



JUDY ROGERS/Golden Plains High School
Golden Plains junior Tristan Schwarz jumped for two against the St. Francis Indians in Rexford on Dec. 18. Schwarz led the Bulldogs with 18 points against the Indians and contributed 2 steals. The Bulldogs will play the Brewster-Triplains Titans on Friday, Jan. 4, for their first post-holiday contest.

Bulldog varsity boys collapse in second half

By Judy Rogers
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The Golden Plains High School boys basketball team played a close first-half game against the St. Francis Indians, but collapsed under the Indians' pressure in the second half to finish with a 76-49 loss in their final game before the holiday break.

"This is the best half we've had so far," said senior Andrew Luna of the first two quarters of Bulldog action Dec. 18 in Rexford. "We need to work on finishing and playing tougher with the ball."

The Bulldogs jumped to a 17-15 lead by the end of the first quarter, thanks in part to aggressive play and multiple steals from Jose Bermudez and Tristan Schwarz.

The boys continued to play hard in the second with an early, hard-fought basket from Schwarz.

Two free shots from Joseph

Koerperich and another three-pointer from Schwarz gave the Bulldogs a 24-18 lead before the Indians went on the warpath. They quickly tied the game up at 24 with just over three minutes until the half. A free throw from Grant Spresser regained the Bulldog lead only to have the Indians tie it up once more. With just over a minute remaining, the Indians made several quick shots to gain a 31-25 lead at the buzzer.

The Indians stepped on the floor in the second half and took advantage of the Bulldogs' frustration at not hitting their shots and quickly extended their lead by adding 25 points to the Bulldogs' 10 in the third.

The Bulldogs continued to work together as a team and hustle on the floor and managed to add 14 more points in the fourth, but were forced to foul to try and regain possession of the ball. This attempt led to two senior players fouling out for the Bulldogs and the Indians were

successful at the line making 10 of their 15 attempts to win the game 76-49.

Schwarz led the team with 19 points against the Indians. Koerperich added 8 points to the final score, Bermudez 5, Luna 4, Shane Ryburn 4, Koi Wessel 4, Spresser 3 and Braden Korte 2. They played an aggressive game as they totaled up 16 steals with 7 from Bermudez, 2 each from Luna, Ryburn, Spresser and Schwarz and 1 by Koerperich.

"We're playing better for longer periods of time. The boys work very hard," said Coach Mike Doll. "Our schedule in the first part of the season has been very tough including competing against two state-ranked teams."

"We will continue to work on toughness and on our rebounding. As we continue to work hard, we can have a winning record after the break."

The Bulldogs go into the break with a 1-5 record and will reopen at home on Friday, Jan. 4, against Brewster-Triplains.

Junior varsity squad takes on Weskan

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The Golden Plains High School junior varsity boys basketball team traveled to Weskan to battle the Weskan Coyotes.

The boys started out strong in the first quarter Dec. 14, putting up 10 points. Allowing the Coyotes to score 17, the Bulldogs trailed going into the second. They couldn't find the basket, missing repeated free-throw attempts with only one falling in from the hands of Braden Korte. Koi Wessel made two baskets to give the Bulldogs 15 points at the half. Weskan added 11 in the second to hold a 13-point lead.

The Bulldogs still struggled to find the basket in the second half, with the only shot of the quarter coming from junior captain Zach Spresser while the Coyotes extended their lead to 34-17. The game was far from over, as both teams stepped up the pace in the fourth quarter. The Bulldogs put up 11 points from Domonic Luna, Koi Wessel and Kade Wessel. The Coyotes were determined to keep their lead and put in 21 to capture the 55-31 win.

Koi Wessel finished the game with 11 points while Luna scored 10 – including 2 three-pointers. Kade Wessel had 5 and Spresser scored 4. Korte rounded out the scoring with 1.

The boys played one more game against St. Francis before the holiday break.

Denver Broncos stay bland but focused on Kansas City

By Eddie Pells
AP National Writer

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. – They are 16-point favorites against a team tied for the worst record in the league. With each and every victory over the span of a 10-game winning streak, their once-narrow path to the Super Bowl has grown as wide as an eight-lane highway.

But think you'll catch the Denver Broncos looking past the Kansas City Chiefs this week? Don't bet on it.

If the Broncos have taken even a moment to think "big picture" this season – or think about anything beyond their next opponent – they've done a great job hiding it.

"As soon as you start thinking about the Super Bowl, you get beat so fast and you're going to be back at home before you know it," free safety Rahim Moore said.

From the free safety to the head coach to Peyton Manning to the 53rd man on the roster, this has been the theme all year – think about next Sunday, think about getting better every week, and let the future take care of itself.

Boring? Yes.
Predictable? Absolutely.
Effective? You bet.
And nobody has stuck to the script better in 2012 than the Denver Broncos.

"We're focused on trying to get better," Manning said. "I think we've done a good job with that all season, just taking it one week at a time. I know it's a boring cliché, but I think coach (John) Fox has preached it. I think our team has bought into it, and I feel like we'll do the same this week."

Whether they acknowledge it or not, the playoff picture has been looking prettier every week for the Broncos (12-3). By topping Kansas City and extending their winning streak to 11, which would be the second longest in franchise history, they would wrap up a first-round bye. If they win and the Houston Texans lose to Indianapolis, the Broncos would be the top-seeded team in the AFC.

The experts in Las Vegas aren't even waiting for Sunday's game

to express their feelings.

The Broncos, at 4-1, are now the favorite to win the Super Bowl, followed by New England at 5-1 and Green Bay at 6-1.

They have come by that status honestly, winning their last 10 games by an average score of 31-17 and making most of those wins as predictable as the well-worn quotes about taking things one game at a time that they serve up on a daily basis.

"I grew up around San Diego and went to the horse track a lot," Fox said. "There were a lot of favorites and it didn't work out that way a lot of times. You've got to earn this between the lines and it won't affect our attitude or mindset moving forward."

Now, just because they don't get ahead of themselves this isn't to say the Broncos are completely devoid of personality.

Manning has a wry sense of humor and, when he's up to it, can be introspective; last Sunday he spoke in depth about his comeback road this season, insisting that despite the year he's having, he is not the same as he was in his prime.

Von Miller likes to dance after his sacks – all 17½ of them.

Champ Bailey is almost always as thoughtful during an interview as he is good in one-on-one coverage.

Maybe it's because of well-respected, focused leaders such as Manning and Bailey that there are no troublemakers in the locker room, nobody serving up bulletin-board material and, for the most part, no complainers, save cornerback Tracy Porter, whose tweets about lack of playing time earlier this month were quickly and quietly tamped down by the team.

All of which keeps the focus on football, and the Broncos are perfecting the art of the easy win.

Home or road, tough opponent or not, Denver's wins have looked very similar week after week: They take a two- or three-touchdown lead and coast to a relatively easy win, yet still sprinkle in enough mistakes to keep the day-after film session interesting.

Bugaboos from last week's 34-

12 win over Cleveland: Penalties. The Broncos committed 11 of them, a season high. Ball security. Broncos punt returners Trindon Holliday and Jim Leonhard bobbled one ball apiece but didn't lose either. Interceptions. Bad communication between Manning and Knowshon Moreno caused a second-quarter turnover against Cleveland – Denver's first inside the opponent's 10-yard line this season.

"You get concerned with everything," Fox said. "The bottom line, as I mentioned yesterday, it's all about winning. You strive for perfection but they're never perfect."

Even while he's having what will, statistically, wind up as one of his top three seasons as a pro – 103.7 passer rating, 34 touchdowns and 4,355 yards – Manning never walks off the field satisfied. That sets the tone for the entire team.

"I think we've made some strides each week," he said. "I still have to admit that it's not going to be an offense that's been together for five years. It's not going to look like that because we haven't. We've only been together for however many weeks, so we've tried to improve each week, but a lot of things just take time. We're trying to do the best we can in this limited amount of time."

So far, that's been very good. Lest the Broncos get complacent, especially with what looks like an overmatched opponent coming into Denver on Sunday, Fox can always pull out a number of well-worn bromides to keep his players' attention.

• "On any given Sunday." (Yes, he really says that.)

• "The other team gets paid, too." (A ready-made answer for any of Denver's shortcomings, which were more pronounced when the Broncos were 2-3 earlier this season.)

• "We don't look at the record, we look at the tape." (An easy one this week, because Kansas City's 2-13 record looks much less impressive than its toughly fought 17-9 loss to Denver did last month.)

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