

Wildcats tie Tonganoxie in season opener



Louisburg senior Lily Cook pushes the ball up the field during Thursday's season opener against Tonganoxie at Tonganoxie High School. The Wildcats ended the match with a 0-0 tie.

TONGANOXIE – Louisburg earned the shutout, dominated possession and put together a couple dozen shots on goal.

It was everything the Wildcats could have hoped for in their season opener Thursday against Tonganoxie – well, almost everything.

Despite all that, Louisburg couldn't find the back of the net and its first game of the season ended in a 0-0 draw after two overtimes at Tonganoxie High School. The Wildcats had several opportunities to get on the board, but encountered some bad luck along the way.

"We tried to do the right thing," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "There were about 10 minutes where we were pretty amped up and we just dribbled way too much. Then we realized if we passed the ball it is way easier and not nearly as tired.

"They are frustrated because they know that this is a game they should have won. I told them what they did last year means nothing this year. Everything you get is what you are going to earn, and if you don't want to earn it, no one is

going to give you anything. That is the message we are going to take from this and we will get better from it.”

The Wildcats’ offense was aggressive from the start as they outshot Tonganoxie 24-4 on shots on goal as they had several nearly find the back of the net. Junior Bailey Belcher, along with freshmen Mackenzie Scholtz and Trinity Moore, had a bulk of those shots.

Seniors Madisen Simpson and Lily Cook, along with junior Savannah Reinhart, also had shots on goal, but nothing Louisburg tried seemed to work.

“Our expectation is that this is a game we should have won,” Conley said. “When you outshoot someone 24-4, and those aren’t shots, those are shots on goal – you have to be able to bury one. I think we hit the post six times and that is on us not finishing and doing our job. The burden probably falls on me a little bit. We probably weren’t as fit as we needed to be coming in.”



Hallie Hutsell crosses the ball to the opposite side of the field Thursday against Tonganoxie.

Louisburg controlled possession for much of the game, but Tonganoxie had a few different opportunities at a score in the second half and in the two overtimes. However, with the four shots on goal, each time Wildcat goalie Shay Whiting was there to turn it away.

Whiting corralled the Tonganoxie shots at some nerve-racking points in the game, including in the second overtime as she had a jump save off a Chieftain corner kick in the second overtime to earn the shutout.

“Shay did a good job cleaning stuff up and really had good angles,” Conley said. “She had everything covered. I was worried with the wind that one would just float in there, but she did a good job of communicating and talking with everyone.”

The Wildcats seemed to get more comfortable as the game went on and had good looks at the goal, including in both extra periods. In the first overtime, Cook and Belcher each had shots that missed just wide of the goal, but the best opportunity late in the period when Belcher took a shot that hit off the post and her follow was stopped by a diving save from the Tonganoxie goalie.

Early in the second overtime, Moore dribbled down the sideline and crossed the ball into the box to a sliding Scholtz, whose shot was knocked away and the Wildcats left Tonganoxie with a tie.

"The kids didn't quit and they won't because they are that type of kid," Conley said. "I think we started making adjustments and seeing where we need to be. We had some of them playing in spots they aren't used to playing in and as the game went along we started make adjustments and made a lot better runs at the end of the game. We just missed that final pass. You can't take anything away from the Tonganoxie goalkeeper any because she made some huge saves for them."

The schedule doesn't get easier for Louisburg as it will host defending Frontier League champion De Soto on March 28 in its home opener. The junior varsity will begin at 4:30 p.m., and the varsity will follow at approximately 6 p.m.

"There are a lot of distractions the first couple of weeks because there are so many other things going on," Conley said. "It is tough to get a flow because some kids are missing time here and there for other things, which is fine. Once we get done with spring break, we can get into a flow and just focus and everyone is there. We can push a little bit and we can get better. It allows us to get some consistency and that will help us quite a bit."

JUNIOR VARSITY WINS OPENER

The Louisburg junior varsity opener got off on the right track to start its season as it downed Tonganoxie 2-0.

The Wildcats got goals from freshmen Erin Lemke and Morgan Messer, while goalies Carson Buffington and Savannah Clark combined to earn the shutout.