

Wildcats get back to work after state runner-up finish



Senior goalie Carson Buffington goes through a drill with assistant coach Michael Pickman during the Wildcats' week-long team camp that ended on June 15.

Two weeks after advancing to the state title game, and finishing its 2018 season with a state runner-up trophy, the Louisburg High School girls soccer team was back to work.

After a little time to relax and celebrate their accomplishments, the Wildcats came back focused for their team camp that started on June 11 in an effort to do what it takes to end their season with a win in 2019.

"It is quick, but ultimately their bodies need to shut down for a little bit," Louisburg head coach Kyle Conley said. "We gave them about a week off, but the last couple of years we started the first day that we could. I think their heads are right though. Last season, we got a little bit unfocused, weren't as dedicated as we could be and that was frustrating. We are starting from the top down and refocusing our dedication and why we are here."

Focus was a big emphasis for Conley in his week-long camp as he tried to get his team to reach even higher goals. Along with the camp, the players will have weight sessions throughout the summer in an effort to get in better shape.

Conley had 28 players out for camp, and even with some players out of town, he believes he has just the right numbers.

Going into next season, Conley sees anywhere from 8 to 10 new players joining the team and that is where summer workouts provided an added benefit.



Head coach Kyle Conley speaks to his team during the Wildcats' team camp earlier this month.

"This week really helps a lot with the new ladies that we have coming in to give them an idea of what to expect and what it is going to be like," Conley said. "That way when we get into the season, they will know what to do and we don't have to spend as much time teaching and can get more work done.

"It is a lot of the same fundamentals. We are going to institute some new stuff, but our girls are a creature of habit. They like doing things that they are comfortable with,

at the same time we need to stretch them out of their comfort zone a little bit. The first three days were a lot of the same stuff we've done, but we did some new stuff and introduced some new formations. The main thing is we just want them to be focused and be prepared."

It is also a good possibility that the Wildcats will use different formations next season due to the departures of four seniors to graduation, including the program's all-time leading scorer in Bailey Belcher, and all-league players in Shay Whiting and Savannah Reinhart.

"It is going to take a lot of work to get back to where we want to be," Conley said. "We are going to have to replace a lot of offense with Bailey leaving, the stability that Savannah put up on the side, Shay in goal and Avery (Barber) providing depth in the back. We only lose four, but it is going to look quite a bit different. We are going to move some kids around and try them in new spots. We need to make it to where we are not so easy to scout. All these kids are coachable and hopefully we can fill those voids as best we can."



Junior Trinity Moore settles a ball during a drill while teammates Madison Quinn (left) and Ashley Moore look on.

Earning a spot in the state championship game gave the Wildcats a lot of confidence heading into the offseason, especially considering they did it in just the program's third year of existence.

Still, the Wildcats faced a lot of up and downs in 2018 and Conley hopes to eliminate the roller coaster ride for next season.

"I think it was the expectation for us when we were coming into last season was to play for a state championship," he said. "When we got fourth two seasons back, we had a lot of offense coming back and I thought on paper that our team should be better. I thought second place is where we deserved to finish, but that whole season was just a roller coaster. We weren't consistent and that is on me. That is what we are

talking about here is being mentally prepared, being a team leader and a good example.”