Lady Cats take fifth at home tourney despite good record



Louisburg senior Sophie McMullen goes up for a kill Saturday during the Lady Cats' match with Olathe North at the Louisburg Invitational. The Lady Cats finished in fifth place overall with a 4-1 record.

In most tournaments, going 4-1 and knocking off a pair of state-ranked teams in the process, usually means your team is going to leave with some sort of hardware.

The Louisburg High School volleyball team did just that – well, everything but the hardware part anyway.

The Lady Cats' lone loss in the Louisburg Invitational on Saturday came in pool play and two other teams in their pool finished with a 2-1 record. Louisburg fell to Shawnee Mission West in two sets, but beat Leavenworth in two and knocked off state-ranked Olathe North in three sets.

The top two teams in each pool moved on to the championship bracket, but Louisburg wasn't one of those as it lost the tiebreaker and were sent to compete in the consolation bracket at Louisburg Middle School.

Louisburg, the No. 3 team in Class 4A-Division I, didn't let that get it down as it won its final two matches of the day to finish in fifth place, including a win over No. 2 Basehor-

Linwood in the fifth-place match. Despite the good record and big victories, the Lady Cats wanted more.

“The moral of the story is every match and every single set is important,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “It may have been a different story had we beaten Olathe North in two, or if we beat Shawnee Mission West. Every game, every set and every match is important and you can’t take them for granted. Losing that match to Shawnee Mission West, or losing a set to Olathe North is what pushed us into the bottom half of the bracket, going 4-1 and ending in fifth place.”

Pool play started well for the Lady Cats as they opened with a 25-21 and 25-21 win over Leavenworth, but Louisburg saw its one setback happen in its next match. Shawnee Mission West knocked off Louisburg 25-20 and 25-21 that forced a must-win match-up against Olathe North, the No. 4 team in Class 6A, in its final pool play contest.

The Lady Cats (20-6) rallied from behind in the third set against Olathe North to win 25-19, 20-25 and 25-23. Louisburg opened that third set with an 8-2 lead, only to see North go on a 9-0 run to grab an 11-8 advantage.



(From left): Carson Buffington, Sophie McMullen, Haley Cain, Reilly Ratliff-Becher and Anna Dixon celebrate a big point Saturday against Olathe North.

Olathe North led 15-9, but the Lady Cats went on a 7-1 run to tie it at 16-all. Louisburg then came back again from a 19-16 deficit to go up 22-20 and eventually hold on to win.

Junior Anna Dixon and senior Sophie McMullen gave the Lady Cats a big boost when they needed it the most. Dixon had a team-high 14 kills to go along with 12 digs, while McMullen was all over the place on defense with 21 digs and also had 12 kills to go along with a team-best six aces.

“We got down several times where we had to battle back,” Compliment said. “The Olathe North match was a tough one and they are a good team and for them to come and win that third set was good. They showed their confidence, they were aggressive and they didn’t pull back. That is what is frustrating sometimes is that we play our best against certain teams and other teams we relax and don’t play as well.”

The victory gave the Lady Cats a 2-1 record in pool play and finished in a three-way tie for first. Louisburg lost the tiebreaker based on set percentage and were sent to the consolation bracket.

It was there Louisburg opened bracket play with a 25-19 and 25-15 win over Fort Scott and then exacted some revenge in its fifth-place match with Basehor-Linwood. The Lady Cats had lost to Basehor twice already this season, but came through this time with a 25-20 and 26-24 win.

Once again, the Lady Cats had to come from behind and did so with a big comeback in the second set. Louisburg found itself down 22-14, before finishing the match on a 12-2 run.

“I talk to the girls a lot about finishing the match, or finishing the set and don’t sit back and think it is going to happen,” Compliment said. “To see them come from behind and beat Basehor, a team that has beaten us twice already this year, was big. We were down eight points at one time and that was great to see them battle back and not give up.



Mikayla Quinn (left) and Anna Dixon rise up for a block Saturday during the Louisburg Invitational.

“They were disappointed that they had to come over to the middle school. At the same time, we finished 4-1, and yeah we lost to Shawnee Mission West, who we had beaten previously earlier in the year. We didn’t start out well and we didn’t play with a lot of urgency. But for them to get four wins, especially against Olathe North and Basehor-Linwood, those are big confidence victories for the rest of the year. Losing that tiebreaker taught our girls that every set is important. I have seen teams go 2-1 in pool play out at state and have gone home. You can’t take anything for granted.”

Dixon had a big day at the net for the Lady Cats as she had a team-high 59 kills and nine blocks to go along with 54 digs.

McMullen recorded a team-best 10 aces and added to 39 kills and 38 digs to her stat line.

Junior setter Carson Buffington ran the offense well for the Lady Cats with 118 assists and defensively had 24 digs. Sophomore Haley Cain had 21 kills and four blocks, while senior Mikayla Quinn finished with 10 kills and six blocks.

Defensively, sophomore libero Riley Kallevig and sophomore Reilly Ratliff-Becher also had positive impacts for the Lady Cats. Kallevig had 38 digs to go along with eight aces and Ratliff-Becher finished with 27 digs.



Reilly Ratliff-Becher digs up a ball Saturday during the Lady Cats' home tournament.

"Reilly and Riley do a good job of reading stuff and they are fun to watch in the back row, especially with both of them being sophomores and watching them grow," Compliment said. "We transitioned Reilly from being a JV setter to being on the back row on defense and has done a good job of embracing that

role.”

Louisburg returns to action tonight when it travels to rival Paola for a Frontier League dual. Freshmen is set to begin at 4:30 p.m., with junior varsity and varsity to follow.

Louisburg gets league road win

The Louisburg High School volleyball team didn’t have much of a problem on the road Thursday at Baldwin in a Frontier League dual.

The Lady Cats rolled to a 25-14, 25-9 and 25-9 win over Baldwin as they still have just one league loss on the season, which was to De Soto earlier in the year.

Louisburg recorded 13 aces on the night, including seven from senior Sophie McMullen. McMullen and junior Anna Dixon were big at the net with 15 kills each and sophomore Haley Cain added seven.

Junior Carson Buffington came through with 31 assists. McMullen and sophomore libero Riley Kallevig had 16 and 15 digs, respectively, to lead Louisburg defensively.

“The team played really well for all three sets,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “They came out ready to play and never let up all evening. Sophie and Anna both had a great night on the service line. They both had some big serves, and made some great plays at the net. Our back row defense was pretty spot on all night as well.”