

By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Imperial's Lady Longhorn volleyball team spent all of last week on the road, with matches at Sidney, St. Francis, Kan., and Sutherland.

The Lady Longhorns played six matches in all, winning three and dropping three to bring their record to 10-6.

Coach Jodie Schuller said it made for a tough week, traveling and playing all of their games on the road.

Sidney

They started Tuesday by traveling to Sidney, dropping a four-set match to the Lady Raiders, 18-25, 25-21, 29-25, 14-25.

Despite the loss, Schuller said the girls played better than the two-match loss at the McCook tournament three days prior.

She said she's still looking for some of the other hitters to step up and make a difference.

Much of the hitting load has been put on sophomores Paige Spady and MaKenna Ketter. Each recorded 12 kills and 4 blocks in the Sidney match.

The team's hitting efficiency finished at .178. She said they need to be consistently .200 or higher.

Sidney's hitting was only .040 but mistakes by the Lady Longhorns at key times proved costly.

Morgan Fisher and Kristen Jussel collected 49 and 42 digs respectively.

The Lady Longhorns committed seven serve receive errors against just three ace serves of their own.

St. Francis, DC-S

The Lady Longhorns traveled to St. Francis on Thursday, Sept. 20 for a triangular with St. Francis and Dundy County-Stratton (DC-S).

In the opener against St. Francis, the Lady Longhorns dominated the match, winning both sets, 25-13, 25-13.

Spady led the hitting with 10 kills, followed by Jussel with 5. The team finished with a .169 hitting efficiency.

The Lady Longhorns had trouble with serve receive again, missing eight.

Schuller said it was nice to win in two, and to do it at someone else's house.

In the finale, the Lady Longhorns defeated DC-S but it took three sets, 25-19, 19-25, 25-11.

Schuller was pleased to see the girls come back to win the third set. She said it can be difficult to swing the momentum back after dropping the second set.

Ketter led the hitters with 10 kills, followed by Spady with 8. Jussel, Mindy Castle and Kaycee Bubak each chipped in with 5 kills. As a team, they hit .184.

Sutherland tournament

After defeating DC-S at St. Francis, the Lady Longhorns had to play them again in the opening round of the Sutherland tournament Saturday.

Schuller said it's not easy to turn around and have to play the same team again. She was pleased with how her girls responded, winning in two, 25-22, 25-23.

She said their hitting at the net was much better, hitting at a .442 rate. Spady led the team with 9 kills, followed by Ketter with 7, and Jussel and Bubak each with 4.

Emma Bauerle collected 3 of the team's 6 ace serves with Bethany Sorenson adding a pair. Jussel finished with 25 digs while Fisher had 20.

In the semi-finals, the Lady Longhorns faced an 11-1 Overton team, dropping the match in two sets, 23-25, 23-25.

Schuller said that was one of the matches her team would like to have back. "We should have won that game. We were the better team," she said. "We just couldn't get it done."

She said they suffered from communication problems, with balls dropping to the floor.

As a team, the girls hit .368 compared to Overton's .350 mark.

Spady and Ketter each finished with 7 kills, along with 5 from Bubak. Bauerle added four ace serves. Jussel added 25 digs with Fisher coming up with 23.

In the final match, the Lady Longhorns faced Wood River, falling in two sets, 20-25, 22-25.

Schuller said her girls were coming off the loss to Overton and couldn't seem to shake that off against Wood River.

She said they didn't read Wood River's defense very well.

The team only hit .195 but Wood River was only .061.

Spady and Ketter finished with 6 kills each, followed by Jussel with four. Jussel added three ace serves, along with two from Bridget Langin.

Fisher finished with 26 dig followed by Jussel with 22.

Schuller: talent is there

Schuller said it's getting to the point in the season that the girls need to start putting things together.

While she doesn't want her team to peak too early, she knows they need to start making a move.

"I know we have the talent." It's just a matter of stepping up to their potential, she added.

This week the Lady Longhorns traveled to Grant for a triangular with Perkins County and Gothenburg.

Tonight (Thursday) the Lady Longhorns will hold a triangular here with Maxwell and Sutherland. Action begins at 5 p.m. MT.