

Lady Cats hope for return to state tournament



Louisburg junior Allie Kennedy goes up for a block on teammate Emma Prettyman during the team's intrasquad scrimmage last Friday.

The Louisburg volleyball team may have a new coach this season, but the expectations haven't changed at all.

Get back to the state tournament.

Louisburg has been a fixture at the Class 4A state tournament over the last decade-plus, and it was a disappointment falling short of that goal last year.

First-year head coach Leanna Willer took over for former coach Jessica Compliment, who resigned after 15 years with the program. Willer, who was the assistant coach the last four years, knows the expectations of the program.

The Lady Cats lost to the eventual state champion, Bishop Miege, in the sub-state semifinals in a close 2-0 match. The loss still lingers with many of the returning players.

"The team has set some goals for the year, and at the top of their list is making it back to the state tournament in Hutchinson," Willer said. "They missed out on the tournament after losing a tough battle to Bishop Miege and you could surely say they are looking for revenge.

"I expect this team to show up each game day ready to give 110

percent effort. The worst thing as a coach or player is to walk away from a game knowing that we could have given more and maybe should have won that game. I don't expect to win every single match this season, but I do expect that we work hard to put our best foot forward to give ourselves every opportunity."

Louisburg, which finished with 21 wins a season ago, returns six players that all saw varsity time last season as the Lady Cats had to play through an injury-plagued season.

It all starts with the quarterbacks on the floor as the Lady Cats will once again run 6-2 offense with senior setters Corinna McMullen and Davis Guetterman leading the way.



Senior Davis Guetterman sets a teammate up during the team's scrimmage last Friday.

McMullen led the Lady Cats in kills and assists a year ago and was a first-team all-league and second team all-state selection.

Guetterman missed part of her junior season with an injury, but was a big factor on the floor when she returned. Both players have started for the Lady Cats all four years.

"I am probably the luckiest first year head coach out there," Willer said. "There are so many things that I simply don't have to worry about with these two running the floor and being leaders on and off the court. I trust them to make the right decisions on the court, and I know how badly they want this team to be successful."

Louisburg does lack height across the net as the Lady Cats just have one 6-foot player in junior middle blocker Allie Kennedy, who started last year for Louisburg after missing the beginning of her season with an injury.

With the lack of height at the net, the Lady Cats will rely on their defense this season as they have several returning players in Guetterman, McMullen and senior libero Chase Kallevig.

Kallevig has started in the back row the last three years for Louisburg and brings an experienced presence in the back. Newcomer Aubryn Berck, a senior transfer, also figures to see a lot of time as a defensive specialist. Senior Catie Lemke will see time there as well.

"Our defense is definitely going to have to step up this year," Willer said. "That being said, I do believe we have one of the stronger defensive teams we've had lately. All five seniors are great defenders, and our outsides are stepping up to the plate as well. I think everyone on the team understands that we're going to have to be scrappy and fight to keep balls alive all throughout the season."

The Lady Cats did lose a lot of hitting from a season ago, including middle Carleigh Pritchard, who is now at Emporia State, along with starters Alyse Moore and Alison Prettyman.



Junior Adyson Ross will be one of several hitters the Lady Cats will look to for production this season.

Juniors Adyson Ross and Claire Brown, along with sophomore Hailey Sword, will be the outside options for Louisburg. Junior Emma Prettyman will also play in the middle alongside Kennedy.

"We are expecting big things out of our middles this year," Willer said. "Allie and Emma should be solid offensive threats. On the pins, Hailey, Adyson and Claire are looking to fill those roles left by last year's graduated seniors. Both Corinna and Davis will potentially be six-rotation threats as each of them are powerful hitters as well."

To start the season, Louisburg was ranked sixth in the Class 4A preseason poll by the Kansas Volleyball Association. The Lady Cats will be well-tested throughout the season as they feature their normal rigorous schedule.

It begins today when the Lady Cats travel to Paola for a Frontier League dual.

“Our league is tough again this year,” Willer said. “Spring Hill (ranked 4th in 5A) will be tough to beat as well as Bonner Springs (5A). Ottawa (ranked 4th in 4A), Eudora, and Paola will all have strong teams in the mix too. League nights are always competitive, and the rest of our schedule is no cake walk either.

“We see multiple 5A and 6A schools throughout the year both in regular season matches and also at tournaments, starting with De Soto and Olathe West and home on Thursday. We love to play a competitive schedule and test ourselves throughout the season to see what we’re made of, and hopefully get to beat some good teams.”