

Bishop Miege halts Wildcats' shot at a state title



Louisburg senior Savannah Reinhart battles a Bishop Miege player for the ball during the Class 4-1A state championship match Saturday at Bethel College. The Wildcats fell to Miege, 5-0, and finished second overall.

NORTH NEWTON – The obstacle seemed insurmountable – and it was.

The Louisburg High School girls soccer team found itself in the Class 4-1A state championship match in the program's third year of existence, but if they wanted to take it another step further, the Wildcats were going to have to knock the defending state champion of its perch.

Unfortunately, Bishop Miege wasn't about to be moved.

In a state title game that was played in the sweltering heat Saturday at Bethel College, the Wildcats couldn't stay with the Stags in a 5-0 defeat. It was the third consecutive title for Bishop Miege, while Louisburg earned a state plaque for the first time in its short history.

"Miege is a team full of club kids that play year-round and they literally have 22 club kids, and I have like six," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "Trying to explain and adjust things, it is hard to do when our soccer experience

isn't what everyone else's is.

"That is what our work ethic does, being blue collar, is it keeps us in games like this and allows us to make it this far. We ran into a great Miego team. The kids held their heads high and they played hard and did things the right way. It stinks now, but for the next 30 years or so that plaque is going to be in that case and no one can ever take that from us. I'm just really proud of the kids."



Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher heads the ball away from Bishop Miego player Saturday in Newton.

It was an historic playoff run for the Wildcats as they put together their best finish in school history and cemented its legacy with a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Topeka-Hayden on Friday in the state semifinals.

Louisburg was guaranteed a plaque after just missing out on

one the year before after it took fourth overall. The Wildcats were thankful for their fourth place medals at the time, but they wanted something a little bigger.

“It is a third-year program with 41 wins, three regional championships, two state final fours and now a state runner-up,” Conley said. “We just have kids who come in and work their butt off. They are not soft, they aren’t weak and from top to bottom they are going to work hard.

“We worked hard (Saturday), but we just played Miego. That is one of the best teams in the state, and that stinks, but our kids played hard, worked their tail off and it was a great year. We had people criticize us for how we got there, but we won games and that really motivated the kids. It got them fired up to go do something bigger than themselves. I couldn’t be more proud of they stuck together and what they accomplished.”

Bishop Miego (14-6-1) broke open a scoreless game in the 10th minute when Sophia Stram scored to give Miego a 1-0 advantage and then doubled it in the 25th minute with another goal from Stram.



Louisburg goalie Shay Whiting slides in for a save Saturday in the Class 4-1A championship match at Bethel College.

Miege scored off a corner kick with 13 minutes left in the first half and then found the back of the net with another shot in the box late in the first half and the Stags took a 4-0 halftime lead.

Louisburg (14-7) had just one good look at goal in the first half as sophomore Mackenzie Scholtz broke through the Stags defense for a one-on-one with the goalie, but the Stags keeper stopped the attempt.

As time ticked off in the second half, the four Louisburg seniors realized their time was coming to an end. Seniors Bailey Belcher, Savannah Reinhart, Shay Whiting and Avery Barber all played their final game as a Wildcat.

Belcher was one of the team's leading scorers from the midfield spot, while Whiting served as the team's starting goalkeeper the last three seasons. Reinhart was a part-time starter in the midfield and logged a lot of minutes, while Barber gave Louisburg good minutes in the back.

"They were an unbelievable group," Conley said. "It is a good thing that we are only losing four kids, but we lose four really incredible kids. They have great personalities, great team leaders and they are players in key positions with great work ethic. They are fantastic kids who are always looking out for others. They were always putting the team before themselves and I couldn't be more proud of that group."



Members of the Louisburg girls state runner-up girls soccer team are (front row, from left) Hayli Detherage, Savannah Reinhart, Camdyn Clark, Shay Whiting, Bailey Belcher, Morgan Messer, Skylar Bowman, Olivia Barber, Leia Shaffer; (back row) head coach Kyle Conley, Avery Barber, Madison Quinn, Carson Buffington, Erin Lemke, Julianne Finley, Haley Cain, Trinity Moore, Mackenzie Scholtz, Hannah Straub, Hallie Hutsell, Kaitlyn Lewer, Avery O'Meara and assistant coach Michael Pickman.

The Wildcats had an up and down season that featured some tough losses, and one where they had to deal with key injuries throughout the season. Still, the team came together at the right time.

“Our team is really young,” Conley said. “Hoping to see them make a jump from a freshman to playing like a junior or senior is unrealistic. At the same time, we also thought some things are going to get handed to us and be super easy. We had to work pretty hard and eventually figured out we need to go to another level. The girls realized that they are going to have to play stronger and harder and once the tournament started we got going pretty good. I’m really proud of them.”