

Lemke's golden goal puts Wildcats in state semifinals



The Louisburg bench runs onto the field to mob Erin Lemke after she scored the game-winning goal in double overtime to give the Wildcats a 2-1 win over Piper Tuesday in the Class 4-1A state quarterfinal game in Louisburg.

Louisburg freshman Erin Lemke loaded up for the most important shot of her short soccer career.

The Wildcat coaches kept preaching to Lemke, that if she got the opportunity, to strike the ball as hard as she could. So when her opportunity came in the second overtime of the Class 4-1A state quarterfinal game – Lemke did what she was told.

In fact, Lemke hit the ball so hard she ended up face first on the turf.

“I didn’t even know if it went in,” she said.

The crowd’s reaction told her everything that she needed to know.

Lemke’s shot found the back of the net and gave Louisburg a 2-1 victory over Piper in double overtime Tuesday in Louisburg. The goal put the Wildcats in the state tournament for the first time in their brief history as they are currently in just their second year.

"Going to state in only our second year is incredible," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "This a tribute to the young ladies in this program. All their hard work and dedication has paid off. I could not be more proud of these ladies and how much work they put into achieving such a fantastic feat. As I coach, I feel very fortunate to have such unbelievable kids to work with. I take great pride in being able to coach these young ladies."



Erin Lemke is all smiles after she realized she scored the game-winning goal Tuesday against Piper.

Following Lemke's goal, the Wildcat bench emptied out onto the pitch to celebrate their historic victory – a hard-fought one at that.

Louisburg, which beat Piper 4-0 earlier in the season, got a much tougher match from the Pirates as both teams had chances

to take control of the game.

After a scoreless first half, the Wildcats struck first when freshman Mackenzie Scholtz scored on an assist from junior Bailey Belcher with 32 minutes left in the second half and Louisburg had all the momentum.

About eight minutes later, it all changed.

Louisburg was called for a foul in the box and Piper was awarded a penalty kick. Piper's Emily Wilson snuck the ball past Wildcat goalie Shay Whiting to tie the match.

Although Whiting missed the penalty kick, the Louisburg junior came up big in several situations for Wildcat defense. Whiting had five saves on the day.

She also got some help from her defense as Bryn O'Meara, Camdyn Clark, Kaitlyn Lewer and Hannah Straub all cleared the ball away at big moments or contested the Piper attack.

"I always have to be ready," Whiting said. "There was a never a moment where they weren't going to shoot because they can shoot from midfield so you have to be ready. The defense did a good job covering them so they didn't get many shots, but when there were, we had it covered."



Louisburg goalie Shay Whiting knocks away a Piper shot on goal Tuesday in the state quarterfinal game.

It appeared Louisburg had taken the lead a few minutes later as junior Savannah Reinhart put a shot into the back of the net off a rebound and the celebration began. It was short-lived though, as the Wildcats were called for off-sides and the goal was disallowed.

“The girls did a good job of keeping a level head there and not getting down,” Conley said. “They did a lot better job than I did, but we had tons of momentum and we didn’t give up. I think fitness was a problem for (Piper) because they had a shorter bench than we did and I think eventually it paid dividends.”

Piper had a direct kick opportunity just outside the box just before the end of regulation that would have given them the win, but the shot sailed just over the crossbar.

Belcher and Scholtz each had shots on goal in the first overtime that would have given Louisburg the win, but those shots were just wide of the net.

All that led up to Lemke's heroics halfway through the second overtime.

Scholtz played a through ball into the box as Lemke was cutting toward the middle. With a Piper defender on her back, Lemke ripped a shot past the Piper goalie and the rest was history.

The Wildcats made it to the state quarterfinals last season before falling to De Soto, but now they have taken the next step as they prepare to play in the state semifinals.

"It was a tough battle and we knew it would be," Whiting said. "Having that pressure of being better than last year was always there, but we pulled through and we got it and that is what we wanted. It was all about who wanted it more at the end and we pulled through."



Louisburg junior Bailey Belcher heads the ball away Tuesday against Piper.

Louisburg will now travel to Wichita on Friday for the Class 4-1A state soccer championships. The Wildcats (13-5-1) will meet Thomas More Prep (13-4-1) at 7 p.m. at Friends University.

If the Wildcats advance, they will play the winner of Maize South (17-1-1) and Bishop Miege (11-7-1) in the championship game at 2 p.m. on Saturday. If Louisburg loses, it will play in the third-place game at noon Saturday.

"The game is going to be on turf so we are going to see if we can find some turf fields to practice on this week so we can get ready for the speed of the game," Conley said. "It will be a faster game and now we are going to play some really good teams. We just have to get there, play one game at a time and see what happens."