

Titans move ahead of Bulldogs as year ends

The newest state rankings should set up some great new drama when area basketball teams resume in 2014.

Triplains-Brewster and Golden Plains were already good rivals, but it may hit a new level now that the undefeated Titan girls (6-0 record) are rated higher than pre-season favorite Golden Plains (3-2).

The Kansas Basketball Coaches Association has raised Triplains-Brewster to No. 8 among all 1A Division 2 girls teams. These Titans cruised past Healy, 52-37, in their final game of 2013 Friday evening.

Meanwhile, the pre-season No. 2 Bulldogs (3-3) are now No. 9

after playing a tough early-season scheduled capped with Friday's 50-12 trouncing of No. 10 Weskan.

Golden Plains returned several top players from last year's state Final Four team. They've already faced 2A No. 10 Ellis (60-37 loss) and 1A Division II No. 6 Dighton (40-33 setback).

The Bulldogs certainly hope these games will only make them stronger and more focused going into their new year. After playing at St. Francis to tip off the new year on Jan. 3, Golden Plains and Triplains-Brewster will collide one week later at Winona.

They'll likely meet again more than once, especially during the

Western Kansas Liberty League tournament later in January.

Meanwhile, the Colby Eagles were holding a 4A Division II No. 4 ranking entering last weekend's 52-37 loss at No. 6 Hugoton.

The Eagle girls will certainly have plenty of chances for payback against rated teams. They'll meet the most familiar Colby rival on Tuesday, Jan. 7 when coach Ryan Becker's team visits No. 9-rated Goodland.

Just three days later, the 3A No. 5-rated Holcomb Longhorns rumble into Colby for another girls-boys varsity doubleheader.

Coverage of area teams will continue as the winter sports season resumes next week.

Bulldog boys bury Healy

Junior Layton Werth's 12 points paced 13 Triplains-Brewster Bulldogs who hit three of four shots (75 percent) while freshman Tad Holm made his only attempt.

The Bulldogs (4-2 overall) shot 51 percent overall in a dominant final performance before their holiday break.

Werth's 71 percent shooting (five for seven) actually didn't

lead the potent attack. Senior Seth Smith and sophomore Coleton Rogge both hit three of four shots (75 percent) while freshman Tad Holm made his only attempt.

A glance at all Bulldog leaders from Friday's big win:

Triplains-Brewster (61) — Layton Werth 12 points, Taylor Stramel 8, Seth Smith 7, Coleton Rogge 7, Fred Schertz 4, Takoda

Turner 4, C.J. Felzien 4, Justin Schmidt 4, Hudson Stramel 3, Quin Clymer 2, Jaden Schmidt 2, Tanner Abbott 2, Tad Holm 2. Three-point goal: Rogge. Rebound leaders: Werth 6, Taylor Stramel 5. Assists: Smith 5, Justin Schmidt 4. Steals: Ryan Gfeller, Justin Schmidt, Taylor Stramel, Hudson Stramel and Rogge 2 apiece. Blocked shot: Werth.



Golden Plains High School Golden Plains' Hailee Spresser fired up this shot during last March's state tournament, where the Bulldogs hope to return in 2014. They currently own a 1A Division II Top 10 state ranking.

K-State will face freshman

Ann Arbor, Mich. (AP) — Michigan will start freshman quarterback Shane Morris in place of Devin Gardner in the Buffalo Wild Wings Bowl against Kansas State on Saturday, coach Brady Hoke announced Thursday.

Gardner, a redshirt junior, remains sidelined by a turf toe injury.

Morris has appeared in only four games this season. He has completed 5 of 9 passes for 65 yards and accounted for one interception.

Morris, who finished his high school career as the No. 8 quarterback in the country, was Hoke's first commit to Michigan after arriving from San Diego State.

Morris committed the summer after his sophomore year and quickly began recruiting other players to the Wolverines.

Bowl ticket sales struggle

Kansas State and Michigan are both having trouble selling their full allotment of 11,000 tickets to the Buffalo Wild Wings Bowl.

K-State spokesman Kenny Lannou said that the school has sold roughly 6,000 tickets to Saturday's 9:15 p.m. game. *The Detroit News* reported last week that Michigan had sold 5,600 tickets from its allotment, and had already decided to donate 4,500 back to the bowl game.

K-State advertised bowl tickets at Intrust Bank Arena on Saturday during timeouts of its basketball game against Gonzaga, and tickets remain on sale at its athletic web site. They can be purchased from \$25 in the upper deck to \$95 in the lower levels.

Though bowl ticket sales are down from the past two years, when K-State sold out its allotment for the Cotton Bowl and the Fiesta Bowl in pre-orders alone, Lannou said K-State is still expecting 10,000-15,000 fans.

Tennis star wins 'Athlete of The Year' honor

NEW YORK (AP) — Serena Williams likes to make one thing clear: She is never satisfied, no matter how many matches and tournaments she wins.

Driven as ever, Williams won plenty this year. She went 78-4 with 11 titles, including at the French Open and US Open, raising her Grand Slam championship total to 17. She compiled a 34-match winning streak. She earned more than \$12 million in prize money, a record for women's

tennis. In February, she became the oldest No. 1 in WTA rankings history and never left that perch.

Thanks to all of that, Williams was honored Wednesday as The Associated Press' 2013 Female Athlete of the Year. It's the third AP award for Williams, following 2002 and 2009. Only two women have been chosen more often as AP Athlete of the Year since the annual awards were first handed out in 1931.

"Whenever I lose, I get more

determined, and it gives me something more to work toward," Williams told the AP in an interview shortly before the start of the US Open. "I don't get complacent, and I realize I need to work harder and I need to do better and I want to do better or I wouldn't keep playing this game."

The vote by news organizations was about as lopsided as many of Williams' matches this season. She received 55 of 96 votes, while Brittney Griner, a two-time

AP Player of the Year in college basketball and the No. 1 pick in April's WNBA draft, finished second with 14. Swimmer Missy Franklin was next with 10.

The Male Athlete of the Year recipient will be announced Thursday.

By adding a fifth career US Open championship and a second French Open title, Williams also moved within one Grand Slam trophy of the 18 apiece won by Martina Navratilova and Chris

Evert. The record is 24 by Margaret Court.

Pretty heady company.

Evert is one of the only two women with more AP awards than Williams. Evert won four from 1974-80, while Babe Didrikson collected a record six one for track in 1932 and five for golf from 1945-54.

"Serena already has provided significant contributions to taking our sport to the next level," WTA chairman Stacey Allaster said.

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