

Lady Cats fall to pair of state-ranked teams at De Soto



Senior Anna Dixon records a kill during Louisburg's match with Olathe West on Thursday at De Soto High School. The Lady Cats defeated Olathe West in two sets, but fell to state-ranked Manhattan in three and De Soto in two.

DE SOTO – It didn't take long for the schedule to ramp up for the Louisburg High School volleyball team.

In just its second outing of the season, the Lady Cats squared off against three larger schools, including a pair that were state-ranked. Louisburg nearly knocked off one of those ranked foes, but came up short as it finished 1-2 on the night in a triangular at De Soto High School.

After the Lady Cats defeated Olathe West 25-23 and 25-11, they took Manhattan (No. 8 in Class 6A) to three sets before falling 25-17, 22-25 and 26-24. Louisburg, the No. 3-ranked team in Class 4A, then fell to De Soto (No. 4 in Class 5A) 26-24 and 25-14.

"Overall, we played pretty well," Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. "We came out a little slow and sloppy against Olathe West in the first set, but the team increased their level of effort and came out strong in the second set. We knew going in to the evening that De Soto and Manhattan would be tough, and the team was ready for the competition."

Against Olathe West, Louisburg (2-2) took a little time to get going in the first set, but the Lady Cats eventually found its footing as it dominated the second set and performed well at the net and in the back, defensively.

Senior hitter Anna Dixon led all Lady Cats with 12 kills in the match and the entire team served well as it recorded 10 aces. Junior Riley Kallevig led the way with four, while Dixon had three and junior Haley Cain had two.

Freshman setter Rinny McMullen led the way with nine assists and also played well defensively with a team-high six digs. Junior Reilly Ratliff-Becher and Dixon both also added five digs.

Louisburg was forced to play from behind against Manhattan from the start as it struggled early, but responded well to win the second set and even the match. The third set went back-and-forth, with some key plays that didn't favor the Lady Cats, and eventually they came up short in a 26-24 loss.

"We played pretty well against Manhattan," Compliment said. "In the third set, there were a few situations where things didn't go our way, but the team rebounded and continued to fight. I've been talking to the players about playing smart, aggressive and to play to win rather than play to not lose. The last few points in the third set, the players were doing just that. They continued to swing aggressively and played to win.

"We did manage to dig ourselves into a few holes at the beginning, which made it an uphill climb to get back to even or come out ahead. We've talked a lot about coming out strong from the first play and never letting up."



Junior Reilly Ratliff-Becher makes a pass Thursday against Olathe West.

Dixon certainly didn't let up at the net as she recorded a team-high 15 kills and also played well defensively with a team-high 11 digs. Cain and Kallevig had six and five kills, respectively.

The Lady Cats also had eight aces from behind the service line and McMullen led the way with four of those and also had nine assists. Freshman Davis Guetterman had a big match setting with 14 assists.

Defensively, Cain, Dixon and sophomore Carleigh Pritchard each had a pair of blocks, while Ratliff-Becher was second on the team with eight digs.

Although Louisburg fell to Manhattan, they still used some of that momentum in its final match against a former Frontier

League opponent – De Soto. The Lady Cats took De Soto to extra points in the first set, but the close losses took its toll as they couldn't keep up in the second.

“I think after losing the third set to Manhattan, and then the first set to DeSoto, I think the team was a little defeated,” Compliment said. “Rebounding from those two close losses wore them down mentally, I think. We didn't come out as strong, and we made too many errors on our side. De Soto is a good team, and one we look forward to playing. Against a team like De Soto, you can't let them get the edge early.”

Dixon once again led Louisburg at the net with 10 kills, while McMullen and Guetterman each recorded seven assists. Junior Erin Lemke and Pritchard each had a pair of blocks and Kallevig led Louisburg defensively with seven digs.

Louisburg returns to action tonight and it will see two more ranked teams when it travels to Burlington High School. The Lady Cats will compete in a triangular against Santa Fe Trail (No. 4 in 4A) and Burlington (No. 2 in 3A). The first match is set for 7 p.m.