyotes pulled ahead once more but serves by KayCee Miller added to the Bulldog score. A good save by junior Maggi Nieman tied it up once more at 20. The Bulldogs held on for the 25-21 win to advance to the championship game.

The championship game was another exciting three-set match against the Sharon Springs Wildcats. The Bulldogs only had a 20-minute break to catch their breath before they hit the floor. The Wildcats took advantage of the energy lapse and won the first set 25-17. The Bulldogs heart and soul came forth in the second as they kept the lead throughout the game and won 25-21. The Wildcats earned their ticket to state with a 25-16 win in the final set as the Bulldogs were named runner-up. "If we would have had more time between matches, it might have helped," said KayCee Miller, sophomore. "Six sets in a row is a lot of playing time."

The Lady Bulldogs finished their season with 13 wins and 18 losses. "Every year we're close to state qualification," said Gabrielle Schiltz, senior. "We have some very good competition in Western Kansas." This was a fun sub-state for me. It was intense all the way through. Everyone played with a lot of heart. I'm going to miss it when the girls start their season next fall. "It's starting to sink in that it's actually over," added Morgan Ritter, senior. "It's been an incredibly fun four years with this team, and I'm grateful."

"We overcame a lot of obstacles this year," said Miller. "We worked harder to compensate for the illnesses and injuries suffered by our players. We had a couple of rough weeks, but worked through it all to finish strong."

With two graduating seniors, Gabrielle Schiltz and Morgan Ritter, the younger girls are looking to the next season. "The seniors were good leaders for the team," said Kaylie Schaben, junior. "The seniors were caring leaders," added Maggi Nieman, junior. "They set a good example for us. I think we can pick up where we left off." "We continue to improve as a team," said Jennifer Luna, junior. "We got better at hitting. The seniors were great leaders in helping the younger girls."

"I'm thankful to the seniors that we had," added Miller. "I appreciate all they did for the team." "We got really close as a team," continued Amanda Cheney, Sophomore. "It was a fun year as we became more experienced and more familiar with one another. Our goal is to repeat our appearance in the sub-state championship game."