

Lady Cats take third at state tourney



The Louisburg girls volleyball team pose with the Class 4A-Division I third-place trophy Saturday in Salina. Pictured are (front row, from left) Cate Stambaugh, Lauren Dunn, Makenzie Kallevig, Madison Turner, Megan Lemke; (standing) assistant coach Mary Quinn, Olivia Bradley, Mikayla Quinn, Sophie McMullen, Ellie Katzer, Ava Littrell, Anna Dixon, Carson Buffington and coach Jessica Compliment.

SALINA – Lauren Dunn felt something different.

That says a lot for a person who has been on state tournament teams the last four years. Dunn has felt heartbreak, joy, nervousness and probably a little frustration.

She has been through a lot of good and bad times, but following Saturday's third-place state finish, Dunn and the rest of her teammates had a little different emotion.

The Lady Cats were finally able to end their state tournament with a victory.

After two fourth-place finishes and a runner-up, the Lady Cats' 25-19 and 25-17 win over Tonganoxie in the third-place match of the Class 4A-Division I tournament at the Salina Bicentennial Center gave Dunn, and fellow seniors Madison Turner, Makenzie Kallevig, Megan Lemke and Cate Stambaugh, a

chance to end their season the right way.

“That was something that I emphasized in the locker room is that this was going to be the year that we end on a win,” Dunn said. “Getting second and all that was great, but getting to end on a win is one of the best feelings.”



Lauren Dunn dives to the court for a dig during Friday's pool play action at the Class 4A-Division I state tournament in Salina.

It was a much-needed win for the Lady Cats, who experienced heartbreak in their two previous matches against the top two ranked teams in the state.

Louisburg found themselves in the semifinals against No. 2-ranked McPherson on Saturday, and despite getting out to an early lead in the first set, fell 25-21 and 25-17.

“McPherson is a good team and they were able to put up some good blocks against us and I think that just got in our heads a little bit and we couldn't find a way to get around those,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “We just started playing more not to lose instead of playing to win. The momentum just stayed on McPherson's side and we couldn't break in.”

Then on Friday, the Lady Cats, who are ranked No. 3 in Class 4A, got a chance to go up against No. 1 Bishop Miege in the final match of pool play. Louisburg made Miege, the eventual state champion, work for everything.

Even though Louisburg fell 25-19, 17-25, 25-16, the Lady Cats were the only team to take a set from the Stags, who beat McPherson in two sets in the championship match.



Megan Lemke (left) and Olivia Bradley go up for a block Friday against Chanute

“We played our hearts out,” Kallevig said. “We wanted to get revenge on them from my sophomore year when we lost in title match. I am really proud of the way we played and I wouldn’t change anything.”

Louisburg also earned honors following the state tournament as it had three players make the all-tournament team. Dunn, Turner and freshman Anna Dixon all earned spots on the team. It was the second time in her career that she was named to the squad.

The Lady Cats, who ended the year with a 31-12 record, made sure to come out strong against Tonganoxie as they took a 12-7 lead after three kills and an ace from Dixon. Kallevig then served four straight service points that included an ace from

her, along with a kill from Dunn and a block from Turner.

Dixon and Turner then added two kills each to stretch out the lead to 20-11 and the Lady Cats never looked back in the first set.

The second set was much of the same went out to a 9-4 lead thanks to three kills from Turner, two kills from Dixon and an ace from Lemke. Ahead 19-15, Louisburg then closed out the match thanks to four kills from Dixon and another from sophomore Sophie McMullen.



Senior Madison Turner gets a stuff block against Chanute on Friday at the Salina Bicentennial Center.

“It means a lot, especially with this being my first state tournament,” Dixon said of the third-place finish. “We definitely wanted to get back with Miego in that championship match, but it was good to end on a win.”

Louisburg had its sights set on the championship match and appeared at one point the Lady Cats were going to get there against McPherson. They found themselves down 11-6 early on,

but the Lady Cats made a furious rally.

McMullen led the charge as she served five straight service points, including three aces to give Louisburg a 12-11 lead. The Lady Cats then went on another mini 4-0 run thanks to two tips and a kill from Dunn to give them an 18-13 lead.

All that momentum quickly went away as McPherson charged right back and went on an 11-3 run to end the set.

The first half of the second set, the two teams went back and forth and neither could pull away. McPherson had a 17-13 lead, but McMullen's serving came up big again with two aces and Dixon added a pair of kills to tie it.

Unfortunately for the Lady Cats, McPherson scored the final eight points to take the set and the match.

"I think it was just a confidence issue," Dunn said. "Some of us were just playing timid. Our players are so great that we just need to play with confidence. We just started tipping too much instead of just hitting the ball and that gave them more free balls instead of making them work for the points."

After losing the first set against Bishop Miege, the Lady Cats put together some of their best volleyball of the tournament in the second set.

Lemke served up five consecutive points to put Louisburg up 9-7 after an ace of her own, along with a block, tip and a kill from Turner. Miege rallied to tie the match at 13-all, but two kills and an ace from Dixon and a kill from Dunn put the Lady Cats up 17-14.

Kallevig put on another serving show for the Lady Cats as she served five straight points and added an ace during that stretch. Turner then added a pair of kills and a block to close out the match.

"We were playing to win against Miege," Compliment said. "They

wanted that game and that set and played aggressive that whole time.”



(Clockwise from left) Megan Lemke, Sophie McMullen, Makezie Kallevig, Anna Dixon, Olivia Bradley and Lauren Dunn celebrate a big point against Bishop Miege.

In the third set, Miege went on a 7-2 run to take a 19-12 lead and the Lady Cats were unable to get any closer.

The Lady Cats also put together good performances to start pool play as they defeated Andover Central (25-19, 25-23) and Chanute (25-15 and 25-12).

Despite the up and down state tournament and some disappointment, the Lady Cats were happy with the way everything turned out.

“It feels great to end on a win, especially with this being my senior season,” Turner said. “I didn’t want to end it on a loss. It would have been better to get into championship match against Miege and beat them so they didn’t win three times in a row, but it still feels good to get third.”

It was never easy for the Lady Cats as they competed in tough tournaments and played several bigger, state-ranked teams in September. Louisburg then had to play without one of its seniors, in Stambaugh, during the final stretch that included

substate and state.

“It was a real fun season,” Lemke said. “Even with Cate going down, I don’t think that set us back too much because she was always there to support us and help us. I had a lot of fun, but sad it is over though.”