

# Louisburg girls soccer rallies to tie Piper



Louisburg sophomore Isabella Ford heads the ball in for a game-tying goal with five minutes left in regulation against Piper on Tuesday in Louisburg. Ford and the rest of the Wildcats tied Piper 3-3 to move their record to 3-1-1 on the year.

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There was 21 minutes left in the contest and the Louisburg High School girls soccer team had a comfortable two goal lead over Piper.

It took only 12 minutes for the game to be completely flipped on its head.

In those 12 minutes, Piper stormed back with three goals of its own to steal all the momentum. For a program in its first year, it could have been easy for the Wildcats to back down.

Instead, Louisburg came right back as Isabella Ford tied the game on a header off a corner kick with five minutes left in regulation. The match went into two overtimes, but it ended in a 3-3 tie Tuesday in Louisburg.

“It was like a roller coaster,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “Having a 2-0 lead in soccer is the hardest lead to hold. It is enough of a lead to just get a little comfortable

and relaxed, but teams need to do the opposite. We left some girls in the midfield or didn't mark up quiet as well as we normally do. Once Piper got that first goal they went to a whole other level.

"Then getting down 3-2 with eight minutes left it was crazy. We showed posse and confidence. I was very impressed how level headed the girls stayed through those 30 minutes."

For a game that was scoreless for the first 50 minutes, the last 30 minutes and two overtimes did provide quite a bit of drama.



**Junior Lily Cook (right) tries to hold off a Piper defender Tuesday in Louisburg.**

After both teams had their fair share of shots on goal, the Wildcats converted in the 51<sup>st</sup> minute when Ford found the back of the net thanks to an assists from senior Maddie McDaniel to put Louisburg up a goal.

It took less than a minute for Louisburg to double its tally when sophomore Bailey Belcher hit a shot from 25 yards away, which caught the Piper defense out of place and scored to

quickly put the Wildcats up 2-0.

It was then when Piper became more aggressive, and in the 59<sup>th</sup> minute scored a goal off a corner kick. Nine minutes later, Piper tied it up and in the 71<sup>st</sup> minute took the lead.

Louisburg (3-1-1) didn't let up as it continued to push the ball up the field and put together one of its more impressive goals of the season. In the 75<sup>th</sup> minute, McDaniel took the corner kick and placed it near the goal, which found the head of Ford who knocked it in.

"Izzie Ford played very well," Conley said. "She was getting frustrated with not finishing like she wants to, but she did a great job of finishing and being our target up top.

"It was incredible how well the girls played to get that last goal back. They were incredibly focused and gave everything that they had to get that goal. Our formation is really coming together. We have focused a lot of practice time recently to improving our attack and being more balanced both offensively and defensively. That goal directly was created with how hard the girls are working at practice. It was an awesome goal and lifted our team spirits. It gave us belief again."

The goal also lifted the spirits of the Louisburg defense which came together to turn away several Piper opportunities in the final minutes of regulation and in the two overtimes.



**Senior Rylee Bergh clears a ball out of the back during the first half of Tuesday's home contest with Piper.**

Senior Rylee Bergh led the Wildcat defense from the centerback spot as she, along with juniors Madisen Simpson, Bryn O'Meara, sophomore Georgia Wilde and freshman Camdyn Clark rose to the occasion to help keep the game tied.

Junior goalie Shay Whiting also made a couple of big saves late in the match, including one in the final minute of the second overtime.

"Piper did get those three goals, but they were due to minor things that can be fixed easily," Conley said. "Communication lacked a little and we broke down, but overall I am very proud of how well the back line is playing. They really do a great job working with each other and complementing each other with their abilities and skill sets. I could not be more proud of them as a unit.

"Rylee is our leader back there and has accepted that role very well, especially since she has not really played centerback before. She is a very good leader and gives everything she had every night. Georgia and Madisen have working really hard and are great assets in the back. Bryn and Cammie are also working hard to improve every game and to anchor our back line. I am just proud how they work together

and play so hard. Shay has played very well. She is doing a great job of working with Coach (Michael) Pickman and improving every day.”

The Wildcats return to action Thursday when they host Heritage Christian Academy for a varsity contest only. The match is set to begin at 4:30 p.m.