

Four-Peat! Lady Cats cruise to state bid



Louisburg's (from left) Cate Stambaugh, Megan Lemke, Lauren Dunn, Makenzie Kallevig, Madison Turner and Olivia Bradley hold up their substate championship trophy Saturday at Spring Hill High School. The Lady Cats defeated De Soto 2-0 to advance to their fourth consecutive state tournament.

SPRING HILL – As the ball hit the floor for the final point Saturday, the Louisburg High School volleyball team celebrated its fourth consecutive trip to the state tournament.

The Lady Cats took care of business in the substate championship game against De Soto at Spring Hill High School. Louisburg cruised to a 25-22 and 25-21 victory to complete its season-long dream of reaching the state tournament.

As far as celebrations go, this was a little more muted compared to the other three. It didn't mean the Lady Cats were any less excited.

"Honestly it just gets better each time," senior Megan Lemke said. "You are always nervous going into it, but we seem to pull it out each time and there isn't a better feeling. I love it."

The quick celebration was followed by a few hugs and several

photo ops. However, even after just a few minutes of wrapping up substate, the Lady Cats were focused on a much bigger goal.

"I would think this is the first time they weren't as excited as in year's past," Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. "Yeah, they jumped around and screamed for a little bit, but you could tell they were ready to get going for state. They have been there before and state is what they have been looking forward to all season."



Lauren Dunn goes up for a kill Saturday in the Lady Cats' first match against Spring Hill.

As for the games themselves, the Lady Cats (28-10) didn't encounter too many problems in their two matches on the day. Before defeating De Soto in two matches, Louisburg defeated Spring Hill 25-22 and 25-18 in the first round.

It did take a few minutes for Louisburg to get in the swing of things against the Broncos.

Spring Hill scored the first four points of the match and used that momentum to build a 21-17 lead. The Lady Cats seemed to flip a switch after that as they went on an 8-1 run to end the

set.

During the run, the Lady Cats got three kills from senior Madison Turner, a kill from senior Lauren Dunn and an ace from senior Makenzie Kallevig to put their team back in good position.

“I think we all had some nerves that hadn’t been worked out,” Dunn said. “I thought we all stayed positive and I think that really helped. Before the tournament, we talked about positivity and I think that was a big factor for our success.”

The nerves seemed to go away quickly as the Lady Cats were in control the rest of the way. Louisburg jumped out a big lead against the Broncos in the second to pull away for the easy win.



Louisburg’s (from left) Anna Dixon, Megan Lemke, Lauren Dunn, Sophie McMullen and Makenzie Kallevig celebrate after scoring the final point of the substate championship match.

Turner and freshman Anna Dixon had big days at the net as Turner finished with a team-high 12 kills and Dixon added eight. Dunn also had seven kills to key the Lady Cat offense.

Sophomore setter Sophie McMullen also did a good job finding her hitters as she racked up 30 assists and also had two aces.

Against De Soto, the points were a little tougher to come by as it stayed with Louisburg point-for-point through much of the two sets.

With the first set tied at 9-all, Dixon came through with a kill, Dunn and junior Olivia Bradley each had a tip, Turner added a kill and Kallevig followed with an ace to make it a 14-11 advantage.

De Soto eventually rallied to take an 18-17 lead, but Dixon and Dunn came up with three kills to give Louisburg a 21-20 lead. The Lady Cats then went on a mini-run thanks to two kills and a block from Turner to seal the win.

"One thing I told them the night before is that there is no tomorrow for three of the teams," Compliment said. "No one is going to back down from them and no one is going to make it easy. Spring Hill came out with a lot of fire and it kind of woke us up a little bit. With De Soto, we had a few dips, especially with some serving errors, but we can't make those mistakes and hopefully we can get those fixed."



Members of the team (front

row, from left) are Cate Stambaugh, Madison Turner; (middle row) Megan Lemke, Lauren Dunn, Makenzie Kallevig; (back row) Anna Dixon, Sophie McMullen, Olivia Bradley, Ellie Katzer, Ava Littrell, Carson Buffington and Mikayla Quinn.

The second set was much like the first as, with the set tied at 7-all, two blocks and a kill from Dixon helped give Louisburg an 11-7 lead. De Soto wouldn't go away and eventually tied the match at 16.

From there, the Lady Cats took over.

Turner served six straight service points, which included three aces, two blocks from Dixon and a tip from McMullen to pull away. Dunn then sent the ball to the De Soto back row on the final volley, and as it hit the floor, the celebration began.

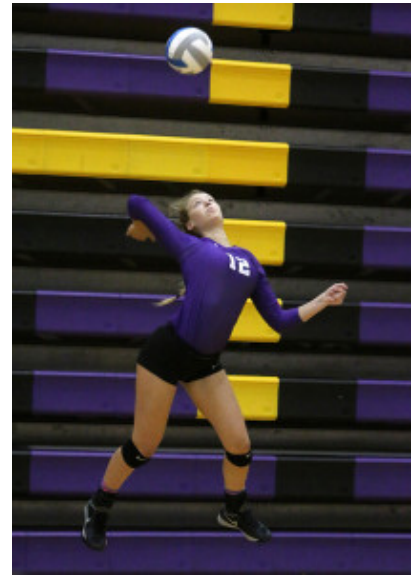
"I thought we played great," Dixon said. "I thought our defense was a lot better and we played loose and had a lot of fun."

Dunn and Dixon led the Lady Cat attack at the net with seven kills each and Turner finished with five. Turner led Louisburg defensively at the net with six blocks and Dixon added four.

In the back row, Kallevig had a team-high 10 digs, while Dixon and Dunn added six each. McMullen had 22 assists in the victory, while Lemke finished with two aces.

Dixon will be the lone Lady Cat varsity player to make her first trip to the state tournament as the rest of the team will be looking to accomplish something special this weekend

after finishing fourth at state a season ago.



Sophie McMullen rises for a serve Saturday during the substate tournament.

“Each time has been exciting, but for me, since I am not playing in college, this would have been my last time playing volleyball and I knew that I had something to work for and I wanted to play one more week,” Kallevig said. “It was a huge goal for us and I just played my heart out.”

Louisburg will begin its quest for a state title Friday when it travels to the Salina Bicentennial Center. The Lady Cats, the No. 2 seed, will open play against No. 7 Andover Central (22-19) at 8:30 a.m. At 10:30, the Lady Cats will play No. 6 Chanute (26-14) and will finish up pool play at 1:30 p.m. against No. 3 Bishop Miege (27-11).

The top two seeds in each pool will advance to the state semifinals at 10 a.m. on Saturday.

“Even though I have been out there before, I am still going to be nervous,” McMullen said. “I was nervous for this substate to be honest. I am just hoping for better than fourth at state

and I hope that we can win it.”