

Wildcats upset state-ranked De Soto



Sophomore Bailey Belcher heads the ball away from a De Soto player Tuesday in Louisburg. Belcher and the Wildcats knocked off No. 3-ranked De Soto 2-1 to give Louisburg its fifth consecutive win.

If you look at the rankings, the history and the fact the Louisburg girls soccer team is in its first year of the program, the Wildcats were right where they were supposed to be.

Louisburg was down a goal to No. 3-ranked De Soto late in the second half Tuesday in Louisburg – an admirable place to be all things considered. Coming into the match, De Soto was undefeated in Frontier League action and it is a team that has been to the state tournament two of the last three years.

Everything pointed to De Soto coming to Louisburg and getting a win.

It didn't happen.

Louisburg kept attacking and broke through for two late goals to upset De Soto 2-1 and give the Wildcats their biggest win in the program's brief history. It was also the Wildcats' fifth consecutive victory.

"The game was like a roller coaster," Louisburg coach Kyle

Conley said. "It was back and forth and had plenty of action. I feel we played pretty decent in the first half with a decent amount of



Louisburg sophomore Savannah Reinhart shields a De Soto player from the ball Tuesday in Louisburg. Reinhart scored the game-winning goal with five minutes left in the match.

pressure. The start of the second half we had no energy and I was worried playing Baldwin the night before might have caught up with us, but the girls just pushed forward and kept playing hard.

"After their goal, we started to push more and play way more direct. It was a great game to be part of and words cannot describe this team's moxie and heart. They are truly playing for this town and community."

Following the win, the Wildcats also took a big leap in the KPI rankings. According the rankings, which were released Thursday, Louisburg jumped up to the No. 1 spot in De Soto's goal midway through the second half certainly seemed to spark the Wildcats. Louisburg, which had a couple shots on goal in

the first half, went on the attack in the final minutes of the match.

Sophomore Bailey Belcher got the ball with some space, raced down the sideline and beat her defender. Belcher's shot toward the far post went in and tied the match.

"That goal gave us the big boost in the arm we were looking for and we were alive," Conley said.



Louisburg junior Bryn O'Meara clears the ball out of the back Tuesday against De Soto.

The Wildcats (10-2-1) weren't done.

With five minutes left in the match, junior Lily Cook got a through-ball from the midfield and had a 2-on-1 situation with sophomore teammate Savannah Reinhart. The De Soto goalie was caught out of position and Cook passed the ball off to Reinhart who had a clear look at the net for the game-winner.

"That was exactly what we have been working on in practice and it was fantastic to see it happen in a game," Conley said.

Louisburg's defense also limited De Soto's shots on goal as it played with a bend but don't break attitude. Sophomore goalie

Shay Whiting had a handful of saves, while the defensive backfield didn't give De Soto good looks at the goal.

"Our goal was not to give them uncontested shots," Conley said. "We wanted to stand them up and contain them and I feel we did a pretty nice job of that. If we didn't remain disciplined then it would have led to a lot of chances for them. I was happy with the way our entire team played defensively."

With three games left in the regular season, the Wildcats have put themselves in prime position for a good seeding come postseason play. Add momentum onto the record and Louisburg seems to be playing its best at the right time.

"Beating a team like De Soto gives us a ton of confidence," Conley said. "They are extremely talented and are one of the best teams we will play all year. They are actually a program with a rich tradition in soccer that I hope we can strive to emulate."

Following the game, the Wildcats also took a big leap in the KPI rankings. The rankings, which were released Thursday, had Louisburg as the No. 1 ranked team in Class 4-1A.

Louisburg will try to keep that ranking when it returns to action Monday at Ottawa and then will follow up with another match Tuesday when it hosts Baldwin.

Louisburg pulls away from Baldwin

Louisburg ventured to Baldwin on Monday in hopes of continuing its season-best three-game winning streak.

The Wildcats had some obstacles to overcome as they had some players out with an injury and others were gone to an FFA competition. It meant players had to play in different spots.

That all didn't seem to matter to Louisburg. The Wildcats jumped out to an early lead and never looked back in a 3-1 victory over the Bulldogs.

Louisburg sophomore Bailey Belcher provided the offensive punch as she finished with a hat trick to account for all three goals. Belcher had two breakaway goals and another that was assisted by senior Lilly Scott.

Baldwin had a chance to get back into the match as it awarded a penalty kick. However, Louisburg goalie Shay Whiting saved the attempt and kept Baldwin off the board.

"The first half against Baldwin was one of the best halves we played in several weeks," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "We played with confidence and moved the ball quickly. We jumped on them early and stayed on them. We only gave up three shots and two of them were from fouls.

"The girls played very organized and disciplined. We had a lot of kids fill roles and get playing time that would not regularly get some because of two students (Georgia Wilde and Hallie Hutsell) excelling at FFA dominating their competitions in Manhattan. We were slightly caught off guard by how direct Baldwin played and had to make some adjustments."

The junior varsity also pulled a shortened 1-0 victory over Baldwin.

Freshman Kaitlyn Lewer scored the game's lone goal on an assists from Camdyn Clark and the Wildcats got a lot of help from its defense. Sophomore goalie Sarah Wilson recorded the shutout and kept Baldwin scoreless with a save on a penalty kick.