Lady Cat soccer ready to begin inaugural season



The Louisburg High School girls soccer team will play the first game in program history Tuesday when the Lady Cats travel to Harmon High School. They will have their home opener Thursday when they host Tonganoxie.

It may just be one game, but for the Louisburg High School girls soccer team, it is more than that.

It is a new beginning. It is a chance to make a good first impression and it is an opportunity to say a big “thank you” for all those that will make Tuesday, and the other 15 games, possible.

Tuesday will mark the first game in program history when the Lady Cats travel to Harmon High School. The day will begin with the junior varsity game at 4:30 p.m., with the varsity game to follow.

Louisburg will face off with a good Harmon team that finished with a 13-2-1 record a year ago, but its biggest opponent Tuesday might be itself. The nerves have already started to creep in.

“I don’t know if it is a gut-wrenching feeling or if it is ‘I am ready to do this’ feeling,” senior Maddie McDaniel said.

“It feels like I am at the top of the rollercoaster looking out at everything and all I want to do is get down the hill.”

The nerves are not just with the players, but with the coaching staff as well. Head coach Kyle Conley admits it will be an emotional day for everyone.

“I will probably be a mess but it will be ok,” Conley said. “I talk to the girls about being tough and living in the moment and hopefully that emotion doesn’t hit when the first whistle blows and we are a mess for five minutes. At the same time I can’t blame them if that happens, especially with all the work they have put in.”

It has been a lot of work for the Lady Cat players as they began their journey with summer workouts and have spent the last two weeks getting ready for the upcoming season. The team even had practice for the final three days of spring break, including a couple practices in rainy, cold conditions.

They want to be ready for one of the most important days in program history.

“I am really excited but nervous at the same time,” senior Lilly Scott said. “I know we have worked really hard these past two weeks and a lot is riding on this first game. We are either going to come out with a bang and show people what we can do, or we come out and not do as well and show us what we need to work on. It is just an exciting time because it is something new and I get to be a part of it, which is pretty special.”

Senior Rylee Bergh, McDaniel and Scott will lead the Lady Cats on their inaugural journey and will try to make sure the other 22 players on the team stay on track for what they hope is a fun, successful year.

“I am really excited to see how the team is going to shape up during the game,” Bergh said. “I am excited to see who steps

it up, who surprises me and how the team comes together in a game situation. It is going to be special.

“I want us to be a family and like each other. I want us to communicate on the field, and no matter the score, I want our team to be proud of what happens this season.”

Regardless of the outcome Tuesday, the Lady Cats have a long 16-game season ahead of themselves to prepare for, and Conley likes what he has seen so far. After 45 girls initially signed up to play last spring, 25 came out and many of them have settled into their roles.

Scott and sophomore Bailey Belcher will play in the midfield, while McDaniel will also see some time there and the forward spot. Bergh will lead the team in the back as Conley sees her as a defensive midfielder.

Junior Bryn O’Meara, sophomore Georgia Wilde, freshman Bria Jensen, sophomore Savannah Reinhart and freshman Camdyn Clark are all competing for spots on defense. Juniors Madisen Simpson, Quincy Rice, Lily Cook and Mara Justesen will also be vying for varsity spots as well.

“I think we are going to be pretty solid in the midfield,” Conley said. “We have a good core of kids that play quite a bit or are athletic. We have four or five kids that haven’t played soccer before and another six or seven kids that haven’t played since sixth grade. We have a good group though.

“We are going to try and keep possession of the ball a lot and I think the middle and forward-wise we should be pretty solid. We have had quite a few surprises with kids and the rust wore off pretty quick. They are doing a good job.”

A pair of sophomores are also battling it out for the goalkeeper job as Shay Whiting and Sarah Wilson look to be that last line of defense for the Lady Cats.

“Both girls are playing pretty well and it has been a good competition so far,” Conley said. “It will be one person’s job to win, but both might have to play some junior varsity too in case someone gets hurt because we only have two on the team. Both haven’t played before, keeper-wise, but they are going to do the best they can.”

If the first game in program history wasn’t emotional enough, it might be even more emotional on Thursday when the Lady Cats will play on their home field for the first time when they host Tonganoxie.

It will be a day in which they recognize the parents and community members who helped raise the nearly $40,000 to fund the program for three years and they hope to honor them with a good performance on the field.

“It will be huge because before if they wanted to play, they had to play with the boys and it has always been about the boys,” Conley said. “Here is our chance and it is our turn to do what we want to do. It is about all those community members that fought so hard and donated so much time, sweat and work and now it is our time to make something of it.

“There have been times when we haven’t been working so hard in practice and I have reminded the girls about how much work people put in for them to have this opportunity. It gives other girls in the community something to look forward to. My daughters are excited about it and my oldest is only five. Hopefully younger girls can see now that they have an opportunity to play high school soccer and I think these girls are going to be good role models for the youth with how they carry themselves.”

2016 LOUISBURG HIGH SCHOOL VARSITY GIRLS SOCCER SCHEDULE

Mar. 22 at Harmon 6 p.m.

Mar. 24 Tonganoxie 4 p.m.

Mar. 28 at De Soto 6 p.m.

Mar. 31 Sumner Academy 4 p.m.

Apr. 5 at Piper 6 p.m.

Apr. 7 Heritage Christian 4 p.m.

Apr. 11 Ottawa 4 p.m.

Apr. 14 at Spring Hill 6 p.m.

Apr. 18 at Wyandotte 6 p.m.

Apr. 22 Basehor-Linwood 4 p.m.

Apr. 26 at Baldwin 4 p.m.

Apr. 28 at Kansas City Christian 6 p.m.

May 2 Baldwin 4 p.m.

May 3 De Soto 4 p.m.

May 9	at Ottawa	6 p.m.
May 12	Spring Hill	4 p.m.