

Wildcats split with Baldwin, De Soto in back-to-back days



Louisburg junior Hayli Detherage battles a De Soto player for a 50-50 ball Tuesday during the Wildcats' home contest. Louisburg lost the match 9-0, but defeated Baldwin, 3-1, a day earlier.

The Louisburg High School girls soccer team had an important couple of days this past week as the Wildcats hosted two teams that had beaten them already this season – one of which was atop the Frontier League standings.

Louisburg played back-to-back days Monday and Tuesday in hopes of getting a pair of wins. The Wildcats had to settle for one as they pulled off a 3-1 victory over Baldwin to exact a loss they suffered from the Bulldogs less than a week prior.

The Wildcats had to battle windy conditions to get the win, and despite letting the Bulldogs tie the match early in the second half, they were able to pull away with a pair of goals as the Wildcats dominated possession in the final 30 minutes.

“We played so bad the first time we played them, but the girls came out this time and played really hard,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “They played with intensity, we marked up tight and we pushed up the field. That is the way we need to play and the girls did a good job with it. Some kids played a

ton of minutes, and others just played a short amount of time, but everyone was engaged and in it. It was fantastic to see and the kids played the right way.”

Louisburg (9-5) got a big performance from senior Bailey Belcher as she recorded a hat trick and was responsible for all three Wildcat goals.

Belcher got things going late in the first half as she took a pass from sophomore Mackenzie Scholtz, took a shot, and put it in the back of the net to give Louisburg a 1-0 halftime lead.

Baldwin didn't waste any time in the second half as Anna Burnett tied the match in the first two minutes. The score didn't seem to faze the Wildcats.

In the 52nd minute, Baldwin was called for a penalty in the box and awarded Belcher a penalty kick. Her attempt was knocked away by the Baldwin goalie, but Belcher got the rebound and put it away for a 2-1 lead.



Louisburg defender Camdyn Clark looks to settle a ball Monday against Baldwin in Louisburg.

Then in the game's final minutes, Belcher sealed the win as she dribbled toward the goal and knocked it over the goalie's head.

"We had the right build up in the first half, but we were just missing that final pass," Conley said. "Then we finally broke through and the girls realized what they needed to. We had a couple of other chances that we should have just buried, and our finishing on breakaways has not been very good, but we did a lot better in the second half. That 25 mile-per-hour wind we had to play into was obviously a major factor as well, and there were some difficulties there, but I thought the girls handled it well."

Other than the one play early in the second half, the Wildcat

defense held firm against Baldwin team that scored three goals of its own just a week earlier. Senior goalie Shay Whiting had two big saves in the first half, but limited the Bulldogs' chances in the second half.

"We have a bend but don't break philosophy," Conley said. "You can let them have some hits, but you don't want them to be good looks. Shay had two or three great saves there in that first half and coach (Michael) Pickman has done a really good job working with the goalies. He challenges them each and every day to get better and they are responding."

Tuesday didn't go as well for the Wildcats as they fell to De Soto, 9-0, and suffered from tired legs against a talented Class 5A program, who is currently undefeated in the Frontier League.

The match was scoreless through the first 10 minutes, but De Soto started rolling thanks to a pair of goals and it was also awarded a pair of penalty kicks in a 10-minute span that helped them build a 4-0 lead – which ballooned to 6-0 at halftime.

"Playing back-to-back games was tough," Conley said. "We just had two freak plays that usually don't happen in soccer, and they definitely don't happen within 10 minutes of each other. We got down and we just ran out of gas. De Soto is a good team. They are very confident in their abilities and we just didn't play very well. This is the last time we are going to play them since they aren't in the league anymore.

"For a minute there I thought we were going to get mercy-ruled and Carson (Buffington) made a great save there to keep that from happening. Shay made some good saves too, but it was rough. It was definitely not how I envisioned the game going. We just got stretched thin with the game the night before and ran out of gas. Tomorrow is a new day and we just need to get better."

This week's will bring Louisburg its final two regular season matches of the year. On Monday, the Wildcats will travel to Ottawa for a 5 p.m. match and then will host Spring Hill on Thursday for Senior Night.