

Bulldogs heading to state tourney

Golden Plains boys beat Palco and Logan to take first at substate

By Judy Rogers
Golden Plains High School

The Golden Plains Bulldogs won the Class 1A Division II substate championship in Palco on Saturday after defeating Palco 64-46 in the semi-final round and Logan 52-44 in the finals.

This was the first year that the Class 1A schools went directly to substate without playing a regional tournament. The teams were divided into Division I and Division II for both substate and state.

Semi-finals

The boys team, which was seeded No. 2 in the tournament, received a bye for the first round. They took on the Palco Roosters, who had defeated Brewster-Triplains, in the semi-final round on Friday.

The game opened with a free-throw shot from senior Rilee Spreser who was fouled on his first shot attempt off a quick pass from senior Tate Preston. Spreser made one of his shots and the 'Dogs were on the boards.

A two-point bucket from senior Devinn Ritter and a three pointer from Preston had the 'Dogs up 6-0 before the Roosters pumped in a three and the contest was underway. Another pass from Spreser to Preston was successful and was followed by a three from Spreser to give the Bulldogs an 11-5 lead. A blocked shot from Cole Christensen was then grabbed by Spreser and he pushed the ball down the floor, but was fouled on the layup. A successful bucket from the stripe extended the Bulldog lead to 12-5 before Palco decided it was time to get in the game.

The Roosters quickly put in a

basket only to be followed by a Bulldog bucket from Ritter. The Roosters went on a run and a final three-point shot ended the first quarter with the Bulldogs holding a slight 14-13 lead and Spreser sweating out three fouls.

In the second quarter, both teams continued to play their hearts out as they traded baskets. Christensen played strong underneath and gave the 'Dogs six points. Ritter, Preston and Spreser also added points to their side of the scoreboard. Palco was equally determined and despite a 19-13 Bulldog lead early in the quarter the Roosters continued to hit their shots and took over the lead 23-24 with just over 3 minutes until the half.

Spreser tied it up at 25 only to have the Roosters regain the advantage. Christensen tied it up again at 27 with under 2 minutes to play. Preston regained the lead for the Bulldogs and a final shot from Spreser put the Bulldogs up 31-30 as the half-time buzzer sounded.

In the second half, the Bulldogs took control of the game and quickly extended their lead to 45-33 with just over two minutes remaining in the third quarter. As the clock ticked down, the boys continued to push through and play together as a team. Ritter pulled down a rebound and passed the ball off to junior Tyler Stevenson. Stevenson threw the ball down the floor to Spreser who put it in for two. A free throw from Ritter and a put-back from Christensen, along with strong defense holding the Roosters to only three points in the third quarter, gave the Bulldogs a 48-33 lead going into the fourth.

Despite their 15-point lead, the Bulldogs were not about to let



JUDY ROGERS/Golden Plains High School
Cole Christensen goes up for two in the Bulldogs' substate win over the Logan Trojans. Christensen had 26 points, 16 rebounds, and 6 blocks during the tournament.

up as they continued their game plan throughout the fourth. They added 6 more points to their total before the Roosters put in a three. They continued to push the ball and play together throughout the last minutes of play. The Roosters desperately put in several three pointers but trailing 60-46 with the clocking ticking down, they were forced to put the Bulldogs on

the line where they added another 4 points to the final win of 64-46.

"It gave us a confidence boost when we beat Palco by as much as we did," Spreser said.

Finals

The Bulldogs' victory over

Palco earned them a spot in the finals. They played the Logan Trojans who had defeated the No. 1 seed Cheylin Cougars in the semi-finals. The boys were eager to play Logan as they had defeated them 67-59 in January and had lost twice to Cheylin in two close games in February.

"It motivated us when Logan beat Cheylin," Christensen said. "We knew we could beat Logan to get to state."

The Bulldogs scored first in the championship game with a three pointer from Spreser. It was quickly answered by a Logan three to tie it up. Stevenson put in a smooth three point shot followed by a three pointer from Preston and the 'Dogs led 9-3 with five minutes off the clock. A free throw from the Trojans ended the first quarter 9-4.

A quick-moving second quarter found both teams searching for the basket. The Bulldogs extended their lead to 15-4 before the Logan boys found their way to the hole. They quickly made up for lost time and closed the gap to 15-12 as half time neared. The Bulldogs worked the ball around as the clock ticked down and a pass from Preston to Spreser went in to give the 'Dogs a 17-12 lead when the buzzer sent them to the locker room.

Logan was not about to let Golden Plains walk away easily as they put in a three and narrowed the Bulldogs' lead to 17-15 to start off the third quarter. The Bulldogs answered back and continued to play smart, extending the score to 36-22. Logan hit four from the line as the quarter wound down to a 36-26 score.

In the last eight minutes of the sub-state championship game, both teams were determined to give it their all as the gym rocked with the enthusiasm of the fans. Spreser started off the play with a put-back for two. Logan added a three and a bucket closing the game to 38-31.

A bucket from Christensen gave

the 'Dogs 40 points but a three from Logan put the score at 40-34 at the 4-minute mark. Christensen hit again to put the 'Dogs back ahead by seven. Ritter caught a pass from Preston for two more, got fouled, made the "and one" and the Bulldogs were ahead 45-34 with two minutes to play. A Bulldog foul gave Logan their own "and one" to give the Trojans 37 points. Preston hit again, but a three pointer from Logan set the score at 47-40 with one minute remaining. As the tension and excitement ran through the crowd, game continued back and forth. Finally, the 'Dogs held a five point lead with 23 seconds on the clock. With anything possible, the Trojans put the Bulldogs on the line and with four free shots in a row from Preston, the Bulldogs claimed their championship 52-44.

Statistics

In the tournament, the Bulldogs scored a total of 116 points to their opponents 90.

Spreser had 41 points while Preston had 35. Christensen walked away with 26 while Ritter put in 9 and Stevenson, 6. Ritter pulled down 19 rebounds along with 17 from Spreser, 16 from Christensen and 10 from Preston. Stevenson grabbed 3 and Weber, 1.

Christensen played strong defense underneath with 6 blocks. Spreser had 2 blocks. Preston played out front and had 9 steals and 11 assists. Christensen had 2 steals; Stevenson, 1 steal and 1 assist; Ritter, 1 steal and 1 assist; and Spreser, 4 assists.

The boys will play Kiowa-Barber County for the first round of the Class 1A Division II state tournament Thursday in Hays.

"It feels good to qualify for state," said Preston. "We have met another of our team goals that we set at the beginning of the season."

College women lose two games on the road

The Colby Community College softball team only managed one run in two games when they dropped both games of an away double-header to Hutchinson Community College on Sunday.

The Lady Trojans had originally been scheduled to play in a tournament in Lamar, Colo., but it was cancelled, so they picked up a double-header at Hutchinson.

Pitcher Kristi Sheets picked up the lost in the opening 0-7 blow-out. She gave up 7 runs – 5 of them earned – on 10 hits in six innings pitched. She gave up no walks and struck out four batters.

Colby got only two hits, one of those from Casey Dirkes, who went 1 for 3 and picked up a double.

"We let the weather get to us," Coach Ryan Sturdy said. "We didn't have any intensity or fire today."

The Lady Trojans picked up their only run the second game, but still lost 9-1. Lori Harshbarger picked up the loss. In 4 1/3 innings she gave up 9 runs – only 4 earned – on 10 hits. She walked one batter.

Courtney Bloski drove in the run. She went 2 for 3. The Lady Trojans had 4 hits.

"We need to find a way to get on base and not be satisfied with putting the ball in play," Sturdy said. "We were a step slow on defense today. We have to make the average play and put the ball in play."

The Lady Trojans were scheduled for a conference game Tuesday against Butler Community College in El Dorado and against Garden City at 2 p.m. today at the college, but both games were called off because of the snow. The Lady Trojans will travel to El Dorado at 3 p.m. Friday and play at home against Western Nebraska Community College at 11 p.m. Sunday.

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