

Piper spoils Wildcats' senior night with three penalty kicks



Louisburg goalie Thomas Arnett dives to make one of his several saves during the Wildcats' match with Piper on Thursday in Louisburg. The Wildcats came up short in their regular season finale with a 5-1 loss to the Pirates.

It started out as a Senior Night to remember for Brock Bila, Chris Williams, Eric Vazquez and Eli Minster.

The Louisburg seniors, who were honored prior to the game with managers Hayli Detherage and Camdyn Clark, jumped out to an early lead against Piper in the Wildcats' last regular season game and the final ever home contest for the Wildcat quartet.

Louisburg had hopes of handing the Pirates, one of the best teams record-wise in Class 4-3-2-1A, a loss to head into the postseason with some momentum.

Piper, unfortunately for the Wildcats, had different plans.

The Pirates were awarded three penalty kicks in the second half, and converted all three, as they went on to down Louisburg, 5-1, and spoiled the Wildcats' celebration.

"Two penalty kicks absolutely kill you, and then you get a third, and it is just frustrating," Louisburg coach Kyle

Conley said. "It was just a lot of dumb luck. It just stinks and then we lost our cool little bit there at the end, and that didn't help. In the end, I think this was one of our best games this season and the score is not indicative of how close the game really was. The boys played with a lot of heart and guts, we just didn't have a lot of luck."

The Wildcats (5-10) got out to an early lead as a pair of seniors put Louisburg on top. Williams raced down the sideline and crossed it over to Bila, who found the back of the net, to give Louisburg a 1-0 advantage nine minutes into the match.



Senior Brock Bila celebrates the game's first goal with teammates Landon Johnson (10) and Eric Vazquez.

Five minutes later, Piper scored the equalizer and the two teams went into halftime tied at 1-all. Wildcat goalie Thomas Arnett turned away several Pirate opportunities in the first

half to keep the game close.

In the second half, however, Piper broke the game open thanks to the three penalty kicks and another goal that gave the Pirates a lead in which the Wildcats couldn't recover.

"Thomas did his thing," Conley said. "He held his ground and saved everything he should have saved. When you have three penalty kicks it is frustrating, but he is a wall back there. He adjusted and communicated well with his defense. He played fantastic and did a great job in the net for us."

Louisburg's four seniors put together one of their best showings of the season and Conley was pleased with what he saw out of his team.



The Louisburg seniors (from left) are manager Hayli Detherage, Brock Bila, Eli Minster, Eric Vazquez, Chris Williams and manager Camdyn Clark.

"We played well," Conley said. "Chris was hustling all over the place and brought a lot of high pressure. I think Brock played fantastic and it was probably his best game this year. He did everything we asked him to do. He attacked and went at people. He played awesome and was our best player."

"Eli did a good job and was fantastic on the back side dealing with their runners all the time. Vazquez worked his butt off and played a lot of good balls down the line. Those four boys left it all out on the field and left nothing back."

Although the loss ended the Wildcats' regular season on a sour note, they have a chance to make amends Tuesday when they travel to Ottawa for the Class 4A regional semifinal.

The Wildcats are the No. 11 seed and will square off with the No. 6 Cyclones (9-7) at 5 p.m. at Ottawa High School. The winner will play Thursday against the winner of Bishop Miede and Bishop Ward for the regional championship.

"The past couple years, we were the guys on the other side that had a big target on our back," Conley said of his previous regional championship teams. "We are 5-10 and I don't think anyone will take us seriously, and I think that is to our advantage. We will just see what happens. We have to come out and play hard and I like our chances. It will be difficult to rebound after a tough loss to Piper."