

Louisburg girls soccer finishes second at wild state tournament



Louisburg captains Erin Lemke (left) and Carson Buffington hold up the Class 4-3-2-1A state runner-up trophy Saturday following the Wildcats 4-0 loss to Bishop Miege in the championship game at Hummer Sports Park in Topeka.

TOPEKA – When it was all said and done, the Louisburg girls soccer held its team trophy high in front of the Wildcat faithful and the tears were easy to spot.

After nearly 200 minutes of soccer in a nine-hour time period, including one match that ended in penalty kicks, the Wildcats were spent. They gave everything they had.

For the second consecutive season, Louisburg earned the Class 4-3-2-1A state runner up trophy after a wild victory over Topeka-Hayden in the semifinals and then were shutout by Bishop Miege in the championship game, 4-0. It was the third consecutive state final four appearance for Louisburg.

Frustration and sadness was easy to see following the Wildcats' loss to the defending state champion, but the

team realizes what they have accomplished in just four years of existence is to be celebrated.

“Being in this situation two years in a row is something that doesn’t happen very often,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “There are a bunch of teams that haven’t been to a state final four and we have been to three in three years. It is pretty cool and it is special.”

It was a wild 24 hours for the Wildcats. Louisburg was supposed to play Hayden on Friday in the semifinals, but severe weather forced the postponement to early Saturday morning.

The Wildcats battled Hayden through four overtimes and eventually led to penalty kicks. After an intense first five penalty kicks that left the match still tied, senior goalie Carson Buffington recorded a big save and then senior Hallie Hutsell converted the sixth penalty kick to break the tie and give Louisburg a 2-1 win over Hayden.



Trinity Moore battles a Bishop Miege player for a 50-50 ball Saturday during the state championship game in Topeka.

"We usually play 80 minutes, but this time we had to play 110 minutes and we were gassed," Conley said. "We were holding on and had some chances at the end to win it, but then we went to overtime and then to penalty kicks. It was all about to see if we could survive. Emotionally it was just a high for us and an unbelievable response and a great finish. Carson making a big save, Hallie putting it in for the win – it was just a great game."

The two teams battled to a scoreless first half, but Louisburg junior Mackenzie Scholtz changed all that as she found the back of the net with 28 minutes left in the match to give the Wildcats a 1-0 advantage.



Junior Mackenzie Scholtz tries to beat the Bishop Miege defense Saturday in Topeka.

In what was a physical contest on both sides, Hayden eventually found a crack in the Wildcat defense and tied it all up with 10 minutes remaining in regulation. Neither team could get a score in the first two 10-minute overtime periods, and then played two five-minute overtimes with the game still tied at 1-all.

“Each side really wanted to win for a chance to play in the championship,” Hutsell said. “Hayden had not forgotten that we beat them for that chance last year and it showed throughout the entire game and four overtimes. Everyone was exhausted, but the team kept pushing and motivating each other and I think that’s what helped us eventually win.”

It all forced penalty kicks as Scholtz, Trinity Moore and Morgan Messer helped Louisburg make three of its five opportunities. On the other end, Buffington recorded two pivotal saves to keep the Wildcats' hopes alive.

"We were not very effective in taking PK's in practice so I was a little worried," Conley said. "We talked to Carson on how to do things the right way, what to prep for, how to read it and what is going on. She made three huge saves and there aren't many goalies in the state that will make two of those saves in the bottom corner. It was a great opportunity and a lot of fun."



Photo courtesy of Bryan Frank

The Louisburg girls soccer team celebrates on the field after Hallie Hutsell converted the final penalty kick in the Wildcats' 2-1 win over Hayden.

Both teams chose their next five players to take the next set of penalty kicks, but Buffington recorded her third save on Hayden's first try on the second round of kicks.

Hutsell ended it all as her shot found the upper left corner of the net to end it for Louisburg and the Wildcats were onto the championship match.

"When my name was called I was so nervous," Hutsell said. "I actually had no idea my kick was for the win. I was just worried that I would miss the shot. When I stepped up to the ball though, some of my nerves went away because I knew the team had my back no matter what.

"When I made the shot I was confused because the team stormed the field. I remember thinking, 'We still have four more kickers.' But when the ref blew his whistle I knew and started freaking out. I was so proud of my team for battling it out and earning a place in the championship."



Louisburg goalie Carson Buffington runs in front of a Bishop Miege player for a save Saturday in Topeka.

Bishop Miege went on to defeat
Buhler, 4-0, in the next semifinal match and the Wildcats had
a little break
before meeting the defending state champion.

In the championship match, the Stags were just too much for
the Wildcats and junior Sophia Stram provided a big spark.
Stram scored all four goals for Miege in the title game, all
of which came in the first half, and the Wildcats didn't have
an answer.

"They are just so freaking good,"
Conley said. "I think the girls were mentally ready, but I
don't think their
legs were quite ready, but we lost to one of best teams in the
state of Kansas.
They have great players, they are well-coached, but our girls
played their
butts off.

“(Stram) is a Division 1 kid and she is special. They have a team full of kids who understand how to play and they are good.”



The Louisburg girls soccer team poses with its state runner-up trophy following the state tournament Saturday in Topeka.

Louisburg had won 10 straight matches going into the championship game and the Wildcats finished their season with a 17-4 record. Other than the final result, it was a season to remember for the Wildcats, but they know they can take pride in what they have accomplished.

“It was a fantastic season, but it stinks right now,” Conley said. “I hate losing, the kids hate losing and I hate saying bye to kids who aren’t going to be a part of our program anymore. Once I have time to reflect on how everything transpired with 10 straight wins to basically end the season, there will be a lot of positives. We broke a lot of records this year that are going to be really, really tough to beat and this is

a really special group.”