

Wildcat boys soccer uses summer to ease new faces into program



Louisburg's Eli Minster settles a ball in a passing drill during the Wildcats' team camp on July 10. The Wildcats introduced a lot of fresh faces to the program this summer after losing more than 10 players off of last season's team.

This summer has been a little different than Louisburg High School boys soccer coach Kyle Conley has been used to.

In recent years, Conley has seen waves of experienced upperclassmen come through his program, which has led to back-to-back regional titles and a fourth place finish at state.

However, this time around Conley noticed those waves aren't as high as in year's past when he started his summer conditioning program with his team. When he began his team camp on July 9, he had 37 players sign up – which nearly half of those were either freshmen or new players to the program.

After graduating 10 players from last season's regional championship team, Conley realizes this summer is important to this year's squad and he has liked what he has seen thus far.

"I felt each day of camp we improved and got better," Conley said. "The boys had positive attitudes and were very

coachable. Because of so many new kids to our program, we went about to square one and worked on technique. We spent a lot of time teaching the boys our way of doing things.”

Fundamentals was a starting point for Conley this summer as he tried to get the players accustomed to playing at a high level in high school. The Wildcats spent the week-long camp going over several different aspects in order to get ready for their season, which will begin in late August.



Louisburg head coach Kyle Conley goes over a drill during the Wildcats’ team camp last week.

“We spent a massive amount of time working on our technique and our speed of play,” Conley said. “This season will require a lot of teaching so we started with phase one. The boys did a great job of progressing and improving. It will be fun to watch this team grow throughout the season.”

As if introducing a number of new players to the varsity level this season wasn't going to be difficult enough, the Wildcats lost one of their top returning players before the season even started.

Junior midfielder Landon Johnson sustained a severe leg injury a couple months ago and will miss at least half, if not the entire season for Louisburg. Johnson was going to be a focal point in the midfield for the Wildcats as he is a two-year starter that earned first team All-Frontier League and second team all-state honors last season.

"Losing Landon is a big blow, but we will play with the next man up mentality," Conley said, "We have some quality players and returners and they will rise to the occasion and fill the void. Landon is a tremendous player and will be very difficult to replace."

Although Conley's work with them is all but complete until the first day of practice next month, the Wildcats will still continue to work in the weight room and go through individual sessions on their own as they prepare for what will be a difficult schedule with the new additions of Frontier League members Piper, Tonganoxie and Bonner Springs.

Despite the obstacles that are in store for the Wildcats this upcoming season, Conley is looking forward to what he has returning.

"This team is going to be extremely young, but these boys have that blue collar work ethic and mentality," he said. "They are coachable and always work hard. I am excited to see how these boys progress."