

# Lady Cats shine in program debut



The Louisburg High School girls soccer team breaks down the huddle following their 2-0 victory over Harmon on Tuesday at Harmon High School. It was also the first win in the program's history.

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KANSAS CITY, Kan. – Maddie McDaniel had been dreaming about this day for months.

Head coach Kyle Conley was nervously anticipating the game's first whistle.

The other 22 members of the Louisburg High School girls soccer team, on the other hand, were faced with emotions from both sides of the spectrum.

Season openers usually feature butterflies, but this one was different.

Tuesday was a special day for these group of girls as they took the field for the first time in program history at Harmon High School. Win or lose, it was going to be a memorable experience for the Lady Cats.

As it turned out, Louisburg put together an historic performance.



**Senior Maddie McDaniel heads the ball toward the goal in the first half Tuesday against Harmon.**

The Lady Cats scored a goal in each half and walked away with a 2-0 victory to capture the program's first win among many other firsts against a Harmon team that finished with a 13-2-1 record a season ago.

"Words can't express how excited and proud I am of these young ladies," Conley said. "It was a night in which everyone was nervous and anxious and we responded very well."

Louisburg seemed to get rid of that anxiousness in a hurry as it put the pressure on from the opening whistle and it didn't take long to find the back of the net.

McDaniel, a senior, received a pass in the air from sophomore Bailey Belcher and headed the ball in the goal to give the Lady Cats a 1-0 lead in the 16<sup>th</sup> minute. She also gets the distinction of going into the record books as the first varsity player to score a goal, while Belcher got the first assist.

"It is my dream to just get a header goal and I accomplished that," McDaniel said. "I almost cried that it was so amazing. It really hasn't sunk in yet. It was a great pass from Bailey."

We just made eye contact and it was over.”

From there, the Louisburg defense took over as they limited Harmon’s shot attempts. The Lady Cats used waves of defenders to keep the Hawks at bay.

Senior Rylee Bergh led the charge as she knocked a lot of balls away in the back, while Georgia Wilde, Madisen Simpson, Bryn O’Meara, Camdyn Clark, Hayli Detherage, Kaitlyn Lewer and Bria Jensen all did their part to take possession away from Harmon.

However, Harmon made an even bigger push midway through the second half as they put numerous shots on goal, but sophomore goalie Shay Whiting didn’t show many signs of it being her first game in the net.



**Junior Bryn O’Meara  
knocks the ball away  
from a Harmon player.**

Whiting not only recorded the team’s first ever shutout, but she slid in for several saves in the final minutes. She also dove to knock away a Harmon shot early in the first half.

In the 67<sup>th</sup> minute, Harmon had a good chance to tie the match

with a penalty kick, but the shot sailed over the crossbar to preserve the Lady Cat lead.

“My teammates told me, ‘Well, your short so she is probably going to get some air underneath it,’ so I knew it was going to go in the air,” Whiting said. “I was just watching the girl and thank goodness it went over. I think we would have been fine either way though.

“I was pretty confident in what I was taught and I knew what to do. My defense helped me out a lot and shutting them out was a team thing. It was from the offense to the defense and all the way back. It was a good win.”

Conley was impressed with what he saw out of his back line for the first time out.

“I think the whole back four did a fantastic job,” Conley said. “The phrase ‘Bend but don’t break’ fit us. We knew they had a very special player at forward and it was going to take a team effort to stop her. Rylee, Georgia, Bryn, Cammie, Madison, Hayli, Kaitlyn and Bria all did great to limit their chances. I am proud at their communication and toughness.

“Shay was fantastic. She was big for us and her reaction saves were quality! Her reaction tonight looked nothing like a girl making her first high school start. She looked like a seasoned veteran back there.”

Belcher was able to provide the Lady Cats with a little breathing room in the final minutes. Already with an assist, Belcher added a goal to the stat line as she took a shot from 25 yards away to put Louisburg up two goals in the 74<sup>th</sup> minute.

“I am so happy,” Belcher said. “Honestly, with this being a new program, I wasn’t sure how it was going to go. Now that we have won our first game against a team (Harmon) that won 13 games a season ago, I am just amazed.”



**Louisburg sophomore Bailey Belcher celebrates her goal late in the second half Tuesday against Harmon.**

The Lady Cats look to start the program's first winning streak Thursday when they host Tonganoxie in their home opener. The varsity begins the action at 4 p.m., in what looks to be another emotional game as Louisburg gets to play in front of their home crowd for the first time.

"Our home opener will be special and they always will be, but this one even more so because of how hard community members worked to make these young ladies' dreams a reality," Conley said. "They will be a little anxious because a ton of community members, friends and family members will be in attendance. It will be a lot of fun and the ladies should be excited."

### **Junior varsity wins opener**

The varsity team wasn't the only one to make history Tuesday at Harmon High School.

The Louisburg junior varsity took the field and left with a 3-1 victory over the Hawks and got a strong performance from freshman Camdyn Clark.

Clark not only scored the team's first junior varsity goal, but she was responsible for all three as she recorded the first hat trick in team history. All three goals came in the second half, including one on a penalty kick with 10 minutes left in the contest that broke a 1-all tie.

Under the direction of coach Michael Pickman, the Lady Cats played a strong first half but had several shots on goal just miss the back of the net.

Sophomore Isabella Ford had five shots on goal in the first half and freshman Peyton Shaffer also took shots as well. The match remained scoreless until Clark scored her first goal in the 57<sup>th</sup> minute.

"The JV played very well and I was very excited with how they performed," Conley said. "I actually think the way coach Pickman and the JV team played, and the result they got eased a lot of the nerves for the varsity team. It was just a fantastic night for our program."