

Ryals ready for next step with William Jewell



Louisburg senior Grant Ryals made it official on Feb. 7 when he signed his letter of intent to play soccer at William Jewell, a Division II program in Liberty, Mo. Ryals was a first-team all-league and all-state selection this past season for the Wildcats.

The process for finding the right home was a taxing one at times for Louisburg senior Grant Ryals.

Ryals spent the last couple of years going to showcase camps and taking college visits trying to figure out what school was going to be the best fit for him. Then on the night before he was to sign his letter of intent, he was trying to find a pen with his new school's name on it.

In what was supposed to be an easy task, it instead became an arduous one.

"We actually found seven other pins from different schools but not the one I was looking for," Ryals said. "That just showed how long of a process it has been and getting this offer is one of the best days of my life."

That offer came from William Jewell and Ryals made it official on Feb. 7 when he signed to play soccer for the Division II program based in Liberty, Mo.

Although Ryals was presented with several different options for his soccer future, he couldn't pass up an opportunity to help out the Cardinal program.

"The program is really good," Ryals said. "The coach likes to recruit kids that are somewhat close, so that when everyone gets there, we are familiar with are surroundings since we are all from the same area. I know the team has had some struggles, but they are still fairly new to Division II, and the conference is very competitive. That is one of the things I liked about Jewell the most is we know that every game is going to be close and that it will be competitive."

William Jewell finished with a 3-14 record this past season under second-year coach Garrett Jahn and Ryals sees the Cardinals as building into something good in the Great Lakes Valley Conference.



Grant Ryals signed his letter intent in front of family and friends on Feb. 7 at LHS. Seated (front row, from left) his father Jason Ryals, Grant, his mother Janelle

Ryals and his brother Layne. Standing (from left) is Grant's club coach Rich Jones, Louisburg head coach Kyle Conley and assistant Michael Pickman.

Ryals, who played in the defensive midfield for Louisburg, hopes to play in the same spot for the Cardinals in the future, but he realizes a lot can change.

"They play a 3-5-2 so there will probably be a lot of midfield options," Ryals said. "I know the coach was looking for a lot of midfielders and he said he saw me on the travel squad coming in, but you never know. I still have to work my way into a position."

Ryals was key fixture on the Louisburg team the past two seasons as he helped the Wildcats to their first state semifinal appearance in 2016 and back-to-back regional championships in 2016 and 2017.

He was named to the all-Frontier League first team the last two seasons and Ryals earned first-team all-state honors as a senior and was selected to the second team as a junior. Ryals finished his senior season with 13 goals and 15 assists.

"He was our leader and motivator the past two years," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "He had the ability to get others to believe in our goal and to push to that level. He is an even better young man. I am extremely proud of him and how he has grown as a player and person over the past two seasons."

Even though William Jewell was a good soccer fit for Ryals, he was also looking for the right spot academically and it also factored big into his decision. He plans on majoring in biomedical engineering.

"There were a lot of other schools that I enjoyed, but it was all about find the right school academically and other things," Ryals said. "I really liked William Jewell because

they were smaller and had a really good graduate program, so my job experience and opportunities were better there as well. Plus, it was close to home and that was a big factor too.”

Now it is all about finishing out his senior year at Louisburg and preparing himself for college soccer in the fall. Ryals is excited for what the future holds.

“Academically, I just want to keep getting good grades and soccer wise I just want to enjoy my time,” he said. “I have worked hard to get into the position where I am at and I just want to enjoy the ride.”