

# LHS girls soccer hopes for another state appearance



The Louisburg High School girls soccer team hopes to have more celebrations like this one for the 2018 season after finishing fourth at the Class 4-1A state tournament last year. The Wildcats open their season Thursday when they host Tonganoxie.

It wasn't exactly the finish it was looking for to end last year, but despite losing its final two matches, the Louisburg High School girls soccer team had its best season in school history.

The Wildcats made the Class 4-1A state semifinals in just its second year and went on to finish fourth. As good of an accomplishment as that was, the ending to last season was more disappointing than celebratory for many of the players.

"It is not the fondest memory I have, but unfortunately for me it is the predominant memory of that season," senior goalie Shay Whiting said. "I think it is something that everyone thinks about and we are all coming back with that fresh in our minds and have a state of revenge."

Louisburg suffered a 1-0 loss to Thomas More Prep in the state semifinals and then fell 8-0 to Maize South in the third-place match the following day that ended Louisburg's season with a 13-7-1 record.

“To be quite honest, we can look at it glass half empty and say we gave up nine goals in two games and we think about that,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “On the other hand, you can look at it half-full and say we are one goal away from playing for a state championship. It was a huge feat for a second year program, but that was last year, so it is our motivation now to prove that it wasn’t a fluke. These girls are pretty motivated. We are returning a strong core of kids and the sky’s the limit for them.”

Yes, the Wildcats are entering the 2018 season with high aspirations and will be considered one of the top returning 4A programs in the state. Louisburg graduated just four seniors from a season ago and brings back several all-league and all-state players.

At the top of that list is senior Bailey Belcher, who will anchor one of the strengths for the Wildcats in the midfield. Belcher is a two-time first team all-Frontier League and all-state player, who has provided a bulk of the Wildcats’ scoring the last two years.

“Honestly, we have a chance to go to state just like we did last year,” Belcher said. “Last year at this time, it seemed a little far-fetched that we could go to state, but we did it. I feel like this year that we are going to be even better than we were and state is something we need to strive for.”

Last season, Belcher finished 29 goals and 12 assists to lead Louisburg. As a team, the Wildcats scored 82 goals last season and they return more than 90 percent of that scoring.



**Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher led the Wildcats in scoring last season with 29 goals.**

“We only saw one dimension of Bailey’s game the last two years,” Conley said. “I would like to see her play with a little more finesse and move the ball a little bit quicker. She just uses her God-given ability to just run by people and next year (in college) she won’t be able to do that. We are going to push really hard for her to be a better player and let the ball do most of the work for her.

“At the same time, she is just like a bulldog out there and you have to let her go out and make plays. She needs to take her game to another level and she can. I don’t think she has peaked at all and I think she can have an unbelievable year.”

Sophomore Mackenzie Scholtz was also a big scoring threat for the Wildcats last season as she added 27 goals and a team-high 18 assists from the forward spot.

Another sophomore, Erin Lemke, will also be a fixture at the midfield/forward spot and both players have had big offseasons. Lemke scored the program's most historic goal to date as her golden goal in the state quarterfinals against Piper propelled Louisburg to the semifinals.

"Mackenzie and Erin and going to take huge bounds," Conley said. "They had really solid freshman years. Mackenzie had more of the stats, but Erin scored the most important goal in our program's history. I think both are going to take off and have huge years. It has been fun to see them improve so much."



**Sophomore Mackenzie Scholtz is one of the Lady Cats' top returning scorers as she finished with 27 goals last season to go along with 18 assists.**

Senior Savannah Reinhart, who earned second team all-league honors last season, returns in the midfield for Louisburg.

Sophomores Trinity Moore, Avery O'Meara, Morgan Messer, Lily McDaniel and juniors Hallie Hutsell, Hayli Detherage and Leia Shaffer could all see time in the midfield.

As strong as the Wildcat attack seems to be, they also return a strong defensive core, starting with Whiting. The Louisburg senior earned first team all-state honors last season and hopes to have a big year.

"I am pretty comfortable back there now, especially when it comes to talking to my defense," she said. "I know more about the game, so I am able to help them in that regard of where they need to be it. Skill-wise, I have some great goalies behind me and we push each other every practice. It is very competitive, but at the same time we are all there for each other and we are all friends."

One of those goalies is junior Carson Buffington, who is in her second year with the program and both have provided a lot of competition in practice.

"I think both are poised to have good years," Conley said. "I could dabble with splitting time or we could just give it to just to Shay to start. Both have been so incredibly good and it has been a good competition and is a good problem to have. It is Shay's spot to lose, but Carson is pushing hard and I think competition just brings out the best in players. They are huge supporters of each other and they encourage each other tremendously. We are going to be really solid there."

Louisburg also returns three of its four defenders from last year, including junior Camdyn Clark, who earned second team all-league and all-state honors for her work in the back. She will be joined by junior Kaitlyn Lewer.



**Junior Camdyn Clark returns to lead an experienced Louisburg defense after she earned all-league and all-state honors last season.**

Straub, who played back last season, could be there again, while another spot is up for grabs. Senior Avery Barber, freshman Olivia Barber, Moore and sophomore Skylar Bowman could all find time on defense.

“I think attacking wise we are going to be incredibly fast and will be incredibly talented,” Conley said. “We will be really tough to defend against. In the back, we are still kind of playing with that a little bit. Last year we started a freshman and two sophomores, and now we have a sophomore and two juniors back there. To be quite honest, it is musical chairs back there. We have the talent to do it, it is all about who is going to step up and fill the void.”

Louisburg will kick off its season Thursday when it hosts

Tonganoxie at the Wildcat Soccer Complex. The two teams battled to a 0-0 tie to start last season, despite the Wildcats outshooting the Chieftains 34-4.

They hope to get off to a better start this time around.

“I am excited to show the town just how talented this team is and everything that we are bringing,” Avery Barber said. I think it is going to be a good season.”

A season they want to get started with a win.

“Our biggest thing is we need to come out with everything that we have,” Reinhart said. “We can’t let our guard down and we have to give it all we have and pull out a win to start the season.

“We always have higher expectations for ourselves. Our goal is that we make it to state, but we don’t want to just get there, we want to win it. We have some really good underclassmen coming up that will keep our program strong, not only for this year, but for years to come.”