

Former state champs return to Wildcat sideline – as coaches



Louisburg High School assistant football coaches Alex Gentges (left) and Kade Larson joined the Wildcat staff this season after helping Louisburg to its first state title in 2010. Gentges (class of 2011) and Larson (class of 2013) are excited to back on the sidelines when the Wildcats host Spring Hill tonight at Wildcat Stadium.

The last time Alex Gentges and Kade Larson were on the same football field together they were both wearing the purple and white of Louisburg and they were all smiles – and for good reason.

On a sunny November afternoon in 2010, Gentges and Larson started on the Wildcats' state championship team that day in Salina after Louisburg defeated Holton 24-16 to earn the school's first, and only, state football title.

The two then went their separate ways, only to be reunited about eight years later. The two Louisburg High grads will be putting on the purple and white again and standing on the Wildcat sideline – this time as coaches.

Gentges and Larson were hired as assistants for the Wildcat program in the offseason and both players are happy to be back coaching their alma mater.

"I'm extremely excited to be back in a community that has given me so much," Gentges said. "I always talked about possibly teaching and coaching in Louisburg, but I didn't know it would happen so soon. I truly feel blessed and I'm glad everything fell into place the way it did."

It was much of the same for Larson, who had just graduated from the University of Tennessee-Martin, before he was hired to teach seventh-grade math at Louisburg Middle School. Gentges, who recently graduated from Pittsburg State, teaches physical education at LMS.

"I am extremely excited to be back coaching at Louisburg," Larson said. "I really hoped the opportunity would present itself and it just so happened to. I was lucky enough to be hired at LMS and am glad I am able to be coaching football."

Both were fixtures on the Wildcat state championship team. Larson, who was a sophomore at the time, started on the line, while Gentges was a starting linebacker and running back.

So when both were hired as teachers in the district, the opportunity to add them to the coaching ranks at LHS made too much sense for Louisburg head coach Robert Ebenstein. Gentges and Larson join currently assistants Jeff Lohse and Drew Harding as LHS alums that are on the staff.

"It is invaluable having those two back with this program, especially when you consider the success they had going through the same workouts, in the same weight room, and on the same field," Ebenstein said. "Then you put coach Lohse and coach Harding into that same conversation as people who graduated from Louisburg and have chosen to come back here. It definitely says something about this town and the tradition that this program has."

"I was fortunate enough to coach Kade when he was a senior and I know the type of player and person he was. When Alex was hired here, I spoke with Griff (former coach Gary Griffin) and

Jeff about him, and once I spoke with them I could not wait to get him on the coaching staff. These two will hopefully be here for a long time and our students athletes will greatly benefit from having these guys in their corner.”

Larson, who played collegiate football at the University of Tennessee-Martin, is currently working with the offensive and defensive lines and is a freshman defensive coach. Gentges, who played football at Hutchinson Community College, along with throwing the javelin at Pittsburg State, is a junior varsity assistant and also coaches running backs and linebackers.

With all the success that both had in high school, they believe they can pass what they’ve learned on down to the current generation and continue the Louisburg football tradition. Of course, winning a state championship doesn’t hurt with gaining respect from the current players.



Kade Larson celebrates with a teammate after intercepting a pass for a touchdown during the 2010 playoffs.

"I think it helps the guys a lot knowing that we have been there and done it," Larson said. "We know what it's like to go win a state championship and know that it can be done. They have one goal this year and that is to win the state championship and I feel like they see through us how much you do remember it down the road in life. I think a big thing they see through Alex and I is how much of a family the team becomes and that is a big factor in making a state championship run."

With having a former teammate around, comes a fair share of reminiscing. The two new coaches, along with coach Lohse, are the only ones still around from that state championship team.

"It's still one of the best memories I have," Gentges said. "There is nothing like experiencing something that special with all your buddies with you. The coaching staff was something that really stood out to me that year. I believe they are a big reason why I wanted to become a teacher/coach. They seemed to have a special bond with each other and I can only hope to achieve that with this group of coaches as well."

"I couldn't ask for a better coaching staff this year. They welcomed me with open arms and I'm excited to work with them. I have high expectations this year and we have a lot of potential, but like Coach E says to the players, potential doesn't win you anything...we have to go prove it."



Alex Gentges had several big carries for the Wildcats in 2010 as they went on to win a state title.

As for the season that lies ahead, both coaches are excited to get back under the Friday Night Lights and help the current players reach their goals.

"It's hard to develop a brotherhood as strong as what you can in high school, but I enjoyed playing and I'm grateful for all the challenges I faced and overcame because it helped make me who I am today," Gentges said. "I miss playing more than anything, but I'm living through these Louisburg athletes now and I hope I can help them get to bigger and better things."

As much as they miss their playing days, getting the opportunity to join the Louisburg coaching staff has been a great opportunity for both.

"This staff is great," Larson said. "There is so much football

knowledge throughout the staff. I am very excited to keep working with them. We should be a pretty solid team this year. We have a lot of returners so that means a lot of experience. I am very excited to get the season started.”