

# Wildcats rally for split against Paola



Louisburg third baseman Colton Smith tags out a Paola runner Thursday during the Wildcats' season opener in Paola. The Wildcats earned a split after getting a 9-7 victory in the nightcap. Louisburg lost the first game 9-5.

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PAOLA – All it took was one swing of the bat and a little lightning to prevent what could have been two straight losses to start the season for the Louisburg baseball team.

During Thursday's season opener in Paola, Louisburg junior Alex Dunn hit a bases-clearing double that led to a four-run sixth inning in the nightcap and helped give the Wildcats a 9-7 victory against the Panthers. Lightning in the area shortened the game by an inning and cemented Louisburg's first win of the year.

The Wildcats battled in the opener, but fell 9-5 after Paola scored five runs in the second inning thanks to a few Louisburg miscues with two outs. The Panthers are the defending Class 4A Division I state runner-up.

"Paola is a very good team and I was proud of the way we kept our composure after we gave up the lead," Louisburg coach Jeff Lohse said. "I was happy to see us compete and find a way to

win. We really didn't play too bad in game one, but Paola did a nice job of putting some runs together with two outs."

Louisburg (1-1) scored 14 runs in the two games but it got clutch hitting from several different areas in the second game. Mitchell Caldwell, Austin Henderson and Lucas Smith each finished with three hits, while Caldwell added an RBI double, Henderson a double and Smith an RBI single.

The Wildcats held a 5-2 lead in the fourth inning, but Paola answered with four runs in the fourth to grab a 6-5 lead. In what turned out to be the final inning, Caldwell and Henderson led the sixth inning off with a pair of walks and Smith reached on an error to load the bases for Dunn.

Dunn's double brought home three runs to take the lead back and the Wildcats added another when Dunn scored on a squeeze bunt from Grant Harding. Paola added a run in its half of the sixth, but the Wildcats were able to hold on.

Dalton Stone added an RBI single early in the game as several players got involved in the offense. Caldwell scored three runs, while Henderson and Smith each scored twice. Ethan Caldwell also had a single and a run scored.



**Louisburg junior Alex Dunn came up with a big hit in the nightcap with a 3-run double Thursday in Paola.**

In the two games combined, Louisburg scored 14 runs on 22 hits against some strong arms from Paola.

“In past seasons, we have always struggled against guys with plus arms, especially early in the year,” Lohse said. “We have changed some things at practice to help us prepare for those

kind of pitchers and I think it is working for us.”

Cole Kramer picked up the win for Louisburg as he came on to pitch three innings of relief after Harding started the game. Each pitcher gave up three earned runs and had two strikeouts.

Louisburg struck first in the opener as Kramer singled, stole second, went to third on a wild pitch and scored on a fielder’s choice from Mitchell Caldwell.

Paola tied the game with a run in the first, but the Panthers broke the game open in the second inning with five runs. Paola had two outs and no one on in the frame, but the next Panther batter was hit by a pitch, then two more walks led to two big hits to give Paola a 6-1 lead.

The Wildcats didn’t give up as they tried to chip away at the lead several times, but they couldn’t dig out of the hole.

Kramer and Mitchell Caldwell each finished with a pair of hits and Caldwell added 2 RBIs on two doubles. Ethan Caldwell also had a run batted in and Matt Risenhoover added a double.

Smith started for Louisburg and gave up the six runs in two innings, but only two of them were earned. He also had five strikeouts in those two innings. Risenhoover and Colton Smith each came on in relief.

“For the first outings of the year, I thought our guys did fine,” Lohse said. “There were some pitches that we would have liked to have back, but for the most part we did OK on the hill. We will get better as the season goes, but our depth out there definitely is a plus.”

Louisburg returns to action Tuesday when it travels to Fort Scott. First pitch is set for 4:30 p.m. on the Tigers’ newly-constructed field.

## **Louisburg JV splits with Paola**

The Louisburg junior varsity baseball team took advantage of a big inning as it won its first game of the season 11-8 against Paola on Tuesday at home. The Wildcats lost the second game 21-5.

In the opener, the Wildcats used a seven-run third inning to pull away from Paola. Louisburg walked five times in the inning and got RBI hits from Joseph Allen and Joseph Hannah to take an 8-0 lead.

Hannah finished the game with a team-high three hits, while Allen and Garrett Caldwell also had a pair of hits.

The second game was a different story as the Panthers jumped out to a 5-2 lead and then scored 11 runs in the fourth inning to pull away.