

Wildcats see historical season come to a close with loss to Bishop Miege



Louisburg goalie Garrett Rolofson slides in to make a save last Tuesday during the Wildcats' home state quarterfinal game against Bishop Miege.

A school record 16 wins, a Frontier League championship and a regional title are all something worth celebrating, but following last Tuesday's state quarterfinal match with Bishop Miege, all Louisburg could think about was the finality of it all.

Despite all those accomplishments, the Wildcats fell one win short of their main goal – a spot in the state final four.

Louisburg saw its season come to a close with a 3-0 loss to Bishop Miege at the Wildcat Sports Complex. The Wildcats lost to the eventual state champion, as Miege went on to defeat Wichita-Trinity on Saturday, 3-1, for the Class 4-1A state championship – the Stags' fourth in a row.

As difficult as the loss was for Louisburg, there was no forgetting how big of a jump the Wildcats made from the season before as they went from a 6-win team to one that

earned the East's No. 1 seed in the state playoffs.

"Going 6-11 last year and seeing this Miego team almost mercy-ruling us in the regional championship last year in the rain, was a program changer," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "After that was over, we talked about how things needed to change and it starts now.

For our first practice in June, I told them that they are the ones that has to change them. Since day one, they have played for each other, played hard in practice and it was a total mindset change. When someone got hurt, it was the next guy up. We missed two starters for half of the year and it was always the next guy up taking advantage of his opportunity to fill in. The freshmen stepped up huge for us.

"This team is special. 16 wins is a school record and only two losses is probably a school record. This team is incredible, played so hard and did everything I asked them to do. They were always there to pick each other up and that is what this soccer family is all about. It will be tough to say goodbye to these kids."

Louisburg (16-2) gave Miego all it had as several Wildcats were dealing with injuries, which made the task of knocking off the perennial state champion even more difficult.

Senior defender Will Frank played with an injured knee. The team's leading scorer, Cade Gassman,

had an oblique injury, and was nowhere near 100 percent.



Louisburg senior Will Frank heads the ball out of the box Tuesday against Bishop Miego.

Still, those players, and others, played through the pain to give what they had left against one of the state's best teams.

"Will is going to having surgery in the offseason here on his knee and played hard and fought through," Conley said. "Landon (Johnson) is still fighting through a patella tendon problem and he did the best he could to run on the ball. Cade had a strained oblique, and could hardly move at all, but just gutted it out for his teammates. David

(Perentis) hurt his leg earlier in the season and he has been fighting through it. We are just dinged up and banged up everywhere, but Miede was able to put it on us at the end."

The Wildcats kept the game scoreless through the first 30 minutes thanks to its defense. Goalie Garrett Rolofson made several diving saves and Frank cleared the ball out of the back.

Sophomore defender Michael Seuferling also cleared the ball off the goal line to keep the game scoreless midway through the first half, but the Stags answered with a goal in the 30th minute to go up 1-0 at halftime.

"We defended our butts off," Conley said. "It was kind of a 'bend but don't break' mentality there for a while. We knew they were going to get chances. The goal was to just limit those chances to the less-dangerous the better and keep them wide. We had a couple good looks, but we just didn't put it on frame. Unfortunately, we just couldn't get one to go."

"Defensively, we played well. We had a wall built and were going to let them shoot from outside and we did a good job blocking what we could. They have four or five players who do a really good job for them."



Senior Colin Cook makes a pass to a teammate during the Wildcats' state quarterfinal game against Miego.

Bishop Miego put away two more opportunities in the second half to get the victory and end the Wildcats' season on their home field – one that provided a lot of memories.

Like with the end of every season, the Wildcats were forced to say goodbye to their season class as Ryan Haight, Colin Cook, Landon Johnson, David Perentis, Emanuel Fries, Rolofson and Frank all played their final game.

"The seniors, from day one, took ownership of the program," Conley said. "Since day one, they have held everyone

accountable and it was incredible. I couldn't be happier for a group of guys. It would have been great to go back to a state final four, and this could have been a state championship game. It stinks that we had to run into them here and not in the state final four, where it deserved to be. This is a special team and they will be tough to emulate. These seniors have set the standard and brought us back to where we need to be."