

# Loss doesn't dampen special senior night



Louisburg seniors (from left) Maddie McDaniel, Lilly Scott, Rylee Bergh and manager Leslie Damian were honored during senior night ceremony following the the Wildcats' game with Spring Hill on Thursday in Louisburg.

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Maddie McDaniel, Lilly Scott and Rylee Bergh were 20 minutes away from having a senior night to remember.

The Louisburg girls soccer team held a one goal lead over Spring Hill on Thursday in the Wildcats' regular season finale – one of just two teams to beat the Wildcats all season. With a win would come a spot as the regional's No. 1 seed and an outside shot at a Frontier League title.

Louisburg had its chance for redemption, but the No. 4-ranked Wildcats couldn't quite hang on. Spring Hill scored two goals in the final 20 minutes to end Louisburg's hope for revenge and the Wildcats fell 3-2 in Louisburg.

"I thought we played well enough to win," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "We struggled at the start of the game and the start of the second half. We got pushed back and struggled to get our formation set. I felt overall the girls played a decent game, but we really struggled to find feet. It was almost like we tried to play too quick."

"I think we played well enough to win, but just couldn't quite make the most of our chances. We gave them shots, but they were from distance. That was part of the game plan to limit their quality scoring chances and I felt we did an excellent job at that."



**Senior Lilly Scott (right) clears the ball out of the back during Thursday's game in Louisburg.**

It was a disappointing loss for the three Wildcat seniors as they were honored, along with manager Leslie Damian, during senior night ceremonies following the game. The four were the first senior class to come through the LHS girls soccer program and Thursday's loss left some mixed emotions.

"It is really an honor because you will be known as the first senior class to have left the girls soccer team and it's also kind of sad because we only got to play for one year," McDaniel said. "The game was a good fight between both teams and we gave them a run for their money and had the lead. I think we got too cocky and let them go and that's when they took it from us, but other than that we had a great game overall. Everyone played great and I was so very proud of everyone and it was sure an emotional game for me."

The Wildcats found themselves down early as Spring Hill's Mikayla Smith found the back of the net in the 11<sup>th</sup> minute to give the Broncos a 1-0 lead. Smith was the focus of the Wildcat defense and made for a difficult matchup.

"Smith is a stud," Conley said. "She is as good as you will see at this level. We preached how essential it is to contain them and stand them up. Unfortunately we couldn't quite get that done, but it was a great match up that will help us from regionals."

The deficit didn't seem to bother Louisburg much.

Nine minutes later, it was a pair of sophomores that helped the Wildcats get back in the game on senior night. Izzie Ford crossed the ball to Bailey Belcher in the box and Belcher put the shot away to tie the match and it stayed that way until early in the second half.

Belcher continued her torrid scoring pace as she gave Louisburg the lead with 26 minutes left in the match. She lined up for a free kick from 30 yards out and her high-arching shot sailed over the outstretched arms of the Spring Hill goalie and found the back of the net.

"Bailey has been playing really well lately," Conley said. "She has been able to get a lot of good chances and finish them. That was a nice free kick. It gave us a shot in the arm and we picked our pace up."

Five minutes later, Spring Hill evened things up with a goal from Shelby Dawson. Smith then put Spring Hill ahead for good on a goal with 15 minutes left in the match.

Even with the loss, Conley realizes this is a special senior class in many aspects and one he is going to miss once the season is complete.

"This group is going to be tough to replace," he said. "They

are a great group that leads and challenges their teammates each and every day. They played their heart out and did so much to set the bar so high from the start of this program. I could not have asked for a better group of seniors. They are going to be greatly missed and hard to replace. I could not be more proud of them.”



**Louisburg sophomore Georgia Wilde wins a 50-50 ball Thursday against Spring Hill.**

The season has been special for everyone involved as the Wildcats accumulated a 12-3-1 record on the year and held the No. 4 ranking in Class 4-1A. Those results exceeded expectations many in the program had for themselves.

Two months ago, Louisburg was getting ready to compete in its first game. Now, the Wildcats are the No. 2 seed in the Northeast regional with hopes of state tournament aspirations.

“Being a newly created team, the expectations were to win a few games and just get better throughout the season, but being 12-3-1 is better than I could have ever imagined we would be,” Scott said. “A lot of hard work had been put in to get us where we are now. I’m really excited to start the postseason.

We get the chance to continue playing as a team for a few more games and to face opponents we have played before, but might not have played well against earlier. I feel like we have a shot at a regional title and hopefully we do well at districts and eventually be on our way to state to battle for a title."

The Wildcats host Ottawa (2-14) at 4 p.m. today in the first round of the regional tournament. Should Louisburg win, it will play No. 7 Basehor-Linwood for the regional title at 4:30 p.m. in Louisburg.

Louisburg's junior varsity ended its season on a strong note as it defeated Spring Hill 4-0 to end its season with a 10-2-1 record.

The Wildcats got a unassisted goals from Camdyn Clark and Savannah Reinhart. Leia Shaffer scored on an assist from Hallie Hutsell and Quincy Rice scored on an assist from Reinhart.