

LHS' Compliment named head coach for KVA all-star match



Louisburg High School volleyball coach Jessica Compliment was recently selected to be the head coach of the Blue Team during the Kansas Volleyball Association all-star match Saturday at Washburn University in Topeka.

Louisburg volleyball coach Jessica Compliment has had many good things happen during her 12 years on the bench.

She is now able to add another to her long list of accomplishments this weekend.

Compliment was recently named as the head coach of the Blue Team for the Kansas Volleyball Association (KVA) annual all-star match Saturday at Lee Arena on the Washburn University campus in Topeka. Compliment will be joined by Wellsville head coach Eric Evans and Meade head coach Leann Krier.

"It's a great honor to be selected and recognized by the KVA," Compliment said. "I'm not quite sure what the whole weekend will entail. I know a coach from each classification was selected to represent their class and I'm honored to be representing 4A and will be coaching alongside two other great coaches. We met up this morning to discuss practices and then we will meet with the players. I'm excited to meet the players as well."

Compliment has tallied a 311-189 record while at Louisburg and has led the Lady Cats to six state tournament appearances, including a second place finish in 2013 and another runner-up performance this past season.

Players selected are first nominated by their high school coaches (who must be KVA members), and then recommended by committee to fill the squads. Teams are determined and divided into two based on achievements, positions, classifications, collegiate plans and availability, according to a KVA news release.

The blue team is consisted of Danielle Dodge, Washburn Rural; Savannah Yost, Thomas More Prep; Laken Schroeder, Concordia; Jana Owens, Blue Valley West; D'Ovion Williams, Blue Valley North; Kassidy Pflughoeft, Central Plains; Kailey Ince, Hesston; Lacey Angello, Lansing; Mackenzie Pease, Manhattan; Marrisa Bates, Silver Lake; Zoe Schultz, Wheatland/Grinnel and Lindsey Fletcher, Blue Valley West.

Compliment will coach against the red team, led by Matt Allin, Blue Valley North; Lindsay Hothan, De Soto and Janelle Maier, Otis-Bison. The Red Team is comprised of Katie Glatzack, Centralia; Amanda Desch, Topeka-Hayden; Kenzie Smith, Manhattan; Alaina Dunlavy, Hesston; Amber Hildebrand, Wamego; Shianne Cook, Olathe North; Sydney Johnson, Beloit; Kayla Vitztum, Thomas More Prep; Brianna Bradshaw, Kingman; Taylor Antonowich, Newton; Trisha Mathewson, Axtell, and Elle Barrett, McPherson.

2018 Female Athlete of the

Year Nominees



For the past two years, Louisburg Sports Zone has given out Athlete of the Week awards during each of the three sports seasons. I do it to recognize special athletic achievements and highlight them a little bit. So this year, I wanted to take it a step further.

This year Louisburg Sports Zone will be handing out an Athlete of the Year honor to a male and female athlete at Louisburg High School. I wanted the opportunity to recognize those who exemplify what it means to be an “athlete.”

Although I am giving out the award, I wanted the process to subjective, so I asked the head coaches at LHS to help me out. I asked each coach to send me nominations of who they thought exemplified the Athlete of the Year honor. They will then vote for their top 3 male and female and then I will tabulate the results and determine the winner. In the next couple of weeks, I will announce this year recipient.

Below are the female nominees for this year’s award in alphabetical order by last name. Congrats to all those who were nominated and best of luck!

2018 LOUISBURG SPORTS ZONE

FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR NOMINEES



Bailey Belcher, Senior, Basketball and Girls Soccer

Belcher led the Wildcat girls soccer team to a state runner-up finish this past season as she was among the leading scorers on the team with 28 goals and 14 assists, which included five hat tricks. She is a three-time all-Frontier League and all-state first teamer, and has been a team captain for the last two seasons.

She holds the Louisburg record for most goals in a season with 33 and in a career with 91. She is will continue her soccer career at Missouri Southern next season.

Belcher was also a starter on the Lady Cats' basketball team and earned honorable mention all-league honors after averaging eight points, four rebounds and two steals a game.



Carson Buffington – Junior – Volleyball, Basketball and Girls Soccer

Buffington helped the Louisburg volleyball team to a state runner-up performance in the Class 4A-Division I state tournament as the team's setter. She finished the season with more than 1,100 assists and had 30 aces. She also helped out defensively with 244 digs.

She earned second team all-Frontier League honors and was also placed on the Kansas Volleyball Association's (KVA) all-state second team. Buffington was also selected to the KVA all-state tournament team.

On the basketball court, Buffington earned second team all-Frontier League honors and led the league in rebounding for the third straight season. She averaged 11.6 rebounds a game

to go along with 9.2 points and 2.7 steals from the forward spot.

Buffington also served as the back-up goalie for the Wildcat soccer team and saw action in several varsity games.



Anna Dixon – Junior – Volleyball

Dixon played a big role in the Lady Cats' state runner-up volleyball team this past season. As an all-around player, Dixon led Louisburg with 613 kills and 61 blocks on the season. She was also third on the team with 58 aces and 329 digs.

She earned first team all-Frontier League and all-state honors. Dixon was named as the Kansas Volleyball Association's Class 4A-D1 Co-Player of the Year and was selected to the KVA

all-state tournament team.

Dixon also earned Best of Kansas Preps selection by the Topeka Capital-Journal, which is a new award this season. She has committed to Kansas State University to play volleyball in the fall of 2019.



Carlee Gassman – Sophomore – Cross Country, Basketball, Track and Field

Gassman had a record-breaking season for the Louisburg track team. She broke a 29-year old school record in the 300-meter hurdles in early April and then broke her own school record several more times this season, including at the Class 4A state meet where she ran a time of 45.68 to finish second in the state.

It was her first of two state medals on the season as she also finished fifth in the state in the long jump with a mark of just more than 17 feet. She also won a regional title in the 300-meter hurdles.

Gassman was also a consistent runner on the Wildcat cross country team that qualified for the state meet for the first time in school history. She served as the No. 2 runner for most of the season.

On the basketball court, Gassman saw a lot of varsity time for the Lady Cats as well as one of the team's point guards.



Isabelle Holtzen – Senior – Cross Country, Basketball, Track and Field

Holtzen had a record-breaking season in the pole vault this past season for the Lady Cats' track and field team. She broke her own school in the event with a vault of 11 feet, 6 inches

and went on to finish sixth at the Class 4A state track meet with a clearance of 11-0.

She was also a league and regional runner-up, while also running on legs of the 4×100 and 4×400-meter relay teams.

On the cross country team, Holtzen was a consistent runner on a varsity team that qualified for state for the first time in school history.

On the basketball court, Holtzen served as a team captain and was a full-time starter for the Lady Cats at the guard spot.

At the end of the school year, Holtzen became the first Lady Cat in several decades to earn 12 varsity athletic letters and did so while earning a 4.0 GPA, which is first in her class.



Sophie McMullen – Senior – Volleyball

McMullen was another key piece to the Lady Cats' success this past season on the volleyball court. She made the switch from setter to outside hitter and defensive player to help Louisburg to a state runner-up campaign.

She was first on the team with 114 aces to go along with 437 digs defensively. As an outside hitter, McMullen added 381 kills.

McMullen was selected to the all-Frontier League and all-state first team and was named to the Kansas Volleyball Association all-state tournament team. She was also selected to the Greater Kansas City Coaches Volleyball Association all-star team.

McMullen signed to play volleyball at Northwest Missouri State this coming fall.

OPINION: 2017 was a banner year for Louisburg



Having the opportunity to cover Louisburg High School athletics, for what has been almost 10 years now, I have seen a lot of different highs and lows.

I have been lucky enough to cover state championship teams and

watched several athletes perform at the highest level. However, this last year has to be one for the record books when it comes to success at Louisburg High School.

For Wildcat athletics, 2017 was a banner year for many reasons.

Louisburg qualified for the state tournament in three different sports – volleyball, girls soccer and boys basketball – and the first two each placed in the top four.

The volleyball team was just a point away from winning the school's first state title after the Lady Cats finished second to defending state champion Rose Hill, and tied for the best finish in school history.

The Wildcat girls soccer team qualified for the state semifinals in just its second year of existence and suffered a heartbreaking 1-0 loss in the semifinals to eventually take fourth overall.

In boys basketball, the Wildcats qualified for the state tournament for the first time in 12 years despite getting knocked out in the first round by defending state champion Bishop Miege.

Most schools would love to have that success with their athletic programs, but for Louisburg, that was just the tip of the iceberg. As special as the seasons were for those three programs, the Wildcats also thrived in a few other sports.

Louisburg's cross country program, which has been around for 19 years, had the best season in its history – by far. Not only did the Wildcats have three state medalists for the first time ever, but it had a year that featured the school's first female league champion in Trinity Moore and the best league finish by a male, Wyatt Reece, who took second.

Tim Smith continued the Wildcat success as he became the

school's first regional cross country champion, and Moore, Reece and Smith each went on to win a state medal. Moore and Smith also set school records for the fastest time.

The Wildcats also qualified the girls team for the first time in school history as Moore, Carlee Gassman, Reilly Alexander, Isabelle Holtzen, Kaitlyn Lewer, Payton Shaffer and Emily Williams took third at regionals and eventually 10th at state.

The Wildcat wrestling team tied a program best by qualifying eight for the state tournament and came back with a medal by Ryan Adams, who finished sixth.

Louisburg's track and field team persevered and qualified for state in 10 events and had two regional champions in Quinn Rigney and Chris Williams. Isabelle Holtzen and T.J. Dover each brought home their first state track medals.

The boys soccer team was one goal away from making its second consecutive trip to the state semifinals, but their run was halted by a loss to McPherson in state quarterfinals. Still, the Wildcats won a regional title, which was the seventh in team history.

Freshman Calvin Dillon led the Wildcat golf team this past year and recorded the program's first state medal in more than decade as he took 10th overall.

All these things and more I described in detail when releasing my top 10 stories of the year and what a year it was.

Obviously, I haven't had a chance to look through all the results, but I can't imagine a more successful year for LHS when you are talking about athletics. There may have been years in the 70s, 80s and 90s that I don't know about, but I find it hard to imagine one that tops 2017.

Sure, the 2010-11 school year featured two state championship teams in football and boys track and field and that was a

fantastic time to be Wildcat, but as far as calendar years go, 2017 was one to remember.

Even outside the sports world, Louisburg High School put together many great accomplishments as the Wildcat Marching Band was selected to participate in the Tournament of Roses Parade and put on a great show for the nation on New Year's Day.

Then in October, the FFA Food Science team of Hallie Hutsell, Faith Seuferling, Addie Katzer and Hattie Harris won a national championship, while Hutsell and Seuferling placed second and third in the nation, respectively.

I don't get a lot of opportunities to cover programs or groups outside the sports world, but these are fantastic accomplishments and deserved to be recognized.

For me, 2017 was a whirlwind. It seemed around every corner, school history was being made and there aren't many schools around the state that can boast about the successes Louisburg has experienced.

It was an honor for me to cover many of these historic runs in Wildcat history and I hope you all realize how lucky you have it. Louisburg is a school filled with great coaches who care about the student athletes.

Believe me, I know how fortunate I am to be able to be a part of something special and this place is it. If 2018 is half of what 2017 was, it will be a fun ride.

I can't wait for what 2018 has in store and hopefully you all will follow along to see what these Wildcats can accomplish.

Top 10 Stories of 2017



It was a successful, and eventful, 2017 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 2017, 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 2018 to begin. Looking forward to it!



Louisburg's Calvin Dillon earns his first state golf medal as a freshman as he took 10th at the state meet.

10. Dillon medals at state golf

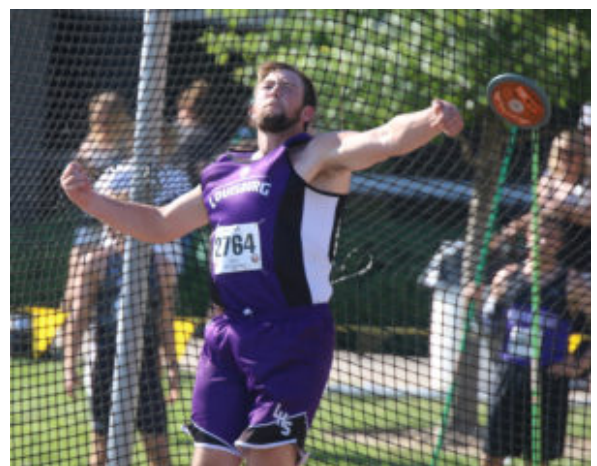
Louisburg freshman Calvin Dillon certainly didn't play like a first-year varsity player as he led the Wildcat golf team all season. Dillon finished 10th at the Class 4A state tournament in Wamego and became the first Wildcat golfer to earn a state medal in several years.

Dillon made the state tournament alongside senior Ty Martin, who finished in 28th place overall after he earned his second straight state appearance.



Isabelle Holtzen earned her first state medal in the pole vault as she took seventh back in May.

9. Holtzen, Dover earn first state track medals



T.J. Dover finished eighth

**in the discus at the Class
4A Kansas State Track and
Field Championships in
Wichita.**

Junior Isabelle Holtzen and senior T.J. Dover both ended their track and field seasons on a good note as they earned state medals in late May at the Class 4A state meet in Wichita.

Holtzen had a big season in the pole vault as she ended seventh in the state after she cleared 10 feet. Earlier in the year, Holtzen broke a 15-year old school record in the pole vault as she topped 11-1.

Dover made his second consecutive trip to the state meet and finished strong in his final high school performance. He took eighth with a throw of 143-4.

The Wildcats qualified for the state meet in 10 events and had two regional champions in junior Quinn Rigney (100-meter dash) and sophomore Chris Williams (400 dash).



8. Frontier League adds three schools, says goodbye to another

For the Frontier League, 2017 brought a lot of changes to a league that has featured seven schools for the last several years.

Starting in the 2018-19 season, the Frontier League will add three new schools. Piper, Tonganoxie and Bonner Springs each accepted invitations to join the league last April to create a 10-team league.

It is didn't stay 10 teams for long as De Soto will make the move to a different league during the same season. The current league will be made up of nine schools: Louisburg, Paola, Ottawa, Spring Hill, Baldwin, Eudora, Piper, Tonganoxie and Bonner Springs.



7. Louisburg boys soccer wins regional crown

The Louisburg High School boys soccer team was trying to make its second consecutive trip to the state tournament this past season and the Wildcats almost got there.

Although the Wildcats fell to McPherson in the state quarterfinal game in late October, Louisburg put together another successful season that included a 1-0 victory over Independence in the regional championship game.

The Wildcats finished the season with a 13-6 record and earned the school's first Frontier League championship since 2010.



Junior Ryan Adams celebrates after he earned a state medal at 138 pounds.

6. Wildcat wrestling qualifies eight for state, Adams picks up medal

The Louisburg High School wrestling team had an historic season as it qualified eight for the Class 4A state wrestling tournament, which tied for the most in school history, during the regional tournament in February at Frontenac High School

Thad Hendrix (106 pounds), Nathan Keegan (120), Kyle Allen (126), Ryan Adams (138), Dylan Meyer (145), Austin Moore (170), Austin Raetzel (195) and Mason Koechner (285) all competed at the state tournament in Salina.

Adams earned the school's lone state medal on the season as he finished sixth overall at 138 pounds.



Louisburg head football and boys track and field coach Gary Griffin retired from the district after 32 years. It was one of many changes for the LHS athletic department.

5. LHS goes through staff/coaching changes

The 2017-18 school year looked a lot of different than in previous years for Louisburg High School athletics.

LHS saw a lot of changes in its coaching staff and in the administration as well. Activities director Darin Gagnebin stepped down and was replaced by current director Jeremy Holloway.

In the coaching department, former head and assistant football Gary Griffin retired from the district after 32 years with the high school and Louisburg promoted assistant Robert Ebenstein

as the new Wildcat head football coach.

Jason Nelson resigned his post as the Wildcat head boys basketball coach and he was replaced with Ty Pfannenstiel. Griffin and Greg Darrington also resigned as the boys and girls track and field coaches, and were replaced by Andy Wright (boys) and John Reece (girls).



Louisburg cross country runners (from left) Tim Smith, Trinity Moore and Wyatt Reece each ended the season with a state medal.

4. LHS cross country earns three state medals, qualifies girls team

The Louisburg High School cross country team might have had

its best season in its 19-year history in 2017.

The Wildcats thrived against some of the state's best competition as seniors Wyatt Reece, Tim Smith and sophomore Trinity Moore all earned state medals at the Class 4A meet in Wamego.

Moore recorded the highest finish for a female runner in school history as she finished fifth in the state and broke her own school record in the process with a time of 19 minutes and 47 seconds.

In the boys race, Reece picked up his first state medal with a time of 17 minutes and finished 11th overall. Smith, who won a regional title the week before, came in 15th with a time of 17:05. Smith was the first Wildcat to win a regional title in school history.

Louisburg also made history as the Wildcat girls team qualified for the state meet for the first time after they finished third at their regional in Burlington. Moore joined Isabelle Holtzen, Reilly Alexander, Carlee Gassman, Kaitlyn Lewer, Payton Shaffer and Emily Williams to make up the seven-member squad that finished 10th in the team standings at state.

Earlier in the year, Moore became the school's first Frontier League champion, while Reece recorded the highest league finish in boys history as he took second at the league meet.



3. Louisburg boys basketball earns first state tournament berth in 12 years

The season may not have started out the way the Louisburg boys basketball team would have liked, but it certainly finished on a positive note.

Louisburg knocked off rival Paola in the sub-state semifinals and then defeated Fort Scott in the championship game in early March to earn its first sub-state championship since 2005.

The Wildcats earned the No. 6 seed and squared off with eventual champion Bishop Miege at the Class 4A state tournament in Salina. The Stags ended the Wildcats' season with an 81-47 loss.



2. LHS girls soccer finishes fourth at state tournament

Louisburg's girls soccer program has only been around for two years, but the Wildcats have set high expectations from the beginning and that continued in 2017.

The Wildcats advanced to the Class 4-1A state semifinals for the first time in school history as they defeated Piper with a 2-1 victory in overtime. This victory came off their second consecutive regional title as they knocked off Bonner Springs.

At the state tournament, Louisburg faced off with Thomas More Prep and suffered a heart-breaking 1-0 loss in the semifinals. The Wildcats moved on to the third-place game against Maize South and eventually finished fourth overall.



1. Lady Cat volleyball ends season as state runner-up

The Louisburg High School volleyball team was just one point away from not only becoming the school's first state volleyball champion – but also the first female team to win a state title in Louisburg history.

As close as the Lady Cats got, they came up just short against defending state champion Rose Hill in late October at the Class 4A-Division I state championship. Louisburg fell 23-25, 25-10 and 29-27 in heartbreaking fashion to finish as the state runner-up.

Still, it was an impressive season for Louisburg volleyball as it finished with a 34-10 record. The Lady Cats reeled off wins over Basehor-Linwood, Bishop Miege and Rose Hill in pool play and then downed Wellington in the state semifinals.

The Lady Cats received several accolades as junior Anna Dixon

and senior Sophie McMullen earned first team all-state and all-league honors. Dixon was also named as the Co-Player of the Year in Class 4A-Division I.

Junior Carson Buffington was also named to the all-state tournament team with Dixon and McMullen.

McMullen excited for opportunity at Northwest Missouri State



Louisburg senior Sophie McMullen helped the Lady Cats to three state tournament appearances during her career at Louisburg High School, including a runner-up finish this year. She signed her letter of intent on Nov. 15 to play volleyball at Northwest Missouri State next fall.

Volleyball has always been a part of Sophie McMullen's life and life has been really good to McMullen as of late.

First, McMullen helped the Louisburg volleyball team to a runner-up finish at the Class 4A-Division I state tournament last month. Although her high school career has come to an end, a new beginning for the Louisburg senior is right around

the corner.

During a ceremony in front of family and friends on Nov. 15 at LHS, McMullen signed her letter of intent to play volleyball at Northwest Missouri State and is looking forward to spending the next four years as a Bearcat.

“The process of recruiting was crazy and finding the right home was a big deal for us,” McMullen said. “I think that I found the right home and I am super excited to be able to sign with them and go down there during the summer to see what it is all about.”

The decision was a difficult one at times as she had offers from other programs, but McMullen appreciated the loyalty from the Northwest coaches.

McMullen had been recruited by the Bearcat staff for several years, including a time when she transitioned into different positions.

“What really stuck out was the coaches,” McMullen said. “I don’t really like having too aggressive of coaches. I like having a coach who will help me when I am in need of help, not when I am doing well. These coaches are just really supportive.”

“They have watched me since I was a setter back in 2014. They have watched me a long time and have seen me develop into a hitter and a right side hitter. They saw something in me back when I was a setter and stuck with me and I appreciate that.”

McMullen played a big role on the Lady Cat volleyball team this season. She led Louisburg with 114 aces and 437 digs. As an outside hitter, McMullen was second on the Louisburg squad with 381 kills.

She was also recognized as one of the top players in the state in Class 4A. McMullen was a first team all-Frontier League

selection and was also named to the Kansas Volleyball Association all-state first team. She was later to chosen to participate in the MO-KAN senior all-star match.



LHS senior Sophie McMullen signed her letter of intent to play volleyball at Northwest Missouri State on Nov. 15. Sitting next to Sophie are her parents Sarah and Scott McMullen and her sister Corinna. Standing (from left) is LHS assistant volleyball coaches Mary Quinn and Leanna Willer, head coach Jessica Compliment, LHS activities director Jeremy Holloway and Dyansty club director Bryon Larson.

It was a long road for McMullen, who started her Louisburg career as a setter her freshmen season. She was also the Lady Cat setter as a sophomore as she helped Louisburg to back-to-back state tournament appearances.

McMullen eventually transitioned into an outside hitter, where she helped Louisburg to a runner-up state finish as a senior,

which was her third state tournament appearance.

“In Louisburg volleyball, I started off as just a little fish just trying to make it,” McMullen said. “I was a freshman and scared of all the seniors. I was just trying to go do my own thing until Comp (head coach Jessica Compliment) asked me to be the JV setter. I was really excited about that, but then halfway through the season she asked me to suit up for varsity and I obviously hadn’t experienced anything like that before.

“This year was an eye opener. Coming back from the loss to Paola at substate my junior year, it took us down a couple notches, but this year I think was one of the best in Louisburg volleyball history. Being a part of it was amazing, but now I realize high school volleyball is over and it pulls at the heart strings a little bit. I am ready for the next level though and excited to experience the college volleyball atmosphere.”

The love of volleyball for McMullen started in fourth grade as she spent most of her days hitting the ball against her garage door. The constant banging annoyed her parents at times, but McMullen had a hard time putting the ball down.

Instead of punishing her parents’ house, she intends on taking it out on her opponents during her time at Northwest. Playing at a high level is something she had always wanted to do.

“I knew I wanted to play in college the minute I touched a volleyball,” McMullen said. “I always thought of myself as that 5-1 setter and nothing else. I never thought I would be recruited as a hitter, but now it is my favorite thing to do. Hopefully I will be able to do it well in college.”

Northwest seemed like the best destination for McMullen, who not only looked for the right fit for her, but somewhere where she could be close to her family.

“Distance was a big deal for me,” she said. “I was looking at

a school in South Dakota and I just felt that I wanted to be close with my family, be with my sister (Corinna) and see her grow up. I think it was a big deal for her to see me play volleyball so it would be cool if I could be there every time she played. I didn't really want to leave my family. I am kind of a homebody and I like being spending time with my family and I don't think I could have gone nine hours away."

McMullen will join a Bearcat program that earned a No. 5 seed in the MIAA Tournament earlier this month, but lost in the first round to Central Missouri State and finished the year with a 17-15 record.

"I am being recruited as an outside hitter on the right side as of right now," she said. "I think I could potentially play defense, but they are pretty heavy there right now. I think myself, along with the rest of the signing class from this year, can come in and help the team."

Dixon named player of the year; Lady Cats haul in honors



Louisburg High School junior Anna Dixon was named the Class 4A-Division 1 Co-Player of the Year by the Kansas Volleyball Association when the all-state team was released Sunday.

Dixon, along with teammate Sophie McMullen, was selected to the first team, while junior Carson Buffington was named to the second team.

The Louisburg High School volleyball team found itself just points away from winning the school's first state championship, but despite that, had one of the better finishes in program history.

The Kansas Volleyball Association (KVA) took notice of the Lady Cats' success and gave one of their players the highest honor it can bestow.

Junior Anna Dixon was named the KVA Co-Player of the Year for Class 4A-Division I and headlined the all-state team that featured two other Louisburg players.

Senior outside hitter Sophie McMullen also earned first-team honors with Dixon on the seven-member team, while junior setter Carson Buffington was awarded a spot on the second team.

Dixon shared the player of the year honor with Rose Hill junior Gracie Van Driel. The two players squared off in the state championship match in late October and will do so again in college as Dixon has committed to Kansas State and Van Driel will play at the University of Kansas.

"It is a great feeling," Dixon said. "I was very excited when I heard about being named player of the year and was even more excited when I heard I got to share it with one of my really close friends. Her and I have a very special friendship. Even though we are supposed to be enemies, with her going to KU and me going to K-State, we are still each other's hypeman and best friend off the court.

"She is a stud athlete and so are the rest of the amazing

players that were selected for all-state honors. I'm very thankful to be named player of the year and very proud and happy for the rest of team and their hard work."

Dixon put together a strong season for the Lady Cats as she led the team with 613 kills and 61 blocks on the season. The 6-foot-3 outside hitter was also third on the team with 58 aces and 329 digs.



Senior Sophie McMullen earned first team all-state and all-Frontier League honors this season.

McMullen, who will play at Northwest Missouri State next season, also had a big year for the Lady Cats as she was first on the team with 114 aces and 437 digs. As an outside hitter, McMullen was second on the Louisburg squad with 381 kills.

These weren't the only honors Dixon and McMullen have received this season. Both players were named to the Class 4A-DI all-

state tournament team and were also first team selections in the Frontier League.

“Both Sophie and Anna had strong seasons,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “They both helped carry and lead the team throughout the season. However, it took the work of the entire team to accomplish our goals for the season. Without each player knowing and understanding their role on the team, we wouldn’t have been as successful and neither would have Sophie or Anna.”

A lot of those kills from McMullen and Dixon came thanks to the sets of Buffington. The Louisburg junior performed well in her first year as the team’s full-time setter.

Buffington finished the year with 1,111 assists as she helped the lead the Lady Cats to a 34-10 record on the season. Defensively, she was also a factor with 244 digs and had 30 aces from behind the service line.



Setter Carson Buffington recorded more than 1,000 assists this season and earned second team all-state and all-league honors.

Along with the all-state selection, Buffington was also named to the Class 4A-DI all-state tournament team, along with a second-team all-Frontier League selection.

“Carson really grew this season and did a good job of running our offense,” Compliment said. “Seeing her being recognized for her hard work is great and shows that others recognized that as well.”

Sophomore middle hitter Haley Cain and sophomore libero Riley Kallevig also received honors from the Frontier League coaches. Both players were named all-league honorable mentions.



Sophomore middle blocker Haley Cain earned honorable mention all-league honors.

Cain was third on the Louisburg team with 182 kills and was second on the Lady Cats with 28 blocks. She also ended the year with 38 aces.

As for Kallevig, she helped the Lady Cats in the back and from behind the service line. As the libero, Kallevig was second on the team with 382 digs to go along with 61 aces.

“Riley and Haley were both returning starters from last year, but I think this year they finally came out of their shells and really showed what they were capable of,” Compliment said. “Throughout the season, they had their ‘sophomore’ moments, but they both play with such composure on the court that you couldn’t tell they were sophomores.



Riley Kallevig was second on the team in digs from her libero spot and was named honorable mention all-league.

“That composure really showed at the end of the season. They both made some huge plays at the state tournament, and their play made the difference in a few of the sets.”

KVA Class 4A-DI All-State Team

First Team

Anna Dixon, Louisburg, outside hitter, junior

Gracie Van Driel, Rose Hill, middle blocker, junior

Elle Barrett, McPherson, outside hitter, senior

Sophie McMullen, Louisburg, outside hitter, senior

Riley Oglevie, Ulysses, outside hitter, junior

Serena Sparks, Bishop Miege, libero, junior

Emily Witt, Rose Hill, setter, senior

Second Team

Carson Buffington, Louisburg, setter, junior

Jaycee Burghart, McPherson, setter, junior

Tasiah Nunnery, Hays, outside hitter, sophomore

Brooklyn Strobel, Andover Central, libero, sophomore

Riley Tinder, Basehor-Linwood, outside hitter, sophomore

Hannah Willey, Abilene, outside hitter, junior

Danyel Yardley, Rose Hill, libero, senior

Honorable mention

Turner Alderson, Abilene, libero, junior

Kate Gordon, Independence, outside hitter, sophomore

Amber Hildebrand, Wamego, outside hitter, senior

Ava Seaton, Basehor-Linwood, outside hitter, junior

Payton Verhulst, Bishop Miege, outside hitter, freshman

Jaden Walters, Abilene, setter, senior

Laney Ward, Bishop Miege, setter, senior

PLAYER OF THE YEAR: **Anna Dixon, Louisburg**; Gracie Van Driel,
Rose Hill

COACH OF THE YEAR: Melissa Segovia, Rose Hill

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE VOLLEYBALL

FIRST TEAM

Ally Barnhart, De Soto, junior

Maya Bascom, De Soto, junior

Haley Cuba, De Soto, junior

Anna Dixon, Louisburg, junior

Sophie McMullen, Louisburg, senior

Kamryn Shaffer, Ottawa, senior

SECOND TEAM

Carson Buffington, Louisburg, junior

Jenna DeVore, Ottawa, senior

Audrey Flowers, Baldwin, junior

Riley Foltz, Eudora, junior

Loren Hinkle, De Soto, junior

Jordan Johnson, Paola, senior

HONORABLE MENTION

Jasmine Boyd, Eudora, senior

Haley Cain, Louisburg, sophomore

Cassy Crist, De Soto, junior

Alli Frank, Spring Hill, freshman

Sutton Jung, Ottawa, senior

Riley Kallevig, Louisburg, sophomore

Allina Kerns, Ottawa, junior

Riley Moore, De Soto, senior

Alexia Nelson, Baldwin, senior

Anna Ohlmeier, Paola, senior

Keagan Shockley, Eudora, sophomore

Kaleigh Scott, Paola, senior

Skyler Williams, Paola, senior

OPINION: Lady Cats inspired fans with successful season



The Louisburg High School volleyball team celebrated a point during the Class 4A-Division I state tournament on Oct. 27 in

Salina.

It has been more than a week since the Louisburg High School volleyball team had to watch Rose Hill storm the court and celebrate its second straight state championship.

Trying to figure out just how much those Lady Cat players were hurting as Rose Hill won match point is something that is difficult to quantify. Needless to say, it was probably a lot.

On three different occasions, Louisburg found itself one point away from winning a state title and becoming in the first team in Lady Cat history to win a team championship in any sport.

The loss was gut-wrenching – at least it was for me.

If I could feel that horrible, I can't imagine what those players were going through. I didn't have a child on the team, nor was I there during the offseason and practice to see how much work the girls put into the season, but I could still feel their pain from across the court.

The entire Louisburg fan base that made the trek to Salina could feel it too. There were a lot of people who connected with this group of girls. They watched as these players grew throughout the season and saw the potential they had.

There weren't many opponents that were all that excited about facing the thundering kills of Anna Dixon or Sophie McMullen, or the stingy Louisburg defense that got better as the season went on. Riley Kallevig, Reilly Ratliff-Becher, Carson Buffington, McMullen and Dixon all came up with big digs throughout the year and became a strength of the team.

Middle hitters Haley Cain and Mikayla Quinn, along with outside hitter Erin Lemke, saw their confidence grow and it showed in the state tournament. They came up with big plays against Bishop Miege and Rose Hill to help Louisburg go

undefeated in pool play to start the state tournament.

Buffington also became comfortable as the team's full-time setter as she had good chemistry with her hitters, especially McMullen and Dixon. When it mattered most, the Lady Cats were a well-oiled machine.

It was all set up to be a happy ending for Louisburg volleyball – a program that has suffered heartbreak several times on the state level. The Lady Cats have a number of runner-up, third and fourth place finishes, but haven't been able to pin down that championship.

As bad as that loss hurt, Louisburg continues to build on its rich volleyball tradition. To finish second in the state is a fantastic accomplishment and one that shouldn't be forgotten.

This team also showed a younger generation of players what it takes to become great and 'Believe The Hype' – the motto the Lady Cats used all season to remind themselves what it means to be a Louisburg volleyball player.

Let me share one, very small example, with you.

My daughter, who is in elementary school, has just started playing volleyball. She is really starting to enjoy it and wants to get better at it.

She is always banging the ball on the wall in her room or against the garage door. The noises drive me nuts.

In just a few months time, she has become interested a sport I never thought she would like. Part of the reason is she sees the success this Lady Cat team has enjoyed.

When Louisburg qualified for the second day of the state tournament, she wanted to go with me to Salina. A girl, who is normally a pain the butt to get up early for school, had no problems waking up at 6 a.m. and making the drive with her dad.

She wanted to support her favorite Lady Cats.

To the Lady Cat players – I just wanted to let you know, that even in a loss, she had a time that she will never forget. You also probably already know this, but you have a lot of other little girls around town who look up to you all and are inspired by what you have accomplished.

There are girls, like my daughter, who have aspirations of hitting the ball as hard as Anna or Sophie when they get to high school, or maybe setting them up like Carson. Maybe they want to be in the middle of it all like Haley and Mikayla, or just maybe they want to dive on the floor for a dig like Riley and Reilly.

You may have not captured a state championship, but you won the hearts of a lot of future Lady Cat volleyball players. You taught them what it takes to believe in themselves and come together as a team.

Your performance at state shows what it takes to keep a strong tradition alive.

You showed them what it means to 'Believe the Hype.'

So for that ladies – thank you for taking all of us on the ride with you. It was a season a lot of us will always remember – not with disappointment – but with pride.

**McMullen, Quinn selected to
play in all-star match**



Louisburg High School seniors Sophie McMullen (left) and Mikayla Quinn were recently selected to participate in the 21st Annual MO-KAN All-Star Volleyball Match this Sunday at Avila University.

A pair of Louisburg High School seniors will compete against, and with, some of the best volleyball players the Kansas City area has to offer.

Sophie McMullen and Mikayla Quinn were chosen to compete in the in the 21st Annual MO-KAN All-Star Volleyball Match this Sunday at Avila University. McMullen and Quinn will take part in the small class game that pits the Kansas all-stars against Missouri.

The two Lady Cat players are fresh off a runner-up performance in the Class 4A-Division 1 state tournament after leading Louisburg to a 34-10 record on the season.

McMullen, who will be playing for Northwest Missouri State next season, did a lot of different things for the Lady Cats as she was an all-around player. McMullen led Louisburg with 114 aces on the season to go along with a team-high 437 digs. She was also second on the team with 381 kills.

McMullen was recently named to the all-Frontier League first team and was selected to the Class 4A-Division I state all-tournament team

As for Quinn, she served as one of the team's two middle hitters and finished the year with 96 kills and 23 blocks. She

is also a two-year varsity player for the Lady Cats.

The match, which is put on by the Greater Kansas City Volleyball Coaches Association, compiles the top seniors on both sides of the state line. The small-class match will take place at 5 p.m., and will be followed by the large-class game.

The other small-class Kansas players that were selected are: Kate Allen, Heritage Christian; Elle Blake, Piper; Jordan Johnson, Paola; Natalie Klotz, Bonner Springs; Jaylyn McPherson, Basehor-Linwood; Aurora Rodriguez, Bishop Miege; Maggie Smardo, Bishop Miege; Laney Ward, Bishop Miege; Madison Wright, Piper; Kate Yankovich, Basehor-Linwood

All-Frontier League Volleyball Team Announced



Louisburg senior Sophie McMullen (left) and junior Anna Dixon (right) were each named as first team selections to the All-Frontier League Volleyball Team. The Lady Cats put five players on the team in all.

The All-Frontier League volleyball teams were recently released and the Louisburg High School volleyball team was well-represented.

The Lady Cats earned five spots on the all-league squad, including two first team honors.

Will put together a full story soon, but here is the complete list. Congrats to all the players who earned all-league honors.

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE VOLLEYBALL

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Alexia Nelson, Baldwin, senior

Anna Ohlmeier, Paola, senior

Keagan Shockley, Eudora, sophomore

Kaleigh Scott, Paola, senior

Skyler Williams, Paola, senior

Lady Cats' title quest comes up short in finals match



Senior Sophie McMullen holds up the Class 4A-D1 state runner-up trophy as the team gathers together following the Lady Cats' three set loss to Rose Hill in the finals match Saturday in Salina.

SALINA – The Louisburg High School volleyball team hoisted a state trophy Saturday during the Kansas Class 4A-Division 1 State Volleyball Championships.

It just wasn't the one the Lady Cats wanted.

Louisburg advanced to the championship match against Rose Hill, and after the two teams split the first two sets, they provided the fans with an intense, and decisive, third set.

In the end, the Lady Cats made just one more mistake in the 23-25, 25-10 and 29-27 loss to the Rockets and finished as the state runner-up. Both teams went back and forth at each other, with both defenses digging most everything up, but Rose Hill won the final two points to pull out the thriller in Salina.

“It has been extremely difficult to handle this loss,” Louisburg junior Anna Dixon said. “I have played a lot of games over the years and lost many important games, but this was definitely the hardest for me, because it was so close and we ended it on our own unforced errors.”

The end of the match saw the Rose Hill players storm the court as they secured their second straight state title. At the same time, the Louisburg players tried to fight back a wave of emotions that came flooding up as they came just short of

winning the school's first volleyball state title.

"There were a lot of tears," Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. "The players were crushed at first. They set their goals high and were disappointed to come so close to the elusive first place at the state tournament. Both teams did leave it all out there on the floor, and that is what I told the girls they had to do. Rose Hill played great defense on Saturday. Their libero was picking up everything."



Senior Mikayla Quinn gives coach Jessica Compliment a long hug after receiving her second place state medal Saturday in Salina.

Louisburg, which defeated Rose Hill in two sets during pool play Friday, saw a different team in the state championship. Despite that, the Lady Cats got off to a strong start Saturday as they jumped out to a 14-9 lead in the first set thanks to a

pair of kills from senior Sophie McMullen, another kill from Haley Cain and an ace from Reilly Ratliff-Becher.

Although Rose Hill cut it to two late, McMullen reeled off three kills down the stretch to secure the first set win. The Rockets came out on fire to win the second going away, which set up the dramatic third set.

Rose Hill took the lead and held it halfway through, until Dixon recorded a pair of kills to give Louisburg a brief 14-13 lead. The Rockets battled back and took a 20-18 lead late and Compliment called a timeout to calm her team down.

It seemed to work as the Lady Cats went on a 5-0 run to take a 23-20 lead behind kills from McMullen and Cain. The state title was within their reach, but Rose Hill didn't give up as it scored a quick three points to tie the match.

Cain responded with a kill to put Louisburg up 24-23 and set up match point. The Rockets defense held firm and tied it back up. Dixon gave Louisburg the lead back with a tip and another match point, but instead, Rose Hill scored the next two to set up match point for itself.

Louisburg tied it up at 26-all and Dixon followed with a block for a 27-26 advantage for Louisburg. Rose Hill called a timeout, and it seemed to be just what the Rockets needed as they scored three straight points to win the match and the state championship.



Setter Carson Buffington tips the ball over a pair of Rose Hill blockers.

“It has been tough to finally come to realization about the loss,” McMullen said. “I think that overall we played better than we would have ever imagined and I’m proud to go out like that, especially with second place.

“Although it does still replay in my mind thinking what I could have done better for my team, and in all honesty it was probably my missed serve. Ultimately, there is nothing more that we could have done. I think Rose Hill just had a few little things that we didn’t.”

Dixon and McMullen provided the Lady Cats with a lot of offense at the net with 20 and 13 kills, respectively. Cain also added six kills of her own and senior Mikayla Quinn had two.

Junior setter Carson Buffington was busy as she tallied 34 assists to set up her four hitters.

The Rose Hill defense made an adjustment on both Dixon and McMullen as the Rockets tried to make it more difficult for the Lady Cat players to hit over them.

“They shifted after the first set which really challenged Anna and I,” McMullen said. “They made it to where we had to hit over a 6-foot blocker, which was very challenging. It was very difficult, yet that’s just what we will see as we both continue off to college, so it was a little eye opening. Of course, we were frustrated but that just made us realize that we can’t just hit it straight down.”

Defensively, the Lady Cats put together one of their better performances of the season as they turned away several Rose Hill attacks and had four players with double-digit dig numbers.



Libero Riley Kallevig digs up a ball against Rose Hill on Saturday during the state championship match.

Sophomore libero Riley Kallevig was one of those as she had a team-high 20 digs along with Dixon. McMullen finished with 15 digs, while Ratliff-Becher added 10 of her own.

The defense was one of the reasons the Lady Cats had match point three times late in the third set.

“The final points of the game were insane,” Dixon said. “Their defense dug everything and so did ours. I never thought the game was going to end. What the game finally came down to was mistakes. That’s what volleyball is, a game of mistakes, but unfortunately it was our side of the net that made the mental mistakes that cannot happen in a time like that. It happens with every team, but we gave it our all and worked our tails off. I am very proud of our team and cannot wait to come out and try to get that state title next season.”

To get to that position, the Lady Cats put together some of their best volleyball of the season as they went 3-0 in pool play Friday to secure a spot in the state semifinals.



Sophie McMullen puts down a kill against Rose Hill in the state championship match Saturday in Salina.

Louisburg opened with a 25-16, 25-16 win over Basehor-Linwood and then followed it up with big 13-25, 25-19, 25-19 win over Bishop Miege. With the victory, the Lady Cats qualified to play the next day, but didn't let up as it beat Rose Hill in two sets, 25-15 and 25-22.

However, it was the win against Miege, a perennial state power, that took the Lady Cats' confidence to another level.

"The win against Miege was straight heart," McMullen said. "After the first set, and me hitting my head, I think a few got nervous and lost hope, but that didn't stop us. We fought

till the very end and pulled it out. The win definitely gave us the confidence to move on to Rose Hill and it showed as we crushed them on the first day. Our confidence was at an all-time high as we ended our first day, which was an amazing feeling.”



Junior Anna Dixon skies for a kill Saturday against Rose Hill.

Dixon led the way with a team-high 20 kills and McMullen finished with 14 in the Miege match, but it was the emergence of Cain, the team’s middle hitter, that helped put Louisburg over the top as she added seven kills and provided another option for Buffington to set to.

“Haley had a good tournament,” Compliment said. “She made some big plays at crucial times on both Friday and Saturday. She also made some big plays in the back row when she was in

serving. She is pretty consistent and always keeps a level head. I'm excited to see what the next two seasons will bring for her."

Defense was also big for Louisburg against Miego as McMullen and Kallevig led the Lady Cats with 17 and 15 digs, respectively, and Buffington added 12. Dixon and Quinn were also big at the net with five and three blocks, respectively.

Serving was key for Louisburg in its first match against Rose Hill as it recorded nine aces and all of them came from Dixon and McMullen. Dixon led with five aces and McMullen had four.



Sophomore Haley Cain goes up for a kill against Wellington in the state semifinals match.

To start the day Saturday, the Lady Cats had an easy time with Wellington in the state semifinals as they notched a 25-11, 25-17 win to set up the rematch with Rose Hill.

The Lady Cats ended their season with a 34-10 record and they realize, despite the loss, that it was a season to remember.

“As I told the team, you can’t let one match define an entire season,” Compliment said. “I needed reminding of that as well because it’s very easy to focus on that last match, on the last set and forget about all of the accomplishments throughout the entire season. To go 34-10 and second in the state is something the team should be proud of. I think after they had time to process the loss, they realized how great the season was. They played really well all season as a team, and continued to grow as a team and as individuals throughout the season.”



Members of the Louisburg High School state runner-up volleyball team are (front row, from left): Sarah Wilson, Ainsley Vance, Sophie McMullen, Mikayla Quinn; (back row) assistant coach Leanna Willer, assistant coach Mary Quinn, Riley Kallevig, Reilly Ratliff-Becher, Makenna Allen, Erin Lemke, Anna Dixon, Carson Buffington, Haley

Cain and Riley Vohs.

The players also enjoyed the journey that began with a loss in the sub-state tournament a year ago.

“Our season was a winning season,” McMullen said. “Looking back on my four years of playing, this was the best season so far. We ended at 34-10, which is better than many others. Although last year we didn’t go to state, it made the team as whole want to win this year and gave us the determination and the goal that we wanted to achieve this year. We may not have won it all, but we sure made history and proved to ourselves that the sky is the limit and we can achieve anything with hard work and heart.”