

Wildcat boys soccer improves over summer



Louisburg's Jacob Benne passes the ball off in a drill during the Wildcats' boys soccer team camp July 13. The Wildcats ended their week-long camp on July 15 and have been busy working since early June.

The Louisburg High School boys soccer team certainly saved its best play for last a year ago when the Wildcats caught fire at the right time, won a regional title and earned a spot in the state quarterfinals.

Now the Wildcats hope to use that momentum to get off to a good start this season. The players have been busy all summer preparing for the start of their season in August and are getting used to their new coach – Kyle Conley.

Louisburg held its week-long team camp that ended on July 15 and have also had numerous workouts over the course of the summer that began in early June.

"I feel camp went really well and we started to build some chemistry and develop a bit of standards that I want to achieve," Conley said. "We had 25-27 guys out throughout the week, and the summer, for that matter. I was extremely pleased with their turnout and dedication to get better."

The camp gave Conley a chance to work with his new team and

was also an opportunity for the players to get used to his coaching style and what he expects.



Head coach Kyle Conley looks on as his players go through a drill during the Wildcats' team camp earlier this month.

"We stressed the importance of focus and training at game speed," Conley said. "It is very easy to go through the motions and at a slow pace. Coach (Michael) Pickman and I stressed playing the game faster and practicing harder. I feel throughout the summer the boys started to buy into my philosophy.

"Also with that philosophy, I needed us to be better passers and value that possession. I felt in the past they made a lot of needless turnovers. We focused on finding feet and keeping the ball. To accomplish that we helped them read the game and anticipate what was going to happen and make the right decision to keep the ball."

The Wildcats return senior midfielder Noah Juarez, who has been an all-Frontier League, and all-state player the last three seasons. Conley will also look to get some help from juniors Christian Scholtz and Grant Ryals on the offensive side along with several others.

Defensively, Louisburg lost several starters to graduation a year ago and is currently working to find different fits on that side of the ball.

Still, while both side of the ball are important, Conley wanted to spend the summer and focus on the basics so the team is ready to transition into the first day of practice on Aug. 15.

"I want to play a fast and a possession style game," Conley said. "For that to happen we had to improve our overall fundamentals. I wanted to stress the improving our overall technique and accuracy. To accomplish that, I have a goal that each player will get 300 touches on the ball each practice. By the end of summer they understood what my expectations were and worked hard to achieve that standard. Each training session was a build-up that led to some sort of competition/game play."

Along with the team camp, the Wildcats held team workouts twice a week since the beginning of June and have also held weight sessions as well.

All that is to help the Wildcats persevere through a rugged 2016 schedule and get off to a good start to the season. For that to happen, Conley knows he will need his veterans to step up and lead the younger players.

"I am extremely pleased with the strides we have made this summer," Conley said. "I know we still have a lot of work to do, but I saw improvement and I feel with their work ethic we can improve so much more. I also truly appreciated the leadership that the upperclassman have demonstrated. That's going to be essential throughout our season.

"I know that we are not going to completely change overnight, but the best part of this summer we started to improve and they showed themselves that they can. I am excited to go compete and watch these young men compete. We will have our

work cut out for us, but I feel these young men want to improve and get better which is half the battle."