By Christy Sheets
Sports Writer

It was a battle of the cats as the Lady Cats suited up against the Paxton Tigers in Paxton on Friday, Sept. 2. The Tigers were tough, and the young Wildcat team struggled with nerves a bit in their season opener. The Tigers defeated the Lady Cats in straight sets (24-26, 19-25, 16-25).

This year's starting lineup for the Wildcats include 5-foot-5 senior, Emily Hasenauer (setter), 6-foot senior, Brooke Hochstetler (middle blocker/hitter), 5-foot-9 junior, Katelyn Melton (outside hitter), 5-foot-5 junior, Anna Griffiths (setter), 6-foot junior, Chelsea Sowle (middle blocker/hitter), 5-foot-6 sophomore, Sara Hubbard (outside hitter), and 5-foot-2 freshman, Morgan Messersmith (defensive specialist) rotates in for Hochstetler in the back row. Also slated for a middle blocker starting position is 5-foot-8 freshman, Christina Daniels who didn't suit up on Friday due to an injury.

In the first set the Lady Cats struggled to get something going. Youth and inexperience help feed the Wildcats nervous tension. As the set progressed though, and with some excellent senior leadership from Emily Hasenauer and Brooke Hochstetler, the Wildcats really seemed to settle down, and play with the confidence that the fans have come to expect from their Cats.

The Wildcats had the first set point at 24 to 23, but the Tigers rallied to win the set in extra points 24 to 26.

In the second set, the Tigers struck first, and the Cats seemed a bit deflated after rallying back, and then just barely losing the first set.

The Tigers took the early lead, but the Cats started to build some momentum with a great service run from junior Chelsea Sowle. Unfortunately, the Tigers, lead was too great, and they were able to close the set, 19 to 25.

The third set was a bit of a repeat of the second, the Tigers came roaring in, forcing the Wildcats to claw their way through. The Lady Cats worked hard to try to build momentum, but the Tigers were relentless.

Coach Rohde chose to give some of his younger players some court time towards the end of the set. The Tigers won the third set 16 to 25.

The Tigers started out strong, and never seemed to really relinquish control, but the young Wildcat team showed a lot of talent and promise.

Leading the cats defensively Friday night was Hochstetler with eight kills and one block, followed closely by Sowle with six kills and three ace blocks. Hubbard had five kills, Melton had

four kills, Hasenauer and sophomore Katherine McClintock each had two kills, and Griffiths had one kill. Leading the Cats with set-assists was Hasenauer with 11 and Griffiths with eight. Offensively, Hochstetler (two aces) led the Cats scoring seven points, followed closely by Melton who scored six points (two aces). Sowle (two aces) and Griffiths (one ace) each had four points, Hubbard had two points, and sophomore Alexandria Lundvall (one ace) had one point.

Next Action

The Lady Cats hosted a Triangular on Tuesday, Sept. 6. They played both Perkins County and Hitchcock County. Results will appear next week.