

# Louisburg girls soccer advances to championship match



Members of the Louisburg High School girls rush the field to celebrate the Wildcats' 1-0 win over Topeka-Hayden on Friday at Bethel College. The Wildcats will play in the state championship match tomorrow for the first time in the program's third-year history.

NORTH NEWTON – The Louisburg High School girls soccer program is now just one win away from accomplishing something the school has yet to see.

Louisburg defeated Topeka-Hayden, 1-0, in the Class 4-3-2-1A state semifinals Friday at Bethel College in Newton and advanced to its first state championship in program history. It can make even more history on Saturday.

The Wildcats will square off with Bishop Miege in the state championship match at 2 p.m., and has the chance to win the program's first state title. It would also be the first girls state championship in Louisburg history.

“For a third-year program, making it to state two years in a row and just the things these girls have done is amazing,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “I don't have a ton of club kids. I have kids that just bust their butt every day and that

is just what we do. We play hard, grind, we don't give up and we just keep fighting and keep working. All the people that said we didn't deserve to be here, all teams that said we had an easy path to state and we didn't do anything – just look at us now.”

It was an evenly played state semifinal match against Hayden, and both teams had their chances to find the back of the net early on. Wildcat goalie Shay Whiting made a couple big stops against Hayden to keep the game scoreless.

With 18 minutes left in the second half, Louisburg finally broke through.

Senior Bailey Belcher played a through ball down the heart of the Hayden defense and hit a running Mackenzie Scholtz in stride and Scholtz put it in the back of the net to give the Wildcats the lead.

“This feels amazing,” Belcher said. “When I played that through ball to Mack and it went in, I was like ‘Oh my gosh, we have a chance.’ We just had to keep it going. We are pretty lucky, but we have to be ready to go tomorrow.”



**Sophomore back Trinity Moore heads the ball away from the Hayden attack Friday.**

Last season, the Wildcats lost both games in their state tournament appearance, but no matter what happens Saturday, they have already recorded the best finish in the program's short history.

"Our goal was to get back here, but we still aren't satisfied with what we have accomplished," Whiting said. "We are going to go out and try to get that trophy. Being a public school, from a small town, people said we didn't deserve to be here, but we are here and we are here to win."

The road to this state championship appearance has been an interesting one for the Wildcats. More than three years ago, a group of Louisburg parents and citizens raised enough money to begin the girls soccer program and fund it for three years.

Louisburg is the final year of that funding, and while the program isn't going away, the team realized they needed to play for more than themselves.

"We played for the community tonight," Belcher said. "We have to remember that when they raised money for this program, it was just through this year, so I think we owed it to them to play well. I really think it might have helped with how we played and I think it was one of the best games we played all season."



**Senior Savannah Reinhart (right) battles for the ball against Hayden on Friday during the state semifinal match.**

All that hard work has put the Wildcats in a position to be named the best team in the state. However, they have one final road block – and it is a big one.

Bishop Miego, which defeated McPherson 2-1 in the other state semifinal, is the defending state champion and perennial power in Class 4A and the Wildcats know they will have their hands full.

“They are the best team in the state,” Conley said. “I don’t care what level you are, but year in and year out they are the best team. I will probably stay up half the night trying to figure it all out. If you want a chance to get a state championship, you are going to have to play the best team in the state and they are. We are going to have to be really good.”



**Junior defender Camdyn Clark was one of several on the Wildcat defense who helped with the shutout of Hayden on Friday.**

Despite the big obstacle standing in their way, the Wildcats won't mind playing the underdog role.

"We figured we would probably play Miego one way or another," Whiting said. "It has all fallen into place to where we wanted. We are the underdogs and we know it. It is going to be David versus Goliath, but we are going to go out and do our jobs."