

OPINION: Moore's injury hurts, inspires Louisburg football



Louisburg senior, and team captain, Austin Moore accepts the regional championship trophy from coach Robert Ebenstein following the Wildcats' 48-0 win over Piper last Friday at Wildcat Stadium. Moore broke his collarbone in the first half of the game and has sidelined him for the rest of the season.

Following Louisburg's 48-0 win over Piper on Friday that gave the Wildcats a regional championship, one would think the mood would be filled with excitement.

The Wildcats had just advanced in the playoffs and picked up their 10th consecutive victory to stay perfect on the season. It was a time to bask in what was a dominant performance.

It was anything but celebratory.

In fact, the setting was more like a funeral.

During the game, senior Austin Moore – a team captain and leader on both sides of the ball – suffered a broken collarbone in the first half. Although the Wildcats will get to play another week of football, Austin's time as a Louisburg football player was up.

To put some perspective on what Moore was to his teammates, he might as well have worn an 'S' on his jersey and donned a red cape. He was Superman to a lot of those players.

He was supposed to be invincible to this type of stuff. There was nothing that could bring down Austin Moore. Just ask his previous nine opponents.

At running back, Moore finished his season with more than 1,400 yards rushing to go along with 21 touchdowns in less than 10 games. On defense, he was the team's leading tackler from his middle linebacker spot.

The shock across the Wildcat sideline could be seen as he came out of the locker room at halftime. Instead of a jersey and shoulder pads, he replaced it with a purple jacket and a sling. His season was over.

"After the game was a bitter sweet feeling for us all," senior lineman Kiefer Tucker said. "Yes we were happy that we had won, but we also all felt terrible because of what happened to Austin. Austin is the hardest working kid I've ever met and he's tough as nails too, so to see him injured was a surreal feeling."

In the second quarter against Piper, Moore caught a swing pass for a short gain, but was brought down by three Piper players and landed hard. The impact would break his collarbone, but it didn't keep him from staying on the field.

Moore shook off the injury – if one could do that with a broken bone – and carried the ball three more times, including a 6-yard touchdown run that saw him shed tacklers and drag defenders into the endzone to give Louisburg an early lead.



Austin Moore breaks a tackle as he tries to get into the endzone after he suffered a broken collarbone.

He then went back on the field for defense, despite his coaches telling him to take a break.

“After we scored, Blue (Caplinger) and (Brayden) Gage both said you need to check on Austin,” Louisburg coach Robert Ebenstein said. “So I found him on the sideline and said ‘You alright?’ and he responded with ‘Yeah I’m fine,’ and went right back out on defense. So we watched him that defensive possession and he was favoring that arm just a little bit.

“When we forced the punt, we put in Ben (Wiedenmann) for a drive to get him a break. He comes to the sideline and says ‘I’m fine, put me back in.’ I told him to just take a breather, we end up scoring and he goes back in to play linebacker. Next offensive possession I took him out again and he comes over and asks me why. I said we are up three scores,

take a breather. His only response was I am fine.”

In his mind though, Moore knew something wasn’t right.

Reluctant to take x-rays at halftime, Moore finally conceded. It didn’t take the team’s trainer, Dr. Damon Dennis, long to figure out exactly what was wrong.

“Doc got his pads off and pressed around and said he needed to get an x-ray and Austin refused to go,” Ebenstein said. “Austin is a very tough kid. I have seen college athletes in tears over that same injury.”

The Wildcats carried on his absence and went on to outscore Piper 34-0 the rest of the way to ensure themselves a regional championship.

After the game was over, Ebenstein had Austin come out to midfield where he handed him the regional championship trophy and Austin presented it to the team. Celebration ensued, even if it was for just a brief moment.

In the locker room, instead of feeling sorry for himself, Austin was there to congratulate his teammates on what was an impressive victory.

“The atmosphere definitely wasn’t as if we had just won the regional championship, 48-0,” quarterback Madden Rutherford said. “The mood was a bit solemn because we all know how much this team means to Austin Moore. The coaches and Austin himself did an outstanding job of saying, ‘Yes, this sucks, but we must move on.’”

That is exactly what the Wildcats are doing as they face a daunting task of playing defending state champion, Bishop Miege. There aren’t many who would give the Wildcats, even with Moore, a chance of knocking off a team that has dominated Class 4A and won the last four state titles.

To put it in perspective, a media outlet in Kansas City

released a poll on Twitter asking its followers to pick the Class 4A winner on the east side of the state – the only four choices were Bishop Miege.

📶 T-Mobile 📶

1:39 PM

🔋 62% 🔋



Tweet



810 Varsity
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Who goes to Class 4A football final
from East:

Bishop Miege

48%

Bishop Miege

17%

Bishop Miege

21%

Bishop Miege

14%

807 votes · Final results

10/30/18, 9:19 PM

5 Retweets **28 Likes**

There hasn't been team in Class 4A that has come close to knocking off the Stags in more than a decade.

That is what the Wildcats are up against this Friday in the sectional round of the playoffs.

"Miege is a good team, you can't deny that, but they are all human and they too make mistakes just as much as we do," Tucker said. "The whole team, and myself, are very excited to

be able to play against them because challenging games like this bring out the best in us. I fully believe that we have the heart and players to go out there and prove to everyone just who we are on our home field in front of the best community out there."

Louisburg has put together probably its best season in eight years, since the Wildcats won the school's first state championship. It has been quite a ride and one that will have to continue without No. 21 on the field.

However, Moore hasn't left them. He will be more vocal than ever on the sidelines and the Wildcats are ready to make the best out of a bad situation.

"After the game I know a lot of us went up to him and told him how much respect and love we have for him and we told him that we weren't done yet and that this next one was for him," Tucker said. "We all know that we must step up now in the absence of him on the field, but he will be right on the sideline coaching us up and making sure that we are in the right mindset."

Even without Moore, this Wildcat team ranks among one of the better teams in school history. They have a lot of depth at running back in Blue Caplinger, Brayden Gage and now Ben Wiedenmann, and Rutherford has had a big year at quarterback.

The lines on both sides of the ball have played well all season and is considered one of the team's strength.

As good as that is, this team still needs your help. They need Wildcat fans to pack the stadium, just like you did against Paola and create an atmosphere these players will not forget.

They need you be loud and supportive. They need to know you have their back.



Austin Moore presents the regional trophy to the rest of the team last Friday.

This is postseason football. The stands should be full. No matter the outcome, celebrate what these Wildcats have already accomplished and what they have the potential to become.

"This is what we prepare all summer for, this is what we practice long hours for, this is why we study film for countless hours," Rutherford said. "Playing Bishop Miege is something not many teams in the state want to do. They'd like to avoid them as long as possible.

"We are all stoked as a team to have them come down to our stadium and push us to our limits, and vice versa. All week long, the high school football gurus, and even classmates, will speculate that 'We have to play Miege.' But the reality is, Miege has to play us."

Louisburg will do so with their leader and captain on the sidelines, cheering them on louder than if he were on the

field. It is Moore's injury that has given his team a new perspective.

"It's always a blow to lose any player, but a kid who leads like Austin will be a big loss," Ebenstein said. "We love Austin and will miss him Friday night on the field for sure, but we are a solid team and it is next man up preparing for the next game. I know our team will rally around the loss of Austin this week. The genuine love of a teammate could be seen in the faces of our kids in the locker room after the game.

"We always preach to play every play like it is your last, and this is just another example of why. Austin will recover fine and I expect him to have one heck of a college football career, but you never know when this game can be taken from you."