BALLIN' at buell

Millard volleyball teams reunite for an old tradition full of energy, passion, and teamwork. Every match reflected the hard work and heart the teams put into their game.



The clock starts ticking, and the minutes count down, not just to the first game of the season, but to the first time this team has ever stepped on an outdoor court. A wave of excitement rushes over the players like a switch being flipped. This season, the district aimed to bring a whole new level of experience to high school volleyball by taking it outdoors. Battle at Buell marked Nebraska's first-ever outdoor volleyball match, drawing in a crowd of nearly 4,000 fans.

Being the first game of the season, what might have been a low-stakes match quickly turned into a high-pressure competition. Even a senior like **Taylor Elsasser,** someone who's spent years in the program, felt a little nervous before stepping onto the court for the sport she knows so well.

"I felt a lot of excitement, a bit of nerves too, because there were about 4,000 people there, which is so crazy. But it was just really cool to have such a neat and unique opportunity," Elsasser said.

There was a measurable difference when it came to moving outside for game time. **Sophomore Norah Todd** knows what environment she would rather play in.

"Outside, there is definitely more open space, so the perception is different. Also, the sun is in the way when you're looking for the ball. I would prefer inside, but being outside was a great experience," Todd said.

Despite the unusual setting, the team still found a way to work together. Instead of the regular best-of-five match, each team played two-set games. Their match against Millard South ended as a tie, with each team taking one set. Their second game, against Millard West, was the one that truly pushed the energy to a new level.

"I think the Millard West game was both better for us and me in general. It was darker, which helped a little with the sunlight, but it was also just really fun. We've had a bit of a rivalry with Millard West, just because of state districts last year, and so I think that made it more of a fun game to play," Elsasser said.

Although nothing has been confirmed for next season, the excitement surrounding this year's match left the players eager for more. Many are hopeful that Battle at Buell will make its return in seasons to come. **Junior Macy Rands** is one of those hoping this remarkable match has a sequel.

"I would love to play this game again next year because it was very fun, and I had a really fun time. It was definitely a memorable game," Rands said.

Even if it doesn't return next year, this match was a reminder that volleyball isn't just about winning: it's about building community, whether it's with the other schools or with your own teammates, and making memories with people you will never forget. story by Scarlett Schmit

senior SUGGESTIONS

Leaving behind a team you worked so hard for, it can be a challenge knowing that you won't have any control in the next season. Seniors from this years' team want to make sure that underclassman feel prepared for next year, leaving them some advice.



"Communication is very important because it is a team sport that requires everyone to work together and not as indiviuals,"

Sydney Rogokos ('26)



"Whether it's playing club or just putting in extra reps, it gives players more time to build their skills and gain more experience,"

Sarah Faust ('26)



"Knowing your worth outside of your sport makes mental health so much better, especially in hard times,"

Marley Tracy ('26)



"I would strongly suggest lifting as well as putting in extra work at practices, lifting is very helpful for improving your vertical and speed,"

Taylor Elsasser ('26)

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