

By EARL WATT • Daily Leader

To arrive at a destination, you have to know how to get there. Thanks to the 2008 Lady Redskin volleyball team, the map has been laid for a return visit to the state volleyball tournament.

The Lady Redskins won their third consecutive Western Athletic Conference title this season under coach Hugo Cano, and for the first time ever won the Sub-State tournament. In the 35-year history of high school volleyball in Kansas, a team from Liberal had never participated in the state tournament which is made up of the final eight teams in Class 5A. Liberal lost all three matches in its first-ever state appearance, but the experience gained for the sophomore-dominated squad should have a pay-off over the next two seasons. "Now they know what it takes to get there," Cano said. "Hopefully this is under their belt and in their mind to be prepared mentally and to overcome that atmosphere in the next year or two." The atmosphere at the state tournament was a new experience for the Lady Redskins. Next time, they will know what to expect.



"This was Topeka Seaman's fourth year in a row to go to the state tournament, and only the first time they qualified for the Final Four," Cano said. The Lady Redskins were up against experienced heavy hitters and teams that make the annual pilgrimage to the state tournament. Shawnee Mission Miego has won 18 of the 35 state tournaments. Liberal's best shot at a win came against Salina South, and the Redskins came up three points short in the third and deciding match. Liberal lost to the eventual state champions and to the third-place team. "Now, we want to make it to the Final Four," Cano said. The program has shown steady improvement under Cano's leadership. Winning three consecutive WAC titles followed by a trip to the state tournament is a clear indication. But the Lady Redskins will have to replace one of the best Lady Redskin volleyball players in school history — senior Makayla McPhail. The big hitter has been recruited by a number of schools to play volleyball, according to Cano, but the standout athlete is also a contributor in basketball and track. Returning for next year will be Kinsi Delzeit, Katie Burnett, Ashlyn Westerman, Caitlin Bauer, and Emily Jackson. Junior Morgan Todd is expected to return from a knee injury while Brittany Odle and McPhail will graduate.

Lady Redskin volleyball team didn't win state, but they did make history

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Thanks to the accomplishments from this year's squad, Cano is expecting another step forward next year — making the Final Four. “It is the next step for us,” he said. “Our girls will do fine. These girls paved the way for the future, and it's looking good for us.”