

Second half goals push Wildcats past Ottawa



Louisburg defender Kris Light ends the ball away from an Ottawa player Thursday at Ottawa High School. Louisburg got two second half goals for a 3-1 victory over the Cyclones.

OTTAWA – It would have been easy for the Louisburg High School boys soccer team to overlook its final regular season match of the season.

With the postseason just days away, the Wildcats' game against Ottawa seemed more than a formality than anything else. Louisburg certainly didn't treat it that way.

The Wildcats challenged the Cyclones on their home field and scored two goals in the final 30 minutes to come away with a 3-1 victory Thursday in Ottawa. Louisburg finished the regular season with an 11-4-1 record.

"It was really nice to finish on a high note," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "We worked very hard to accomplish our goals throughout the year and that was the icing on the cake. The boys were determined and it showed in their play. Ottawa is a much improved team and they are playing their system pretty well.

"We struggled a little bit in the midfield because of the condition of the field, but we had adjustments at halftime to

play more direct and put the pressure on them. This game should give us confidence going into postseason play.”



Junior Grant Ryals knocks the ball down off his chest Thursday in Ottawa.

The win bumped Louisburg to a No. 3 seed in the East Regional and the Wildcats will host No. 6 Baldwin (6-10) at 6 p.m., on Tuesday. The winner of that match will travel to Coffeyville on Wednesday for a spot in the regional championship.

Louisburg and Baldwin split during the regular season, but Conley said he and his players are looking forward to the challenge of the postseason.

“The playoffs are what we play the game for,” Conley said. “It is a great challenge and provides a lot of adversities. It

shows what teams are really made of and gives an opportunity for anything to happen. I am very excited and the boys are too. We will play some very good teams, and in fact, our first round game will be a great test against a confident Baldwin team.”

As for the match against Ottawa, the Wildcats were able to strike first and take a 1-0 halftime lead on a goal from senior Noah Juarez with a minute remaining in the first half.

In the first half, the Louisburg defense worked hard to keep Ottawa off the board as it had several chances to take the lead. The Cyclones’ best chance came with 24 minutes left in the first half as they took a shot on goal, it rebounded off goalie Ambrose Stefan and rolled toward the goal.

Senior defender Jacob Benne reacted quickly and sent the ball away just before it crossed the goal line. The Louisburg back line of Benne, Kris Light, Kolten Ragan and Curran Conklin, along with Stefan, turned away several Cyclone scoring opportunities.

“Our defense has been doing that all year,” We have worked extremely hard, but we seem to give up some chances on inability to communicate at times. I honestly do not think they believe how well they are actually playing. The main back four and goalkeeper had given up only 15 goals all year; .937 goals against average and if I am not mistaken the majority of them if not all of them were not starters on last year’s team. That is a great improvement and a credit to their work ethic. I could not be happier for them.”

Six minutes into the second half, Ottawa was able to break through the Wildcat defense for a goal to tie the match at 1-all. However, instead of hanging their head, the Wildcats battled right back.

Four minutes later, senior Herman Knipp scored on an assist from junior Grant Ryals to put the Wildcats back in front and

they would stay there. In the 54th minute, Louisburg sealed the win after senior Ty Martin floated a pass into the box and Juarez headed the ball into the net for the game's final goal.



Noah Juarez heads the ball into the back of the net for Louisburg's third goal in the Wildcats' 3-1 win.

"Our team never quits," Conley said. "Our goal is to never give up regardless how things are going and to play to the final whistle. This game was no different. The boys just kept working and playing hard. Since the beginning of the year, we have had a goal to never get outworked in a game. These young men have bought in and it reflects their play."

Tuesday starts a new journey for the Wildcats when they begin Class 4-1A regional tournament action. No matter the outcome, it has been a special ride for Conley, who is in his first year with the program.

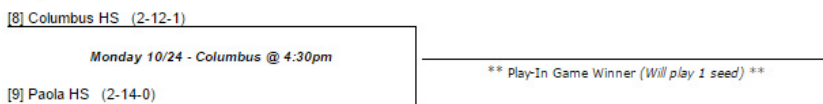
“The boys have worked so hard throughout the year to buy into my philosophy and my style of play,” Conley said. “As a coach I could not be prouder of a group of young men. They have fantastic work ethics and great character. This season can attest to that.”

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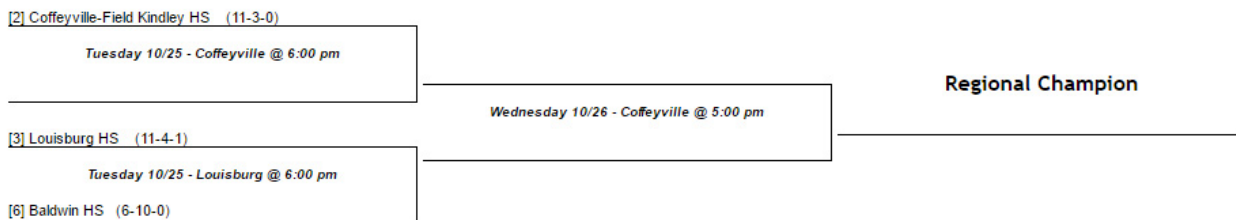
East Regional #1



Play-In Game



East Regional #2



Play-In Game

