

Louisburg rolls Ottawa to begin state playoff run



Louisburg senior Josh Casey hauls in a touchdown pass in the second half of Louisburg's first-round playoff game Friday against Ottawa at Wildcat Stadium. The Wildcats defeated the Cyclones, 56-8.

Coming off an emotionally-charged game with rival Paola the week before in which it claimed the Frontier League title, Louisburg coach Robert Ebenstein was mildly concerned how his team would respond.

The No. 1 seed Wildcats hosted winless No. 16 Ottawa in the first-round of the Class 4A state playoffs Friday. Louisburg shutout Ottawa earlier in the year and he didn't want his team to overlook the Cyclones.

As it turned out, there was absolutely nothing to be worried about.

Louisburg dominated from the opening kickoff and never looked back in a 56-8 victory over Ottawa. The Wildcats advanced to the regional round of the playoffs and will host No. 9 seed Piper this Friday at Wildcat Stadium.

"It was good," Ebenstein said of the win. "Trying to keep our kids composed coming off a big win like we had last week, and coming back here and staying grounded, I think they did a

great job with that. We were able to get some guys in the game in the second half and they knew what we wanted them to do. That is what we hope for nine weeks into the season and I am pretty happy with them.”

Senior Brandon Cooper got the Wildcats off and running when he returned the opening kickoff 83 yards for a touchdown, and after Drake Varns extra point, the Wildcats took a 7-0 lead.



Austin Moore (21) brings down an Ottawa runner while Brayden Gage (10) comes in to finish him off Friday.

After the Wildcat defense forced an Ottawa punt on its first possession, Louisburg went down and scored again as Blue Caplinger found the endzone on a 27-yard touchdown run.

Louisburg’s defense struck again as senior Beckett Rasmussen intercepted an Ottawa pass early in the second quarter and the Wildcats quickly turned that into points. Two plays later,

senior running back Austin Moore broke free for a 57-yard touchdown run.

Moore found the endzone again, this time on a 3-yard run, to put Louisburg up 26-0 with 2 minutes and 28 seconds left in the first half. The Wildcats still weren't done as their defense forced another Ottawa punt and the offense drove right back down the field.

With a few seconds remaining in the second quarter, Varns converted a 34-yard field goal to give Louisburg a 29-0 lead at halftime.

The Wildcats, which defeated Ottawa 25-0 earlier in the year, continued to pour it on. Defensively, Moore intercepted a pass and returned it 23 yards for a touchdown to open the third quarter.



Louisburg kicker Drake Varns (30) celebrates with his

teammates after making a field goal to close out the first half Friday against Ottawa.

Quarterback Madden Rutherford got involved a little later when he connected with Josh Casey in the endzone on a 12-yard touchdown pass with 4:22 left in the third quarter.

Louisburg gradually put its second-string players in after that and those Wildcats found success as well. Brian Houck had a pair of strong runs down the sideline that set up a 1-yard touchdown, his first score of the season, to put Louisburg up 49-0.

The Wildcats scored one more time when backup quarterback Noah Bell, a.k.a. 'Roll Tide,' came in the game. In his second play from scrimmage, he handed the ball off to sophomore Ben Wiedenmann, who ran 66 yards for a touchdown and sealed the win for Louisburg.

It was a much different game for Louisburg the second time around as it didn't have to deal with a cold and muddy Wildcat Stadium field.

"Our cleats worked this time," Ebenstein joked. "The last game we ran iso like 27 times and stretch like 20 times. We just didn't want to turn the ball over. This time we wanted to open it up a little bit and run our stuff and we did that in the first half. The second half was a lot of fun to be able to get some of the backups in and have this experience as well."



Louisburg backup quarterback Noah Bell (aka Roll Tide) hands the ball off to Ben Wiedenmann for a touchdown late in the game Friday.

Moore led the Wildcats in rushing with 115 yards on just 11 carries, while Rutherford had 92 yards through the air. Casey and Brayden Gage led Louisburg in receiving with 34 and 29 yards, respectively.

Ottawa just wasn't able to move the ball on the Wildcat defense as it held the Cyclones to just 214 yards of total offense and forced two turnovers.

Now the Wildcats will need to get ready for a Piper team that they defeated earlier in the season, 28-21. It was one of the closest games of the year for Louisburg and the Wildcats realize it will be another difficult challenge this time around.

"We are going to come back prepared and get ready for another week of football," Ebenstein said. "I know the guys will be ready to go and we are going to come back here and hopefully we will do this again."

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SCORING SUMMARY

First quarter

L: Brandon Cooper 83 kickoff return (Drake Varns kick)

L: Blue Caplinger 27 run (kick failed)

Second quarter

L: Austin Moore 57 run (run failed)

L: Moore 3 run (Varns kick)

L: Drake Varns 34 FG

Third quarter

L: Moore 23 interception return (Varns kick)

L: Josh Casey 12 pass from Madden Rutherford (kick failed)

L: Brian Houck 1 run (Varns kick)

Fourth quarter

0: 20 touchdown pass (pass converted)

L: Ben Wiedenmann 66 run (Varns kick)

STATISTICS

RUSHING: Austin Moore 11-115; Ben Wiedenmann 2-67; Blue Caplinger 6-56; Brian Houck 6-49; Madden Rutherford 6-24; Jorge LeBron 1-6; Brayden Gage 1-1

PASSING: Madden Rutherford 7-11-92

RECEIVING: Josh Casey 2-34; Brayden Gage 2-29; Austin Moore 1-18; Blue Caplinger 2-11

TACKLES: Brian Houck 6, Austin Moore 5, Tanner Belcher 5, Brayden White 4, Brayden Gage 3, Jorge LeBron 3, Charlie Koontz 3, Blue Caplinger 3, Ben Wiedenmann 3, Jay Scollin 3, Kiefer Tucker 3, Noah Larson 3, Garrett Harding 3, Jonathan DePriest 3, Kaden Oehlert 2, Beckett Rasmussen 2, Brandon Cooper 2, James Foote 2, Drake Varns 1, Andrew Krause 1, Ian McGuire 1, Cole Williams 1, Hunter Day 1.