

Wildcats prepare for dangerous Independence team



Louisburg senior Korbin Hankinson looks for a few extra yards against Paola last week. The Wildcats travel to Independence tonight for their regional playoff game.

As exciting as it was for the Louisburg football team to beat its rival in blowout fashion last week, the Wildcats didn't get a lot of time to celebrate.

The Wildcats' focus went directly to the state playoffs and their first opponent – Independence. Louisburg will travel to Independence tonight for the 7 p.m. kickoff in the Class 4A Division I regional round.

Louisburg (7-2) faces an Independence (8-1) team that has just one loss on the season and the Wildcats know they will have a challenge from the team in Southeast Kansas.

“We have had a very good week of practice leading up this game,” Louisburg co-head coach Jeff Lohse said. “Our team is excited for the challenge ahead of us. We need to grind out first downs on offense and keep them from having big plays when we are on defense. As always, we want to take care of the football and limit our penalties.”

The two teams don't have many common opponents as the Bulldogs have beaten Caney Valley, Fort Scott, Parsons, Anderson

County, El Dorado, Labette County, Field Kindley and Chanute by a combined score of 263-135. Independence's lone defeat came in September in a 46-6 loss to Basehor-Linwood.

Fort Scott is the lone common opponent between the two. Independence defeated the Tigers 14-11 in the second week of the season, while Louisburg downed Fort Scott 35-6 in district play.

The Wildcats have earned their second consecutive trip to the state playoffs, but they are looking for their first win since 2012.

Louisburg has seen several types of offenses throughout the Frontier League and the Wildcats might see a mixture of those tonight. Independence is a threat to both run and throw the ball, and the Wildcat defense, which holds teams to an average of 13 points per game, will have to be on their toes to prevent big plays.

"Indy has a pretty balanced offense," Lohse said. "Their quarterback throws the ball well and their running backs run hard. They have some big boys up front on their offensive line who can move. We are going to have to play disciplined and fast on defense."

However, the Wildcats haven't seen what the Bulldogs bring on the defensive side of the ball. Independence likes to stunt its two inside linebackers, which could cause confusion for the offensive line, but according to Lohse they have been preparing for the different look all week.

"This can create a problem if you aren't prepared for it," he said. "We haven't seen too much like this in the Frontier League, but have been working real hard in practice trying to simulate the different looks we might see tonight."

If the Wildcats survive their test this evening, they will continue to the sectional round of the playoffs and will play

the winner between Bishop Miego and Piper at 7 p.m. next Friday.