

Wildcats open postseason run with rout of Basehor-Linwood



Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher lets out a scream after scoring the match's first goal Monday during the Class 4-3-2-1A regional semifinal at Wildcat Sports Complex. Belcher finished with two goals and three assists in the 8-1 win.

The Louisburg High School girls soccer team had to go up against two opponents during the Class 4-3-2-1A regional semifinal Monday at Wildcat Sports Complex – Basehor-Linwood and Mother Nature.

The Wildcats had to dodge lightning strikes and were forced to sit out for a 45 minute delay five minutes into the match. It wasn't an ideal start, but Louisburg certainly made the most of a bad situation.

Louisburg scored its first goal 20 minutes into the first half and never looked back as the Wildcats rolled Basehor-Linwood, 8-1, to move on to the regional championship match. Louisburg will travel to Kansas City, Kan., on Thursday to meet Sumner Academy for the right to move on to the state quarterfinals.

"We did a good job for the most part," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "There are so many distractions with the weather, and the stoppages, and wondering whether we were going to get the game in was difficult, plus we needed to get the game in cause we were going to need the rest."

"The girls played well, especially when we moved the ball. When we weren't selfish, we did a really good job passing the ball and finding feet. We played to everyone, and when we get rid of that selfishness and just play, we are a really good team."

Sharing the ball was a strength for Louisburg (11-6) as it had five different players find the back of the net and five of the eight goals were assisted.

Sophomore forward Mackenzie Scholtz led the way with three goals and an assist, while senior midfielder Bailey Belcher had two goals and three assists to account for a bulk of the Wildcat offense.

Belcher opened the match with the goal at the 20 minute mark, then five minutes later, struck again on a shot from about 25-yards out to put the Wildcats up two goals.

Scholtz followed suit as she got the ball in the box, faked out the Basehor-Linwood goalie, and scored an empty-netter for the next Wildcat goal. Freshman Olivia Barber found the back of the net less than a minute later to help Louisburg pull away for a 4-0 halftime lead.



Louisburg sophomore Hannah Straub wins a 50-50 ball against a Basehor-Linwood player Monday in Louisburg.

The Wildcats picked up right where they left off in the second half as Scholtz scored two straight goals to put Louisburg up six. With 17 minutes left in the match, after Basehor scored its lone goal, senior Savannah Reinhart was fouled in the box and converted the penalty kick.

In the final minutes, Conley subbed most of his starters out to get his reserves some minutes and that time is something Julianne Finley won't soon forget. The Louisburg junior, who normally plays on defense on the junior varsity level, was put up top.

Finley got her chance at a goal as Louisburg was awarded a free kick just outside the box and her shot glanced off the Basehor goalie for her first varsity goal.

"I wanted to get everyone in and get some playing time and I told Jules to go up top, and she goes 'Where?'" Conley said. "I just told her to go up there and run her butt off and give me five good minutes and see what you can do. Then when she got that free kick opportunity, she happened to be in the right spot. The shot went in and it was a pretty cool moment. The girls were pumped for her and it was cool to have things like that and make those lifelong memories. It is a lot of fun."



Julianne Finley gets a hug from several teammates after scoring her first varsity goal Monday.

Louisburg's defense held firm for much of the match as it allowed just the one goal and limited the Bobcats' chances. It was rebound performance after allowing four goals to Spring Hill last week.

“Defensively I thought we did some good things,” Conley said. “We let them get some runs in the middle and they are really good up top. They come at you really hard and we did a good job shifting and covering. We got away with a couple things when we missed the mark, but we were able to stand them up for the most part.

“Our biggest thing right now is trying to get rid of the tunnel vision. We are trying to teach them to focus on what is going on around you and see the field – not just focus on the ball.”

The Wildcats will try for the regional title at 5 p.m., Thursday when they travel to Schlagle Stadium to face off with Sumner Academy. Louisburg defeated Sumner, 7-0, earlier in the season, but Conley knows it won't be the same this time around.

“Sumner is a good team and a much different team than what we played a while ago,” he said. “We have to get refocused and be ready to go. They had a lot of injuries the last time we played them and they are playing pretty decent right now. We have to pick up the intensity, we are going to ball hunt a little bit and just play our game. We are going to do our job and see what happens.”