



Team, KU camp brings Louisburg volleyball together

Junior Reilly Ratliff-Becher makes a pass during a drill while freshman Chase Kallevig looks on during the final day of the Louisburg volleyball team camp on July 11.

The Louisburg High School volleyball team is about nine months removed from one of the best – and most heartbreaking – finishes in school history.

In late October, the Lady Cats were a point away from winning the school's first state championship against Rose Hill, but came up just short in what was a memorable state title match. Louisburg is hoping to use that defeat to their advantage in 2018 and the Lady Cats came together over the summer to get back to work and try to get back to the state title game.

That work picked up on July 9 when the Lady Cats took part in a 3-day team camp in an effort to redevelop that team chemistry from a year ago. Louisburg also spent its summer competing in summer league action and open gym workouts.

“We had 35 athletes attend the summer camp, and I am anticipating around 40 will try out in August,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “We had a few who were unable to attend, but overall I was pleased with how the camp went. We’ve been running open gym sessions and league nights

throughout the summer, so the players had already put in a lot of time on the court.”

The purpose of the camp was to also bring everyone together to work on fundamentals since it had been 7 to 8 months since some of them had been on the volleyball court.

‘This was the first time we had a solid week to just focus on volleyball and building individual and team skills and goals,” Compliment said. “We really wanted to focus on areas we’d noticed during league matches or open gyms that needed strengthening, but we also wanted to strengthen up our basic skills. The camp allowed us to break up into smaller groups and focus more on specific skills.”



Louisburg head coach Jessica Compliment talks with her players during their team camp on July 11.

On July 12, 20 players ventured to the University of Kansas

team camp for three days in Lawrence, where they competed against some other programs in the area, along with learning tips from some of the Jayhawk coaches.

According to Compliment, it was the perfect way for the team to end its summer competition.

“We worked a lot on team drills and competition play at KU,” Compliment said. “Over the course of the summer, we’ve had three different groups playing in summer leagues and lineups varied from week to week based on who was in town and able to play. The three days at KU allowed us to focus a little more on finding some consistency, but there were still changes to the line ups made during each session and day. It was helpful to see how the groups and individuals adjusted to the changes, and it allowed us to see if there were changes in chemistry when players moved around.

“Between open gyms, weights, summer league matches, and both camps the players have put in a lot of work. It’s always fun to see how the players and groups progress from the start of summer to the end of summer camps. The KU camp is the final thing we do as a team over the summer, and there were big strides made from the first summer league match to the last match played at camp.”

The 2018 campaign has the possibility of being another special season for the Lady Cats. Of the starting eight players from last year, six of them are returning, including the Class 4A Co-Player of the Year in Anna Dixon. Setter Carson Buffington, middle hitter Haley Cain, defenders Riley Kallevig and Reilly Ratliff-Becher and outside hitter Erin Lemke also return.



Haley Cain tips the ball over the net during a drill at the Lady Cat team camp.

Even with several players coming back, Compliment saw her team get better and believes it was a successful summer.

“We still have a ways to go and a lot that needs ironing out, but we have a group of athletes that are hungry for the season to start,” she said. “Placing second at state is a great accomplishment, but there is still a feeling of unfinished business among the players.

“We do have a solid crew returning, and I’ve seen a lot of good play out of all of the athletes this summer so I think we should be fairly solid. They are hungry for another shot at state. They understand that it won’t be easy and that they can’t take anything for granted. They will need to work harder than everyone else. Nothing will be handed to them.”