

TITLE TOWN: Louisburg earns 7th trip to state in last 9 years



Louisburg senior Anna Dixon holds the Class 4A sub-state championship trophy up high following the Lady Cats' 2-0 win over Eudora in the title game Saturday at Louisburg High School.

The last time the Louisburg volleyball team hosted a sub-state tournament, the Lady Cats had to watch an opposing team celebrate a trip to state on their home floor.

It was a thought that was never too far from some of the players' minds.

"When we hosted sub-state my sophomore year, we ended up losing to Paola by two points," Louisburg senior Anna Dixon said. "I just kept thinking that we weren't going to let that happen this year and we were going to finish out strong as my last time playing on this court."

Dixon and the rest of the Lady Cats made sure it didn't happen again.

Louisburg captured its seventh sub-state tournament title in the last nine seasons as the Lady Cats defeated Iola, 2-0, in the sub-state semifinals, before downing Eudora, 2-0, in the

championship match on Saturday at Louisburg High School.

The Lady Cats, who are the No. 3-ranked team in Class 4A, will get another shot at state championship this weekend in Hutchinson.

"It is an amazing feeling because I know this is my last year and that I am not done playing quite yet," Louisburg senior Carson Buffington said. "I am so pumped to get back to state. I want to play Miego, I want to play Rose Hill and all the other good teams and I am just so excited. I know what our potential is and I know that we can get to it out at state."

Louisburg (32-8) didn't face much resistance to start the day as the Lady Cats controlled the match against Iola, 25-4 and 25-8, and came out strong from the beginning.

Dixon finished the match with 10 kills to lead the Lady Cats and junior Haley Cain finished with four. Buffington and sophomore Carleigh Pritchard each added three.

Offensively, they also served well from behind the service line as the Lady Cats recorded nine aces, including three each from Dixon and Cain. Freshman Rinny McMullen led the offense with 15 assists.

On defense, Louisburg junior Riley Kallevig finished with a team-high seven digs and junior libero Reilly Ratliff-Becher added four.

"We just wanted to come out, take care of business and just do our job," Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. "I thought they played great against Iola and had high energy. They didn't hold back on anything and came out and played tough."



Louisburg's (from left) Riley Kallevig, Anna Dixon, Carson Buffington and Carleigh Pritchard erupt with excitement after securing match point against Eudora on Saturday.

It was much of the same in the first set against Eudora as the Lady Cats jumped out to a quick start and won the first set, 25-14.

The second set was a little different as Louisburg had to face some adversity. Eudora looked like as if it was going to force a deciding third set as the Cardinals held an 18-13 lead late.

That was until McMullen got behind the service line as she recorded five straight service points to give Louisburg the lead and it wasn't going to let it go. The Lady Cats went on to take the second set, and the match, 25-22.

"Rinny stepped up big and it all started with her serving," Compliment said. "It took Eudora out of their offense and kept them guessing on what they were going to do. It just helped us

dig out of it.



Freshman Davis Guetterman sets up teammate Erin Lemke for a kill with the student section cheering behind her.

"The girls were just on fire in that first set against Eudora, but that second set we made a few errors and missed a couple serves and that slowed our momentum down a little bit. I was proud of the girls with how they finished it out and it just showed how much they wanted it."

Dixon had another big showing for the Lady Cats offensively as she finished with a team-high 12 kills and Cain was second on the team with seven.

McMullen had a team-best two aces and 13 assists, while fellow freshman setter Davis Guetterman added 12 assists as both players distributed the ball well offensively. Pritchard also had four kills and a team-high two blocks for Louisburg.



Freshman Rinny McMullen runs down a ball to keep it in play Saturday against Eudora.

On defense, Kallevig and Ratliff-Becher both led the team with six digs each, while Dixon and Cain both had five. It was a defense that also came up big late against Eudora.

“Everyone really showed their strength out there, especially Reilly Rat,” Kallevig said of the defense. “She was able to pick up all the tips and Haley really stood out too when she filled in on the back row. It really was a great team effort.”

Although they didn’t necessarily like trailing for much of the second set, the Lady Cats hope to turn it into a positive that they can use for even bigger stakes this weekend.



Reilly Ratliff-Becher dives on the floor to dig up a ball Saturday against Iola.

"All season we were taking one game at a time, one point at a time and we kind of got shook up a little bit when Eudora took the lead, but we decided we were going to defend our home court," Dixon said. "It shows a lot of progress because there would be times earlier in the season where we would dig holes and we weren't able to come out and finish. It showed we have come a long ways, and we were able to get it out of our heads and finish strong."

Louisburg, which finished as the state runner-up a season ago, will try for the program's first state title beginning Friday during the Class 4A state tournament at Hutchinson Sports Arena.

The Lady Cats, which earned the No. 5 seed, will start pool play against No. 4 Rose Hill (31-6) – last year's state champion – at 8:30 a.m. on Friday. Louisburg will then play No. 1 Independence (37-2) at 11:30 a.m., and No. 8 Topeka-

Hayden (21-17) at 12:30 p.m.

The top two in each pool will advance to bracket play at 10 a.m. on Saturday.

"There are a lot of teams that we have heard about, or even seen that should be out there next weekend," Dixon said. "We just want to take it one point at a time and one game at a time and make it to that championship game again."

For a photo gallery from Saturday's tournament, make sure to [click here](#).



Members of the team (front row, from left) are: Davis Guetterman, Chase Kallevig, Anna Dixon, Carson Buffington, Rinny McMullen, Reilly Ratliff-Becher, manager Bailey Kern; (back row) assistant coach Leanna Willer, assistant coach Mary Quinn, Erin Lemke, Riley Kallevig, Alyse Moore, Carleigh Pritchard, Haley Cain, Sydni Keagle, head coach Jessica Compliment and manager Cameron Rogers.