

# Lady Cats rally to finish fifth at Emporia Invitational



Louisburg juniors (from left) Erin Lemke and Haley Cain go up for a block during a match earlier this season. The Lady Cats competed in the Emporia Invitational on Saturday and finished with a 4-2 record and took fifth overall.

EMPORIA – If the Louisburg High School volleyball team wanted one final tune-up before the start of the postseason, the Lady Cats certainly got it in the Emporia Invitational.

Three of the top six teams in Class 6A made an appearance in the tournament and the Lady Cats faced all three Saturday at Emporia High School. Although it got off to a rough start, Louisburg finished with a flurry of wins.

The Lady Cats won their final four matches of the day to finish in fifth-place overall, including a victory over Lawrence Free State, the No. 6 team in Class 6A, in three sets in their final match of the day.

After losses to No. 2 Lawrence High and No. 3 Washburn Rural, Louisburg bounced back with victories over Shawnee Heights, Maize, Bonner Springs and Free State.

“The Emporia tournament was an important one, and one that I was hoping would provide us with some positive motivation leading up to sub-state,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment

said. "Overall, we played well. We did come out a little slow against both Washburn Rural and Lawrence High. We got behind in both matches and had difficulty digging ourselves out of the hole. We picked it up during the Shawnee Heights match and maintained it for the rest of the tournament."

Louisburg, the No. 3-ranked team in Class 4A, had a tough draw to start the day as it faced two of the top three teams in 6A in Lawrence High and Washburn Rural. The Lady Cats fell to Washburn Rural 25-16 and 25-20 and then dropped their next match to Lawrence, 25-21 and 25-16.

The Lady Cats (29-8) dropped their fifth set in a row in its next game with Shawnee Heights in a 25-12 loss, but they were able rebound for a pair of 25-16 victories to win its first match of the day.

From there, Louisburg was able to put it all together with a 25-19 and 25-16 victory over Maize and a 25-15 and 25-23 win against Bonner Springs.

Free State was the Lady Cats' opponent in the fifth-place match and they had to play from behind from the start. Louisburg lost its first set 23-25, but responded with a 25-21 and 25-22 win over the Firebirds.

"Lawrence Free State was the last match of the day, and I talked to the team about finishing on a high note," Compliment said. "Any momentum we could get through that match would also help set the tone for sub-state. We played well against Free State. Our offense was consistent and aggressive, and our defense made some big plays."

Offensively, the Lady Cats got big plays all over the floor against Free State, most notably from outside hitter Anna Dixon. The Louisburg senior recorded a team-high 17 kills, while fellow senior Carson Buffington and junior Erin Lemke both had five.

Freshman setter Rinny McMullen set the tone for the offense with a team-high 21 assists against Free State and another freshman, Davis Guetterman, added 12 of her own.

Defensively, the Lady Cats also played big at the net as junior Haley Cain led the way with five blocks and sophomore Carleigh Pritchard added three. Junior Riley Kallevig also had a team-high eight digs in the win.

"Haley and Carleigh both had a great tournament," Compliment said. "They both stepped up big during our afternoon matches and made some big plays at the net. I was glad to see our middle offense step up. Erin made some key plays on the right side. She had a few big blocks and attacks that helped us against Bonner Springs and Free State too."

Dixon finished the tournament with double digit kills in five of the six matches. On the day, she recorded a team-best 72 kills and now has 474 on the season, which averages out to more than five per set.

Pritchard was second on the team with 29 kills Saturday, including a team-high nine in the Lady Cats' win over Maize. Cain added 22 on the day and Kallevig finished with 19.

Louisburg also created some momentum from behind the service line as it had 22 aces over the six matches. Dixon and Guetterman both had five to lead Louisburg, while Kallevig and McMullen each had four.

McMullen also had a big day running the offense with a team-high 92 assists and Guetterman was second with 61.

Defensively, Kallevig had 47 digs to lead the Lady Cats, while Dixon and junior libero Reilly Ratliff-Becher had 39 and 35 digs, respectively. At the net, Pritchard led Louisburg with 10 blocks and Cain added nine of her own.

Louisburg will conclude its regular season tonight when it

hosts Piper for Senior Night. The Lady Cats will honor Dixon, Buffington and manager Bailey Kern during pregame ceremonies.

Also, should the Lady Cats defeat Piper, they will wrap up a perfect Frontier League season and earn their first league crown since 2015.

“Senior night will be special,” Compliment said. “Both Anna and Carson have been a part of the program for four years, and they have both brought a lot to the program as well. Bailey has also been a great addition to the team as our manager for the past three years. It will be a special night and a great way to honor our seniors.”

## **Louisburg sweeps Olathe North in dual**

In a tune-up before the Emporia Invitational, the Louisburg volleyball team traveled to Olathe North last Thursday and left with a 25-16, 25-18 and 25-14 win.

Senior Anna Dixon pestered the Eagles as she was a difficult matchup at the net with a team-high 21 kills and fellow senior Carson Buffington had six. Junior Erin Lemke had five kills and junior Haley Cain had four in the win.

Cain and Dixon were also strong from behind the service line with four and three aces, respectively. Freshmen setter Rinny McMullen had a team-high 19 assists and freshman Davis Guetterman was also in double digits with 11.

Defensively, junior Riley Kallevig and junior Reilly Ratliff-Becher both led Louisburg with 10 digs, while sophomore Carleigh Pritchard finished with a pair of blocks.