

After two runner-up finishes, Lady Cats want elusive state title



Senior middle hitter Haley Cain is one of several returning players from last year's state runner-up volleyball team for Louisburg.

In the last two seasons, the Louisburg volleyball team has found itself one win away from capturing its ultimate goal – a state championship.

Most programs would relish the opportunity to play in one state championship game – much less two. Still, as proud as the players are of their accomplishments, they have concluded each season with a rotten feeling in their stomach.

That feeling provided the Lady Cats with extra motivation as they head into the 2019 season – trying to get that elusive first state title.

“The players understand that nothing has been given to them in the past,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “Because of their past experiences, they understand how important summer weights/conditioning/open gym/camps, etc are. They’ve been working really hard and have set high expectations for themselves this season.

They also understand the history and tradition of Louisburg volleyball and want to continue that tradition of not only qualifying for state, but for placing at state."

The Lady Cats have had a big advantage on their side the last two years as they have had the Class 4A Player of the Year on their roster in Anna Dixon. After putting up big numbers as a four-year starter for Louisburg, Dixon has moved on to play for Kansas State and left a big hole to fill on the Lady Cat team.

Although one player might not be able to replace her production, Compliment is looking to several players to fill that role.

"Anna has probably been the best volleyball player to come through Louisburg in my 13 seasons, so losing her is huge," Compliment said. "However, I think this year's team could be just as good, if not stronger, because each player is taking more ownership and owning their role on the team more."



Senior Riley Kallevig is one of six seniors returning for Louisburg this season.

Louisburg will continue to run its 6-2 offense with returning setters Rinny McMullen and Davis Guetterman. The two Lady Cat sophomores played well last season as freshmen and their coach has seen them take a big step forward in the offseason.

McMullen was a second-team All-Frontier League selection a year ago, and both her and Guetterman, were considered among the best setters in nine-team league.

“They did a great job last year as freshmen, and they each continue to get better and better,” Compliment said. “They were both awarded with the ‘Best Setter Award’ at Nebraska’s team camp. We have five players that are versatile across the net and that gives us lots of options to run different offensive

plays. Our key defensive players are returning as well, and a few new faces are going to make our defense stronger.”

Defense also will be another strength for the Lady Cats as they return all of their defensive specialists – including senior libero Reilly Ratliff-Becher. Senior Riley Kallevig will also play a big role in the back from her 6-rotation spot, as will sophomore Chase Kallevig, who will see full-time varsity action for the first time this season.

“We are a versatile team with players who are comfortable and willing to play at any position,” Compliment said. “That is huge when I can play with rotations, and it gives the setters multiple options at the net. Reilly Ratliff-Becher has had a great summer. She was good last year, but this summer and so far this season, I’ve been really impressed with her go-get-it attitude and her leadership. Riley Kallevig is returning and is solid as a 6-rotation player.”



Reilly Ratliff-Becher returns to lead the Lady Cat defense from the libero spot.

Louisburg also

returns its two middle hitters as senior Haley Cain and junior Carleigh

Pritchard both bring experience to the position and the Wildcats will have

several options on the outside with senior Erin Lemke, senior transfer Liz

Jacobs, senior Sydni Keagle, Riley Kallevig and junior Alyse Moore.

Cain is in her fourth-year as a starter and will be one of the leaders at the net for the Lady Cats. Cain, Riley Kallevig and Ratliff-Becher were all honorable mention all-league players last season and Compliment expects them all to take another step forward.

“Between Haley’s leadership and experience, we’ll look to her to be more of a threat at the net,” Compliment said. “Erin Lemke and Carleigh have both improved their play since last season as well. I’m really excited to see what they can bring to the team.

“We also have a few new faces. Liz Jacobs is a transfer senior who joined us this summer and fit right in with the team. She’ll be able to help us both offensively and defensively. There is a lot of depth in positions this season, which is awesome. These players have great chemistry and are unselfish.”



Senior Erin Lemke will be one of several options at the net for Louisburg this season.

The Lady Cats, which are currently No. 4 in the Class 4A

preseason rankings, will have some competition for their second consecutive Frontier League title as they will play a difficult schedule in and out of league.

Louisburg

begins its season at 6:30 p.m., on Tuesday as it travels to Paola. The Lady Cats open their home schedule Sept. 12 against Bonner Springs.

“Spring Hill

and Eudora will be two strong teams in league this season,” Compliment said. “The Lansing and Emporia Tournament will continue to be tough, and we’ve added a few different teams to our schedule this year. I’m excited to kick the season off Tuesday at Paola.”