

## Lady Bulldogs Place Third at League By Judy Rogers

The Golden Plains Lady Bulldogs placed third in the WKLL League Tournament held in Grainfield and Wakeeney on February 3. "It was a good tournament," said Anais Cepeda. "We worked hard and played as a team."

The girls opened the tournament against Western Plains/Healy in Grainfield on January 30. Following an early defensive battle, the Bulldogs found the basket and pulled ahead 9-2 by the end of the first. They powered through in the second quarter adding 22 points while holding the Bobcats to 2 for a 31-4 half time lead.

The Bobcats rallied in the second half and added 10 in the third quarter while the Bulldogs extended their lead by 15. The Bobcats finished the game with an additional 10. The Bulldogs did not score in the fourth, but held on for the 46-24 win.

Jordyn Fleckenstein led the Dogs with 14 along with 13 from Hayden Wark. Kailee Wessel added 8, Kadalen Unrein 6, and Anais Cepeda 5. Wessel had 9 rebounds against the Bobcats along with Fleckenstein 6, Unrein 5, Siena Vargas 3, Cepeda 3, Wark 2, and Lesly Rios 1. Wark and Cepeda each had 3 assists, Fleckenstein 2, Wessel 2, and Vargas 1. Steals were made by Wark 5, Cepeda 4, Fleckenstein 2, and Unrein 2.

"We got off to a slow start in the tournament," said junior Hayden Wark. "We got into the game more as the game went on once we hit that first shot and figured them out. If we play with the same intensity, we should do good things against Northern Valley's experienced players."

The girls advanced to play the Northern Valley Lady Huskies in the semi-finals on Friday in Grainfield. Both teams played hard and kept the game close as the Bulldogs led 8-7 at the end of the first. The Bulldogs outscored the Huskies again 9-7 in the second to hang on to a 17-14 lead at the half.

The Dogs were only able to 7 in the third quarter as they allowed the Huskies 13 giving the Huskies a 27-24 lead. The Bulldogs were not ready to give up as they fought back in the fourth. The Dogs tied the game up with free throws then pulled ahead with a 3 from Wark. The Huskies tied it back up and pulled ahead once more. Fleckenstein hit another basket as the quarter closed out with a 33-33 tie sending the game into overtime.

Cepeda hit a three to open the OT. Fleckenstein made a free throw before fouling out and sitting on the bench the remainder of the game. The Huskies took advantage of the Dogs only senior starter being out of the game and finished the game with 9 points and the win 42-39.

Fleckenstein put in 20 points for the Bulldogs along with 10 by Cepeda, 7 from Wark, and 2 from Unrein. Kailee Wessel had 8 total rebounds along with Fleckenstein 7, Cepeda 6, Wark 6, Unrein 3, and Vargas 1. Wark had 5 assists, Fleckenstein 2, Cepeda 1, and Unrein 1. Steals were grabbed by Fleckenstein 4, Cepeda 2, Wark 1, and Unrein 1.

The final game on the tournament was held in Wakeeney on Saturday, February 3, where the Lady Bulldogs faced the Cheylin Lady Cougars in a battle for third place. The Bulldogs had lost to the Cougars the week before and were determined to prove they could handle their competition.

The Dogs opened with 5 points from Cepeda before the Cougars could score. Fleckenstein added another 6 along with a 3 from Wark to hold a 14-8 lead at the end of

the first. Wark and Cepeda each hit additional shots in the second along with free throws from Unrein as the Bulldogs signature defense held the Cougars to 10 giving the Dogs a 28-18 half time lead.

The Cougars were determined and came back in the third to outscore the Dogs 10-6 closing the spread. The Dogs stayed strong and with shots from Fleckenstein and Wark finished with 19 points while the Cougars added 15 more. The Dogs held on to the lead to claim the win and third place in the tournament 53-43.

Hayden Wark led the Dogs with 22 points—including shooting 8 of 10 free throws, along with 18 from Fleckenstein. Cepeda added 9 and Unrein 4. Wessel again led the Dogs under the boards with 7 rebounds along with 7 from Unrein. Fleckenstein pulled down 6, Cepeda 5, and Wark 2. Fleckenstein had 6 assists, Wark 5, Cepeda 2, Wessel 2, and Unrein 1. Wark claimed 4 steals, Cepeda 3, Wessel 1, and Unrein 1.

“It was a hard fought week to end up 3<sup>rd</sup>,” said Fleckenstein. “We are growing as a team and improving. We have big games ahead of us and need to continue to work hard.”