By Christy Sheets
Sports Writer

The Wallace Wildcats competed in the RPAC Conference on Monday, Oct. 19 in their home gym. The Cats were the first seed for the west division, so their first round was a bye.

Their first opponent was Dundy County, who defeated Wauneta-Palisade in the match prior 25-23, 25-20, and 25-22. This match was a battle from the start, neither team wanting to relinquish the lead. The Cats won the match in three close sets, 25-22, 25-12, and 25-22.

In the first set, the Cats took the early lead, but driven by their recent victory, Dundy County quickly closed the score 5-4. They Cats again lengthened their lead, but they struggled to put together any major points runs. The Cats were methodical, slowly building their lead, but Dundy County refused to let them run away with the set. The final point came on a kill by senior Jena Aylward to close the set 25-22.

In the second set, the Cats started out much the same way, but junior Shanice Harris helped the Lady Cats with her seven-point service run. This gave the Cats a commanding lead, 21-9. Dundy County fought back, but the Cats sensed the kill, and Aylward closed the set with a two-point service run, 25-12.

The third set was again a battle, but the Cats never relinquished the lead. At 21-16 the Dundy County coaches decided to call a time out, and this seemed to rally the Tigers, forcing the Cats to take a time out at 23-21. Inspired by words from the bench the Cats closed the set 25-22.

When asked about the game, Coach Rohde said, “We got the win.” He added, “We did what we had to do with a couple of girls under the weather.”

Leading the team offensively against the Dundy County Tigers were junior Shanice Harris (1 ace) with 9 points, followed closely by senior Jena Aylward and junior Katelynn Hild each with 8 points (1 ace). Senior Katie West had 4 points (2 aces), senior Tarassa Swedberg had 3 points, and juniors Whitney Smith and Laura O’Brien each had 2 points. Leading the team with set assists was Hild with 17, followed by O’Brien with 14, and Harris with 1.

Defensively, Smith led the team with 10 kills and 1 block, followed closely by West with 8 kills and 3 blocks, and Aylward with 6 kills and 5 blocks. Hild had 1 kill.

Because the ladies won the second round, they had to play in Trenton on Tuesday. Their opponent in the RPAC semifinals was Hitchcock County. The Lady Cats got off to a slow start, losing the first set, but the Cats rallied back to win the match in four sets, 20-25, 25-22, 25-20, and 25-20.

When asked about the game, Coach Rohde said, “It took us a little while to get things going, but once they did we played real well.” He added, “Hitchcock County is a very good team.”

Leading the team offensively against Hitchcock County was West with 15 points (4 aces), followed by Hild with 11 points (1 ace). Leading the team with set assists was Hild with 24, followed closely by O’Brien with 23.

Defensively, Aylward led the team with 19 kills, followed closely by West who had 16 kills and 5 blocks, and Smith who had 10 kills.

Then it was off to the final round against Southwest. This was an epic battle from the start. The Cats took the first set in extra points, and then they lost the second set. They rallied back to win the third set, but dropped the fourth. Finally the Lady Cats pulled together to win the final set and the match, 26-24, 18-25, 25-19, 18-25, and 15-11.

When asked about the game, Coach Rohde said, “The girls played awesome tonight!” He added, “We made big plays at the right times, and beat a very tough Southwest team.”

Leading the team offensively against Southwest was Harris with 12 points (1 ace), followed by Smith with 10 points. Leading the team with set assists was O’Brien with 32, followed by Hild with 22.

Defensively, West led the team with 17 kills and 3 blocks, followed closely by Aylward who had 17 kills and 2 blocks, and Smith who had 13 kills.

The Lady Cats will face the Broncos of Wauneta Palisade at Wauneta on Tuesday, Oct. 27 starting at 4 p.m.