

Lady Cats end season with loss in title match



Sophomore Anna Dixon sends the ball over the net for Louisburg on Saturday during the Class 4A substate tournament at Louisburg High School. The Lady Cats earned a spot in the title game before falling to Paola in two sets.

Louisburg left it all out on the floor.

The Lady Cats chased down and dug up every loose ball they could get their hands on, hit the ball as hard as possible and played it out to the final point. The problem was, when that final point came, Louisburg had to sit and watch as another team celebrated on its home court.

During the Class 4A substate tournament Saturday at Louisburg High School, Paola downed Louisburg 25-22 and 29-27 in the championship game to snap a streak of four straight substate titles for the Lady Cats.

“They are disappointed,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “A lot of girls wanted to keep that streak going and the tradition that has been set. They feel like they let some of their teammates down and they wanted that trip back down to state. For those that have already been, they wanted their teammates that haven’t been down there to experience that. It definitely hurts.”

The teams went back and forth at each other in both sets and created for an intense match between the two rivals. Louisburg jumped out to an early 14-10 lead in the first set behind four kills from sophomore Anna Dixon and a pair of aces from junior Sophie McMullen.

However, Paola went on a mini 6-2 run to grab a 19-18 lead. The Panthers eventually built a 23-20 advantage and pulled away to take the opening set.



Freshman Haley Cain (left) and junior Sophie McMullen team up for a block Saturday during the Class 4A substate tournament.

In the second set, Louisburg again built an early 7-3 lead after three kills from Dixon and an ace from McMullen. The Panthers followed with a 6-1 run to go up 9-8, but the Lady Cats went back on top after a long volley and then McMullen

followed with a kill to take a 13-10 lead.

Paola battled back to grab an 18-17 lead late in the match and both squads would trade points the rest of the way. Dixon and McMullen added kills to keep the Lady Cats in it and freshman libero Riley Kallevig added a big dig to tie the match at 25-all.

The Lady Cats faced match point four different times and each time responded to tie it up and eventually went up 27-26 to force a match point of their own.

Senior Ellie Katzer, Kallevig, Dixon, McMullen and sophomore Carson Buffington were all a part of several big volleys late, but with it tied at 27, the Panthers responded with the final two points and the victory.

"The Paola match was a good one," Compliment said. "Paola played great, but I thought we played really well too. We played some of our best ball today. We were running down so many balls, the girls were fighting for everything and didn't let the ball drop. They really wanted it and they 100 percent went after it. I think some nerves got us a few times and that comes with the territory. Overall, we played well though."

Dixon led the Louisburg offense with 15 kills, while McMullen added six kills and three aces. Senior Olivia Bradley also played well at the net with a team-high five blocks.

Dixon also added a team-high 17 digs, while Katzer and Kallevig had 14 and 13, respectively. Buffington ran the Louisburg offense and led the way with 14 assists and McMullen added eight.

Louisburg (23-17) started the day strong with a 25-16 and 25-18 win over Ottawa in the substate semifinals. The Lady Cats were never threatened by the Cyclones as they played with the lead most of the way.



Freshman Riley Kallevig sends a serve over the net Saturday in Louisburg.

McMullen had a big match with a team-high 14 kills. Dixon added nine kills in the win to go along with three aces. Buffington also handed out 21 assists.

Defensively, Dixon also had a team-high 12 digs and four blocks, while freshman Haley Cain added eight digs. Bradley also finished with four blocks.

"Coming out against Ottawa, we had a lot of energy," Compliment said. "All day we talked about getting that energy and mental game. We played Ottawa really tough, served tough, were aggressive at the net and the girls did a good job of setting the pace."

For the first time in five years, Louisburg will not be making the trek out to Salina for the state tournament and the Lady Cats will look back on what was an up and down season. It also marked the final time seniors Tayler Lancaster, Katzer and Bradley suited up for Louisburg.

"The season overall was kind of a roller coaster ride for us," Compliment said. "We had a lot of roller coaster rides out there and we played with some different lineups throughout the year. Throughout it all, I think they learned a lot about each other and they learned a lot about themselves. They grew as a team and overall it was a good season. We have a tough schedule to where we see a lot of good teams and hopefully that just builds experience for us."