

Wildcats fall short in knocking off undefeated Paola



Senior Charlie Koontz (24) closes in on Paola quarterback Garrett Williams, while his Wildcat teammates fight through blocks Friday during Louisburg's rivalry contest against Paola at Wildcat Stadium.

It was a battle, in fact, it was the closest anyone had come to knocking off undefeated Paola all season.

Still, Louisburg wasn't in the mood for consolation prizes Friday following its 16-8 loss to the Panthers on Senior Night at Wildcat Stadium. The Wildcat wanted to knock off its rival from the top of the Frontier League, and what made it worse for the players, was they knew they had their chances.

"It is definitely not a moral victory type of night, but obviously Paola is a great team," Louisburg coach Robert Ebenstein said. "I told the guys that losing hurts, but when they watch it on film it is going to make them sick to their stomach. We had every opportunity in the world to make plays and we just didn't make them. Hats off

to Coach (Mike) Dumpert and Paola, but hopefully we will get another chance to see them again in the playoffs.”

Untimely penalties and missed opportunities haunted Louisburg much of the night, but the Wildcats still gave the Panthers a run for their money and it started on the defensive end.

Paola, which hadn't scored under 35 points all season, managed just 13 points in the first half and Louisburg rose to occasion in the second half as the Wildcats the Panthers to just the one field goal.

Louisburg (5-3) held Paola (8-0) to just over 250 yards of total offense and the Panthers' closest game up until Friday was a 43-16 win over Piper.

The Wildcats were all over the field as they had three players with double digit tackles with senior Charlie Koontz leading the way with 12, while junior Justin Collins and sophomore Brandon Doles each added 10.



Junior linebacker Andy Hupp brings down Paola running back Connor Hasz on Friday.

Seniors Brayden White and Garrett Harding were active on the defensive line with nine and eight tackles, respectively. Junior linebacker Andy Hupp and senior defensive back Michael Waldron also finished with eight, while Hupp, Koontz and Doles each added a sack.

Offensively, the Wildcats had trouble moving the ball on the Panthers – part of which was due to penalties, a fumble or dropped passes in key situations.

“Paola played good technical defense, but when you have

holding penalties on every big play you have or dropped passes on third down, we didn't help ourselves any," Ebenstein said. "Their defense is good, and they have only given up around 50 points all year, we just didn't make the plays we needed to. We made some plays, but we could have made so many more and we will learn from it and get better."

Panther running back Connor Hasz caused some problems for the Wildcats as he had one score on the ground in the first quarter and another through the air from quarterback Garrett Williams to put the Panthers up 13-0 at halftime.

Down 16-0, Louisburg started to pick up steam late in the fourth quarter as the Wildcats put together a 13-play drive that ended in a 10-yard touchdown pass to Weston Guetterman from Madden Rutherford and Koontz ran in the 2-point conversion to cut the Paola lead in half. Guetterman caught the ball on his shoulder with two players draped on him in the back of the endzone.

"Weston is a playmaker and that kid is just really good," Ebenstein said. "There were two kids in his face, and they both could have probably been called for pass interference and he still made the catch. That was a great play right there at a big moment."



Quarterback Madden Rutherford gets a little extra time to throw a pass thanks to the block from lineman Garrett Harding.

The two plays prior to that brought a lot of emotion out of both sidelines. A Paola player was ejected following a late hit on offensive lineman JR Rooney, and then on the next play, Guetterman appeared to have caught the ball near the 4-yard line and ran toward the goal line when the ball came loose and Paola thought it had recovered the fumble.

The officials conversed and ruled it an incomplete pass, which gave the Wildcats new life and led to the touchdown on the next play. Also on that drive, junior running

back Ben

Wiedenmann had a pair of 13-yard runs to help the Wildcats move the ball down the field.

Paola got the ball back with just under four minutes left in the game and the Panthers were able to run out the clock and keep its undefeated season alive.

“I think this is the best game in the state of Kansas,” Ebenstein said of the rivalry. “Records don’t really matter in this game. Paola could have been 1-7 coming in here and it would have been a tough game. We just didn’t make enough plays this time around.”



Seniors (from left) Madden Rutherford, Garrett Harding, Andrew Krause, Sam Kratochvil, Charlie Koontz, Ian McGuire, managers Morgan Messer and Kody Lowry, Brayden White, Drake Varns and

Michael Waldron pose for a picture before Friday's Senior Night game.

Louisburg will now begin postseason play and the Wildcats are the No. 6 seed on the east side of the state and will host No. 11 Atchison at 7 p.m. this Friday. Earlier in the season, the Wildcats defeated the Redmen 41-12 on the road.

Should the Wildcats advance, they will meet the winner between No. 3 Chanute and No. 14 Fort Scott next week and the higher-seeded team will host.

"I like where we are at," Ebenstein said. "We are fairly healthy for the first time in a while, and the good thing is we get another home game. Hopefully we can bounce back and make a little run."

LOU	0	0	0	8
- 8				
PAO	7	6	0	3
- 16				

SCORING SUMMARY

First quarter

P: Connor Hasz 21 run (Ryan Wokutch kick)

Second quarter

P: Hasz 24 pass from Garrett Williams (Kick failed)

Fourth quarter

P: Wokutch 25 FG

L: Weston Guetterman 10 pass from
Madden Rutherford (Charlie Koontz run)

STATISTICS

RUSHING – Ben Wiedenmann 9-53, Madden
Rutherford 8-14, Kolby Kattau 1-7

PASSING – Madden Rutherford
10-24-58

RECEIVING – Weston Guetterman
5-33, Ben Wiedenmann 3-20, Michael Waldron 1-5

TACKLES – Charlie Koontz 12,
Brandon Doles 10, Justin Collins 10, Brayden White 9, Andy
Hupp 8, Garrett
Harding 8, Michael Waldron 8, Weston Guetterman 4, Konnor Vohs
4, Ben
Wiedenmann 1