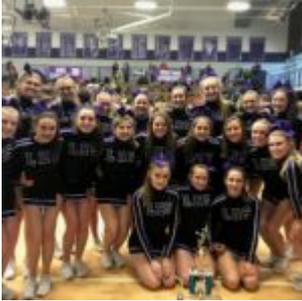


LHS cheer wraps up successful season



The Louisburg High School cheerleading team had a busy 2017-18 season and one that ended with an awarding finish at the Baldwin competition in February when the Wildcats earned grand champion honors.

The end of the winter sports campaign also marks the conclusion for the 2017-18 Louisburg High School cheerleading team as it will put away the pom-poms for a few months as the Wildcats begin looking toward next year.

This past season brought a lot of highs, and a few lows, for the Wildcat program under first-year head coach Dana Shaffer.

One of the biggest moments for the LHS cheer squad came on Feb. 3 when it competed at the Baldwin Cheer Festival at Baldwin High School. The Wildcat group put on one of their best performances of the season as they earned a '1' rating, that included grand champion honors.

The 20 member Wildcat cheer team includes Jady Amren, Avery Barber, Olivia Barber, Cecilia Bindi, Billie Casebeer, Andrea Gaza, Hallie Hutsell, Bria Jensen, Addie Katzer, Kaitlyn Lewer, Ashlyn McManigal, Brooklyn Mitchell, Lexi Pena, Leia Shaffer, Ashley Stuteville, Gabby Tappan, Kaitlyn Urban, Lauren Vincent, Shaylor Whitham and Eleanor Willming.

Louisburg also finished first in dance, choreography and stunts in the competition that featured teams from approximately 20 area schools. What made the accomplishment even more impressive was the girls had just two weeks to perfect their routine.

“That was pretty amazing and the girls did a really great job,” Shaffer said. “If you put something in front of them, no matter the time frame, they are going to get to work and they are going to do it well.”

For the first time, the LHS cheer team also included a manager in Hannah Jones, who Shaffer relied on throughout the season.

“Hannah has been a great manager for us,” Shaffer said. “Cheer has never had a manager before. She has gone to every game, every practice, gone to camp and I couldn’t have done it without her.”

Among the regular performances at football and basketball games, the team also made history in November when it traveled to Topeka to compete in the KSHSAA Inaugural Game Day Spirit Showcase.

Louisburg was one of 18 Class 4A programs to participate in the first-year event. The team was judged based on three categories: Band dance, fight song and crowd leading.

Like with any new competition, there were a few hiccups and one of them cost the Wildcats. Instead of being given a three-point deduction, the judges made a mistake and accidentally gave Louisburg a 13-point deduction that could not be rectified.

That cost the Wildcats a possible spot in the finals as they would have had a chance to battle it out for a state championship.

“It was overwhelming, just for the fact that we didn’t know

what we were getting in to and everyone else thought the same because it was new for everyone,” Shaffer said. “We got kind of raked over the coals on our score. They recorded a lot of the scores by hand, and not electronically, so instead of deducting us by three points, we got a 13-point deduction. They admitted their fault and it was a learning experience for them too.

“If the score we were supposed to have gotten would have happened, we would have been in third position to go for first. It stings a little bit still, but with it being a first year I understand everyone is trying to work out the kinks. We will go back next year and are looking forward to doing even better.”

Coach Shaffer is already looking forward to next season for the Wildcat program with a few changes, along with hoping to make amends at the state competition.

One that is already in place in creation of the Cheer Cat-Backers, an parent-run organization to help raise money for the team.

“The parents have been great and they started the cheer version of the Cat-Backers and we are going to do some fundraising for next year so we can afford to go to high school nationals,” she said.

Another change could be the size of the group, along with the possibility of hosting their own competition.

“I don’t think we are going to have as big of squad next year, because I would like to focus on a little smaller scale and nail it that way,” she said. “That is just a preference though. Next year we will have a mascot, too.

“We will have a competition of our own, somewhat like the Baldwin one that we go to, and I think that will be a lot of fun. Hopefully it will be a great fundraising opportunity for

us as well. We want to get up to the standards of bigger schools. Everyone knows who Louisburg is, but we don't have the funds that those other schools have and hopefully we can get there and have a chance to maybe attend nationals."