

Young Wildcats look to rebuild after special season



Louisburg senior Brock Bila (1), who was a first team All-Frontier League player last season, is one of five returning starters for the Wildcats as they open their season Tuesday in Fort Scott.

It was a memorable ride for the Louisburg High School boys soccer team last season that ended with its third consecutive regional title and a spot in the state quarterfinals.

Expectations are always high with the Louisburg program, but the Wildcats have some reshuffling to do for this season as they have to replace 10 seniors off of last year's team – many of whom played key roles during their run.

The Wildcats return just five starters from a year ago and have 16 new faces to the program as they try to build chemistry for the 2018 season.

“This team is going to be vastly different than my previous two years,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “We are very young. We have been doing a lot more teaching and explaining to make sure everyone is on the same page. It is a lot of fun watching these young men grow and get better. We will take our lumps I am sure, but this team has a very nice core of players that want to get better.”

Louisburg returns four seniors – Brock Bila, Eric Vazquez, Chris Williams and Eli Minster – but all four players saw a lot of varsity time a season ago.

Bila, who was a forward last season, was a first team All-Frontier League selection as he finished the year with 20 goals and five assists. He will see a lot of time at forward with Williams along with some midfield play as well.

Vazquez, along with Ryan Haight, Luke Faulkner, Logan Faulkner, Colin Cook, Benjamin Ratliff-Becher, David Perentis and Ethan Showalter will all see time in the midfield. Haight was a big part of the Wildcats' midfield last season and ended the year with honorable mention all-league honors.

One piece missing from that group is junior Landon Johnson, who suffered a leg injury in the offseason, and is expected to miss a lot of time this season. Johnson, who earned first-team all-league honors last season, led Louisburg with 15 assists last year to go along with six goals.

“The midfield will have a lot of options for us, which is great because it creates a lot of competition,” Conley said. “All of those guys will be fighting for a starting spot. The team is going to be wide open in regards to opportunity and winning and a spot. Landon will be very tough to replace, but he is improving each and every day.”



Senior Eli Minster (23) is a returning starter for the Wildcats on defense after also seeing time at the forward spot last season.

Defensively, the Wildcats are returning a pair of starters in Minster and junior William Frank. Sophomore Haden Yeager and freshman Michael Seuferling will complete the Wildcat back line.

Louisburg will also have a new goalie this season in junior Thomas Arnett, but fellow junior Garrett Rolofson is providing plenty of competition in practice as the team's backup according to Conley.

The Wildcats will try and get their season started on the right foot this week. Louisburg will travel to Fort Scott on Tuesday for a 4:30 p.m. matchup in their season opener and will host rival Paola on Thursday in its home debut.

Despite the lack of experience on the varsity level for many of the Wildcats, Conley believes this team can come into their own as the season goes along.

“This group will be held to the same standard that our previous team have been,” Conley said. “It will be difficult and hard, but this group of young men are capable to doing great things. As for being their coaches, we have been more patient and teaching a lot more. It is imperative to get all of our players on the same page.

“The boys need to work on their confidence and believe in one another. This team will be a team that grows throughout the year and gets better each and every time they play. We will be looking to shock some people.”