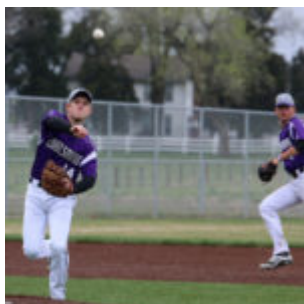


Paola takes two from Louisburg in opener



Louisburg third baseman Ben Lajoie makes a throw to first during the Wildcats' season opener last Thursday in Paola. The Wildcats fell to the Panthers 10-0 and 7-4.

PAOLA – As cold and windy as it was for Louisburg's season opener against Paola, it made it all the more difficult to get its bats heated up.

The Wildcats managed just three hits in the doubleheader last Thursday in Paola as they fell 10-0 and 7-4. Paola's pitching also had a little something to do with it.

The Panther hurlers struck out 19 Louisburg batters over the two games and had a hard time putting many scoring opportunities together.

"The first game was rough," Louisburg coach Joel McGhee said. "We struggled at the plate, had a hard time hitting spots with our pitches, and were noticeably rusty. The second game was a big improvement from the first. Defensive efforts were better, our approach at the plate improved, and our focus improved."

Louisburg (0-2) had a tough time against Paola's Blaine Hanf in the opener. Hanf pitched a six-inning no hitter and struck out 12 Wildcats.

"Hanf is a very solid pitcher and he kept most of our guys

guessing throughout their at-bats,” McGhee said. “He was hitting his spots and he threw quality pitches. He had quality off-speed pitches to go with his fastball.”

Louisburg senior Dalton Stone started the opener for the Wildcats, and despite allowing three runs in the first inning, settled down to pitch two scoreless innings and struck out four batters. Kylan Harper and Joe Allen came in for relief.

The Wildcats were a little more patient at the plate in the nightcap as they drew eight walks and converted those into four runs. Louisburg took a one-run lead in the first inning after senior Blake Ruder reached on an error and later scored on a sacrifice fly by Nate Swenson.



Louisburg second baseman Sam Guetterman makes a throw to first for an out last Thursday in Paola.

Paola answered back with two runs in the bottom of the second,

but the Wildcats took the lead back with two in the third. Stone walked with the bases loaded and scored Grant Harding and then Christian Tosterud scored on a Madden Rutherford ground out.

The Panthers jumped in front again in the bottom of the third to take a one-run lead, but the Wildcats tied it an inning later when Korbin Hankinson scored on a fielder's choice. In the bottom of the fourth inning, Paola took the lead for good with three runs.

Harding started the second game for the Wildcats and went three innings and gave up three earned runs to go along with two strikeouts. Sam Guetterman come on in relief and helped the Wildcats get out of a jam as he pitched 2 2/3 innings and gave up just one hit and struck out two.

"As a pitching staff we struggled to hit locations," McGhee said. "We gave up a lot of free bases, which hurt us, as Paola got some timely hits to follow them up. We threw quality pitches, but struggled with hitting spots. Stone, took a little bit of time to get going, but once he was on he threw quality stuff.

"Harding came out and was very efficient with his pitches. He made quick work through several innings. Guetterman also did a great job hitting locations and pitching efficiently. He came in a tough spot and got us out of a jam. Then finished the second game with some great stuff. It is nice having him back this season. We lost him last year to injury and it is great to see that he has made a recovery and is bringing great stuff."

The Wildcats will try for their first win of the season Thursday when it hosts Prairie View for a doubleheader at Lewis-Young Park. First pitch is set for 4:30 p.m.