

Lady Cats' season comes to close with loss to Baldwin in sub-state finals



Louisburg senior Corinna McMullen records a kill in Saturday's sub-state championship match against Baldwin. McMullen led Louisburg with 20 kills on the day.

BALDWIN CITY – Sometimes there are seasons where everything goes your way.

It wasn't that type of season for the Louisburg volleyball team – in fact – it was quite the opposite. The Lady Cats dealt with injuries for a majority of the 2021 season and it was no different heading into Saturday's Class 4A sub-state tournament.

Despite getting three players back from injury, Louisburg was without starting middle blocker Emma Prettyman.

The Lady Cats responded with a 28-26 and 25-12 victory over Parsons to advance to the sub-state semifinals against No. 2 Baldwin.

Louisburg pushed the Bulldogs to a third set, but the Lady Cats came up short in the 25-21, 21-25 and 25-15 loss.

It also meant the final game for Louisburg seniors Aubryn Berck, Chase Kallevig, Corinna McMullen and Davis Guetterman.

"Losing never feels good, but losing at the end of the season

is heart wrenching, especially in a tough match like that when we have worked so hard all season long,” Louisburg coach Leanna Willer said. “We knew it would be a tough match up with Baldwin, just like earlier in the year, but we came prepared for a battle. Unfortunately, we were not the team on top in the end. Baldwin is a great team. They play with a lot of high energy and they have some stud players that came out in full force on Saturday.

“I think they knew they were going to have to bring it in order to beat us, and they definitely had some players step up. The atmosphere was loud and crazy, but our players love that energy. It was a great volleyball environment and we are proud of the way we played.”

It was a championship match filled with runs as both teams came out swinging.



Louisburg juniors Claire Brown (left) and Adyson Ross go up for a block in the Lady Cats' win over Parsons.

Louisburg opened the first set with a 7-2 lead after kills from Adyson Ross, Hailey Sword and McMullen. Baldwin would respond with five straight points to tie the match.

It was a tight set most of the way as Kallevig tied it at 18-all after an ace. Ross also had an ace to pull Louisburg within one. Baldwin went on a 4-1 run to end it and take the first set.

Baldwin was the one who took the lead in the second set, but the Lady Cats had a big rally to force a third. Louisburg went on a 7-1 run to win the set thanks to aces from Berck and kills from Ross, Sword, McMullen and Guetterman.

Louisburg (20-17) used that momentum to take a 5-1 lead to start the third after a block from Ross and an ace from Guetterman. Unfortunately for the Lady Cats, it was all Baldwin after that as the Bulldogs outscored Louisburg 24-10 the rest of the way.

It was similar to the five-set thriller the two teams played Louisburg earlier in the season, with the Lady Cats pulling out the win. The only difference this time was the result.



Senior Davis Guetterman (4) celebrates with her teammates after a big point Saturday during the Class 4A sub-state tournament.

"The match had a lot of ups and downs," Willer said. "Baldwin came out on fire, and it took us a second to warm up. I thought we really turned it on in the second set, which helped us win. Volleyball is a huge game of momentum. There were big swings in both directions, but they ended up having a few more go their way. Our first five-set match was a thriller, and this one felt no different. We were never out of it, always fighting and pushing back even when their hitters made a big play.

"It did feel like we had the wave of momentum on our side at that point in the third set. We went up 5-1 on Davis's serve, in what is typically our strongest rotation. On the next point, we made an error to give them the ball back. After a

couple of side outs by each team, they were in the rotation with both Fisayo Afonja and Chaney Barth in the front row. We had difficulties with both of those hitters all day, but they went on a run in the third in this rotation and we just weren't able to answer back."

Guetterman and McMullen were both the team leaders in assists and kills in the two matches.

Guetterman had a team-high 31 assists, while McMullen had a team-best 20 kills. McMullen finished with 16 assists and Guetterman had 12 kills.

Kallevig and Ross each had three aces to lead Louisburg and Claire Brown was in double figure kills with 10. Kallevig also had a team-high 23 digs, while Berck, Guetterman and McMullen had 19, 18 and 17, respectively.

Although, the Lady Cats will return a core of this group, they have to say goodbye to their four seniors and the impact they had on the team.



Senior Chase Kallevig receivers a serve Saturday in Baldwin.

"I cannot talk about this senior class enough," Willer said. "I have been so incredibly blessed to have my first year as head coach be with these senior leaders. They are some of the most dedicated and hard working players who live and breathe the game of volleyball. Rinny and Davis have been running the show since they were freshmen, Chase has been a major part of the defense since she was a sophomore, and Aubryn came in this year and made a huge impact in the back row. They are the core of our defense, serve receive, and offense, and they are at the top of each statistics chart (aside from blocking, but they are close). Even when three of them were injured this season, they found a way to be involved in practices and games by being my 'assistant coaches,' especially when our JV and Freshman teams were playing elsewhere. I know that every freshman, sophomore, and junior looks up to them because it's impossible not to. They are always there ready to push

themselves and their teammates. They are never satisfied and always hungry to learn more and keep getting better.

“They have been excellent role models for our players and have set some pretty high standards for what we expect from our players going forward. They leave behind some pretty big shoes to fill, but they have been training their younger teammates for this moment from the very beginning. They believe in what we are doing here with LHS volleyball and are 100 percent supportive of the next team to come. There will never be another group like this one. They have forever left their mark on Louisburg and they will be dearly, dearly missed. We wish them the best of luck as they move on in their volleyball careers and schooling in the years to come.”