

Two LHS students help MAVS to national volleyball championship



Louisburg's Wyatt Axmann (left) and Ben Ratliff-Becher pose for a picture after helping the Kansas City-MAVS volleyball team to a national championship earlier this month.

In a packed and deafening arena in Dallas, Texas, Louisburg's Wyatt Axmann and Ben Ratliff-Becher looked around and couldn't believe what was about to happen.

With the rest of their Kansas City-MAVS volleyball teammates, Axmann and Ratliff-Becher were on the verge of completing memorable journey – one they weren't sure was always possible.

In the 16 USA Volleyball National Championship match on July 5, the MAVS huddled up one point away from winning the biggest trophy either player had ever seen. When the MAVS forced a side out and took the second set in a 25-22 win, the bench emptied and they celebrated their USA Division National Championship.

"The experience was amazing," Ratliff-Becher said. "There is nothing else like it. You're out on the court and there are announcers and huge stands and it feels like you are playing in an Olympic game. I don't think I'll ever forget that moment."

Playing for six years, Ratliff-Becher is a veteran to the sport of boys volleyball and has dreamed to be in this position. For Axmann, he didn't join Mavs program till February of 2018 and had little volleyball background.

That didn't stop him from contributing in a big way to the Mavs this season as he played on the front left side and also saw some time in the middle of the back row.

"It meant the world to me and my team to win a national title," Axmann said. "We had worked so hard together for such a long time and it was amazing to see all of our hard work pay off."



Louisburg's Ben Ratliff-Becher (front row, second from left) and Wyatt Axmann (front row, second from right) helped the MAVS to a 10-1 record in the tournament.

Ratliff-Becher was a defensive specialist for the MAVS and was a back-up libero. Both Louisburg players saw significant time during the 11-match tournament as they played big roles on the floor and off.

"I was also a really big cheerleader on the bench," Ratliff-Becher said. "The entire experience was awesome. I love volleyball so much and winning a national title means so much to me. It was such a great experience and it's one to remember for a lifetime.

"Going into the year, we knew we could win it. We honestly had all the right players at the right time. Everyone on the team had a role to play and they played that role perfectly."

The MAVS finished the tournament with a 10-1 record and rallied back to avenge their only loss later in the competition.

Volleyball has been a fixture in both players' lives this past year as they also both played for the Louisburg High School boys team that was started this year and played in a league in Kansas City.

"The tournament was crazy from beginning to end," Axmann said. "We ended 10-1 so we didn't lose much, which was crazy. Our team just had to keep talking with each other and making sure our heads were on straight.

"Playing volleyball for MAVS and our Louisburg team has been on the biggest blessings in my

life. I would
encourage anyone and everyone to at least give it a try.”