

York steps down after 13 years



Louisburg High School boys soccer coach Ben York recently announced his resignation from the program after 13 years with the Wildcats. York has been the team's head coach since the program's inception in 2003.

For 13 years, Ben York immersed himself into Louisburg High School boys soccer.

York was named the team's head coach when the program started in 2003 and every season since he could be found roaming the Wildcat sideline.

Next season, will be a different story.

York recently informed his team and the high school administration that he will not be returning for another season and is stepping down as the team's head coach. As much as he loved the program and his players, he had a bigger reason for saying goodbye.

"I probably have about five solid reasons I am doing it, but chief among all the reasons, and the only one that is important that anyone else knows is I have not gotten to the point in my life where my wife and kids have said, 'Hey, you have missed this or that,'" York said. "Realizing it now

before it happens, knowing if I continue down this path, then it is eventually going to happen. I am choosing them in that scenario.

“If I blink it is going to be gone and I am never going to get that back. I can be the soccer coach the rest of my life after my kids are older. I was fortunate that I was given this opportunity so early. I was only three-and-a-half years older than the senior class in my first year of coaching. My wife has done a great job of taking care of everything while I was gone. Now I just want simple and I want time. I just need some time with family or just with me.”

The Louisburg coach informed his team that he would be stepping down shortly before the playoffs began in late October. It was a time York had dreaded for weeks.

As he wrestled with his decision, he watched his team struggle during the same time as they finished the regular season with just four wins.

“We were in a spot where we weren’t having a whole lot of success. I know it is there and I am trying to deal emotionally with not coaching anymore and when to tell my players and administration. When you come to the end as a coach, you are just overwhelmed with all the memories, whether it is happy or sad. It was hard to concentrate. After I told the kids, which was terrible, and I got past that day, it was a lot easier for me.”

The Wildcats seemed to turn the corner after that as they rattled off three straight victories in the playoffs to capture a regional title.

“I couldn’t have had a better end to the season,” York said. “Losing the last three or four games of the year would have been pretty bad, but we started playing better. Once I told them what was really happening, it seemed like the players’ attitudes changed and they were just like ‘Let’s go. Let’s see

how far we can go.' I think it was really neat to see and I think maybe they had a little more reason to be focused and they got after it."

York put together a program that encountered a lot of success in his 13 years. During his tenure, the Wildcats won six Frontier League championships and six regional playoff titles.

In all, York put together a 131-80-12 record – but maybe more importantly – he had the opportunity to build Louisburg soccer from the ground up.

"It was the hardest thing I have done," York said. "The hardest thing anyone can ever do is take something that doesn't exist, and not just manage it, but I have a lifetime full of memories."

York, a Louisburg High School graduate himself, started those memories from day one when Chad Wagner scored the program's first goal on a Saturday afternoon against Eudora. Or maybe it was when Zac Messmer's free kick in overtime against Ottawa gave the Wildcats their first regional title.

He couldn't forget the countless breakfasts at Miss B's with long-time assistant Tony Juarez to talk about game plans. Even recently, York couldn't help but smile when talking about the memories from this season's group.

Whether it was welcoming former player Tanner O'Hara as an assistant coach or watching this year's team rally to win the program's sixth regional title after winning only four games during the regular season, they all hold a special place for him.

"I remember all the road trips," York said. "I remember standing in the middle of the huddle every game and looking in their eyes knowing that they trust me. Then there are a billion more memories that are just for me."

York hopes that the returning group of players can continue what he helped start and build on what is already a strong tradition.

“It is not going to end,” he said. “I told the guys that my part might be done, but it is not over. It is their responsibility now to carry things on and not let it fall apart. I can sit back and think of a billion things that bring a smile to my face about coaching here, but not a lot of things that make me sad. There have been some life changing things happen in this program and I was glad that I was here for those.

“I went to school here and to be able to give back was my primary goal. It wasn't to win state or regional championships, I just wanted to allow these kids a chance to play some good soccer and I think I succeeded in that. Maybe if there is a next time I will do even better, or I will try to anyway.”