

# 2020 Senior Spotlight: Kayla Willey



*Louisburg Sports Zone will be running senior spotlights through April and May everyday (Monday through Friday) in an efforts to honor seniors who had their seasons taken away due to the spread of COVID-19.*

Earning a spot and playing in a state tournament gave Kayla Willey memories that will last a lifetime.

Willey and the Lady Cats upset their way to a regional championship last season after entering the tournament with a 6-14 record. A pair of wins over Ottawa and Chanute put the Lady Cats in the state tournament for the first time since 2014.

Louisburg would end up losing to No. 1 seed Andale in the first round of state a week later, but the experience was something Willey won't soon forget.

"I think the best moment for me was last year at state and how we got there," Willey said. "We finally came together as a team and played our hearts out. When we got to the hotel for state, we just had so much fun. Even though we lost, we had an experience of a lifetime and made bonds and memories to last us forever."

As much fun as that was, Willey was looking forward to another shot at a state tournament. Louisburg was going to do it with a new coach as Nick Chapman moved from junior varsity to

varsity head coach and replaced John Ozier.

“I was so excited to play with coach Chap this season,” Willey said. “We had all put in so much work and in those first weeks and I had already been seeing so many improvements in the team. I think we could have really pulled together our wins this year and done great things.”

The worst part is the Lady Cats will never know what could have been as spring sports across the state of Kansas was shelved due to the spread of COVID-19 back in March.

It was difficult news to hear for Willey as she will likely never play softball again – a sport that has been a staple in her life.

“I have played softball since about T-ball age,” Willey said. “My dad played baseball and our parents always let their kids try every sport we wanted. I tried softball and just instantly fell in love with the sport. I just picked up everything about the sport so fast. It has been a huge part of my life. It has run my life from start to finish. I have lived and breathed softball. It has helped me make friendships that I will have for the rest of my life. It has made me who I am.”



**Louisburg senior Kayla Willey was a returning starter off of last season's regional championship team.**

Willey has been a big part of the Lady Cat team the last two seasons. She earned All-Frontier League honorable mention honors as a sophomore as she split time between second base and the outfield, and was a key contributor on their regional championship team.

"Willey would have been our starting centerfielder this year," Chapman said. "She had a lot of speed to chase down a fly-ball and is very quick on the basepaths. Kayla always brought a great attitude and brought cheerfulness that lightened up practice, which was much needed. She really accepted the role of senior leader. When I couldn't get to the younger players to help them with something, she was all over it; whether it be helping them with their swing or outfield technique."

Those are the memories Willey will try to hold on to when

times get tough as the final two months of her high school career come to a close.

“It has been really hard,” Willey said. “I had planned to play college ball, but I just recently decided that I was not going to play in college. So this last high school season was my last chance to leave behind my legacy and step onto that field knowing this was the sport that changed my life. I have been really sad that I won’t get to finish my senior year as planned. I wanted to have my last prom, walk across the stage for graduation and have my last memories with my class.”

Other than softball, Louisburg Sports Zone also had a chance to catch up with Kayla on how she has been coping with an early end to her senior year and some of her other interests. Here are her responses from the rest of our Q&A.

**LSZ:** What have you been missing the most during this time away from everyone?

**KW:** I miss the softball team. I just miss practices and getting to be with all of them.

**LSZ:** What is your most memorable moment as an athlete or in school, and why?

**KW:** It has to be getting to go to Indiana for FFA nationals. I loved getting to spend a week away from home, with friends. It was such an experience and I’m glad I got to have it during my senior year.

**LSZ:** What is your favorite activity/hobby outside of sports and why?

**KW:** I like to ride horses. I love the relaxation of going on trail rides, but the real fun is getting to an open field and going as fast as the horse can go. I just like the freedom.

**LSZ:** What are your plans after graduation?

**KW:** I plan to go to Johnson County Community College for the first two years and then maybe go to the University of Central Missouri to study criminal psychology.

**LSZ:** What accomplishments that don't involve athletics are you most proud of and why?

**KW:** I would have to say getting the opportunity to be Mr. Holloway's assistant for TA was the best accomplishment I achieved, at least recently.

**LSZ:** What do you think would be something that a lot of people don't know about you?

**KW:** I don't think a lot of people know that I love Spiderman. I have seen all the Spiderman movies and love them all.

## **Kayla's Favorites**

**Pro athlete:** Patrick Mahomes

**Pro team:** Kansas City Chiefs

**College team:** K-State

**Movie:** A Quiet Place

**TV Show:** Criminal Minds or Vampire Diaries

**Song:** What She Wants Tonight by Luke Bryan

**Band/Musician:** Trace Adkins

**Pregame meal/snack:** Pickles

**Class/subject:** Ag

**Teacher and why:** Mr. Morgan – he always makes me laugh. He's pretty crazy and it just makes class that much more fun.

## **Previous Senior Spotlights**

Drake Varns – Golf

Trinity Moore – Girls Soccer

Andrew Krause – Baseball