

Bulldogs Advance to Championship Game

By Judy Rogers

The Golden Plains Bulldogs defeated Ashland 71-46 in the Sub-State Playoff game in Ashland on November 2 to advance to the Championship game of the Wild West Bowl on November 10. This is the third year the Bulldogs have played in the Wild West Bowl since initiating the six-man football program in 2016. The 'Dogs placed third in 2016 and fourth in 2017, and this is their first shot at the Championship.

"It's exciting to get the football team to their first state championship game in school history," said Coach Travis Smith. "It's been a long time coming. The senior boys have done a fantastic job of leading the team, and demonstrating what it takes to be successful."

The Bulldogs entered the Sub-State game with a 7-1 record while the Ashland Blue Jays were 7-0. The 'Dogs won the toss and chose to receive. Caleb Korte returned the ball and the game was underway.

The 'Dogs advanced the ball with first down runs by Dylan Spresser, Nolan Ritter, and passes caught by Korte and Ritter. Ritter caught the ball from Wade Rush and ran 15 yards to the end zone for his first of six touchdowns of the night to give the 'Dogs an early lead 6-0.

Spresser kicked off to Ashland but tackles by Rolis Loya, Miguel Monge, and Wade Rush kept them in check. A Blue Jay fumble was recovered by Rush. Korte gained a few yards before Ritter caught another pass and ran it in for the score. He then kicked the PAT for a 14-0 Bulldog lead.

The Bulldog defense again stopped the Blue Jays to take over. A pass from Wade Rush to Ritter gained yards just short of a first down. Korte then carried the ball for the first down. Rush gained five and a pass from Rush to Ritter advanced another first down, allowing Korte to finish the drive in the end zone.

Ashland tried to pass the ball repeatedly, but they were unable to connect with coverage by Korte and Ritter turning the ball back over to the Bulldogs with a 20-0 lead at the end of the first.

The Bulldogs opened the second with a pass from Jacob Ritter to Nolan Ritter who ran it in for a 20 yard touchdown. The extra point kick by N. Ritter was good and the 'Dogs led 28-0.

The Bulldogs regained possession with strong defense and tackles by Korte, Spresser, and Monge. Ashland also stepped on their defense and the Bulldogs ended the drive with their first punt of the game midway through the second. They worked together to make stops, but Ashland was finally able to connect on a pass for their first score of the night to make the score 28-7. The 'Dogs again punted and Ashland took advantage of their passing game to score again to and make the score 28-13 at the end of the first half.

Ashland made another passing touchdown early in the third to close the spread to 28-19 but Nolan Ritter returned the kick for this fourth touchdown of the night. He then ran in the extra points and the 'Dogs were back up 35-20. Nolan recovered the kickoff allowing Dylan Spresser to pass it in to Miguel Monge for quick Bulldog score. The PAT kick was blocked but the 'Dogs were up 41-20.

Ashland worked hard to advance the ball despite stops by Spresser, Korte, and Ritter. They connected on another pass for a fourth touchdown. Spresser and Rush stopped the extra point attempt. Korte returned their kick to mid field. Ritter made a short gain and Spresser ran in a 40 yard touchdown keeping the Bulldogs lead at 47-26. Ashland scored again with 4.7

seconds remaining in the third. The game was suspended following the touchdown due to lack of ambulance. When it resumed, the Blue Jays ran in the PAT for a 47-32 score. The Bulldogs received the ball with just seconds on the clock. Spresser ran in a 41 yard score as time ran out to spread their lead to 53-33 going into the fourth.

The final 10 minutes of the game were just as exciting as the previous three quarters as the Bulldog crowd cheered the boys on. The Bulldogs defense again stopped the Blue Jays despite their attempts to pass. Spresser gained yards before getting tackled for a loss. Korte then broke through for his second touchdown of the night and a 59-33 lead.

Ashland came back with more passes. Several fell incomplete but they finally connected for a score and an extra point to close the spread to 59-40. The Bulldogs gained a few yards on the next drive but ended with a punt. Their defense stayed strong and continued to frustrate Ashland's attempts to move the ball. With three minutes left in the game, the Blue Jays made their final score of the night.

Nolan Ritter picked up the short kick and ran it in uncontested for his fifth touchdown of the game and a 65-46 Bulldog lead. Ashland again attempted to pass but were unable to connect allowing the 'Dogs to take over on the 20. Korte made a couple short gains then Spresser connected with Nolan for his sixth touchdown and a final score of 71-46.

Nolan Ritter led the Bulldogs scoring with a personal record 6 touchdowns including 4 receiving and 2 kick returns. He also kicked two successful PAT's and ran in one for 41 points in the game. He had 143 receiving yards and 28 rushing yards along with 12 tackles and one fumble recovery. "It felt good to get the touchdowns for the team," said Ritter. "I had some good passes from Dylan, Jacob, and Wade, and the line did a good job which helped me get through to make the catches."

Dylan Spresser rushed for 143 yards and 2 touchdowns and passed for 77. He also had 8 tackles. Caleb Korte received 5 yards and rushed for 74 with two touchdowns and led the defense with 19 tackles. Miguel Monge received for 5 yards and 1 touchdown and had 10 tackles and one fumble recovery.

Additional offensive gains came from Jacob Ritter who passed for 45 yards, Wade Rush who passed for 26 and rushed for 5 yards, and Josh Spresser who gained a yard. Rolis Loya also had 19 tackles while Rush had 11, Ethan Shea-2, and Tanner Trussel-1.

The Bulldogs will play Weskan in the Championship game of the Wild West Bowl in Dodge City this Saturday, November 10, with a 4:00 pm kickoff. "Hopefully we are not just satisfied with reaching the title game," continued Coach Smith. "Come Monday we have to put the Ashland game behind us and focus on Weskan for the next 5 days. For us to have a shot at the state title we have to put in the same type of work we've put in all year."

"We are very thankful for all those who made the 4 hour trip to Ashland last week," added Coach Smith. "It would be great to see the stands full of our biggest fans down in Dodge City cheering on the guys as we compete for the title."