

# Third time's a streak: Wildcats win regional championship



The Louisburg girls soccer team was all smiles following its 4-1 victory over Sumner Academy on Thursday in the Class 4-3-2-1A regional championship game. The Wildcats will host Heritage Christian at 5 p.m. tonight in the state quarterfinals.

KANSAS CITY, Kan. – The smiles and celebrations were abound for the Louisburg girls soccer team following Thursday's regional championship victory.

It was not an unusual feeling for the Wildcats as they won their third straight regional title following their 4-1 win over Sumner Academy at Schlagle Stadium – in fact – it is all they have ever known considering the program is only three years old.

So when Louisburg led by just one goal at halftime, the Wildcats regrouped and put together a solid performance in the second half.

“This is one of our goals,” senior captain Bailey Belcher said. “I told the girls at halftime that we haven't lost a regional championship game yet and we aren't about to start now. We needed to come out, play hard and keep progressing,

especially now at the end of the season. I think we are doing that.”

Louisburg scored three second half goals to pull away for the win after a slow start to the match. Although the Wildcats dominated possession, they were unable to convert on many of their chances in the first half and allowed Sumner Academy to get a couple different runs on the goal.

Playing well is obviously a key for the Wildcats’ run in the postseason, but Louisburg coach Kyle Conley isn’t worried about the style points at this juncture – just the result.



**Sophomore Avery O’Meara battles a Sumner Academy player for a 50-50 ball Thursday.**

“It is definitely good,” Conley said. “We want good things to happen and we want positive results, but sometimes you have to win ugly and that was a really ugly game for us. We struggled

in the last 20 minutes to just pass the ball and that has been our problem all season on the road, especially on turf. It is survive and advance.

“I was super excited about a majority of effort and work ethic. I think the girls busted their butts out there and that is our goal. You have to go play the game and win it, and I think the girls did a real good job.”

After a slow start to the match, Louisburg sophomore Mackenzie Scholtz was able to get the Wildcats on the board first. Scholtz pounded a goal in the back of the net with 24 minutes remaining in the first half.

Louisburg had a few more chances on goal in the first half, but took a 1-0 lead into halftime thanks in part to a pair of big saves from goalie Shay Whiting.

“I think we struggled at first and for some reason we always have a turf spell, but toward the end I think we started to click,” Whiting said. “On defense, we are just thinking too much out there at times and we need to take a step back and gather ourselves. Once we get that together, I think we can do some special things.”



**Morgan Messer settles a pass Thursday in the Wildcats' 4-1 win over Sumner Academy.**

Offense started to come together in the second half thanks to the feet of sophomore Erin Lemke as she scored a pair of goals, including one early in the second half on an assist from Belcher.

Sophomore Skylar Bowman followed that up with a goal of her own when she sent a towering kick toward the goal, which took a high bounce and sailed over the head of the Sumner Academy keeper and went in.

After Sumner scored with 27 minutes left in the match, Lemke all but sealed the win with her second goal on an assist from Morgan Messer in the 60<sup>th</sup> minute.





**Hayli Detherage (11) races to beat a Sumner Academy player to the ball during the regional championship game.**

From there the celebration ensued, albeit a mild one as the Wildcats still have their ultimate goal sitting out there for them.

Louisburg (12-6) will host Heritage Christian (10-5-1) at 5 p.m. tonight in the Class 4-3-2-1A state quarterfinals as the Wildcats will try for their second consecutive trip to state after finishing fourth last season.

“It’s very exciting right now,” Whiting said. “We weren’t happy with the results out at state last year, now we have one game left to get back there so we need to stay focused. We have to take it one game at a time and that is what we are going to do.”

The Wildcats defeated Heritage Christian, 8-0, earlier in the

season but they will be facing a Charger team that has won nine of their last 10 games to get to this point.

“Our side of the bracket is a little more favorable for us, but Heritage Christian is a good team,” Conley said. “They have one of the best center-mids in the state that no one really talks about and she is a fantastic player. We will have our hands full and we just have to play our game. They are a scrappy team and they play hard. We are going to have to get ready and keep working hard.”