

Lady Cats fall to pair of state-ranked teams at De Soto



Senior Anna Dixon records a kill during Louisburg's match with Olathe West on Thursday at De Soto High School. The Lady Cats defeated Olathe West in two sets, but fell to state-ranked Manhattan in three and De Soto in two.

DE SOTO – It didn't take long for the schedule to ramp up for the Louisburg High School volleyball team.

In just its second outing of the season, the Lady Cats squared off against three larger schools, including a pair that were state-ranked. Louisburg nearly knocked off one of those ranked foes, but came up short as it finished 1-2 on the night in a triangular at De Soto High School.

After the Lady Cats defeated Olathe West 25-23 and 25-11, they took Manhattan (No. 8 in Class 6A) to three sets before falling 25-17, 22-25 and 26-24. Louisburg, the No. 3-ranked team in Class 4A, then fell to De Soto (No. 4 in Class 5A) 26-24 and 25-14.

“Overall, we played pretty well,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “We came out a little slow and sloppy against Olathe West in the first set, but the team increased their level of effort and came out strong in the second set. We knew going in to the evening that De Soto and Manhattan would be tough, and the team was ready for the competition.”

Against Olathe West, Louisburg (2-2) took a little time to get going in the first set, but the Lady Cats eventually found its footing as it dominated the second set and performed well at the net and in the back, defensively.

Senior hitter Anna Dixon led all Lady Cats with 12 kills in the match and the entire team served well as it recorded 10 aces. Junior Riley Kallevig led the way with four, while Dixon had three and junior Haley Cain had two.

Freshman setter Rinni McMullen led the way with nine assists and also played well defensively with a team-high six digs. Junior Reilly Ratliff-Becher and Dixon both also added five digs.

Louisburg was forced to play from behind against Manhattan from the start as it struggled early, but responded well to win the second set and even the match. The third set went back-and-forth, with some key plays that didn't favor the Lady Cats, and eventually they came up short in a 26-24 loss.

"We played pretty well against Manhattan," Compliment said. "In the third set, there were a few situations where things didn't go our way, but the team rebounded and continued to fight. I've been talking to the players about playing smart, aggressive and to play to win rather than play to not lose. The last few points in the third set, the players were doing just that. They continued to swing aggressively and played to win."

"We did manage to dig ourselves into a few holes at the beginning, which made it an uphill climb to get back to even or come out ahead. We've talked a lot about coming out strong from the first play and never letting up."



Junior Reilly Ratliff-Becher makes a pass Thursday against Olathe West.

Dixon certainly didn't let up at the net as she recorded a team-high 15 kills and also played well defensively with a team-high 11 digs. Cain and Kallevig had six and five kills, respectively.

The Lady Cats also had eight aces from behind the service line and McMullen led the way with four of those and also had nine assists. Freshman Davis Guetterman had a big match setting with 14 assists.

Defensively, Cain, Dixon and sophomore Carleigh Pritchard each had a pair of blocks, while Ratliff-Becher was second on the team with eight digs.

Although Louisburg fell to Manhattan, they still used some of that momentum in its final match against a former Frontier

League opponent – De Soto. The Lady Cats took De Soto to extra points in the first set, but the close losses took its toll as they couldn't keep up in the second.

"I think after losing the third set to Manhattan, and then the first set to DeSoto, I think the team was a little defeated," Compliment said. "Rebounding from those two close losses wore them down mentally, I think. We didn't come out as strong, and we made too many errors on our side. De Soto is a good team, and one we look forward to playing. Against a team like De Soto, you can't let them get the edge early."

Dixon once again led Louisburg at the net with 10 kills, while McMullen and Guetterman each recorded seven assists. Junior Erin Lemke and Pritchard each had a pair of blocks and Kallevig led Louisburg defensively with seven digs.

Louisburg returns to action tonight and it will see two more ranked teams when it travels to Burlington High School. The Lady Cats will compete in a triangular against Santa Fe Trail (No. 4 in 4A) and Burlington (No. 2 in 3A). The first match is set for 7 p.m.

Lady Cats blank rival Paola to start season



Freshman setter Davis Guetterman celebrates a point with her

teammates Tuesday during Louisburg's season opening victory over Paola at Louisburg High School. The Lady Cats defeated the Panthers, 3-0.

It may only be one match, but the Louisburg High School volleyball team showed exactly why it was worthy of its No. 3 preseason ranking Tuesday in the Lady Cats' season opener against Paola.

The Lady Cats were dominant and never let up in their 25-14, 25-15 and 25-12 victory over the Panthers and started their season off with a victory at home.

Louisburg played like a team that finished as the state runner-up a season ago and wanting to take it a step further this year.

"We were ready to play for sure," Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. "We wanted to take a look and see where we are at offensively, defensively and what we needed to focus on for practice next. It was nice to play against someone other than ourselves and the girls were excited, especially with it being Paola, who is our league rival. They came out ready to play and they are a very cohesive group."

Chemistry didn't seem to be a problem on the court Tuesday, especially for a team running a new offense, defense and several players playing different positions than a year ago.

"It is a little rare to see a team that is so close so early in the year, especially when you add three new players to the mix, and two of them being freshmen setters," Compliment said. "Then you go and change the offense and the defense – they are just accepting their roles. We have made some changes from last year to this year, position-wise, but they understand the big picture and we are going to do what is best for the team. As a group they have decided what they wanted to accomplish

this year."



Senior Carson Buffington (left) and Sydni Keagle go up for a block Tuesday against Paola.

The Lady Cats are running a two-setter offense this season and freshmen setters Riny McMullen and Davis Guetterman stepped in to take charge of the offense. Both players provided several assists on the night to all their hitters, including Anna Dixon, Carson Buffington, Haley Cain, Riley Kallevig, Erin Lemke and Sydni Keagle.

"Both Davis and Riny did a great job stepping in and running the offense," Compliment said. "We worked on spreading the offense around and giving all our hitters a chance to go swing. They did a good job of connecting with all the hitters at different times. In my mind, you couldn't tell that they were freshmen out there. They did a very good job."

Serving was a big key for the Lady Cats against Paola as McMullen finished with a team-high four aces and Kallevig added three of her own. Dixon, Reilly Ratliff-Becher and Cain also recorded aces on the night.

Not making mistakes from behind the service line was key for Louisburg as it scored eight of the first nine points in the first set to take control early after kills from Buffington and Dixon.

"We worked a lot on improving our serve receive in practice, and with that I told them that they have to serve tough," Compliment said. "I think they really stepped up in practice and were more aggressive. They are finding more spots, more zones and are just pushing the serve a little bit. We had a few errors, but we were serving aggressive."



Freshman Riny McMullen skies for a serve Tuesday against Paola.

Paola made things interesting in the second set as it rallied to tie the match at 12, forcing Louisburg to call a timeout. Dixon recorded a kill right after the timeout and McMullen followed with three straight aces to give Louisburg a 17-12 advantage, and it never let up after that.

Louisburg (1-0) jumped out to a 10-1 lead to start the third set behind kills from Buffington, Dixon and Cain and also two aces from Kallevig. Dixon had a pair of aces and Lemke recorded two kills in the final five points to secure the win for the Lady Cats.

The Lady Cats will try and keep the winning ways going Thursday, but it will be tough as they travel to De Soto for a quadrangular with Olathe West and Manhattan. De Soto is currently ranked No. 4 in Class 5A and Manhattan is No. 8 in Class 6A.

"It will be a really good quad to play in," Compliment said. "We wanted to keep De Soto on our schedule and they wanted the same thing even though they were leaving the league. I am excited to see how we match up. There will be some high-caliber teams that will be there and I will be looking forward to see how we play."

State title game loss fuels Lady Cats for upcoming season



Louisburg senior Anna Dixon, the Class 4A-Division I Co-Player of the Year last season, returns to lead the Lady Cats as they embark on what they hope is another trip to the state tournament.

As the Louisburg High School volleyball team went through its summer workouts, visions of watching Rose Hill storm the court and hoisting a state championship trophy was a constant in its mind.

Last October in Salina, the Lady Cats were just one point away from winning their first ever state championship. Instead, Rose Hill rallied to take the match in three sets and left the Louisburg players with a hollow feeling the last 10 months.

It is that feeling that has fueled the Lady Cats over the summer, and now into the start of practice for the upcoming season.

“I think the nerves really got to us,” senior Anna Dixon said. “I think we had the physical ability to win a state title, but we didn’t have the mentality to win it there in the moment. That is what we have been working on in practice. I know for me, hitting it into the net at game point there – that hurt a ton. I know that each point matters and that is what we are focusing on – every point and every play.

“Every practice we always think about losing that match. We have had a lot of teams at Louisburg get second, third, fourth and I think we were the closest to ever win it. Hopefully, we can put it together this year.”

That focus is evident in practice as the players have returned with a renewed emphasis on getting better.

"We just want to go out and become a better team," senior Carson Buffington said. "There are some people that don't think we are going to be as good as last year, but I think we can even be better than last year. We are further ahead right now than at this time last year and I feel we are little more focused."

Buffington and Dixon are the lone seniors on this season's team that returns several key players from last year's state runner-up performance. In fact, six players are back that saw time in the state tournament.

Although many of the same pieces are there, they are going to fit a little differently this year according to head coach Jessica Compliment.



Carson Buffington sets up teammate Haley Cain for a kill during last season's state tournament. Buffington, a senior, will make the move from setter to outside hitter.

Louisburg has switched to a 6-2 offense, which will run two setters. Buffington, who was the team's setter a year ago and a second team all-state player, has moved to outside hitter, while freshmen Corinna McMullen and Davis Guetterman will each take turns at the setter spot.

"Carson ran a 6-2 her sophomore year and has some hitting experience in her past," Compliment said. "She is a great vocal leader and someone I knew the team needed on the court. Switching her to a right side hitting position made sense and it was apparent during the KU camp that Carson fits in well there. The transition to the new 6-2 with Davis and Corinna is going well, and all of the players are working well together."

Another change is in the back row as junior Reilly Ratliff-Becher will take over as the team's libero. Last year's libero, Riley Kallevig, will take to the role of becoming a six-rotation outside hitter as the Lady Cats try and replace the production from Sophie McMullen – a first team all-state player that is now currently playing at Northwest Missouri State.

Junior Haley Cain also returns as the team's middle blocker and will be joined at the position by sophomore newcomer Carleigh Pritchard. Junior Erin Lemke is also back as a right side hitter.

"I stress to the players in the program to know multiple positions because it makes them versatile and easier to place on the court," Compliment said. "I also talk to them about being the type of teammate that's willing to adjust for the team and play where they will most benefit the team."

However, one thing that won't change for the Lady Cats is the presence of Dixon on the court. The returning Class 4A-Division I Co-Player of the Year, Dixon put together a strong season for Louisburg as she led the team with 613 kills and 61 blocks . The 6-foot-3 outside hitter was also third on the team with 58 aces and 329 digs.

Dixon, who will play at Kansas State next season and is currently ranked the 46th best prospect in the nation according to prepvolleyball.com, will be focal point for a lot of what the Lady Cats do this season.

"This will be Anna's fourth year as a starter on the squad," Compliment said. "She brings in a lot of experience. I'm sure she'll have a strong season and continue to lead the team vocally and by example."



(From left): Carson Buffington, Reilly Ratliff-Becher,

Haley Cain, Riley Kallevig and Anna Dixon celebrate a point during last season's state tournament.

Although a state title is the team's ultimate goal this season, the Lady Cats still have several boxes they would like to check off before they get there. Louisburg, which is currently ranked No. 3 in the Class 4A preseason rankings, has been working hard to get that accomplished.

"The difference with this group is we are motivated right from the start," Dixon said. "It took us halfway through the season last year for us to get the confidence that we can compete at state. After what happened last year, now we know we can do it and that we have the tools to do so. We just have to work hard from the start and we have been doing a good job doing that in practice.

"Our biggest goal right now is just going after the teams in our league. We have a few new teams, so we want to get a league title and get a good record going into sub-state."

Louisburg will kick off its season at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday when it hosts rival Paola for a Frontier League dual match.

It will be the first of many matches the Lady Cats hope to turn into a win this year as they try and erase the heartbreak images from Salina.

"We think about it a lot," Buffington said. "It has motivated us to come back determined and ready to take it this year. It has really bugged us. We see pictures of Rose Hill winning it last year and they are already saying they want a 3-peat, so we can't let that happen.

"We just want to go out and become a better team. There are some people that don't think we are going to be as good as last year, but I think we can even be better than last year."

The Lady Cats would also like to finish what they started a

year ago.

"Placing second at state is a huge accomplishment and something the team is proud about," Compliment said. "Few teams have the opportunity to play for a state title, but considering how close we were it left everyone feeling like we had some unfinished business. It's definitely added some extra fuel this season."

New rules create different vibe for first day of fall practice



The Louisburg High School football team opened the 2018 season with its first day of practice Monday and did so under different guidelines. Despite that, the Wildcats are excited for the start of the season.

On the horizon, it looked like a normal first day of practice.

More than 150 athletes took to their respective field, court or course to begin their journey to greatness Monday for the 2018 fall sports season. Excitement was abound and coaches were happy to be back with their players.

However, the first day of practice was a little bit different this year as the Kansas High School Activities Association implemented new fall heat acclimation rules in late July. The rules, applied to all sports, includes:

- Only one practice per day is permitted during the first five days of practice. All individuals shall only practice once per day for the first five days the individual practices, no matter when the person joins the team or if the person misses days due to injury/illness.
- No single practice may last longer than three hours. All warm-up, stretching, conditioning and weight lifting is included as part of the three-hour limit.
- A separate walkthrough is permitted in addition to the single practice. The walkthrough cannot be longer than one hour and must be separated from practice by at least three hours of rest. A walkthrough is defined as a teaching opportunity with the athletes in which no protective equipment is worn. No physically exerting activity, including any conditioning or weight lifting, may take place during the walkthrough.
- Beginning on practice day six, double practice sessions are permitted for any individual who has completed five days of single practices. Double practice sessions cannot be held on consecutive days. The day following a double practice day would be either a single practice day or a rest/recovery day.
- On days of multiple practices, no single practice may last longer than 3 hours and total practice time combined shall not exceed five hours.
- To be deemed a practice, a majority of the squad members must participate in the organized team training session.

Those rules left most of the coaches at Louisburg High School having to readjust how they run their practices or tryouts.

The Wildcat boys soccer team, which normally conditioned in

the morning and worked on skills in the afternoon, were forced to cram everything into one practice.

"I am extremely frustrated with the new KSHSAA rule," Louisburg soccer coach Kyle Conley said. "Before to protect the student athletes, we ran in the morning before the sun was up and when it was cooler out. Now we have to practice and condition in the afternoon in the heat of the day. Personally, I fill this will lead to more issues. It would be interesting to see who all was included in this decision and what the data said."



Eli Minster passes a ball to a teammate during a drill Monday during the first official day of practice.

Louisburg volleyball, which also holds tryouts, had to split up the grade levels during the process. Senior and juniors had tryouts in the morning as a group, while sophomores and

freshman practiced in the afternoon.

"In the past, we were able to put every athlete, freshman through senior, on the court at the same time and separate out the tested areas," Louisburg volleyball coach Jessica Compliment said. "Physical testing had been in the morning with volleyball skill testing in the afternoon. Due to the change in the rule, we could no longer use that set up.

"It has forced a 'split' in the athletes because they can't all work out together like they have been all summer long. Because of our numbers, and the tests we feel are necessary in order to make cuts and squad roster decisions, we need to run the athletes through each test. We would not have enough time to do that if we had kept them all together and brought them in for only one session. Which means the athletes are that more anxious and excited to finish tryouts and start the season with their teammates."

There were also specific rule changes in regards to football, which forced Wildcat coach Robert Ebenstein to adjust his practice schedule as well, including the removal of two-a-days for the first week practice. Other changes include:

- Players must have a minimum of one day of rest/recovery during any week (Sunday- Saturday). Only injury treatments are permitted on a rest/recovery day.
- Days No. 1 and 2 of practice: Helmets only (air and bags only are permitted.)
- Days No. 3 and 4: Helmets and shoulder pads are permitted (Day 3: control permitted; Day 4: thud permitted.)
- Days 5 through Saturday of third week of practice: Full contact (air, bags, control, thud and live action permitted) may begin with exceptions that on any day involving multiple practices, only one practice may involve thud and/or live action.

"The changes with KSHSAA policies are what they are," Ebenstein said. "I think they were created with good intentions. Personally I feel that our practice tendencies over the last few years have put player safety as the No. 1 priority always, so in that regard not a whole lot will change for us. You are allowed to do a separate 'walk-through' other than practice which we will still do every morning at 6 a.m., so we still have that old school two-a-day feeling just the approach of what we do and how we will do it has changed.

"The only thing that confused me is the purpose of the change is for heat acclimation, but the wording of it will force us to condition our players in the afternoon when it is hot instead of in the morning when it is typically cooler. But most all of our players have been working their tails off all summer and are already in pretty good shape."

Despite the changes in practice, all four Wildcat programs are excited for what their season has in store. LHS had a large number of participants for the first day of fall practice as 163 athletes participated.

Ebenstein had 70 players attend the first day of practice, which is the highest number the Wildcats have had since he joined the staff in 2012. Louisburg also hopes to improve off its 6-3 record last season as they return 18 seniors, including several starters on both sides of the ball.

"Practice went well and it was good to finally get back on the field with the guys," Ebenstein said. "We are very excited for this season, as in every team in the state. The thing that separates us is how players, managers and coaches alike all really enjoy our time together. I am excited to coach, but I'm honestly excited to be around these coaches and kids again and give this season the best run we can."



LHS freshmen and sophomore volleyball players gather at center court during tryouts Monday.

On the volleyball side, the Lady Cats had 34 athletes show up for the first day of tryouts, which will end on Wednesday as Louisburg begins its quest to get back to the state tournament after finishing second a year ago.

“The first couple days are focused on running each athlete through a set of volleyball skills and physical skills tests,” Compliment said. “The athletes did a good job for the first day, and we are looking forward to the next couple of days.

“Over the course of the summer, we had a lot of athletes participate in summer league matches, summer camps, team camps, open gym and weights. They are ready to get the season going. There is a lot of excitement among the athletes and a lot of anticipation for the season.”

Coming off a spot in the state quarterfinals, the Wildcat boys soccer team had 38 athletes compete for a spot on the team as they try to make another run in the playoffs.

"It was nice to see so many kids out for the team," Conley said. "The boys work incredibly hard and we are very supportive of each other. With having so many new players coming out for the team, we did a lot of teaching and developing expectations for the drills and why we do things. It was actually the first time in three years the majority of the team completed the mile under six minutes, which was fantastic."

"It is a great time of the year with a lot of optimism. The boys were very upbeat and very focused on getting better. With only four seniors, we are extremely young and we will need to do a lot of teaching."



Trinity Moore (center) leads a pack of runners during the first day of practice Monday at LHS.

As for cross country, numbers have dwindled a little for head coach John Reece as he has close to 25 runners out this season, but he has a good group of runners coming back, including state medalist Trinity Moore.

The girls team is also hoping to make a return trip to state this season after qualifying for the first time in school history last year.

"The first practice was great," Reece said. "We are going to have more girls than boys, but it seems like they are in shape and ready to start training for our first race.

"The kids are jazzed about the season and the girls are wanting to do even better than last year. I believe success builds the team numbers."

Hinkle ready to take on role as LHS activities director



Walking into Scott Hinkle's office, it doesn't appear he started a new job two weeks ago.

The moving boxes are mostly gone. His desk is organized with everything in its place, along with a calendar crammed full of upcoming events.

Hinkle is not shy to tell people about his love for the Boston Red Sox. Sitting on one wall are two older chairs from Fenway Park, along other memorabilia.

The one thing that Hinkle hasn't caught up on is his efforts to get some purple gear. An avid Kansas Jayhawk fan, he hasn't had need to purchase any purple flair in the past. Seems like that will change shortly as he was hired as the new activities director and assistant principal at Louisburg High School earlier this summer.

"I have been a Jayhawk fan all my life," Hinkle said. "It will be a little weird to wear purple that is for sure, but I am sure I will get used to it. Before I left my old job, people found out where I was going so they started giving me little gifts with purple on it, like markers and stuff like that. They definitely got a kick out of that."

Hinkle takes over for Jeremy Holloway, who was promoted to principal at LHS and becomes the third activities director in as many years to take over that spot.

"My wife has family in Kansas City and I have family in Wichita and so we were looking to come this way," Hinkle said. "I had a couple friends that told me that the Louisburg position had opened up. I had heard of Louisburg a long time ago. I actually coached at Ottawa University in the early 90s and was familiar with the area. I came up, interviewed and here I am. It has obviously worked out well."

"Everyone has been so helpful and friendly and it is a good time to be coming to Louisburg. I am excited to be here."

Before taking the job in Louisburg, Hinkle had spent the last 22 years in the Liberal school district in a variety of roles. He served as the boys high school basketball coach, along with nine years as an activities director, a year as the head girls basketball coach at the local community college and last year he served as assistant principal at the high school.

Hinkle graduated from Valley Center High School, and went on from there to earn his bachelor's degree from Friends University, where he played basketball, and his master's from the University of Kansas.

Basketball has always been a passion for Hinkle, but during his time as activities director at Liberal, he had a chance to learn the life of other sports as well.

"Liberal changed a lot from when I first got there in the mid 90s when they were a football and track powerhouse," Hinkle said. "There were just athletes galore, but the culture kind of changed. We were really good in soccer and decent in track and volleyball. We still had good kids and good athletes, but it was a big transition as far as sports go when I first got there. My kids grew up there and being involved and being able to watch their events was something that has always appealed to me.

"Basketball has always been in my blood. Other than my nine years as athletic director, I have coached in some capacity and I am a big basketball fan. Obviously, being an athletic director I am just a big sports fan in general."

Still new in town, Hinkle is still trying to get to know his coaching staff, but he is excited about the situation he is walking into with the Wildcats finishing as state runner-ups in volleyball and girls soccer last season. Several cross country, golf, wrestling and track athletes also earned state medals.

However, if there is one thing he wanted to relay to everyone is that he wants to give his coaches the freedom to run their programs.

"I want to let the coaches, coach," he said. "I am not going to be the guy that says this is how we did things in Liberal and I am not that type of leader. If it comes to the point where they need some advice, I want to be a resource for them.

I don't want to be someone that is looking for something.

"I have met a few of the coaches. I have let them know that I am here if they need anything. I have stopped by the weight room to speak to a few coaches and some have stopped by to introduce themselves. I am still learning names and faces. We have a coaches meeting on the 10th and I will see and learn a lot more about them then."

With all the success the Wildcats had last season in the sports arena, Hinkle is happy to be a part of the LHS family and is learning new things about the town every day.

"I have heard all types of things," he said. "I have heard they take football pretty seriously here. I know they were state runner-up in volleyball and girls soccer last year and that is an exciting thing to walk into. I think expectations are obviously high in those sports, but I think everyone always has high expectations. I am not going to do anything different than normal and I am just going to sit back and observe for a while and take it all in."

Hinkle will experience some different things along with his new position. This season, the Frontier League will welcome three new teams – Bonner Springs, Piper and Tonganoxie – and will say goodbye to De Soto.

Another big change will be the postseason formats with several sports as the Kansas State High School Activities Association reshuffled their classification system, eliminating Class 4A-Division II.

"With the changes in the league, the classification system and being a new AD, it is probably a good time to be coming on," Hinkle said. "The learning curve is going to be the same for all of us.

"I walked into a good situation for scheduling because (Holloway) already had everything all taken care of," he said.

"I think the dynamics of the league are going to change. Liberal's former girls basketball coach is the coach at Piper and I know a little bit about them. As far as the programs and rivalries, that is something that is going to come with time."

Even with all the changes in his life – moving, starting a new job, getting to know new faces – Hinkle is ready for what lies ahead and the staff at Louisburg has helped with that transition.

"It has been a whirlwind and it has been information overload," he said. "It is a lot of the same things I did in Liberal as athletic director, I just haven't done it for the last five years. Being an assistant principal at Liberal last year, I think, helped me prepare for the principal side.

"People have just gone out of their way to be helpful. From the administration to the custodial staff to the secretaries, everyone has been super helpful. When I was out around town, people have welcomed me and it has been a friendly feel everywhere I have been."

Team, KU camp brings Louisburg volleyball together



Junior Reilly Ratliff-Becher makes a pass during a drill while freshman Chase Kallevig looks on during the final day of the

Louisburg volleyball team camp on July 11.

The Louisburg High School volleyball team is about nine months removed from one of the best – and most heartbreaking – finishes in school history.

In late October, the Lady Cats were a point away from winning the school's first state championship against Rose Hill, but came up just short in what was a memorable state title match. Louisburg is hoping to use that defeat to their advantage in 2018 and the Lady Cats came together over the summer to get back to work and try to get back to the state title game.

That work picked up on July 9 when the Lady Cats took part in a 3-day team camp in an effort to redevelop that team chemistry from a year ago. Louisburg also spent its summer competing in summer league action and open gym workouts.

"We had 35 athletes attend the summer camp, and I am anticipating around 40 will try out in August," Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. "We had a few who were unable to attend, but overall I was pleased with how the camp went. We've been running open gym sessions and league nights throughout the summer, so the players had already put in a lot of time on the court."

The purpose of the camp was to also bring everyone together to work on fundamentals since it had been 7 to 8 months since some of them had been on the volleyball court.

'This was the first time we had a solid week to just focus on volleyball and building individual and team skills and goals," Compliment said. "We really wanted to focus on areas we'd noticed during league matches or open gyms that needed strengthening, but we also wanted to strengthen up our basic skills. The camp allowed us to break up into smaller groups and focus more on specific skills."



Louisburg head coach Jessica Compliment talks with her players during their team camp on July 11.

On July 12, 20 players ventured to the University of Kansas team camp for three days in Lawrence, where they competed against some other programs in the area, along with learning tips from some of the Jayhawk coaches.

According to Compliment, it was the perfect way for the team to end its summer competition.

"We worked a lot on team drills and competition play at KU," Compliment said. "Over the course of the summer, we've had three different groups playing in summer leagues and lineups varied from week to week based on who was in town and able to play. The three days at KU allowed us to focus a little more on finding some consistency, but there were still changes to the line ups made during each session and day. It was helpful to see how the groups and individuals adjusted to the changes,

and it allowed us to see if there were changes in chemistry when players moved around.

"Between open gyms, weights, summer league matches, and both camps the players have put in a lot of work. It's always fun to see how the players and groups progress from the start of summer to the end of summer camps. The KU camp is the final thing we do as a team over the summer, and there were big strides made from the first summer league match to the last match played at camp."

The 2018 campaign has the possibility of being another special season for the Lady Cats. Of the starting eight players from last year, six of them are returning, including the Class 4A Co-Player of the Year in Anna Dixon. Setter Carson Buffington, middle hitter Haley Cain, defenders Riley Kallevig and Reilly Ratliff-Becher and outside hitter Erin Lemke also return.



Haley Cain tips the ball over the net during a drill at the Lady Cat team camp.

Even with several players coming back, Compliment saw her team get better and believes it was a successful summer.

"We still have a ways to go and a lot that needs ironing out, but we have a group of athletes that are hungry for the season to start," she said. "Placing second at state is a great accomplishment, but there is still a feeling of unfinished business among the players.

"We do have a solid crew returning, and I've seen a lot of good play out of all of the athletes this summer so I think we should be fairly solid. They are hungry for another shot at state. They understand that it won't be easy and that they can't take anything for granted. They will need to work harder than everyone else. Nothing will be handed to them."

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/Grinnell 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 be 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 4x100 and 4x400-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.