



By Jan Schultz

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With five of their varsity players home sick with the flu, Chase County's Lady Longhorns did well to take fourth place in last week's SPVA conference volleyball tourney in Maxwell.

Four of the five out sick last week have starting roles on the Chase County team, giving Coach Jodie Schuller a real test on coming up with a lineup.

The number out sick left just nine girls on the Lady Longhorn bench in last Thursday's SPVA opener. Schuller had planned to have 14 on the tournament roster.

Despite the missing players, No. 3 seed Chase County defeated Sutherland in the first round match, but fell to Perkins County and Hershey in Saturday's matches.

Schuller couldn't say enough about how the younger girls stepped up Thursday to beat Sutherland in four games.

"Those girls really stepped up to fill some big shoes. It was just awesome," Schuller said.

Schuller knew last Monday, three days before the start of the tourney, that illness was growing at the school. She said she didn't even want to check the student absent list early last week.

When last Wednesday arrived with three starters already out sick—Shannon Liewer, Lexee Reichert and Karlee Kunnemann—she had a new lineup ready. Then, Maria Ramos missed Wednesday's practice, also out sick.

"I just sent the girls out for ice cream," Schuller said.

Then, she and Asst. Coach Angie Dickey refigured the lineup once again.

Liewer and Reichert were able to return to practice Friday and played in the two matches Saturday, but neither was 100 percent, Schuller said. Not fully recovered, Kunnemann wanted to play in Saturday's matches, too, but Schuller decided it was best to leave her home.

And then, two other starters, Paula Leibbrandt and Chantal Heathers, were starting to feel sick on Saturday.

With more changes in Chase County's player positions for Saturday's matches, they were able to get through the games.



But, Schuller said the team just wasn't in sync and was out of rhythm, which was to be expected.

She credited her team with playing the best they could under the circumstances.

"I've never had to rearrange a lineup so much. I was just happy last week that we weren't out of

rotation,” during the matches, she said.

“We just need to get healthy and get all of them back,” she said.

Two additional players on the team, Alexis Tropf and Courtney Kunnemann, were out sick on Monday, with a home match with Hershey set for Tuesday night.

Most of the varsity starters were back, however, and Schuller was hoping to have a good practice Monday.

They usually have a light practice the day before a match, but Monday was expected to be longer than normal, as the team spent time reviewing rotations and working on defense, she said.

Sutherland match

It took four games, but Chase County pulled out the win over Sutherland last Thursday.

Scores were 25-18, 19-25, 25-17 and 25-10.

Schuller said her team did a good job at the serving line, missing just five in 91 attempts for 94.5%, and scoring 13 ace serves.

Chantal Heathers and Alexis Tropf took over the team’s major hitting duties in the match. Heathers had 13 kills and Tropf scored another 12 of the team’s total 37. Dee Dee Pursley also stepped up and had six kills against the Lady Sailors.

Overall, the team had a .099 hitting efficiency, compared to Sutherland’s .008.

At the top of the scoring for Chase County were Shayla Dinnel and Bethany Sorensen, each with 18 points. Also in double figures were Tropf 16, Heathers 16 and Paula Leibbrandt 13.



Perkins County match

Chase County faced No. 2 seed Perkins County in the semi-finals Saturday afternoon, losing in three games.

Coach Schuller said the team was “out of rhythm” and lacked some spark due to illness still lingering with some players.

Chase County lost 17-25, 19-25 and 22-25.

At the serving line, the Lady Longhorns were 42 of 47 for 89%, including three aces.

Sorensen led the scoring with 13 points. Liewer and Pursley each added nine.

Chase County had 18 kills in the match, five each from Tropf and Dinnel. As a team, they were .046 for hitting efficiency. Perkins County had 24 kills and finished with a .075 hitting efficiency.

Hershey match

In the consolation match, Chase County lost in straight sets to Hershey, 20-25, 8-25 and 18-25. Again, the team wasn’t in rhythm for the match, Schuller said, but played as best they could.

Chase County was 41 of 44 on serves for 93%. The scoring was led by Heathers and Sorensen, each with nine points.

Heathers also led the hitters with eight kills, as the team compiled a total of 18 kills for a .051 hitting efficiency.

Hershey had a better night at the net with 35 kills and a .219 hitting efficiency.

By far, Chase County was suffering the most with illness among the other SPVA teams in the tournament, Schuller said.

North Platte St. Pat’s, top-seeded in the tourney, did finish with the championship, while

Perkins County finished in the runner-up spot, also as seeded.

Action this week

The Lady Longhorns hosted Hershey Tuesday night for their final home match of the season.

Chase County will be in McCook next Tuesday, Oct. 27, for 10th grade, JV and varsity matches starting at 4 p.m. MT. The McCook matches will be the final regular season action.

The varsity squad will return to McCook for subdistricts this year on Nov. 2-3.

Chase County's younger teams will get some experience this coming week, with a freshman/sophomore tournament hosted by Dundy County/Stratton Saturday and a 9-10 tourney at Southwest Monday.

Schuller said they are hoping to take two teams to the Dundy County/Stratton tourney Saturday. One Chase County 9-10 team will compete at Southwest.