

# Goodland Cowgirls take second at sub-state tourney

## Ambush is nightmare for fans

By Roxie Yonkey

*The Goodland Daily News*  
SCOTT CITY — Say it ain't so. Tell us that the Ambush in Scott City really didn't happen, that it was all just a nightmare and that we're going to wake up at the state tournament in Salina.

Please say that the No. 1 Cowgirls' season is still going on. Tell us that the lone blemish on the Cowgirls' record didn't happen at sub-state, that it happened in some parallel universe where the loss really doesn't count.

How I wish I could say it wasn't so. But I can't.

The Ambush in Scott City was a nightmare, for sure, but it was a waking one. Goodland (36-1) fell to Scott City (32-5) 15-9, 12-15, 15-12 in the sub-state finals Saturday, ending the Cowgirls' season. Goodland advanced to the finals by drawing a bye as the top seed, then defeating Ulysses (11-21) 15-8, 15-5.

The Cowgirls played as if the weight of their undefeated season and their No. 1 ranking were dragging them down. The key to beating Scott City was avoiding mistakes, forcing the Beavers to play to perfection. In their previous two meetings, Goodland had done precisely that, taking Scott City in two games each time.

But not this time. With the Goodland crowd roaring so loud that the radio broadcasters were deafened from the noise, Goodland committed numerous unforced errors. Scott City played nearly to perfection.

"Our hitters went timid and we had way too many service errors (an unheard of nine)," Goodland coach Jerry McKee said. "They hammered our blockers and we didn't hit into their blocks. We couldn't get a hold of the momentum and we couldn't get them to shank a pass."

In the first game, Goodland led 6-3 before the team unraveled. Scott City went up 9-6, helped by Goodland errors.

The Cowgirls tied the game on three straight Scott City errors before Goodland's Ashley Hallagin had a questionable roofing call.

At first the official called Hallagin an illegal back-row hitter. When Hallagin explained that she was in the front row, though, the official changed her call to roofing.

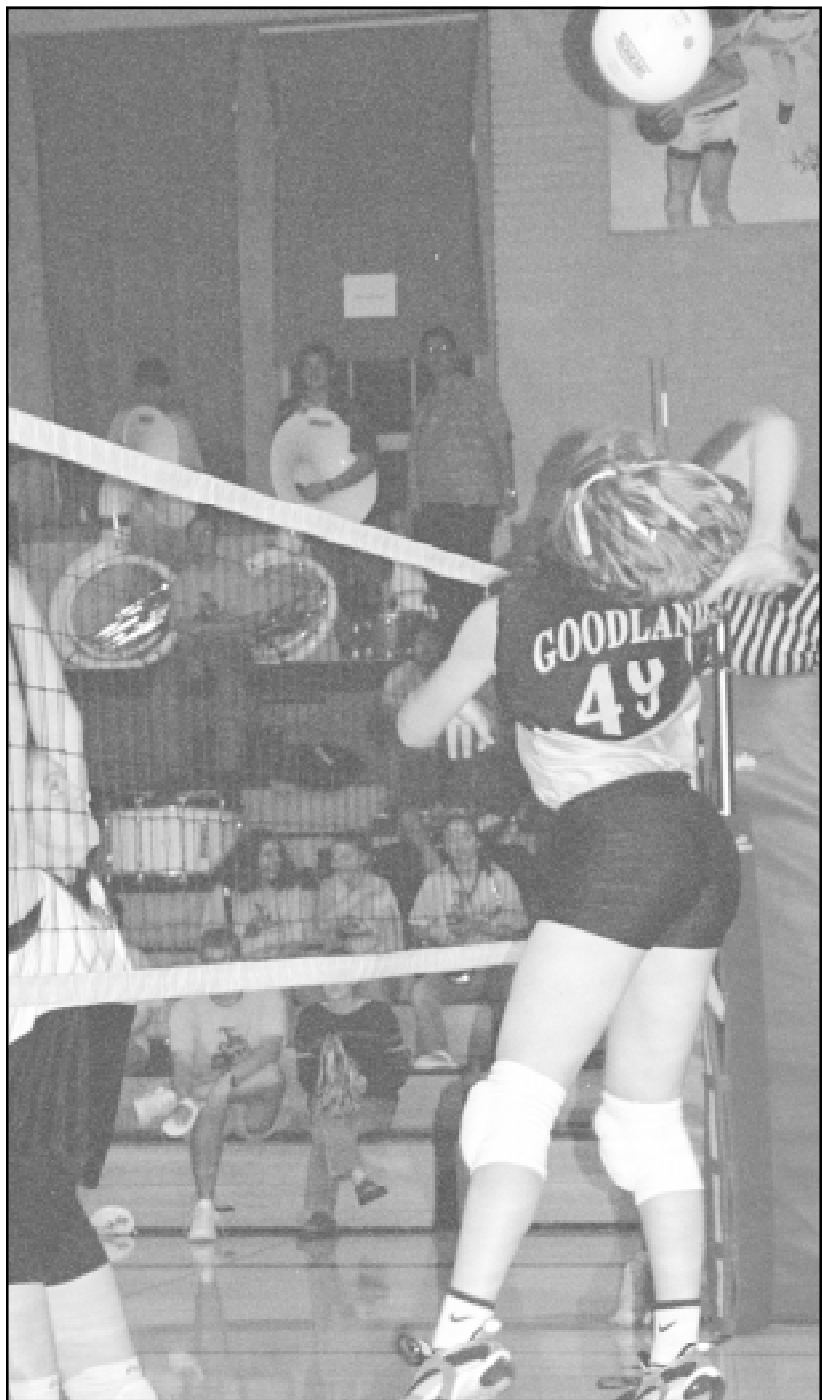
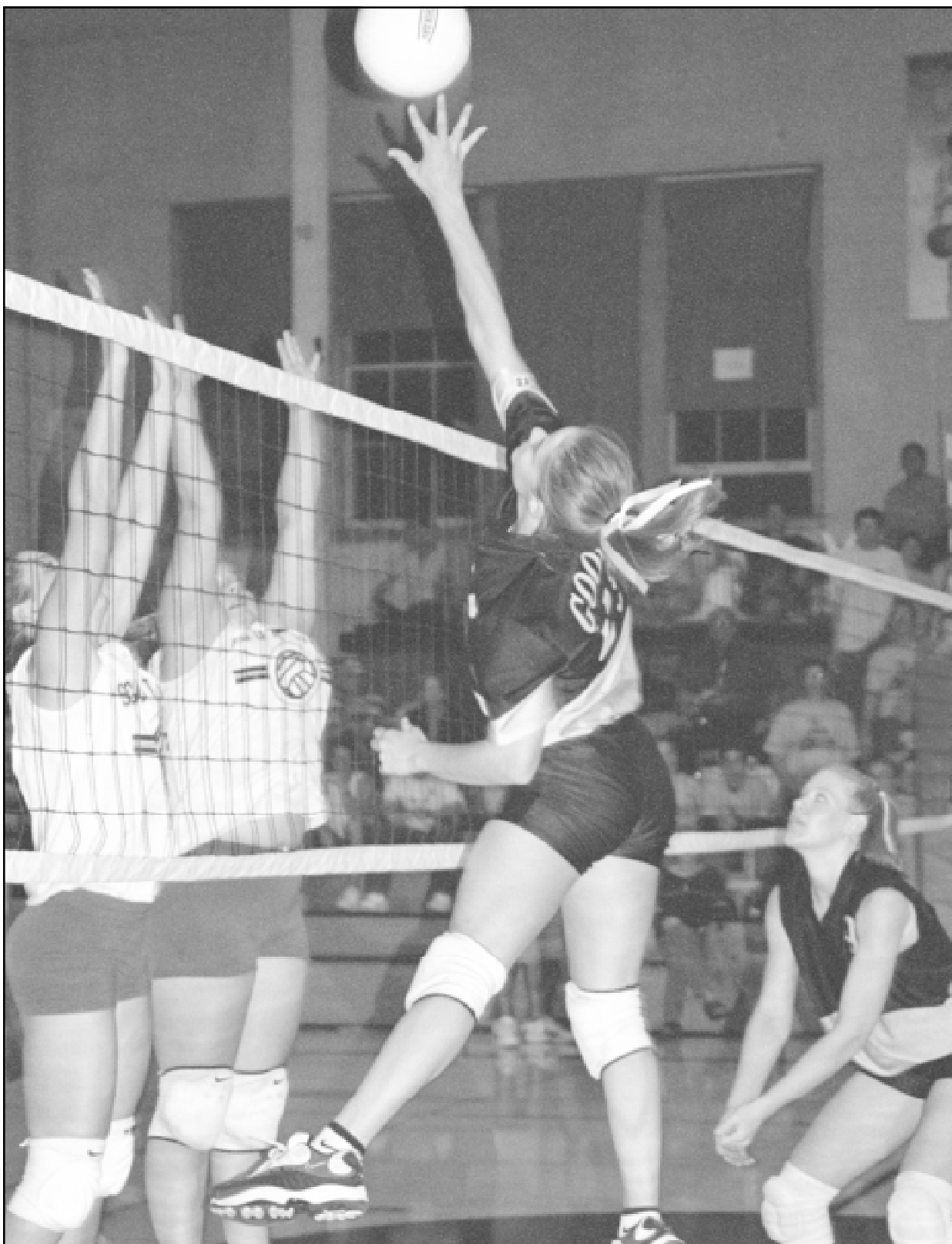
Scott City's Nicole Rogers then served. Her aces, Andrea Kasper's kills, a Hallagin error and blocks from Scott City's Megan Richmeier and Elise Deniston ended the game in spite of two Goodland time outs.

Scott City continued their run in the second game, opening with a Richmeier dink that fell in the center of Goodland's court.

Goodland scored the next point on Kasper's long hit, but Scott City got back the serve when Hallagin hit long. They built a 5-1 lead on three Julia Darnauer errors and Kasper's kill off Jill Sowers.

With the Cowgirls in deep trouble, Darnauer broke the serve by killing Hallagin's quick set. After an exchange of serves, Darnauer served. She opened her service with an ace, followed by a kill from Cowgirl Alisha McKee. Two Scott City errors tied the score at 5-5. The score stayed tied through points 6 and 7, then Scott City surged ahead again, reaching 11-7.

With Goodland's season hanging in the balance, McKee buried a kill in Scott City's left back, then served.



Jill Sowers (left, No. 23) jumped up to tip the ball over the net while Julia Darnauer (No. 49) waited to defend the ball if it fell. Darnauer (above) jumped up to spike the ball during the Cowgirls' match against Scott City. The girls lost the state finals, losing the first game 9-15, winning the second 15-12 and losing the last 12-15.

Photos by Dana Sulsberger/The Goodland Daily News

Kasper hit out, then pounded a kill through Darnauer and Hallagin's double block to get back the serve.

Darnauer returned the favor, pounding a kill off Kasper's block and Hallagin served.

She opened her serve with an ace, then Darnauer blocked Kasper. Darnauer killed Adriel Alstrom's back set off Scott City setter Audra Hunter to tie the game. Goodland took the lead, 12-11, when Kasper was called for two hits.

Then Richmeier pounded a kill off Goodland's Evann Hardy and Beaver Bridget Kuntzsch picked up a point when Alstrom's block went out. Darnauer then killed Hallagin's set off Hunter and stuffed Kuntzsch to make it 13-12.

It took Goodland three servers to end the game on kills from Jara McKee and Kuntzsch's error.

The start of the third game was disastrous for Goodland. Their first four servers served illegally. Goodland served nine times for just three points, two Darnauer kills and a Rogers error while Brack was serving.

But they were still only down 6-3. Finally, with Jara McKee serving, Goodland picked up two points, kills from Alisha McKee and Hallagin.

With Hallagin serving, Goodland took the lead on a Darnauer kill and stuff and Scott City's error.

Then Hallagin was called for a carry. A dubious net call and Kasper's ace tied the match, but Darnauer took a bad set and put it into a Beaver coverage hole to break the serve.

Goodland was then called for four hits. Sowers supposedly hit the net. Rogers had really blocked her and Sowers dug up the ball.

The call gave the serve to Kuntzsch.

Consecutive Cowgirl errors gave Scott City a 12-10 lead.

After an exchange of serves, Sowers' free ball went out and Scott City led 13-10.

Six servers then stepped to the serving line without another point scored until Hallagin served. Darnauer pounded a Hallagin quick set into Scott City's left back to make it 13-12, but Alstrom hit very long.

Another pair of servers couldn't score, then Stephanie Crist served.

Kuntzsch reached sub-state point with a cross-court kill. Kasper hit the next kill and two Cowgirls dove at it. A two-hit call might have been believable, but the official called Hallagin for a carry.

Can't we say that wasn't so? Unfortunately not.

"It took a good team to keep us from going to state again," Coach McKee said. "Scott City played well tonight."

Goodland's loss broke a string of state appearances that went back to 1994.

Darnauer led the Cowgirls with 23 kills. Hallagin posted 56 assists. Jara McKee had 21 digs and was the only perfect Cowgirl server with more than 10 serves. She, Sowers and Hallagin had three aces each.

## Coach celebrates 500th win

By Roxie Yonkey

*The Goodland Daily News*

SCOTT CITY — Goodland opened sub-state tournament play with a bye, which was Coach Jerry McKee's 500th win. His players gave him a team picture in honor of that milestone.

Win 501 came shortly, against Ulysses 15-8, 15-5, but it wasn't an easy one.

The Cowgirls got behind in early the first game Saturday before a 6-0 run put them in command. With Cowgirl Jill Sowers serving, Alisha McKee killed Ashley Hallagin's set into the Tigers' center front.

Tigers dodged two Sowers serves that fell in for aces. Jara McKee then killed Hallagin's set off Ulysses' Morgan Steele. Steele then hit the scoreboard and Sowers hammered an ace off Tiger Katie Noriega to make it 9-3.

Sowers then net served. Ulysses got within three, 10-7, before Goodland began its next run with Darnauer serving. Darnauer opened her serve with an ace, followed by Alisha and Jara McKee's kills.

Darnauer net served, and the teams traded points to make it 14-8, Goodland. Then Ulysses erred and Jara McKee served. Ulysses' Melissa Long got into the net to end the game.

In the second game, Goodland built a 5-1 lead before Ulysses got back into the game. Noriega's tip got by Hallagin, then Tiger Nicole Young picked up an ace. Tiger Nikki Hernandez then got into the net.

Ulysses' floor defense then fell apart. Jara McKee served an ace when Tiger Paola Galaviz's up hit the scoreboard. Cowgirl Kendra Brack killed Hallagin's set off Alianna Hamer. McKee picked up an ace when Galaviz's up went out, then Brack's kill fell into Ulysses, left back to make it 10-4.

Noriega then used her three-inch

height advantage to stuff Hallagin and Hamer pounded a kill off Jara McKee to make it 10-5, Goodland.

Alisha McKee killed Hallagin's quick set into Ulysses' right center, then Goodland's Evann Hardy served. Brack stuffed Hernandez, then killed Hallagin's set off Noriega.

Three services passed before more points were scored, then Brack punished Noriega again for an ace. Tiger Danielle Biddle got into the net to get Goodland to match point, but Brack served long.

Goodland's Adriel Alstrom ended Ulysses' final serve by stuffing Steele. Hallagin dumped Brack's dig into Ulysses' court to end the match.

But one statistic may have foreshadowed Goodland's eventual loss in the finals: The Cowgirls missed six serves.

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