

# Wildcats win six straight to capture Frontenac Invite crown



*Members of the Louisburg volleyball team that won the Frontenac Invitational are (front row, from left) Ashlyn Berck, Izzy Moreland, Hailey Sword, Madie Williams, Megan Quinn, Katie Elpers; (back row) Delaney Nelsen, Eryn Richardson, Adelyn Moore, Caileigh Kilgore and manager Kira Kundt.*

FRONTENAC – Prior to Saturday, it had been a tough start to the season for the Louisburg volleyball team.

The Wildcats lost four of their first five matches to start the year and they were searching for positives when they entered the Frontenac Invitational on Saturday.

Their search came to an end as Louisburg reeled off six straight wins on its way to the Frontenac Invitational crown. The Wildcats rallied to defeat the host school in the championship match, 2-1, to complete what was a memorable day.

“Saturday’s tournament was huge for this team, and I am really

proud of how we played together as a team all day to finish undefeated and win the whole thing,” Louisburg coach Leanna Willer said. “With our close losses last week, we knew that we really wanted to take advantage of the opportunity in front of us on Saturday with the chance to turn around our record and get going in the right direction.

“Even though we weren’t perfect and still faced some adversity throughout the day, we fought hard each match to battle back and put ourselves in a position to win. Saturday was an extremely long day as we started playing at 9:15 a.m. and didn’t finish until about 7:15 p.m., so I am proud of our ability to stay focused and energized through an exhausting six-game day.”

After cruising to five straight wins, the Wildcats faced some adversity against Frontenac in the championship as they lost the first set 19-25, but rallied back to take the second 25-18.

Louisburg (7-5) found itself down 10-17 late in the third set, only to rally and win 25-22 and capture the tourney title.



***Hailey Sword (left) celebrates a big point with her Wildcat teammates against Ottawa last Thursday.***

“Frontenac was a really solid team,” Willer said. “They were very scrappy on defense and served tough throughout the match, pushing us out of system more than we would like. Our first set had us in a little bit of a panic mode at times, and we saw more miscommunication and errors on our side of the net. Going into the second set, we knew we just needed to regroup, reset, and start fresh. Cleaning up the little things on our side of the court made a huge difference.

“I am most impressed with our girls being able to shake off the mistakes made in the first set to bounce back even stronger in the second. Even in the third, we dug ourselves a bit of a hole, but we dug deep and played with a ton of heart to fight back and win. I am so proud of the tenacity that these girls showed.”

In the championship match, the Wildcats got a big game at the

net from seniors Hailey Sword and Madie Williams. They each finished with 11 kills to lead the Louisburg attack.

Defensively, Williams also had a big match with a team-high 17 digs, while freshman Adelyn Moore and senior libero Ashlyn Berck had 13 and 12, respectively. Junior Eryn Richardson tallied three blocks.

Louisburg had four aces in the match, including two from Berck. Offensively, senior setter Megan Quinn led the way 15 assists and Moore added 11.

Over six matches, Quinn had a strong day running the offense and behind the service line. She finished with a team-high 11 aces and had 78 assists.

Williams also had a big outing in her all-around position. She led Louisburg in both kills (43) and digs (45) and was second on the team with eight aces and nine blocks.

Sword, who plays all six rotations, was a factor all over the floor. She finished with 40 kills, 41 digs, five aces and four blocks.

Senior middle Izzy Moreland was big at the net as well with 28 kills and eight blocks. Richardson led Louisburg with 11 blocks.

Sophomores Delaney Nelsen and Caileigh Kilgore each had 15 kills and senior Katie Elpers finished with 12.



***Megan Quinn sets up a teammate during the Wildcats' match with Ottawa last week.***

"Megan and Madie did have great tournaments, and I think Hailey and Izzy did as well," Willer said. "Our outsides established themselves as our go-to hitters, and it was clear that both Megan and Adelyn knew to find them when we needed a point. That being said, I think we saw a lot of positives from every single player out there throughout the day.

"I liked seeing in each match we had some different leaders in different categories, which is exactly what we want from a well-rounded team. One of our goals will be to continue to distribute the ball through all of our hitters offensively to maintain a well-balanced attack."

Louisburg opened the tournament with a 25-23, 25-16 win over Girard and then rolled Baxter Springs, 25-7 and 25-13. The

Wildcats rounded out pool play with a 25-12, 25-13 win over St. Mary's-Colgan and downed Chanute, 25-22 and 25-20.

The Wildcats reached the semifinals against Fort Scott and held on for a 25-20 and 25-23 win to advance to the championship.

Willer liked what she saw from her entire team during its championship run and the way they pulled together.

"Our team chemistry was another positive for us," Willer said. "When one player was maybe struggling in a certain aspect of the game, the rest of the team rallied around her to continue to encourage each other and lift each other up. We love to see that on those long days."

Louisburg will try to build on its momentum today when it travels to Bonner Springs for a Frontier League dual.

## **Wildcats lose five-set thriller to Ottawa**

Louisburg made the trip to Ottawa on Thursday for a Frontier League dual and nearly rallied for a big road win.

The Wildcats won the first set 25-21, but lost the next two, 25-11 and 25-20. Louisburg put together a strong fourth set to win 25-21 and tied the match at 2-all.

Ottawa held off a late charge from the Wildcats to win the final set, 15-10.

Hailey Sword and Madie Williams had big nights at the net with 14 and 13 kills, respectively. Senior Izzy Moreland tallied three blocks to lead the front row.

Senior setter Megan Quinn led the Wildcat offense with 21 assists and freshman setter Adelyn Moore and 17.

Defensively, Williams (15), Quinn (13) and Sword (12) all finished with double-digit digs.

Louisburg had a tough time containing one of the top players in the Frontier League, Emery Keebaugh. The Ottawa senior led all players with 26 kills as she hit from all over the floor.

“The Ottawa match was a tough battle throughout, and I am proud of the fight that we put up after losing sets 2 and 3,” coach Leanna Willer said. “Their outstanding player Emery Keebaugh is tough to stop, and it’s tough to beat a team like that who is scrappy on defense and has her as an offensive weapon in all 6 rotations. We are looking forward to a rematch with them at their home tournament in a couple of weeks.”