

Dixon excited for opportunity with U.S. Collegiate National Team



Kansas State freshman, and Louisburg graduate, Anna Dixon sends a shot over the net during tryouts for the U.S. Women's Collegiate National Team in March in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Six months ago, Anna Dixon had just finished guiding the Louisburg High School volleyball team to its second consecutive state runner-up trophy.

Dixon was always one of – if not the best – player on the court whenever the Lady Cats took the floor.

Back in the present, Dixon has now positioned herself as one of the best players in the nation at the collegiate level. On April 1, it was announced Dixon was named to the U.S. Women's Collegiate National Team after having yet to play a game as a college player.

She was named to Anaheim National Team roster and Dixon will train and compete for five days in late June as the coaches will split up the 24 players on the roster.

"It is really exciting," Dixon said. "I honestly didn't expect anything to happen, but I was

excited, especially
that I can go with three of my other teammates and that we are
in California.”

Dixon, who graduated from Louisburg in December, joined the
Kansas State volleyball program the next month and began
training with her new teammates. The K-State coaches then gave
Dixon the opportunity to try out for USA Volleyball in March
in Colorado Springs, Colo.

So in early March, Dixon and some
of her new Wildcat teammates made the journey and took part in
the 3-day tryout
at the U.S. Olympic Training Center.

Looking around the gym, Dixon was in disbelief at the
different coaches and players she was competing against. The
game was being played at a different level than she was used
to, and it was a little stressful at times.

“We had two sessions the first day
and three the second day,” Dixon said. “They usually evaluate
you in one
session and then regroup you with some other girls. Whenever I
got moved up to
the top group it was really nerve-racking because you are
playing with
All-Americans and girls who have been in the Final Four. The
pace of the game
was faster than I have ever played. They were really helpful
with the
adjustment.

“I got used to the pace after a
while. I actually usually play better when I am nervous and
that helped me a
lot. At first it was hard, but I had to just trust my
training.”

Trust it she did.

Dixon continued to impress her coaches with her play as an outside hitter. After the tryouts were over, and before the rosters were officially released, she actually earned a spot on a higher-level team.

USA Volleyball has four collegiate national teams with the top team that goes to compete in Italy and a second-tier team will journey to Japan. Dixon earned a spot on the No. 3 team that goes to Anaheim, but was originally selected for the Japan squad.

Due to a conflict with Kansas State, Dixon was unable to make the trip to Japan and was put on the Anaheim roster instead. K-State is traveling to Brazil over the summer to compete against the Brazilian collegiate team, which overlapped with the Japan trip.

“The 20-and-under Italy team is basically the ‘A’ team for the collegiate national team so I made the second team that was going to Japan,” she said. “It was mostly girls who are juniors and seniors in college and there might be a couple sophomores. Japan would have been cool, and it was an honor to be named that high, but I get to go to Brazil with my team and I am really excited about that. We will be there for two weeks and it should be a lot of fun.

“I like getting to experience different things in different areas. It has helped me meet a lot of people and build connections with them. My goal at the end of college is to go overseas and play volleyball, so I am excited about all these opportunities.”

Dixon hasn’t actually competed in

an official event for USA Volleyball yet, but she is excited for the opportunity and what she has experienced so far.

“It was really cool,” she said. “I got a chance to meet a lot of the girls that I had been looking up to or watching on TV the last couple years, so being around them and playing with them was a great experience. We were playing with some of the best players in the country, and some former All-Americans, so it was cool to see how they learn and get to know them more.”

Dixon has been trying to get acclimated to her first semester in college and being a collegiate athlete. She has spent a lot of time training with the Wildcat team and hasn't had much free time to herself.

Working under the guidance of K-State head coach Suzie Fritz, Dixon has enjoyed her time in Manhattan so far and has learned a lot in just a few months time.

“It has been good,” she said. “It was overwhelming at first. Every day I leave my house at about 6:15 in the morning and I won't get back until like 7 at night. The time management has been a huge adjustment, but my teammates have been really helpful and made it pretty easy.”

As if playing on the collegiate national team wasn't enough, Dixon is currently waiting on a decision to see if she will earn a spot on the USA Junior National Team. The roster will be announced later this month.

If she earns a spot, Dixon will go to Colorado Springs for training and then will travel to Mexico to compete in the 2019 World Championships. Not too bad for a player who hasn't played an official collegiate match yet.

"It is a bigger deal for me because we will be playing teams from all over the world," Dixon said. "I am crossing my fingers that I will make it, but we will see."

Newly-formed boys volleyball team excited for home debut



Louisburg boys volleyball head coach Jeff Harris talks to his team during a practice Monday. The newly-formed Wildcat team will host Blue Valley and St. Thomas Aquinas in their home opener Wednesday at Louisburg Middle School.

When it comes to volleyball, it has been the girls that have dominated the court in Louisburg.

Success has been a staple of the Louisburg High School volleyball program as the Lady Cats have recorded numerous top 3 state finishes, including a pair of back-to-

back state runner-up performances the last two years.

Now, there are a group of boys who want to get involved in the fun.

Eleven Louisburg students have joined together to create the town's first boys high school volleyball team. Louisburg is a member of the Kansas City High School Boys Volleyball League, which is in its inaugural season as several schools in the area want to create interest in having boys volleyball become a sanctioned sport within the Kansas State High School Activities Association.

"There are 26 teams right now in Kansas and Missouri," assistant coach Geoff Branine said. "Some of them have junior varsity programs involved so there are 21 schools involved and 26 teams. It was better than expected. We are pretty excited and Missouri doesn't have a big step to take to get it into the schools because St. Louis has several.

"The Heart of America Volleyball Association is trying to build boys volleyball in the region. In Minnesota, they started this club-type volleyball program two to three years ago and next year will be their first year of having it be a true varsity sport, which is awesome."

However, before they can get to that point, the Louisburg club team is trying to draw interest within the community and the Wildcats are already off to a good start.

Louisburg is currently 2-2 in league play as the Wildcats have played in two different triangulars. The next one will come Wednesday when Louisburg will have its home

opener at Louisburg
Middle School.

Head coach Jeff Harris and Branine, who are both Louisburg residents and former collegiate volleyball players, are excited for the opportunity to show what their players can do.

“It was slow starting out because they have never played together on the same team because of the mix of age groups,” Harris said “We are coming together well and this will be our fifth match Wednesday and the boys look great right now.

“We have 11 on the team right now, four of which have never played before. They are all great athletes and are picking the game up very well.



Ben Rangel works on his serving during practice.

The Wildcats are made up of Louisburg High School and middle school students as the league can have seventh through 12th graders on their roster and the Wildcats are one of the youngest teams in the league. Their oldest player is a sophomore and they have eighth-graders that see a lot of playing time.

One of those players, Louisburg freshman Ben Ratliff-Becher, has played club volleyball for several years and is excited for the opportunity to compete with others from the same town.

“It is really fun, actually,” Ratliff-Becher said. “There has only been volleyball for girls in Louisburg and there hasn’t been much volleyball-wise for boys to do in

Louisburg. Having a boys volleyball team is awesome and I think it opens doors for other high schools to do the same.

“I think probably about 80 percent of our team has played volleyball before, but it is also really fun to have those that haven’t played at all. Watching them get better and better is so much fun.”

Louisburg will host Blue Valley and St. Thomas Aquinas at 6 p.m. on Wednesday and the Wildcats want as many members of the community to come to Louisburg Middle School to see what they are about.

Free hot dogs will be provided thanks to Dixon Contracting Services and Prairie Shield Roofing until 7 p.m., and the Wildcats are doing all they can to try and get the word out.



Assistant coach Geoff Branine works with Isaiah Leonard on his serving technique Monday during the team's practice.

"It is going to be great," Harris said. "We have started Facebook pages, we are having a free barbecue and we are trying to do everything we can to draw a crowd to support the boys. We just want to spread the momentum for boys volleyball here. The girls program always has a great team and we just want to continue that tradition in Louisburg."

Although they know this is a process, the Wildcats hope this venture will help create an awareness for boys volleyball in the high school setting.

"Even after talking with the schools and other principals and such, it is just really about interest," Branine said. "As far as fitting into the school program, it could happen

pretty easily. They already have the gym, the nets, balls and the gym time is available in the spring because this is the time for boys volleyball. The only thing you have to worry about is pulling kids away from track and baseball when it turns into a school sport. We think there is interest and it could work.”

Although that possibility is still a ways away, the Wildcats are focused on the task at hand and will try and get some revenge. Louisburg lost to St. Thomas Aquinas in three sets to begin the season and it is hope to avenge that tough loss in front of its home crowd.

“It will be so fun,” Ratliff-Becher said. “I am excited. I think a lot of people are coming, so I am definitely proud of that. I think we are going to get Aquinas this time.”

Members of the Louisburg team are Ben Rangel, Brett Rangel, Braden Branine, Jay Scollin, Bryce Gage, Wyatt Axmann, Ben Ratliff-Becher, Matthew Sword, Dawson Barnes, Isaiah Leonard and Jacob Sanders.

For more information on the new league, visit kcboysvb.org

Top 10 Stories of 2018



It was a successful, and eventful, 2018 for Louisburg High School athletics and for those who are connected to the Wildcat program. This past year created a lot of school history for LHS and several programs brought back state hardware to Louisburg.

Below are the Top 10 stories from 2018, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the explanation is the link to the actual story from the event.

This year was a blast to cover and I was blessed to have the opportunity to go along for the ride with many of these. As much fun as it was, I can't wait for 2019 to begin. Looking forward to it!



10. Dillon medals at state golf for second straight year

EMPORIA – All season, Calvin Dillon had been atop or near the front of leaderboard and that didn't change in what was his biggest tournament of the season.

The Louisburg High School sophomore went up against the state's best during the Class 4A state golf tournament on May 19 at the Emporia Municipal Course and did more than old his own. Dillon earned a state medal as he finished 11th overall with a 3-over par 74.

It was the second consecutive state medal for Dillon after he finished 10th overall last season at Wamego as a freshman.

"It is a real honor to earn another state medal, especially with the quality players that were at

the state tournament,” Dillon said. “There were lots of good players and lots of good teams.”

It was another notch on Dillon’s list of accomplishments that included a Frontier League title and six straight tournament victories during the 2018 season.



Louisburg football coach Robert Ebenstein



Louisburg girls soccer coach Kyle Conley

9. Conley, Ebenstein named Class 4A Coach of the Year

Louisburg girls soccer coach Kyle Conley and Wildcat football coach Robert Ebenstein both led their respective teams to special seasons.

Those seasons were special enough for both coaches to earn two big awards.

Conley was rewarded for all his hard work in June when it was announced that he was named as the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association's Girls Coach of the Year for Class 4-1A.

He guided the Wildcats to a 14-7 record and a spot in the state championship match, where the Lady Cats finished second overall. The

finish was something to remember for Wildcat fans as that was accomplished in just the program's third year of existence.

He has posted a 41-18-2 record during his time as the Wildcat girls head coach and also guided the Louisburg boys soccer team to its best finish in program history in 2017 with a fourth place finish at state.

As for Ebenstein, he guided the Wildcats to 10 straight victories and a regional championship to start the 2018 season, before getting knocked out in the sectional round against eventual state champion, Bishop Miege.

Following the season, the Kansas Football Coaches Association named Ebenstein as the Class 4A Coach of the Year. Ebenstein, who is just in his second season as head coach, has a 16-4 record with the Wildcats as he guided his team to a Frontier League championship this year.



8.

Holtzen finishes Louisburg career with 12 varsity letters

Once Isabelle Holtzen received her diploma and walked out of Louisburg High School for the last time as a student, she officially became one of the most decorated female athletes in school history.

No, she doesn't have any individual state championships, or even one as part of a team. Holtzen's decorations aren't ones in the form of trophies or all-state honors, but instead, they can be found on the front of

her letter jacket.

Holtzen became the first female athlete in at least 20 years to earn 12 varsity letters, which means she lettered on the varsity level in three sports in each of her four years of high school.

In research done by Louisburg Sports Zone, it was unable to find the last athlete to accomplish the feat, which could mean Holtzen could be the first Lady Cat to do so. She competed in cross country, basketball and track and field

The last athlete to come close was in 2001 when Krystal Bowes earned 10 varsity letters before moving on to a collegiate track career at Wichita State.

“The biggest thing that it means to me is to just have an opportunity to participate in three sports at a school like Louisburg,” Holtzen said. “The bigger the school that you go to, the harder it is to play multiple sports at the varsity level and I think Louisburg is unique in that fact. The best part of this whole journey was I think my freshman year because there was no pressure and no one was expecting anything from me. It was surprising and exciting to be able to letter in all three sports.”

Holtzen is currently at Northern Iowa, where she received a scholarship to pole vault for the Panther Track and Field Team.



7.

Dixon earns All-American, Player of the Year honors, signs with Kansas State

Louisburg

senior Anna Dixon led the Lady Cat volleyball program all season and she was recognized for her play on the court.

Dixon was named to the Under Armour Volleyball All-American team as she received a spot on the honorable mention squad when the list was released in November.

Dixon, the 6-foot-3 outside hitter, was recently named the Class 4A Player of the Year by the Kansas Volleyball Association, and along with that was also selected to the all-state first team.

It was the second year in a row Dixon was named player of the year, as she had to share the honor last season with Rose Hill's Gracie Van

Driel.

The honors certainly didn't stop there as Dixon was all named to the All-Frontier League first team as she helped guide the Lady Cats to an undefeated league season.

Dixon led the Lady Cats in kills with 584 in 105 sets played. She also finished with 325 digs, as she played all six rotations and also had 50 aces and 42 blocks.

In her four years with the program, Dixon finished with 2,003 kills, which would place that total among the best the school has ever seen.

All that success resulted in a dream come true for Dixon as she made it official last November when she signed to play volleyball at Kansas State.

"I have always known Kansas State was going to be my home," Dixon said. "Even since I committed as a sophomore, I always wanted to go up to Manhattan and see the girls and spend time with the team. K-State is where I need to be."



6. Louisburg wrestling sends six to state, Holtzen earns first state medal

SALINA – As the final whistle sounded in his blood round match, Cade Holtzen looked up into the rafters of the Tony’s Pizza Events Center and smiled.

He had finally reached his goal.

Holtzen defeated Columbus’ Gabe Porter by a 6-0 decision Saturday during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in Salina and secured his state medal.

“It is one of the best feelings that I have had in my life,” Holtzen said. “Just knowing that I’m going to place – you just can’t match that with anything else.”

It certainly wasn’t

easy for the Louisburg freshman as he faced a win or go home with nothing scenario heading into his match with Porter. Holtzen pulled out the victory and eventually finished sixth overall at 113 pounds to give Louisburg a state medalist for the third consecutive season.

"It is pretty cool," he said. "I have been working for this all season, so to get a state medal is great. It may not have been as high as I wanted, but any state medal is pretty amazing."

Holtzen had a special year for the Wildcats as he finished with a 45-6 record and broke the school record for most wins in a single season. He won four different tournaments and was a Frontier League and regional tournament runner-up.

To add to his resume, he became only the second freshman in school history to earn state medal – second to only Austin Hood, who would go on to win three state titles.

Austin Moore finished one victory shy of earning his first state medal, while Ryan Adams, Thad Hendrix and Blue Caplinger also picked up wins at the state tournament.



5. Moore, Johnson finished in top 10 at state cross country, girls qualify for second straight year

WAMEGO – It was going to be hard for the Louisburg High School girls cross country team to duplicate its magical season of 2017.

Not only did the Lady Cats qualify their team for state for the first time in program history, but they also had a top five finisher in Trinity Moore.

Fast forward to 2018, Louisburg wasn't able to match that successful run – the Lady Cats took it a step further.

Moore, along with freshman Reese Johnson, each had a top 10 finish during the Class 4A Kansas State Cross Country Championships at Wamego Country Club, and it is the first time

in school history that two female runners had medaled at a state meet. Louisburg added on to that as the girls finished fifth in the team standings with 154 points, which is also the highest finish in school history.

Moore, who finished fifth at state a year ago, bested her performance by one place as she took fourth with one of her better performances of the season. Johnson was right behind her as she crossed the finish line in sixth.

Shaylor Whitham, Carlee Gassman, Kaitlyn Lewer, Delaney Wright and Kennady Wilkerson were also members of the Lady Cats' team to run at state. Emily Williams was a member of the regional team that finished second overall.



4. Louisburg track earns six state medals, Gassman state runner-up in

300 hurdles

WICHITA – Carlee Gassman had broken the Louisburg High School 300-meter hurdle record three different times in 2018 prior to the state track meet.

She picked the perfect time to make it a fourth.

Gassman broke her own school record in the 300 hurdles in May at the Class 4A Kansas State Track and Field Championships in Wichita as she ran a time of 45.68 seconds to earn a silver medal as she was the Wildcats' top performer on the weekend. Andale's Abby Smarsh, who is a senior, won the event in 44.73.

It was the Louisburg sophomore's first time competing at the Kansas meet as she transferred in from Iowa last year, where she qualified for the state meet there in the 400 hurdles.

Gassman's medal in the 300 hurdles was just one of six the Wildcats were able to bring home following the two-day meet. Those six medals were the most Louisburg has earned since 2011, when the Wildcats combined to medal in 10 events and the boys won their first team state title.

The 300 hurdles wasn't the only event Gassman found success in as she also medaled in the long jump. Gassman, who hadn't competed in the event prior to this year, finished fifth with a mark of 17 feet, 0.25 inches.

Isabelle Holtzen would go on to finish sixth in the pole vault, the boys 4×400 team of Chris Williams, Blue Caplinger, Ben Wiedenmann and Justin Collins went on to take seventh. Williams finished eighth in the 400-meter run and

Trent Martin medaled
eighth in the boys pole vault.



3. Louisburg volleyball takes runner-up at state for second straight season

HUTCHINSON – The
feeling was much of the same.

The pride of finishing as a state-runner up was a popular one among the members of the Louisburg volleyball team. At the same time, the frustration of taking second in state in back-to-back seasons was just as prevalent.

Louisburg wasn't quite sure what to feel following its 25-13 and 25-14 loss to Bishop Miege in the championship game of the Class 4A state tournament Saturday at Hutchinson Sports Arena.

In 2017, the Lady
Cats fell to Rose Hill by two points in the championship

match, and fast

forward to the present, they were in the same spot – holding the state

runner-up trophy. It was the 15th time in program history that Louisburg finished in the top four at state.

The Lady Cats rattled off four straight wins to start the tournament, including knocking off No. 1 seed Independence, and defending state champions Rose Hill and Topeka Hayden. Louisburg then battled back to defeat Andale in the state semifinals.

“The loss was tough,”

Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “To come so close to a state title two

years in a row, only to come up short is tough. But with that being said, it is

a huge accomplishment for this team to get back to the state championship and

make it two years in a row. Finishing second is nothing to hang our heads on.

Last year’s finish fueled the fire for the team this year, and I challenged the

returning players to use this loss and feeling to fuel them for next year.”

Louisburg has been

one of the more dominant teams in Class 4A in the last decade as the Lady Cats

have made the state tournament seven out of the last nine years and have

finished as a state runner-up on three different occasions, along with several

third and fourth place finishes. They finished 2018 with a 36-9 record.



2. Louisburg girls soccer advances to title game, has best finish in program history

NORTH NEWTON – The obstacle seemed insurmountable – and it was.

The Louisburg High School girls soccer team found itself in the Class 4-1A state championship match in the program's third year of existence, but if they wanted to take it another step further, the Wildcats were going to have to knock the defending state champion of its perch.

Unfortunately, Bishop Miege wasn't about to be moved.

In a state title game that was played in the sweltering heat in late May at Bethel College, the Wildcats couldn't stay with the Stags in a 5-0 defeat. It was the third consecutive title for Bishop Miege, while Louisburg earned a state plaque for the first time in its short history.

It was special season for the Wildcats as the night before they knocked off Topeka Hayden, 1-0, in the state semifinals to secure the program's first state plaque. In 2017, Louisburg

both games in its state tournament appearance and finished fourth.

The road to this state championship appearance has been an interesting one for the Wildcats. More than three years ago, a group of Louisburg parents and citizens raised enough money to begin the girls soccer program and fund it for three years.

Louisburg was in the final year of that funding, and while the program isn't going away, the team realized they needed to play for more than themselves.

"We played for the community tonight," Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher said after the Hayden win. "We have to remember that when they raised money for this program, it was just through this year, so I think we owed it to them to play well. I really think it might have helped with how we played and I think it was one of the best games we played all season."

"It is a third-year program with 41 wins, three regional championships, two state final fours and now a state runner-up," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said after the title game. "We just have kids who come in and work their butt off. They are not soft, they aren't weak and from top to bottom they are going to work hard."

"We worked hard, but we just played Miego. That is one of the best teams in the state, and that stinks, but our kids played hard, worked

their tail off and it was a great year. We had people criticize us for how we got there, but we won games and that really motivated the kids. It got them fired up to go do something bigger than themselves. I couldn't be more proud of they stuck together and what they accomplished."



1. Football wins 10 straight, takes Frontier League title and regional championship

It had been almost two months since Louisburg and Piper squared off on the football field in what was one of the more entertaining games on the Wildcats' schedule.

Back in early September, Louisburg left Piper High School with a seven-point win – a victory that would help propel them to a Frontier League championship and a perfect regular season.

The two teams squared off again and the stakes were a bit higher. The game, at least for Louisburg anyway, was even more exciting.

The Wildcats dominated action from the opening kickoff and never looked back in a 48-0 win over the Pirates. In the process, Louisburg won the school's first regional championship since 2016 and are off to a 10-0 start for the first time since 2010.

Louisburg advanced to the sectional round where it fell to eventual state champion Bishop Miege, 55-21, and finished its season with a 10-1 record.

It was as season marked with special moments, including a 28-7 victory over then-undefeated Paola late in the year to secure a league title.

"Being 10-0 and then having that first loss of the season was very disappointing," Louisburg coach Robert Ebenstein said. "Losing always sucks, but losing in the playoffs and having to wait until next August is the worst. At the end of the day, Miege is a very good team and we did some good things. We got them to fourth down on multiple drives in the first quarter, we just couldn't make the plays on those big downs. Then we got behind a little and started pressing.

"Overall it was a great year. I am very proud of our guys and excited for them that they were able to get double digit wins for only the third time since 2000, and

there was a
lot of really good football played during that time period. It
was a lot
fun to be a part of.”



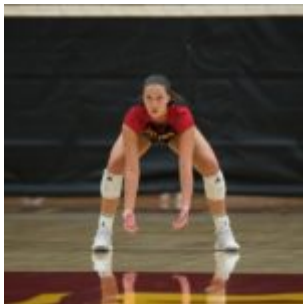
Austin Moore was named to the Kansas Shrine Bowl and was a first-team all-state player for the Wildcats. Moore was also named as the Kansas Small-Class Player of the Year by 810 Varsity.

With all that success, honors
started to roll in for its players as running backs Austin
Moore and Blue
Caplinger, along with linemen Brayden White and Kiefer Tucker
all earned
all-state honors.

Moore and White went on to be
semifinalists for the Simone Awards and Moore was also
selected to participate
in the Kansas Shrine Bowl in the summer of 2019. Ebenstein was
also named as
coach of the year by the football coaches association.

Most recently, Moore was named the Kansas Small-Class Player of the Year and Running Back of the Year by 810varsity.com, while White was named the Small-Class Lineman of the Year. Ebenstein was also named Kansas Small-Class Coach of the Year by 810 Varsity.

Dunn ends Pitt State career in record-setting fashion



Pittsburg State junior Lauren Dunn became the school record holder last month in service aces. Dunn, who is a Louisburg High School graduate, also earned All-MIAA honors.

PITTSBURG – Although it wasn't the year she was hoping for as a team, Lauren Dunn personally had a season to remember for the Pittsburg State volleyball program.

Dunn cemented her name in the Pittsburg State record books when she became the single season-record holder for service aces with 59 when the Gorillas squared off with Emporia State on Nov. 2. She would finish the year with 60 aces overall.

It was an impressive feat and Dunn, a 2016 Louisburg High School graduate, didn't have much of a clue that she was close to any kind of record.

"I was very surprised," Dunn said. "My coaches had kept it from me until it happened because they didn't want me to over think it. I honestly had no idea that was even a possibility."

As for the Gorillas themselves, they finished their season with an 18-13 record and a 7-11 mark in the MIAA. Dunn, a junior, served as a defensive specialist for Pittsburg State and led the team in a couple different categories.

Along with service aces, she also led the team with 456 digs and averaged 4.07 digs per set. She played in all 31 matches for the Gorillas, but that 31st match was her last as a collegiate volleyball player, despite having one more year of eligibility remaining.

"As for the future, I decided that nursing school needed to come first and I decided to end my volleyball career," Dunn said. "It was a very hard decision, but getting my nursing degree is very important to me."

Dunn certainly left the Pitt State program on a high note as she also received postseason honors for her performance. She was named to the All-MIAA honorable mention team as she led the MIAA in service aces and was ninth in the conference in digs per set.

Dunn was also recognized for her work in the classroom as she was recently named as an MIAA Scholar Athlete and to the MIAA Academic Honor Roll.

To qualify as a Scholar-Athlete an individual must have a grade point average used by the institution for purposes of NCAA academic certification of 3.50 at the certifying member institution. They must also have at least two terms of attendance at the certifying member institution, excluding summer terms. If competing in a championship sport of the MIAA, the student-athlete must earn All-MIAA honors.

The honors were great for Dunn to receive, but she would have

liked to play a little bit longer with her team.

“Our overall season was good, but the team had more room for improvement,” Dunn said. “We had a winning season, which hadn’t happened for a while, so that is good. Being mentioned as all-conference is a big honor. I’m glad my hard work paid off and it was awesome to be recognized.

“We were one seed away from making the conference tournament, which was a bit disappointing, but we knew that this was the best season we have had in a long time.”

Buffington, Dixon take part in all-star match



Louisburg seniors Carson Buffington (left) and Anna Dixon share a quick laugh during the small class match of the GKCVCA All-Star Match on Nov. 18 at Avila University.

Louisburg seniors Carson Buffington and Anna Dixon thought their days of playing volleyball together were over following the Lady Cats’ loss to Bishop Miege in the Class 4A state championship match last month.

It was difficult moment for both players to comprehend as they

have played on the Lady Cat varsity team together the last three seasons and their final match ended in defeat.

Instead, both girls received one more opportunity to take the court together one last time on Nov. 18 when they were chosen to participate in the 22nd Annual Greater Kansas City Volleyball Coaches Association M0-KAN All-Star Match.

Dixon and Buffington were selected to represent team Kansas in the small-class match at Avila University following their good performance in the 2018 season.



Carson Buffington records a kill during the small-class all-star match at Avila.

“It was really enjoyable, especially coming after state where Carson and I thought it was going to be the last time playing

with each other,” Dixon said. “But having one more match with her, and with a lot of these other girls that we have been playing with since middle school, it was pretty fun.”

The result didn’t go as the two would have hoped. Kansas took the first set 25-20, but Missouri bounced back to win the match 25-20 and 25-21.

Despite the loss, it was a still a great experience for both as they got a chance to team up with some of the best players in the Kansas City area.

“It felt good to get back out there one last time, even though I didn’t know many of the girls,” Buffington said. “It was still fun and it was a great opportunity. I was just really honored to be picked for this. It was pretty cool and it was great to be out there and joke around with Anna again.”

Dixon provided Kansas with a spark in the first set with three kills and a block and she played all six rotations for much of the match. Buffington, who played as a right side hitter, also registered a pair of kills in the second set.



Senior Anna Dixon sends a shot over the net during the GKCVCA All-Star Match on Nov. 18.

Team Kansas was coached by Kathleen Rush, the head coach of Bishop Miege, and she ran a practice the day before the match to help the girls get acclimated to each other.

"Practice was a little rough and there were times where I felt like I haven't ever touched a volleyball before, but at the end I felt a lot more confident," Buffington said. "Then in the game I got a chance to talk to the girls and get to know them a little bit. It was a good experience."

Dixon agreed, as she came up against foes that she has competed against over the last several years from both sides of the state line.

"There were a lot of great athletes, especially ones that I

have come up against during the club season, so it was fun to play with and against a lot of them," she said.

From one Wildcat to another, Dixon signs with Kansas State



Louisburg senior Anna Dixon (center) made it official on Nov. 14 when she signed her letter of intent to play volleyball at Kansas State. Seated (from left) are Louisburg head coach Jessica Compliment, Anna's parents Jerry and Beth Dixon and Louisburg assistant coach Leanna Willer.

Since giving her commitment to Kansas State two years ago, there was plenty of time where Anna Dixon could have had second thoughts about playing for the Wildcats.

It just never happened – not even a little. Dixon was all in.

"I have always known Kansas State was going to be my home," Dixon said. "Even since I committed as a sophomore, I always wanted to go up to Manhattan and see the girls and spend time with the team. K-State is where I need to be."

The Louisburg senior made it official on Nov. 14 when she signed her letter of intent to play for Kansas State next

season in front of a room fully of family, friends and teammates. Dixon will trade in one Wildcat uniform for another.

"It hasn't really hit me fully yet," she said. "It has been my dream since second grade, not only to play college volleyball, but to play volleyball at K-State. I am still trying to soak it all in.

"It is awesome to have everyone here to be with me on my special day. In my four years of high school, my friends and family have been so supportive of me and traveling to tournaments every weekend with club. Even going through the recruiting process as an eighth-grader and a freshman, it is nice to see the same faces that have been there since the beginning."

Dixon had a prolific career for the Louisburg volleyball program. She was a two-time Class 4A Player of the Year and earned first team all-state and All-Frontier League honors on several occasions. Earlier this month, she was an honorable mention selection to the Under Armour All-American Team.

She helped the Lady Cats to two state runner-up appearances and led the Lady Cats in kills with 584 in 105 sets played. She also finished with 325 digs, as she played all six rotations and also had 50 aces and 42 blocks.

In her four years with the program, Dixon finished with 2,003 kills, which would place that total among the best the school has ever seen.

Playing Louisburg volleyball is a family tradition as she grew up watching her two older sisters, Katie and Sydney, play in the program. Her mom Beth Dixon and aunt Amy Goode, also played for Louisburg and went on to collegiate careers at Wichita State and Kansas State, respectively.

"It was awesome to be a part of this program," Anna said.

“Watching my older sisters play for so many years, I just couldn’t wait to get up here and contribute in any way I could. My mom and aunt played in the program and I wanted to contribute as much as I could like they did. It has been really enjoyable and my teammates have really made it a lot of fun.”



Anna Dixon finished her high school career as a two-time state player of the year and recorded more than 2,000 kills.

Now Dixon will move on to the Division I level where she will compete against some of the nation’s best volleyball players on a regular basis. It is that competition that attracted Dixon to the Kansas State program, along with environment that surrounded the team.

"I really like the family atmosphere in Manhattan," she said. "The girls are so welcoming and sweet and they make me feel right at home whenever I visit. One of my biggest goals was to play in one of the top conferences in the country and the Big 12 is right up there. It seems to keep getting more competitive and I am excited to contribute in any way that I can."

Kansas State is currently 14-12 on the season, including a pair of wins over rival Kansas, but the Wildcats will be losing seven seniors off its roster for next season. That leaves an opening for Dixon to come in and play right away.

"Anna is a high-level recruit with great size and athleticism at the outside hitter position," K-State coach Suzie Fritz said in a release. "She has the potential to contribute early on in her career as she is a strong presence at the net, both offensively and defensively. She has a nice combination of size, power, athleticism and control as an attacker and can play physically at the net.

"We believe she is well prepared to quickly transition to the college game with elite club experience at KC Power and coming off a 4A State Player of the Year performance in leading her team to the 4A state championship final."

She will be graduating from Louisburg this December and will report to Kansas State shortly after to get her college career started and get acclimated to the program.

"There are a lot of spots to fill," Dixon said. "Since I am graduating early in December and going out there, I think it just gives me a head start so I can work toward trying to earn a spot on the court. Whether I am playing six rotations, playing three or just sitting the bench, I am just happy I can contribute to the team."

It has been a long journey for Dixon to reach her dream of playing at Kansas State – one that started in the second grade

and that saw countless hours in the gym working to get better.

“I started taking volleyball seriously in sixth grade and I had no intentions of playing anywhere except for high school,” she said. “Then I started getting some looks my freshman year and that is when I started taking it more seriously. I practice 3-4 times a week and have been lifting three times a week, so it is a lot of hard work but I enjoy it. I am just so excited to get started at K-State.”

Dixon named 4A Player of the Year; Lady Cats earn 6 all-league honors



Louisburg senior Anna Dixon was recently named as the Class 4A Player of the Year by the Kansas Volleyball Association and was also named to the all-state and All-Frontier League first teams.

The 2018 season was another one to remember for the Louisburg High School volleyball team.

Louisburg rolled to a perfect Frontier League season, which resulted in its first league title since 2015, and went on to

finish runner-up in Class 4A for the second consecutive season.

So it is only fitting the honors are now rolling in for the Lady Cats and it starts with senior Anna Dixon.

Dixon, the 6-foot-3 outside hitter, was recently named the Class 4A Player of the Year by the Kansas Volleyball Association, and along with that was also selected to the all-state first team.

It was the second year in a row Dixon was named player of the year, as she had to share the honor last season with Rose Hill's Gracie Van Driel.

"It is an awesome honor and it feels great," Dixon said of the award. "I didn't mind sharing it with Gracie at all last year and she is such a great player too and so are all the other players in 4A. There was some great talent this season. You could tell that by how close all the matches were at state. It feels great to be recognized with that two years in a row.

"Honestly, I was little surprised to win it because typically the player of the year comes from whoever won the state championship, so I figured it would go to someone from Bishop Miege. I was pretty shocked, but excited at the same time."

The honors certainly didn't stop there as Dixon was all named to the All-Frontier League first team as she helped guide the Lady Cats to an undefeated league season.

Dixon led the Lady Cats in kills with 584 in 105 sets played. She also finished with 325 digs, as she played all six rotations and also had 50 aces and 42 blocks.

In her four years with the program, Dixon finished with 2,003 kills, which would place that total among the best the school has ever seen.

"Anna had another great season for us," Louisburg coach

Jessica Compliment said. "She's a dynamic player on the court and one that is fun to watch. She truly enjoys playing, and she brought her love of the sport every day to practice and to every match. Between she and Carson (Buffington), they did a great job leading the team. They both stepped up and made huge plays when we needed it.

"Anna seemed to be our go to player the majority of the time, but as the season progressed the setters started to move our offense around more. That gave each player more of an opportunity to go up against a single block. Anna's numbers are pretty impressive. I don't have records from years before my time, but I'm going to venture to guess that she is the leader for career kills at Louisburg."

As much praise as Dixon received for her performance, the rest of the Lady Cats weren't able to crack the first team all-league honors.

In a season where Louisburg lost just one set all year in league play, Dixon was the lone player to earn first team honors.

Senior Carson Buffington and freshman Rinny McMullen were recognized as second team selections, while juniors Haley Cain, Reilly Ratliff-Becher and Riley Kallevig were named as honorable mentions.



Carson Buffington (left) and Rinny McMullen (right) were named to the All-Frontier League second team.

Eudora, which finished second in the league and never took a set from Louisburg, earned three first-team selections. Bonner Springs ended its year with a below .500 record, but had two first-team honorees.

“It would have been nice to see each of those players and a few others recognized higher within league,” Compliment said. “I may be biased, but I think the players on this team were special and some of the best in the area. Their stats may not have been higher than others, but the balance and consistency they brought to the team this year was huge.

“Anna was our main offensive player with the most swings, but every player contributed to our success. You don’t go undefeated in league and only drop one set, or place second at state without a well-balanced and talented team.”

Buffington, who was the team’s setter the last two years, was named to the second team as a hitter as she made the move to a new position this year. She finished the season with 130

kills.

As for McMullen, she shared setting responsibilities with fellow freshman Davis Guetterman, and McMullen led Louisburg in assists with 638, to go along with 202 digs and 40 aces on the season.

“I think it’s great to see Carson get second team, especially since I changed up her position this year,” Compliment said. “Carson didn’t bat an eye and never backed down from a challenge. We started working on special plays, and Carson was excited to try something new. Some players would be hesitant to try something new, especially their senior year after they’d had success somewhere else. I was proud of how Carson took on her new position on the team. She was welcoming and a great leader to the two freshmen setters.

“Rinny didn’t act like a freshman on the court. She plays with a lot of confidence and that showed throughout the season. I’m happy she was recognized for her play this season.”



(From left) Haley Cain, Reilly Ratliff-Becher and Riley Kallevig were honorable mention all-league selections.

Cain and Kallevig were named to the honorable mention team as hitters, while Ratliff-Becher was selected as a libero.

Cain had a big season in the middle for Louisburg as she was second on the team with 191 kills. She also finished with 41 blocks and 42 aces on the year.

Kallevig, who played all six rotations for Louisburg, led the Lady Cats from behind the service line with 76 aces and was second on the team in digs with 325. She also finished with 105 kills.

As for Ratliff-Becher, she became a leader in the back row in her first season as the team's libero. She finished with a team-high 330 digs and also added 21 aces.

"I wish more of their hard work had been recognized, but I am proud of each of them and what they did this year for the team," Compliment said of Cain, Kallevig and Ratliff-Becher. "They are all returning next year and you can bet they are already talking about what they want to accomplish next season."

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE VOLLEYBALL

FIRST TEAM

HITTERS – Anna Dixon, Louisburg, senior; Keyana Cruse, Bonner Springs, sophomore; Riley Foltz, Eudora, senior; Jalyn Stevenson, Spring Hill, sophomore; Kim Whetstone, Bonner Springs, junior

SETTER – Keagan Shockley, Eudora, junior

DEFENSIVE SPECIALIST/LIBERO – Delaney Franklin, Eudora, junior

SECOND TEAM

HITTERS – Payton Bruce, Ottawa, senior; Carson Buffington, Louisburg, senior; Alli Frank, Spring Hill, sophomore; Alex Garcia, Eudora, senior; Taylor Knipp, Tonganoxie, senior

SETTER – Rinny McMullen, Louisburg, freshman

DEFENSIVE SPECIALIST/LIBERO – Alli Kerns, Ottawa, senior

HONORABLE MENTION

HITTERS – Haley Cain, Louisburg, junior; Paige Ellis, Baldwin, senior; Paige Fleming, Paola, senior; Audrey Flowers, Baldwin, senior; Alyssa Henness, Paola, senior; Riley Kallevig, Louisburg, junior; Kayla Kurtz, Baldwin, senior; Molly Olmstead, Ottawa, sophomore; Keagan Shockley, Eudora, junior

SETTERS – Shelby Rome, Piper, senior; Abby Wintersheid, Paola, senior

DEFENSIVE SPECIALIST/LIBERO – Reilly Ratliff-Becher, Louisburg, junior; Sammie LeBlanc, Spring Hill, senior; Abby Marcouillier, Tonganoxie, junior; Jada Simmons, Piper, senior; Abby Winterscheid, Paola, senior

Dixon named to Under Armour All-American team



Anna Dixon, a senior at Louisburg High School, was recently named to the Under Armour All-American team as an honorable mention. Dixon tallied 584 kills on the season to lead the Lady Cats.

Louisburg's Anna Dixon has solidified herself as one of the top volleyball prospects in the state of Kansas after her performance this past season.

The Lady Cat senior is also considered one of the best players in the nation and she was recently recognized for her efforts.

Dixon was named to the Under Armour Volleyball All-American team as she received a spot on the honorable mention squad when the list was released last Wednesday.

"Getting recognized as honorable mention for Under Armour All American was a big honor," Dixon said. "It has been my goal to make the list, whether that was first, second or third team, since my freshman year. They decide who is on the list based off of stats during high school season and I was able to receive this award with the help of my awesome setters this high school season. I'm very thankful."

Dixon led the Lady Cats to a second consecutive runner-up finish in the Class 4A state tournament and the 6-foot-3 outside hitter was a team-leader in kills with 584 in 105 sets played. She also finished with 325 digs, as she played all six rotations and also had 50 aces and 42 blocks.

A record 793 nominations were submitted through the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) and MaxPreps, resulting in 150 All-America and Honorable Mention All-Americans. Many already committed to play collegiate volleyball at some of the top schools in the country.

Requirements for nomination were that the student-athlete be in her senior year of high school, that she be nominated by her high school coach, that her coach be a member of the AVCA and that her individual season statistics versus all opponents for the entire season be entered into MaxPreps, a free service that aggregates and distributes data on high school sports.

In 2017, Dixon was named as the Class 4A Co-Player of the Year and will be attending Kansas State on a volleyball scholarship next season.

To view a complete list of the Under Armour team, [click here](#).

Lady Cats fight way to state runner-up finish



Members of the Louisburg volleyball team are (front row, from left) Chase Kallevig, Riley Kallevig, Anna Dixon, Carson Buffington, managers Cameron Rogers and Bailey Kern; (back row) Reilly Ratliff-Becher, Erin Lemke, Sydni Keagle, Haley Cain, Alyse Moore, Carleigh Pritchard, Rinny McMullen, Davis Guetterman, assistant coach Mary Quinn, head coach Jessica Compliment and assistant coach Leanna Willer.

HUTCHINSON – The feeling was much of the same.

The pride of finishing as a state-runner up was a popular one among the members of the Louisburg volleyball team. At the same time, the frustration of taking second in state in back-to-back seasons was just as prevalent.

Louisburg wasn't quite sure what to feel following its 25-13

and 25-14 loss to Bishop Miege in the championship game of the Class 4A state tournament Saturday at Hutchinson Sports Arena.

In 2017, the Lady Cats fell to Rose Hill by two points in the championship match, and fast forward to the present, they were in the same spot – holding the state runner-up trophy. It was the 15th time in program history that Louisburg finished in the top four at state.

As disappointing as that was to some, the Lady Cats also realize what it took to get to that final match.

“Losing in the championship match is a terrible feeling especially since we lost in the championship last year,” Louisburg senior Anna Dixon said. “We were all very upset, but we also had to remind ourselves that many girls or teams would have killed to even been able to compete in the state tournament.

“Miege just did not make mistakes and I think we were waiting for them to. They scrapped for every ball and had many offensive players that could put a ball down.”



Senior Anna Dixon slams down a kill during the Lady Cats' match Friday against Topeka Hayden

The Lady Cats faced off with Bishop Miege earlier in season, where they lost a 2-1 match to the Stags at the Ottawa Invitational. Louisburg had hoped to get a little revenge on the biggest stage, but wasn't able to gain momentum in either set.

"I honestly think we let the name on their jersey get to us," senior Carson Buffington said. "We were fully capable of beating them, but again, we didn't come out and play the way we know we can. They got to us."

Before the championship, however, the Lady Cats were on the top of their game. In the state semifinals Saturday against Andale, they lost the first set 25-12, but came back to win the second 25-21 and then dominated the third set, 25-14.

"The comeback was great," Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. "I was so proud of how they adjusted in the second set and battled to win. Then they just came out roaring in the third. They had a goal and that was to make it to the state finals. They weren't going to let anyone stand in their way."



Louisburg's Carleigh Pritchard (right) blocks and Independence player at the net. Pritchard earned all-tournament team honors with Anna Dixon.

On Friday, Louisburg played some of its best volleyball of the season as it knocked off two defending state champions and the No. 1 seed in pool play to advance to the state semifinals.

The Lady Cats battled two-time defending state champion Rose Hill and got some revenge from last season as it downed the Rockets 25-10, 25-27 and 25-23. Louisburg then went on to beat No. 1 seed Independence 25-16 and 25-20.

In a match to determine seeding in the state semifinals, Louisburg squared off with defending state champion Topeka-Hayden in the final match of the day. The Lady Cats lost 20-25 in the first set, but rallied for a pair of 25-17 victories to finish pool play, 3-0.

“Their emotions were high against Rose Hill and Hayden,” Compliment said. “To open pool play with Rose Hill given our history was exciting, and the team was hyped up to play them. We wanted revenge, and to see them come back in both matches is huge. We hadn’t seen Hayden in a few years since the split of 4A, but the motivation to beat them still existed.”



The Louisburg bench erupts after securing the win against Topeka-Hayden on Friday to finish pool play undefeated.

Dixon had several big performances in her final outing as a Lady Cat. The Louisburg outside hitter led the way with 64 kills in the five matches, including a 22-kill performance in the semifinals against Andale and also had 21 kills against

Rose Hill.

She also finished with a team-high six blocks and was second on the team with 49 digs and five aces.

After the tournament was complete, the Kansas Volleyball Association released their all-state tournament teams. Dixon and sophomore Carleigh Pritchard earned tournament honors for their performance.

Pritchard was second on the team with 24 kills and also had five blocks. Also at the net, junior Haley Cain had a big tournament with 22 kills, a team-high six blocks and she also finished with three aces.

Buffington finished with 18 kills and three blocks in her final competition for Louisburg. Junior Riley Kallevig led Louisburg from behind the service line with seven aces and also had 10 kills, while junior Erin Lemke had 11 kills.



Freshman Rinny McMullen celebrates a point Friday during

pool play.

Louisburg got a strong performance from its two freshmen setters. Rinny McMullen ran the offense well with 80 assists and also shined on defense with 34 digs. Guetterman had 56 assists in the five matches and had 22 digs.

Defensively, junior libero Reilly Ratliff-Becher was busy in the back row with a team-best 56 digs and Kallevig had 29 digs, which was fourth on the team.

"This team was just fun to coach and watch play volleyball," Compliment said. "At times, they were a bit frustrating. For instance...our serving. We just liked to keep the game going at times. But when it really came down to it, they made the plays they needed to. We talked all season about starting and finishing strong. Throughout the season we had the tendency to come out slow. We did that a few times at state, but for the most part we played pretty well.

"We needed to peak at the right time and needed all of the pieces to fall in to place, and that happened at state. Each player on the team made some huge plays. Carleigh, Haley and Erin really made a difference at the net both defensively and offensively. Rinny had a great tournament. She and Davis did a good job running the offense throughout the entire tournament."



Junior libero Reilly Ratliff-Becher gets ready to return a serve Friday.

As each Lady Cat player were given their state runner-up medal at the end of the tournament, the tears of ending their season with a loss was impossible to hold back.

It was a special season that ended with a 36-9 record and second-place state finish. However, for some of the players, it was about more than wins and losses.

“This season was the best volleyball season I’ve ever been a part of,” Buffington said. “The chemistry we had with each other was amazing. We all love each other so much, and because of that, we meshed so well together. We are all crazy and weird and it added to the fun. I’ll miss my best friends so much and I can’t wait to see how far they go in the years to come.

"I'm so proud of our team and how much we cared for everything this season. I'll miss the coaches and everything about LHS Volleyball. It hasn't really sunk it too much yet, even though I'll never play volleyball again. My high school career was such an amazing time and I'm so grateful with everything that has happened."

Dixon's Louisburg career also come to a close Saturday in Hutchinson. Although, she will still be wearing purple and white, the Louisburg senior will be suiting up for Kansas State next season to begin her college career.

As much excitement as that brings, the thought of not playing volleyball for Louisburg anymore still hasn't quite sunk in.



Seniors Anna Dixon and Carson Buffington walk off the floor for the final time as Bishop Miege celebrates its state championship.

“It has not hit me yet that the season is over,” Dixon said. ‘It went by so fast and I had a lot of fun playing with some of my closest friends. I am going to miss them so much, but now I have to focus on the next level. I can’t wait to watch Louisburg succeed next year and go after the state title again.”

The Lady Cats have been one of the more dominant teams in Class 4A in the last decade as they have made the state tournament seven out of the last nine years and have finished as a state runner-up on three different occasions, along with several third and fourth place finishes.

It is that success that Compliment hopes will drive them team into next season.

“The loss was tough,” Compliment said. “To come so close to a state title two years in a row, only to come up short is tough. But with that being said, it is a huge accomplishment for this team to get back to the state championship and make it two years in a row. Finishing second is nothing to hang our heads on. Last year’s finish fueled the fire for the team this year, and I challenged the returning players to use this loss and feeling to fuel them for next year. The off-season starts today.”

Title game rematch fuels Lady Cats’ fire for another state run



Members of the Louisburg High School volleyball team run onto the court to celebrate their sub-state championship last Saturday in Louisburg. The Lady Cats open the Class 4A state tournament against defending state champion Rose Hill this Friday in Hutchinson.

Throughout the offseason and into this season, the Louisburg volleyball team has always had last year's state championship match fresh in its mind.

The Lady Cats lost by two points to Rose Hill in the state title game last season, and the loss has been a driving force in their success this season.

"It is just the worst feeling and it still burns," senior Carson Buffington said. "It is definitely motivation for us and it started right after we lost to Rose Hill. We knew that the next year that we are going to come out and win a state championship, and that is what we plan to do."

Louisburg won its seventh sub-state crown in the last nine years last Saturday in its 2-0 win over Eudora in the sub-state championship game, and on Sunday found out who it was going to play.

The Lady Cats (32-8), which earned the No. 5 seed, won't have to wait that long for their rematch with Rose Hill. They face the No. 4 seed Rockets (31-6) in the first match of pool play at 8:30 a.m., Friday in the Class 4A state tournament at Hutchinson Sports Arena in Hutchinson.

“When we found out Rose Hill was going to be in our pool, I think that just fueled our fire even more, especially with it being our first match of the day,” senior Anna Dixon said. “Hopefully we can come out and have a lot of energy. Everyone has been pretty motivated. We have been watching a lot of film and scouting other teams. We have been incorporating their habits into our practice to prepare us for what we see on Friday.”

What Louisburg will see Friday is several difficult opponents. Not only will the Lady Cats square off with the defending state champion in Rose Hill, Louisburg will also face No. 1 seed Independence (37-2) and No. 8 Topeka-Hayden (21-17), who is a three-time defending state champion in the former Class 4A-Division II.

The Lady Cats will meet Independence at 11:30 a.m. and follow it up with their match against Hayden at 12:30 p.m.



Carleigh Pritchard and Anna Dixon combine for a block Saturday during the sub-state tournament.

No. 2 Chanute (33-6), No. 3 Andale (32-6), No. 6 Wichita-Trinity (22-15) and No. 7 Bishop Miege (21-16) are in the other pool. The top two teams in each pool will advance to bracket play at 10 a.m. on Saturday.

"We were a little nervous when the seedings came out, but yet excited at the same time," Dixon said. "Rose Hill ended our season last year in the championship game and we have the opportunity to send them home after day one.

"We also have the No. 1 seed and another defending state champion in Hayden. We know we are going to have to play them eventually if we want to win the whole thing, so we might as well get it done the first day."

The first match of the day against Rose Hill could be a pivotal one for the Lady Cats as they want to get started strong and not have the pressure of playing from behind to make sure they get to Saturday.



Senior Carson Buffington celebrates a point last Saturday during the sub-state tournament against Iola.

“The first match sets the tone for the day and you have to come out awake and ready,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “The players are smart and they know how the system works and they know how important every match is. Each set is important and we haven’t dropped very many when we have won matches, so it will be important for them to come out ready to go.”

The Louisburg-Rose Hill match-up brings even more intrigue as it will feature two of the best hitters in the state of

Kansas. Dixon, who will attend K-State next season, will go up against Rose Hill's Gracie Van Driel, a University of Kansas commit.

Dixon and Van Driel were selected as Co-Players of the Year in Class 4A by the Kansas Volleyball Association and the Louisburg senior is excited for the matchup.

"I love playing against Gracie," Dixon said. "We have been good friends since middle school. Our dream was to always play together, but I have enjoyed playing against her and it is always fun to go up against a good team and trying to defend big hitters like her."

Dixon herself has had another good season for Louisburg and currently has a team-high 510 kills on the year. She is also second on the team with 45 aces and 276 digs as an all-around player.

However, all of the Lady Cats have taken a step forward this season, especially when it comes to their setters. Going into the season, Compliment decided to run a 6-2 offense, and handed the reigns to two freshmen setters in Rinny McMullen and Davis Guetterman.

Compliment asked Buffington, who served as the team's setter the last two seasons, to move to an outside hitter position and the change has worked out well for the Lady Cats. McMullen currently leads the team with 558 assists and Guetterman has 391.



Freshman setter Rinny McMullen rises up for a serve last week.

Both players are also among the team's best servers. Guetterman is third on the team with 44 aces and McMullen has 35 on the year.

"I don't think a lot of people realize that both of them are freshmen," Compliment said. "I've had people come up to me, even at sub-state, and say 'Your setters are freshmen? You can't even tell.' You can't tell that when you watch them play and that is kudos to those two and the experience they had coming in.

"Also, as the season has progressed they have gotten more and more comfortable adjusting on how to run things and getting to know their hitters. They have done a really good job of figuring out strengths, weaknesses, what works and what doesn't. I am just proud of both of them and they have gotten

stronger as the season goes on.”

The Lady Cats also take pride in their defense, which changed up from last season. Reilly Ratliff-Becher took over the libero spot from Riley Kallevig and Kallevig moved on to play all six rotations.

Kallevig leads the team with 296 digs on the season, while Ratliff-Becher is third on the team with 274. Kallevig also has a team-high 69 aces and both players are key in the back row with Dixon, along with McMullen and Guetterman.

“I think everyone knows this, but defense wins game,” Ratliff-Becher said. “Being a libero, I have to be the loudest in the back row, especially for this tournament. Defense is hard, but it is all about your mindset. If you don’t think you can play defense, the ball is going to come right to you. You have to have the confidence to go get it.”

Louisburg has also improved at the net throughout the season as junior Haley Cain and sophomore Carleigh Pritchard have emerged as big hitters in the middle, and also on defense. Cain is second on the team with 169 kills and Pritchard has 119. Pritchard also leads the team with 45 blocks.



Junior Haley Cain goes up for a kill during the sub-state championship match against Eudora.

On the outside, Buffington, Kallevig and junior Erin Lemke also give the Lady Cats good hitting options as they have combined for more than 300 kills on the season.

Even with all the success and big wins they have posted this season, the Lady Cats realize the stakes are high and are hoping to bring home the school's first state volleyball title. They just need to have the right frame of mind.

"When they just unload, unleash it, don't hold anything back and just have fun, they are a very tough team to beat," Compliment said. "That is what we have done all season long. Some of the matches we have lost is when we have played it safe and over-analyzed everything, rather than just playing aggressive. For Friday, we just need to play the way we know how and have fun. When they have fun, I think these girls are

unstoppable.”