

Louisburg volleyball downs Fort Scott, Girard to stop losing streak



Louisburg's Emma Prettyman (pictured) and Allie Kennedy combined for 27 kills in the Wildcats' 2-1 victory Thursday at Fort Scott.

FORT SCOTT – The Louisburg volleyball team walked into the Fort Scott gymnasium Thursday trying to shake a six-game losing streak.

After the Wildcats left Fort Scott, they started a new streak – a winning one.

The Wildcats held on to defeat Fort Scott, 2-1, in the first match of the night and ended with a 2-0 win over Girard.

“We were due for a win and I am so proud of the girls for how they approached last night,” Louisburg coach Leanna Willer said. “They walked into the gym on a mission and were committed to getting those two wins. I thought we played well together as a team and worked hard to make big plays throughout the night. I think everyone stepped up at different moments, which is exactly what we wanted to see.”

The Wildcats were tested at the net in the first match of the night, thanks to the play of Fort Scott's Kenzie Murphy as she helped keep the Tigers in it the match.

Louisburg's middle blockers of Allie Kennedy and Emma Prettyman also rose to the occasion and played one of their better matches of the season.

Kennedy had a team-high 17 kills and two blocks in the match, and Prettyman finished with 10 kills to help Louisburg to a 25-20, 20-25 and 25-22 win over the Tigers.

"We bounced back well in the third set," Willer said. "They never let the second set loss keep them down in the dumps. We used it to fuel our fire going into the third. It was a middle vs middle battle during that game as Fort Scott's middle Kenzie Murphy is a force to be reckoned with. Our middles were poised and ready to answer back any of her kills with one of their own, and they really couldn't stop either of them."

The Wildcats (5-9) also served well as they finished the match with nine aces. Junior Madelyn Williams led the way with four, while senior Claire Brown and junior Megan Quinn each had two.

Quinn also had a big night for the Wildcat offense as she finished with a team-high 41 assists.

Senior Adyson Ross, who has been up at the net as a hitter for most of the season, switched positions Thursday and was the team's libero. Ross handled the position well as she helped the Wildcat defense with 15 digs, while Brown had a team-high 18 and Williams finished with 14.

"Moving Adyson to libero has crossed our mind a few times throughout the summer and this season, and we felt like this week was the time to try it out," Willer said. "Adyson is a great all-around athlete who can play any position, so we love that she is ready and willing to fill any role that the team needs her to play."

"Her passing and defense were solid all throughout the night and our team recognized her for the big defensive plays she

made. Having her consistent presence in the back row seemed to be just what our team needed.”

Against Girard, the Wildcats took care of business from the opening whistle in the 25-15 and 25-22 victory.

Kennedy, Williams and Brown each finished the match with six kills, while Williams and Prettyman each had two blocks. Brown led the way with 11 digs and Quinn led the Wildcat offense with 18 assists.

Louisburg will try and build on this momentum as the Wildcats host the Louisburg Invitational on Saturday as matches begin at 8 a.m. It is a round-robin tournament that will include Basehor-Linwood, Shawnee Mission East, Shawnee Mission West, Shawnee Mission South, Olathe North and Leavenworth.

“We are excited,” Willer said. “We will play a lot of volleyball tomorrow and we know that we have some great opportunities to grow as a team and win some games in the process. We have a wide variety of teams coming to the tournament that we don’t typically see, so we are focused on taking it one match at a time and playing our best. This is one of the last home events we have this season, so we are hoping to see Louisburg show up and support.”

Louisburg can't overtake Ottawa in five set loss at home



Louisburg senior Claire Brown puts down a kill Tuesday during the Wildcats' home match against Ottawa. Brown led Louisburg with 17 kills in the team's 3-2 loss to the Cyclones.

A difficult early schedule has made life tough on the Louisburg volleyball team to begin the 2022 season

The Wildcats had a chance to get back on track Tuesday when they hosted Ottawa for a Frontier League dual and they were one set win away from stopping a five-match losing skid.

Ottawa had other ideas. The defending state runner-up handed Louisburg a 3-2 loss in what was a highly-contested match on both sides.

Louisburg opened with a 25-21 win in the first set, Ottawa followed with a 25-15 victory in the second, before the Wildcats took the pivotal third set, 25-21. The Cyclones rallied back to take the next two 25-15 and 15-7 to win the match.

"I thought there were moments where we were playing really, really well, but we were unfortunately not as consistent with those moments as we needed to be to end up on top," Louisburg coach Leanna Willer said. "Playing any five set match is tough, and losing in the end can feel especially draining. That being said, I think we were able to recognize a lot of positive things from our play throughout the night to build on moving forward."

One of those positives was senior Claire Brown as she made her impact felt all over the floor. Brown led the Wildcats with 17 kills and was also among the team leaders in digs with 12.

“Claire stepped up at the net to lead our team and she became our go-to throughout the night when we needed a kill,” Willer said. “Her court presence was felt by everyone all night long and she seemed to really find her groove.”



Louisburg senior Allie Kennedy goes up for a kill Tuesday against Ottawa.

After the two teams traded victories in the first two sets, the Wildcats (3-9) came out strong in the third. Louisburg went on an 11-3 run to take hold of the match and seemed to have all of the momentum.

Brown had seven kills in that third set and the Wildcat defense stepped up in the process. Senior Emma Prettyman had a team-high three blocks, while senior Allie Kennedy, along with juniors Megan Quinn and Hailey Sword, each had two.

Junior Madelyn Williams was also strong defensively in the back with a team-best six digs in that third set.

Ottawa took that momentum right back in the fourth. The Cyclones jumped out to a 12-5 advantage and went on to take

the set. They used that string of good play to their advantage to take the fifth and final set, as well.

“Ottawa’s outsides are very strong and we had trouble stopping them in the sets we lost,” Willer said. “Additionally, I think Ottawa won the serve and pass game in those final two sets, which cost us in the long run.”

Along with Brown’s play at the net, the Wildcats had six kills each from senior Adyson Ross, Kennedy and Sword. Prettyman finished with a team-high five blocks.



Louisburg junior Madelyn Williams makes a pass Tuesday against Ottawa.

Williams was strong behind the service line with a team-best four aces on the night and also led Louisburg with 17 digs. Ross was second on the team with 14 digs.

Quinn led the Wildcat offense with 34 assists from the setter spot.

Louisburg has a busy rest of the week and will try to get back on track tonight as the Wildcats travel to Fort Scott for a

triangular with Girard. First match is set for 5 p.m.

The Wildcats will then host the Louisburg Invitational on Saturday in hopes of righting the ship.

“We are looking forward to the rest of this week as we have seven more games as opportunities to put what we’ve learned about ourselves in action,” Willer said. “We have some great opportunities to showcase what this team can really do in our triangular and home tournament, so I can’t wait to see how our girls attack these next few games.”

Louisburg beats Bonner Springs, goes winless at Lansing tourney



Louisburg senior Claire Brown goes up for a kill during a match earlier this season. The Lady Cats defeated Bonner Springs on Thursday, but went 0-4 on Saturday at Lansing.

LANISING – In a week that started with three wins for the Louisburg volleyball team, ended with an appearance in the toughest tournament the Lady Cats will compete in all season.

Louisburg traveled to the Lansing Invitational on Saturday and competed against numerous Class 5A and 6A teams.

The Lady Cats didn't have the results they were hoping for as they went 0-4 in pool play and saw their tournament come to an end.

Louisburg fell to Lansing, Olathe West, Lawrence and De Soto, and two of those schools (Olathe West and Lansing) are ranked in their respective classes.

De Soto and Lawrence were Louisburg's first two opponents of the day and the Lady Cats put up a fight early. They defeated De Soto in the first set 25-21, but dropped the next two 25-15 and 25-22.

Louisburg (3-7) then went on to fall to Lawrence 25-20 and 25-18, before losing to Olathe West (25-10, 25-14) and Lansing (25-10, 25-16).

"The Lansing tournament is tough and filled with strong teams all around," Louisburg coach Leanna Willer said. "Our first two matches of the day against De Soto and Lawrence could have gone our way, but unfortunately we were unable to close them out. We had our opportunities to come out on top but failed to execute in the end.

"We let errors pile up on top of each other instead of ending runs quickly. That being said, I think we learned more about ourselves and are coming into this week hungry for a win."

Claire Brown led the Wildcats at the net as she finished with a team-high 17 kills, while Allie Kennedy added 16 kills and a team-high three blocks.

Emma Prettyman and Hailey Sword both finished with double figure kills with 10. Junior setter Megan Quinn ran the offense well with a team-best 55 assists.

Sword led the Lady Cats from behind the service line with four aces and junior Bronwynn Williams added three of her own.

Brown finished with team-high 33 digs on defense and senior

Adyson Ross had 31.

Louisburg will try and get back on track Tuesday when it travels to Spring Hill for a Frontier League dual. The varsity will start at 6:30 p.m.

Lady Cats get road win at Bonner Springs

In its second Frontier League match of the season, Louisburg picked up its first victory in the league with a 3-1 win last Thursday at Bonner Springs.

The Lady Cats earned a hard fought 25-21, 29-31, 25-22 and 25-15 win over the Braves to get their third straight victory at the time.

“It was a great game for us against Bonner Springs,” Willer said. “We weren’t perfect and we definitely made a lot more errors than we would like to see, but our energy, enthusiasm, and drive to win was evident as we battled for every point. When we made mistakes or Bonner made a good play, we didn’t let ourselves spiral, but rather we recovered quickly and focused on the next play. That allowed us to bounce back after losing that heartbreaker of a second set.”

Louisburg found itself in a back and fourth second set, but the Lady Cats found a way to bounce back and take the next two.

Defense was big for Louisburg as it helped turn away Bonner Springs’ top hitter, Mariyah Noel, as several different occasions. Offensively, setter Megan Quinn did a good job distributing the ball to different hitters.

“I think our blockers did a good job of finding Mariyah Noel and worked to slow her down a bit, forcing her to try some off speed shots,” Willer said. “Our setter Megan Quinn did a nice

job of distributing the ball to all of our hitters to present a balanced attack using all of our threats.

“I thought our energy and intensity lasted throughout the entire match, and a large part of that had to do with our ‘student section’ of our JV and freshman teams. Our girls on the court fed off of the crowd and loved having everyone so involved.”

Lady Cats down Burlington, Piper for season's first wins



Louisburg's Allie Kennedy (left) and Claire Brown (right) celebrate a Hailey Sword (9) kill Tuesday during the Lady Cats' home match against Piper.

The start of the season didn't go as the Louisburg volleyball team had hoped.

Louisburg lost its first three games last week and needed to find a way to get into the win column.

Tuesday's triangular with Burlington and Piper gave the Lady Cats exactly what they were looking for. Louisburg hosted the two schools and earned a pair of victories, including a competitive 2-1 win over Piper to end the night.

The Lady Cats (2-3) opened the competition with an easy 25-17 and 25-12 win over Burlington.

"It was great to finally get a couple of wins under our belt," Louisburg coach Leanna Willer said. "We played much better and we started to find a rhythm within our team during that second game against Piper. It was really nice to see different girls step up at different times to combine for two good team wins."

Louisburg made the plays it needed to in the 26-24, 21-25 and 25-16 victory over Piper.

In the first set, junior Madelyn Williams tied the match at 19-all with an ace, but Piper responded to score the next two points. Louisburg then took advantage of two Piper mistakes, and an Adyson Ross ace, to give itself a 22-21 advantage.



Junior Madelyn Williams sends the ball over the net Tuesday against Burlington.

Louisburg senior Allie Kennedy followed the up with a kill and Ross added another ace to make it 24-21. Piper took the next three points to tie it again, before Kennedy had back-to-back kills to end the match.

The Lady Cats put themselves in a big hole in the second set as they found themselves down 12-4, but put together a big rally to tie the match at 13. Even though, Louisburg lost the set, it used that momentum in the third.

“I was impressed with our perseverance during the Piper match as we had a rough start to the second set but kept pushing through and gained momentum that carried us through the third,” Willer said. “We had a lot more energy during this game with the level of competition that Piper brought, and it was so fun to see the crowd feed into it as well.”

Defense came to life in the third set for Louisburg, especially at the net. Kennedy, Ross and Emma Prettyman all had blocks that helped build a 19-13 advantage and an eventual victory.



Louisburg junior Hailey Sword goes up for a kill Tuesday at home.

"We finally started to block some balls and slow down their offense," Willer said. "We have been working on blocking over the past week so it was great to see that aspect of our game improve. There's nothing quite like the feeling of getting a block. It definitely fires up every single person on the team."

Louisburg had a well-rounded attack at the net against Piper as Kennedy led the way with 10 kills and two blocks. Ross finished with eight kills and a team-high three blocks, while Prettyman had eight kills and a block.

Junior Hailey Sword also finished with eight kills in the match and senior Claire Brown had seven.

Ross also had a big night from behind the service line as she had four aces, while Sword and Brown each had two.

Junior Megan Quinn ran the offense well with 28 assists against the Pirates and Brown was big on defense for Louisburg with a team-high 21 digs. Sword (13), Quinn (12) and senior Ava Jorn (11) also had double-figure dig numbers.

The Lady Cats controlled their match against Burlington from the start.



Louisburg setter Megan Quinn sets up teammate Emma Prettyman for a kill attempt Tuesday against Burlington.

Louisburg had 10 aces against the Wildcats. Williams led the way with four and Brown added three of her own. Ross and Kennedy each led the attack at the net with six kills each, while Quinn had 19 assists.

“I loved to see us meshing better together as a team and everyone stepping up in their role,” Willer said. “It takes each and everyone of us doing our jobs to play our best.”

The Lady Cats are back in action tonight when they travel to Bonner Springs for a Frontier League dual. The match is set to begin at 6:30 p.m.

Rough week leads to three losses for Lady Cat volleyball



Louisburg senior Allie Kennedy battles two Paola players at the net last Tuesday during the Lady Cats' season opener at Louisburg High school.

The early season hasn't been all that kind to the Louisburg volleyball team as it began with three straight losses, including a pair against bigger programs.

Louisburg traveled to Olathe West on Thursday and competed against the Class 6A school, along with 5A De Soto. After a pair of tough 25-14 and 25-13 losses to Olathe West, the Lady Cats found themselves in a battle with De Soto.

After falling 25-12 in the first set, Louisburg rallied to take the second, 25-21. De Soto, however, took control in the third with a the 25-12 win.

"We didn't have our greatest showing, and I think the girls would agree with that," Louisburg coach Leanna Willer said. "However, we were still able to challenge De Soto and take a set from them, which is an accomplishment against these bigger schools."

Louisburg senior Allie Kennedy led the charge at the net as she finished with a team-high eight kills and a block. Senior Adyson Ross had seven kills and a team-high two blocks, while

junior Hailey Sword also had seven kills.



Junior Hailey Sword dives to the floor for a dig last Tuesday at home against Paola.

Setter Megan Quinn added a team-high 26 assists on the night and also had a team-best 17 digs as four Lady Cats had double-digit totals in that area. Senior Claire Brown had 15 digs, while Ross and Sword tallied 12 and 10, respectively.

Junior Bronwynn Williams, Sword and Brown each finished the night with two aces to lead Louisburg in the serving department.

Louisburg will try and bounce back tonight when it hosts Burlington and Piper in a triangular. The Lady Cats will then hit the road Thursday at Bonner Springs. On Saturday, Louisburg travels to the Lansing Invitational and its first tournament action of the season.

Lady Cats fall to Paola in season opener

For first time in five years, Louisburg came out on the wrong side against its rival.

The Lady Cats hosted Paola last Tuesday in their season opener, and despite putting up a fight, came up short against the Panthers, 3-1.

"I am proud of how the girls battled," Willer said. "I think it was clear we were a little nervous the first set, but we came back with a vengeance in the second and fought hard in the final two sets. We never gave up and gave it our all no matter the score.

"With this being the first match, we saw inconsistencies in all aspects of the game. However, we saw a lot of positives as well that have us excited for what's to come."

Paola took the first set 25-16, but the Lady Cats responded and won the second set by the same score. The Panthers made the plays late in the third and fourth sets to win 25-22 and 25-20.

Senior Claire Brown had a big night for the Lady Cats as she was all over the court. Brown had a team-high 14 kills at the net and also led Louisburg with 14 digs on defense.

Seniors Adyson Ross and Allie Kennedy finished with 12 and 10 kills, respectively. Ross was also second on the team with 13 digs.

Junior Madelyn Williams tallied 12 digs from the back row, while fellow junior Hailey Sword finished with 10 of her own.

Setter Megan Quinn led the way with 43 assists on the night.

New pieces, familiar faces to lead Lady Cat volleyball in 2022



Louisburg senior Adyson Ross is one of several returning players to the Lady Cat volleyball lineup this season. Ross, along with senior Claire Brown, were named team captains.

Like every program sees from time to time, the winds of change are blowing through the Louisburg volleyball team.

After finishing one win shy of a state tournament appearance a year ago, the Lady Cats will have a different look to them – at least in some spots, anyway.

For the first time in four years, the Lady Cats will feature a new setter thanks to the graduation of four-year starters Corinna McMullen and Davis Guetterman.

Add in the loss of strong defenders like Chase Kallevig and Aubryn Berck, Louisburg coach Leanna Willer has had to do some reshuffling to see how the pieces fit for the 2022 season.

“This will be a different team after losing last year’s seniors, but many of our players have solid varsity experience and benefited from awesome leadership the past few years,” Willer said. “So far, our varsity players maintain high

expectations for themselves – they refuse to lower the bar and continue to push each other, demanding the best of their teammates.”

However, despite all that change, there is one place where the Lady Cats return a lot of veteran pieces – at the net.

Seniors Allie Kennedy, Emma Prettyman, Adyson Ross and Claire Brown, along with junior Hailey Sword, all return as the team’s top hitters and will be a big strength of the squad this season.



Senior middle blocker Allie Kennedy returns to lead the Lady Cats up front after suffering an injury that cost her part of her junior season.

“We do feel that our offense is strong,” Willer said. “We return our No. 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 hitters when looking at kills per set. With this much experience, we feel that we can compete with just about anyone.”

Putting the hitters in the best position to succeed will fall on the hands of Megan Quinn. The Louisburg junior is the team’s starting setter this season, while another junior, Bronwynn Williams, could also see some setting duties.

Willer has liked what she has seen out of Quinn so far and believes she will do a good job in her first year at her new role.

“Some of our leadership roles have shifted as our captains this year are Claire and Adyson, who are hitters for our team,” Willer said. “That being said, leadership naturally comes from the setting position as we say the setter is the ‘quarterback’ of our team. Megan is an extremely hard worker and a natural leader on the court. No one can expect her to be Rinny or Davis, we just want her to be the best Megan she can be.

“We know that Megan is fully committed to our team and will give us 100 percent no matter what. In addition to Megan, Bronwynn may also see some setting opportunities. We love the energy and passion that the two of them bring to the court. They are two kids that have fully bought into the program and are willing to do whatever the team needs to help us be successful.”



Louisburg senior Claire Brown digs a ball up last season. This year, Brown will be looked upon to contribute at the net and on defense.

Defensively, Louisburg will feature some new faces with the loss of those four starters from last season. Serve receive

and defense has been a focus so far at practice for the Lady Cats.

Junior Ashlyn Berck will start the season as the libero, while senior Ava Jorn, Sword, Brown and Ross will also provide help in that area.

"All four of last year's seniors were phenomenal defenders and serve receive passers," Willer said. "That is definitely an area we work on improving every single day. Both Claire and Adyson have back row experience, and we will look for Hailey Sword, Ashlyn Berck and Ava Jorn to step into those roles as well."

Like most seasons, the Lady Cats will venture through a difficult schedule, but many of those challenges will come in Frontier League action.

Ottawa (state runner-up), Baldwin (fourth at state) and Spring Hill (5A tournament qualifier) will all be tough matches in Frontier League play, along with tournaments at Lansing, Ottawa and Circle High School.

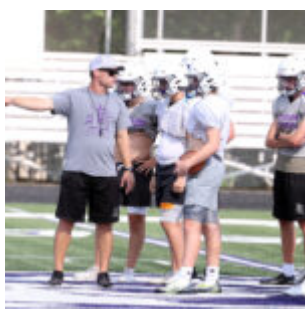
"Our league is crazy tough with three teams that competed at the state tournament last year in Spring Hill, Ottawa and Baldwin," Willer said. "While every team lost good players in their senior classes, they each return talented players who have that high level experience. Every league game will be tough, but that's what makes playing in the Frontier League so exciting. Nothing is guaranteed, and we are fueled by that competitive atmosphere."

Louisburg, which is currently ranked No. 7 in the Kansas Volleyball Association preseason poll, would love nothing more than to find itself back in the state tournament once again.

That road begins at 6:30 p.m. tonight when the Lady Cats host Paola in a Frontier League matchup.

"We have high hopes and expectations for our season," Willer said. "They expect to continue the traditions of Louisburg volleyball by competing at the top of the league and working toward that sub-state championship. I think we all recognize the potential this group can have together – we are just excited to get started."

First week of practice breeds optimism for LHS fall programs



Louisburg head football coach Drew Harding speaks to his players in the huddle during a practice this week. Harding is in his first year as head coach after serving as an assistant for several years.

It's only four days into practice, but all four Louisburg High School fall coaches have liked what they have seen so far out of their teams.

Numbers have been steady as each program has high expectations for the upcoming 2022 season.

There are also plenty of new faces this year as the Wildcats will feature two first year coaches in Bobby Bovaird (boys soccer) and Drew Harding (football). Leanna Willer

(volleyball) is in her second season, while cross country coach John Reece is entering his 20th season.

On the gridiron, the Wildcat football team is returning several starters from last year's team that lost to St. James Academy in the first round of the playoffs.

Louisburg currently has 70 players out for football this season, including 15 seniors that will help lead the way.



Senior Mason Dobbins (left) and junior Declan Battle go up for the ball during practice this week.

"Practice has been going well so far," Harding said. "We have a lot of competition for spots and competition brings out the best in everybody. We are very excited for the upcoming season. We have a large senior class and a junior class that has gained lots of experience from last year so we are excited to see what we can do."

Having a new head coach can bring a learning curve, but the Wildcats worked hard over the summer. Along with their annual team camp, they had several scrimmages, 7-on-7 competitions and skill sessions.

"The team did a good job picking up on our installs on both sides of the ball so we were able to get a lot of really good reps that will hopefully help us in this upcoming season," Harding said.



Seniors Ayden Deterding (left) and Cade Gassman go through a drill in practice this week.

As for the boys soccer team, the Wildcats will try and reach the state final four for the second time in three years after falling to Bishop Miege in the regional championship match a season ago.

Louisburg returns another experienced group as it enters the season with 15 seniors after earning the No. 1 seed in the playoffs a year ago. Numbers are once again high for the program as 40 players are out this year.

"Nine of them (seniors) saw some pretty solid varsity playing

time last year, and five of them got playing time in the state tournament two years ago when we finished in 3rd place,” Bovaird said. “Practice has been running very smoothly. We’re getting a great look at the players during our tryouts this week, and we’re seeing lots of leaders emerge every day.”



First-year head coach Bobby Bovaird speaks to his team during the final day of tryouts.

The Wildcats also had a busy summer with camps and team workouts. It was a good way for Bovaird to get to know his players as a first-year head coach.

“Almost everyone was able to participate,” Bovaird said. “They were getting together for informal kick-arounds, they were either lifting weights with the school’s summer program or they were lifting together on their own, and I’m loving the buy-in that they’ve shown. We’re looking at the potential to have another outstanding season this year. Of course, conditioning is a factor and we’re working on improving that during practice.

“This year, we’ve got the motto ‘United,’ which comes from the

fact that many soccer clubs use that word with their club names – Manchester United, New Mexico United, etc. I chose that motto because we have kids with all sorts of experience, from those who play year-round club soccer to kids who only play in the fall. They've grown up playing all over the place, whether it's a club up in the city, Louisburg Rec, or somewhere in another district or community. But we're here right now, and we have to come together to be united as a soccer family if we want to achieve our goals. This group of seniors has had a taste of state success, and they've had a taste of falling short of the team's goals. I think they have the hunger to buy into what the coaching staff is striving to provide for them and they are willing to make a commitment to get to the top this year."



The Louisburg girls cross country team is currently ranked in the preseason top 5 in Class 4A by Kansas MileSplit.

As for cross country, Reece has liked what he has seen from his runners so far after a successful season a year ago in which both teams qualified for state.

He currently has 25 runners out this season, while 18 are out

on the middle school level. The girls team is already being thought of as one of the top squads in the state as they are ranked in the top five in Class 4A by Kansas MileSplit.



The Louisburg boys cross country team will look to earn another trip to the state meet this season.

"We are down a little in numbers but return many state qualifiers," Reece said. "Practices are going well and we are enjoying this stint of cooler weather. We are again focusing on the end of the season and are setting a goal to return both teams to state again. It is going to be an exciting year."

Volleyball also has strong numbers out as they had 36 athletes out for tryouts for the first three days and have settled at 30 for the rest of the season between the three levels.



Coach Leanna Willer speaks to her team at practice Thursday following a 3-day tryout.

Despite losing four starters from last season's team that fell one game short of reaching the state tournament, Willer is excited to see what this group can do.

"We've had a great first few days and are seeing really awesome things from our girls that have us excited about what we'll be able to do at all three levels this year," Willer said. "We see a lot of potential at all ages and we are hungry for the opportunities to keep improving and make some noise in the league."

The squad had a busy summer with its team camp in early June, followed by summer league action for two months and the varsity traveled to the University of Nebraska team camp in July. Add in the normal open gyms and weight sessions, Willer is pleased with how her players have improved.



Senior Claire Brown passes the ball during a drill Thursday.

“This was a very busy summer of all sorts of crazy twists and turns with the high school being under construction and schedules constantly changing,” Willer said. “Those that were able to dedicate time and effort consistently throughout the summer improved, not only in skill, but also in confidence. The coaches and athletes were typically here working four days a week with weights, conditioning, and open gyms.

“We love having these summer opportunities to get to know our team better and to start working on our team chemistry as much as possible. As a whole, we have grown a lot over the past couple months and we are looking forward to seeing what we can accomplish here in the next couple.”

McMullen transfers to national runner-up Washburn



Sophie McMullen, who is a 2018 Louisburg High School grad, transferred to Washburn from Northwest Missouri State after four years with the Bearcat program. (Photo courtesy of Northwest Missouri State)

Sophie McMullen thought she had played her final match last fall as she helped the Northwest Missouri State volleyball team to just its second NCAA tournament appearance.

After falling to Nebraska-Kearney in the first round, McMullen was all set to put the sport she loves, behind her.

The Louisburg High grad sat out the 2018 season with a medical redshirt and was also granted another year of eligibility due to COVID-19. Still, with two years remaining, McMullen was ready to move on.

“Volleyball is something that once you’re in it, it’s hard to say goodbye to,” McMullen said. “I was ready to say goodbye until this great opportunity fell into my lap and it was a no brainer from then on.”

That opportunity came unexpectedly from an MIAA conference rival.

McMullen transferred to Washburn University after earning a degree in elementary and special education from Northwest Missouri State.

She joins a national power in Washburn that finished as the national runner-up in the Division II Tournament and McMullen is familiar with the program.

“Washburn has always been a great program when I played against them at Northwest,” McMullen said. “They are a highly respected program and just made a great run at the National Championship tournament. My hope is that I am able to bring my passing, leadership, and experience to the program in a positive way since they just graduated 10 great athletes.”

The Ichabods will feature several new faces in their program including a pair of McMullen’s. Sophie’s younger sister, Corinna, who graduated from Louisburg High last spring, is one of the team’s setters.



Sophie McMullen finished second on the Northwest Missouri team in digs and fourth in aces last season.

Sharing the court with her sister is something Sophie has always wanted to do.

“Getting the opportunity to play with Corinna is unbelievable,” Sophie said. “It has been something that we have always dreamt about and we would always talk and go on and on about how much we wish we could have played together

just once, and here we are, finally getting that opportunity.

“We have supported each other through thick and thin and seeing her in the crowd at my games always brought a smile to my face, but now that we will be on the court together, the feeling is going to be so surreal. It’s hard to even put it into words.”

Washburn was very familiar with Sophie as she put together some of her best performances against the Ichabods while at Northwest.

In fact, Northwest defeated Washburn on three different occasions last season, including one where Sophie recorded a career-high 22 digs from her defensive specialist position when Washburn was ranked No. 1 in the country.

She finished her season second on the team with 297 digs and was fourth with 31 aces. Sophie also had 14 double-figure dig performances.

Changing to a back row player from an outside hitter while Louisburg was a change for her, but one she has grown into.

“Defense is something that I have always loved because it’s so fun,” Sophie said. “Digging an absolute rocket that nobody expects you to get close too is one of my favorite feelings in the world. Defense wins games and I believed that once I was able to get into the role and learn to really love it.

“On the other side of being a DS, passing is my true love. I feel so comfortable in my abilities to pass and I truly enjoy passing so I felt really comfortable where I was at for my position. It takes awhile to get comfortable with getting balls smacked at you continuously but in the end it’s pretty fun when you see yourself start to grow and have the ability to really start touching a lot of untouchable hits.”

Sophie has also thrived in the classroom as she is a four-time

member of the MIAA Academic Honor Roll. She is also pursuing her master's degree in high incidence special education.

Now she is focusing on her time at Washburn as she tries to help the Ichabods get back into the national tournament and have a shot at a championship.

"My goals at Washburn are to make a positive impact and make memories with a new set of girls," she said. "I am beyond excited for this opportunity and with two years left I can't wait to see what the future has in store for me and my sister.

"My last season with Northwest was amazing. We made history and I wouldn't have wanted to do it with any other group of girls. Seeing the Northwest program grow from my freshman year to my senior was amazing and I happy that I was able to have that experience."

2022 Louisburg Sports Zone Female Athlete of the Year Nominees



For the past six 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 to highlight the athletes.

For the fifth consecutive 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 athletes and then I will tabulate the results and determine the winner. The winner will be announced in the coming days.

Below are the nominees for the Female Athlete of the Year award in alphabetical order by last name. Congrats to all those who were nominated and best of luck!



Davis Guetterman, Senior, Volleyball and Track and Field

Davis made an impact on a pair of Louisburg athletic programs this past season. The Louisburg senior was a starting setter for the Lady Cats and she was also a thrower on the Wildcat track team.

On the volleyball court, Guetterman finished her year with a 138 kills, 436 assists, 184 digs and 58 aces as she helped the Lady Cats to the sub-state championship this season. In her four year career, she tallied 199 kills, 1,603 assists, 564 digs and 184 aces as she helped the Lady Cats to two state tournament appearances. She also earned honorable mention all-league honors this season as a setter and earned the AVCA Best and Brightest First Team Award and was chosen as the recipient of the 2021 Lady Cat Volleyball award.

In the spring, Guetterman was one of the top throwers on the team in the javelin and earned a state bid in 2021. She will continue her career in both volleyball and track and field at the University of Sioux Falls in the upcoming year.



Reese Johnson, Senior, Cross Country and Soccer

Reese played at a high level for two different Louisburg teams this past season. The Louisburg senior was one of the top runners on the Louisburg cross country team and a starter for the Wildcat soccer program.

In cross country, Johnson helped the Lady Cat team to the Class 4A state meet for the fifth consecutive time. The team finished fifth overall at state and Johnson earned her third state medal of her career as she finished 19th overall in 21:08 at Wamego Country Club. She was also an honorable mention all-league selection as she finished 16th at the league meet.

Johnson also played a vital role for the Wildcat soccer team that finished the season in the regional championship and a 13-5 record. She finished with nine goals and eight assists on the season and was a first-team all-league selection from her midfield spot.



Corinna McMullen, Senior, Volleyball and Track and Field

Corinna was a big part of two Wildcat programs this past season as she was a member of the volleyball and track and field programs. She was the starting setter for the volleyball team and threw the discus on the track squad.

In volleyball, not only was McMullen one of the team's starting setters, she was also the team's top hitter. McMullen

led the Lady Cats to the regional championship and helped the program to two state tournament appearances. This season, she led Louisburg with 284 assists and 224 kills to go along with 194 digs and 35 aces. She was a first-team all-league selection as a hitter and an honorable mention selection as a setter. McMullen also earned all-state honors and was selected to play in the GKCVCA MO-KAN All-Star match. She was named as the team MVP for Louisburg and was given the AVCA Best and Brightest First Team Award.

On the track team, McMullen was the squad's top discus thrower and earned her second consecutive state medal this past May. McMullen placed third at the Class 4A meet with a throw of 117-4. She threw a personal best of 127-3 to win a Frontier League title. She will be continuing her athletic career at Washburn University as a member of the volleyball team.



Delaney Wright, Senior, Basketball and Track and Field

Delaney was a part of the girls basketball program and track and field team for Louisburg High School this past season. She was a starting guard on the basketball team and competed in four events on the track team.

As a member of the Wildcat track program, Wright competed in the long jump, 200-meter dash, 400-meter dash and the 4×400 relay. She qualified for state in all four events and won three regional titles. At the Class 4A state meet she brought home three medals. Wright finished as the state runner-up in the 400 dash, took in the 200 dash and medaled fifth in the long jump. She ended her Wildcat career with 10 state medals, three state championships and holds school records in three events.

Wright was also a member of the Lady Cat basketball team and was a returning letter-winner off of last season's third place finish at state. She was a starting guard on the Lady Cat team and was considered the team's best defender, before an injury ended her season halfway through. That injury also cost Wright part of her track season, as well. She will continue her track career at Kansas State University next season.

Dixon thrives at Missouri and with USA Volleyball



In 2020, like everyone else in the country, Anna Dixon had to face a lot of adversity.

Not only was Dixon moving on from the Kansas State volleyball program to Missouri, which is stressful enough, the idea of being able to play through the spread of COVID-19 brought its own level of stress.

Instead of letting that get to her, Dixon took full advantage of the opportunity presented to her in a difficult SEC schedule.

Dixon, an outside hitter for the Tigers, was named to the All-SEC team as sophomore. That performance guided her to being one of Missouri's top hitters at the net as junior.

Most recently, Dixon received another honor added to her long list of achievements.

On Monday, the Louisburg High School graduate was named to the USA Volleyball Women's Collegiate National Team, which includes 38 of the top players in the United States.

Dixon is no stranger to success with USA Volleyball as she was named to the Women's Junior National Team in 2019.

"Earning a spot on the collegiate national team is a huge honor," Dixon said. "I'm so excited to learn from some of the best athletes and coaches in the country."

The 2022 Collegiate National Team will train June 19-25 at the National Team Training Center in Anaheim, Calif. Athletes will train among the best collegiate players in the country, watch

the WNT (Women's National Team) training sessions, study the USA systems, meet with Tokyo 2020 Olympians and be observed by the WNT staff.

It was welcome news for Dixon, who experienced a bumpy 2021 season on the team level. The Tigers, who had a young team in a difficult SEC, finished the year with five wins.

Still, Dixon is using it as a positive as she enters her senior campaign later on this fall.



"Our record was obviously not what we wanted this year, but this group of young girls has an unreal amount of potential," Dixon said. "Having a losing season is so tough, but we made sure we came in every practice going 10 times harder and always strived to learn more. We focused more on growing and connecting together which allowed us to make tremendous strides. Our gym is full of so much talent and the future is so bright for this group."

The Tigers relied on Dixon's experience at the net throughout last season. She finished with 380 kills in 110 sets played. She also had 21 aces, 173 digs and 41 blocks on the defensive end.

It was a strong runner-up performance after earning All-SEC honors in her first year with program as a sophomore in 2020-21. That season, the SEC split up the season into fall and spring campaigns due to COVID-19.

She was second on the team that year with 273 kills and produced double-digit kills in 13 matches.

"My sophomore season was a long hard nine month season," Dixon said. "I had the opportunity to learn from many older athletes and was pushed so much as a player. Keeping my play consistent for nine months was probably my biggest struggle and something I'm still working on changing.

"Being named All-SEC with some awesome woman in our conference was a huge honor. I'm thankful for my teammates who pushed me everyday to be able to accomplish that."

The jump from Big 12 competition from when she was at Kansas State, to Missouri and the SEC has been a noticeable one.

"SEC play was definitely something I had to adjust to," Dixon said. "Every team you come up against has so much talent and I feel like the conference is just overall more competitive. My favorite part has been traveling to the different schools and seeing the campuses."

After a tough junior season, Dixon is excited to see what her volleyball future holds. Although she is technically a senior, she has an extra year of eligibility due to COVID-19 if she choose to use it.

When her time in college comes to an end, Dixon has her sights set to possibly continuing her career by possibly playing overseas.

As exciting as that possibility is for her, Dixon is focused on the upcoming year for the Tigers and is looking forward to seeing her team make a big jump.

“(Last season) was a huge growing year for me physically and mentally,” Dixon said. “Being one of the older girls on the court, I got to learn a lot about leadership skills and how to bring our team together while dealing with adversity. It was such a good learning experience for me and I am so excited to see what next fall will look like for us.”