

# Wildcats capture Frontenac Invite championship



***The Louisburg volleyball team celebrates match point of the championship match Saturday at the Frontenac Invitational.***

FRONTENAC – Louisburg volleyball had a difficult schedule through its first six matches of the season, that included two-ranked opponents, and it lost four of them.

Despite its rough start, Louisburg showed out in its first tournament of the season Saturday at the Frontenac Invitational. The Wildcats won all five matches, including a 25-19, 26-24 win over Pittsburg in the championship, to capture the tournament title.

Following a league victory Thursday over Ottawa, the Wildcats have now won six straight and are starting to build momentum on the young season.

"This was a great start to the tournament season," Louisburg coach Leanna Willer said. "We were really glad to get back on the winning side of our games, and it definitely helped build our confidence as a team. We battled through a couple of three set matches to start the day and worked hard to come back in the third to take them after dropping those second sets.

"Coming home with a first place plaque to display in the front of the school is always a good feeling and we have set team goals to not let that be the only hardware we come home with."

The Wildcats (7-4) got off to a little bit of a slow start as they defeated Cherryvale in three sets, 25-19, 18-25 and 25-12. They went three sets again in their next pool play match against Fort Scott, but again came away with a 25-19, 23-25 and 25-15 victory.

Louisburg won its pool after a 25-19 and 26-24 victory over St. Mary's-Colgan, and once the Wildcats reached bracket play, they stepped it up.



***The Louisburg volleyball team poses with its championship plaque Saturday in Frontenac. Members of the team are (front row, from left) Aspen Coulter, Katie McKain, Ally Brown, Evyn Richardson, Jaden Bentz; (back row) coach Leanna Willer, Caileigh Kilgore, Adelyn Moore, Delaney Nelsen, Rylee Telken, McKenna Lohse and Addison Mallett.***

"In our final two matches of the day, we hit a point where we decided that we weren't going to let ourselves go to three again," Willer said. "We wanted to focus on our side of the net and take care of business – trusting everyone to do their job and get us where we wanted to be. Thanks to some great serving, we were able to string together a few runs in each set to make that happen."

It was the serving that lifted the Wildcats past a pair of good opponents in Girard and Pittsburg.

Louisburg defeated Girard, 25-21 and 25-18, to reach the championship match in big thanks to its performance from behind the service line.

After the first set win, sophomore Adelyn Moore and senior Ally Brown helped serve the Wildcats to an 8-1 advantage in the second. However, Girard battled back and eventually tied the match at 15.

Brown once again put the Wildcats back on top as she served five straight points, including three aces, to put Louisburg up 21-15 and the Wildcats were able to pull away. Brown finished with five aces in the match.

The serves helped set up kill opportunities from Addison Mallett and Evyn Richardson, who helped continue the run.

“Serving was a big part of our success in the latter half of the day,” Willer said. “We continuously talk about winning the serve and pass game, and we were able to serve aggressively – especially in those last two matches to give us an advantage over each team. Ally’s serve came up huge for us in the semi-final game against Girard. That stretch included three aces and some other killer serves that set us up for success.”





***Junior Caileigh Kilgore goes up for a kill Saturday in Frontenac.***

Mallett led the Wildcats at the net in that match with six kills and four blocks, while junior Caileigh Kilgore had five kills and Richardson had three blocks. Junior McKenna Lohse had four kills and two blocks.

Moore, the team's setter, ran the offense well with 17 assists. Defensively, senior libero Aspen Coulter led Louisburg with nine digs and senior Jaden Bentz added seven.

The good serving continued in the championship match against Pittsburg.

Coulter, Moore and Lohse all put together key serving runs to give the Wildcats the early lead. Coulter had two aces in the match, while Moore and junior Delaney Nelsen each had one.

"In the championship, Aspen, Adelyn, and Kenna had a combined total of 30 serves, which were all aggressive enough to push Pittsburg out of system as much as we could," Willer said. "When we are tough behind the service line, we are much tougher to beat."

Lohse was big for Louisburg at the net in the championship match as she posted a team-high seven kills and junior Rylee Telken added five of her own.

Defensively, Coulter was all over the floor with a team-high 16 digs, while Kilgore and Brown had seven and six, respectively.

For the tournament, the Wildcats had 31 aces in the five matches. Nelsen led the way with seven aces, while Brown finished with six. Coulter and Moore each had five of their own.

Moore had a busy day running the offense and doing a little bit of everything from the setter spot. She tallied 108 assists in the five matches to go along with 26 digs and 15 kills.

"Throughout the whole day, we ran a really balanced attack," Willer said. "Adelyn did a great job of distributing the ball and finding our hot hitters when we needed a kill, and she threw in a few of her own as well. It was really nice to see that if one of our hitters was struggling, we were able to find others to step up and fill our offensive needs."



***Junior McKenna Lohse sends the ball back over the net on an over pass Saturday during the Frontenac Invitational.***

Several Wildcats stepped up at the net as Kilgore led the way with 31 kills, while Lohse and Mallett had 29 and 25, respectively. Richardson added 18 kills, while Telken (13) and senior Katie McKain (12) also finished with double-digit kills.

Richardson posted a team-high 11 blocks on the day to lead the way defensively and Mallett had seven. In the back row, Coulter had a team-best 58 digs, while Brown finished 31.

It was exactly the kind of day the Wildcats were hoping for after a rough stretch to start the season.

“Throughout the day, I was constantly changing and tweaking our lineup to try out some different options and just get some different looks with our core group,” Willer said. “No matter

the lineup, our players adjusted and adapted to every different combination and found a way to mesh. Regardless of who was playing in the game or not, everyone remained supportive and encouraging of their teammates which made it a fun day for everyone.”

## **Wildcats sweep Ottawa in league dual**

Before Saturday’s tournament, Louisburg was able to start a winning streak during Thursday’s home Frontier League dual against Ottawa.

Louisburg won the match in three sets, 25-19, 25-8 and 25-22, to move to 2-0 in league play.

The Wildcats got out to a rough start before Ottawa’s starting middle blocker, Dylan Nichols, had to leave midway through the first set with a serious leg injury.

“With the competitive nature of our league, securing those wins on league nights is really great,” coach Leanna Willer said. “It’s tough to do consistently in this league because we have so many strong teams. Ottawa started off really strong, and it was clear our girls were a little nervous heading into the first home league match, but we were making a comeback in the first set.

“Unfortunately, Ottawa did suffer an injury that took their team out of it for a little bit. We never want to see that happen to anyone, but Ottawa came back together and really put up a fight in the third set and it was good for us to remain strong as a team and get the win.”





***Louisburg junior Delaney Nelsen rises up for a back row swing Thursday at home against Ottawa.***

Louisburg was able to serve well again as it totaled eight aces, including three from junior McKenna Lohse.

Junior Caileigh Kilgore and Lohse were also strong at the net with 13 and 11 kills, respectively, while Moore had 30 assists on the night.

Defensively, junior Rylee Telken had three blocks to lead the Wildcats and senior Katie McKain had two. Senior libero Aspen Coulter had 18 digs to lead the Louisburg back row, while seniors Ally Brown and Jaden Bentz had eight and seven, respectively.