

Lady Cats blank rival Paola to start season



Freshman setter Davis Guetterman celebrates a point with her teammates Tuesday during Louisburg's season opening victory over Paola at Louisburg High School. The Lady Cats defeated the Panthers, 3-0.

It may only be one match, but the Louisburg High School volleyball team showed exactly why it was worthy of its No. 3 preseason ranking Tuesday in the Lady Cats' season opener against Paola.

The Lady Cats were dominant and never let up in their 25-14, 25-15 and 25-12 victory over the Panthers and started their season off with a victory at home.

Louisburg played like a team that finished as the state runner-up a season ago and wanting to take it a step further this year.

"We were ready to play for sure," Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. "We wanted to take a look and see where we are at offensively, defensively and what we needed to focus on for practice next. It was nice to play against someone other than ourselves and the girls were excited, especially with it being Paola, who is our league rival. They came out ready to play and they are a very cohesive group."

Chemistry didn't seem to be a problem on the court Tuesday, especially for a team running a new offense, defense and several players playing different positions than a year ago.

"It is a little rare to see a team that is so close so early in the year, especially when you add three new players to the mix, and two of them being freshmen setters," Compliment said. "Then you go and change the offense and the defense – they are just accepting their roles. We have made some changes from last year to this year, position-wise, but they understand the big picture and we are going to do what is best for the team. As a group they have decided what they wanted to accomplish this year."



Senior Carson Buffington (left) and Sydni Keagle go up for a block Tuesday against Paola.

The Lady Cats are running a two-setter offense this season and

freshmen setters Rinny McMullen and Davis Guetterman stepped in to take charge of the offense. Both players provided several assists on the night to all their hitters, including Anna Dixon, Carson Buffington, Haley Cain, Riley Kallevig, Erin Lemke and Sydni Keagle.

“Both Davis and Rinny did a great job stepping in and running the offense,” Compliment said. “We worked on spreading the offense around and giving all our hitters a chance to go swing. They did a good job of connecting with all the hitters at different times. In my mind, you couldn’t tell that they were freshmen out there. They did a very good job.”

Serving was a big key for the Lady Cats against Paola as McMullen finished with a team-high four aces and Kallevig added three of her own. Dixon, Reilly Ratliff-Becher and Cain also recorded aces on the night.

Not making mistakes from behind the service line was key for Louisburg as it scored eight of the first nine points in the first set to take control early after kills from Buffington and Dixon.

“We worked a lot on improving our serve receive in practice, and with that I told them that they have to serve tough,” Compliment said. “I think they really stepped up in practice and were more aggressive. They are finding more spots, more zones and are just pushing the serve a little bit. We had a few errors, but we were serving aggressive.”



Freshman Rinny McMullen skies for a serve Tuesday against Paola.

Paola made things interesting in the second set as it rallied to tie the match at 12, forcing Louisburg to call a timeout. Dixon recorded a kill right after the timeout and McMullen followed with three straight aces to give Louisburg a 17-12 advantage, and it never let up after that.

Louisburg (1-0) jumped out to a 10-1 lead to start the third set behind kills from Buffington, Dixon and Cain and also two aces from Kallevig. Dixon had a pair of aces and Lemke recorded two kills in the final five points to secure the win for the Lady Cats.

The Lady Cats will try and keep the winning ways going Thursday, but it will be tough as they travel to De Soto for a quadrangular with Olathe West and Manhattan. De Soto is currently ranked No. 4 in Class 5A and Manhattan is No. 8 in

Class 6A.

"It will be a really good quad to play in," Compliment said. "We wanted to keep De Soto on our schedule and they wanted the same thing even though they were leaving the league. I am excited to see how we match up. There will be some high-caliber teams that will be there and I will be looking forward to see how we play."