

Wildcats roll Tonganoxie in season opener



Louisburg junior Kaitlyn Lewer clears the ball away from a Tonganoxie player during the Wildcats' season opener Thursday in Louisburg. The Wildcats rolled to a 6-0 win over the Chieftains.

The Louisburg High School girls soccer team has made it a mission to try and get back to the state tournament this season.

Louisburg took a step in the right direction Thursday as the Wildcats picked up a win in their season opener and did so in convincing fashion.

The Wildcats used four second half goals and shutout Tonganoxie, 6-0, at Wildcat Soccer Complex and avenged a 0-0 result in last year's season opener.

"It was really nice that we got off on the right foot," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "It was an incredibly physical game and it took us a while to adjust. I felt the girls got better as the game went on and we started to play like I expected us to in the second half. I really like the amount of grit and toughness our kids showed and how we didn't back down. We were about as ready as we could have been and I think that we showed what our potential could be."

Physical play was the common theme throughout the contest as Tonganoxie was called for multiple fouls that included three yellow cards and a red card late in the match.

Those fouls didn't seem to bother the Wildcat players much as they were able to put away two penalty kicks and didn't let the emotions of the game affect their play.

"For the most part, the girls played extremely hard and were pretty focused," Conley said. "I am glad that no one seriously got hurt and that we didn't back down from the challenge. It was a great first match and I think opened some of our girls' eyes to what playing high school soccer is all about. I would like our speed of play to improve and if we played the ball faster, we could have avoided a lot of that contact."

Senior Bailey Belcher appeared like she was in midseason form for the Wildcats as she recorded a hat trick in her first game of the season and scored two of her three goals in the first half to give Louisburg a 2-0 halftime advantage.

Belcher opened the scoring in the first 10 minutes of the contest with a free kick from 20 yards out, then midway through the first half, converted a penalty kick after being fouled in the box.



Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher puts a shot on goal Thursday. Belcher had three goals in the victory.

The Wildcats were able to maneuver through the Tonganoxie defense through most of the night as they put 20 shots on goal, but struggled a little in the first half to find a rhythm offensively.

“Offensively in the first half, I felt we wasted a lot of opportunities,” Conley said. “We struggled to put the ball on frame, as well as the timing of our runs. The second half we were much more successful with our timing and how we moved the ball. We could have been better, but for the first game, we responded and played well.”

Louisburg blew the match open in the second half as sophomore Skylar Bowman struck a ball from close to 20 yards out to give the Wildcats a 3-0 lead with 17 minutes remaining.

Three minutes later, Belcher dribbled the ball into the box and had a 1-on-1 with the Tonganoxie goalie, but the Chieftain keeper tripped Belcher while she was going in to score and was given a red card, forcing her to leave the game.

Sophomore Mackenzie Scholtz took the penalty kick and found the back of the net for a 4-0 advantage. Belcher and sophomore Erin Lemke each put away goals in the final minutes to help seal the win.



Sophomore Hannah Straub (left) beats a Tonganoxie player to a 50-50 ball Thursday.

The Wildcats dominated possession for much of the contest, but the Louisburg defense didn't give Tonganoxie many good looks when they had the ball on their side.

Louisburg's back line of juniors Kaitlyn Lewer and Camdyn

Clark, along with sophomores Hannah Straub and Avery O'Meara, freshman Olivia Barber and senior Avery Barber gave up just three shots on goal.

Senior goalie Shay Whiting saved all three opportunities and earned the shutout in the process.

"Defensively we tried some new things and worked hard," Conley said. "We did a fairly nice job standing up our opponent and did a really good job of having support of players on the ball. All of the girls did a nice job of marking and communicating. I think the communication was really good between our defensive group."

The Wildcats will have this week off for Spring Break, before returning to action Mar. 27 when they travel to De Soto for their first Frontier League game of the season. Varsity is set to begin at approximately 6 p.m.