

# Wildcat soccer has eyes on state final four



*Senior Treston Carlson (12) is one of several returning scorers for the Louisburg boys soccer team this season as the Wildcats bring back 91 percent of their scoring from a year ago.*

The Louisburg boys soccer team had one of the most successful seasons in program history a year ago when the Wildcats captured a Frontier League crown, a regional title and set a program record with 16 wins.

Still, after it was all over, there was a feeling of disappointment on how it all ended.

The Wildcats lost to the eventual state champion, Bishop Miege, in the state quarterfinals and saw their goal of making it to the state final four come up just one win short. That day has fueled the fire for many around the Louisburg program and they want to take that next step forward.

“A year ago, this group went 16-2-1 which was arguably the greatest seasons in Louisburg soccer history, but that was last year,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “We are focusing on this season and getting back to improving this year’s team. The boys are picking things up quickly and it’s allowing us to advance faster in regards to implementing more advanced technical aspects. This group is going to be very special.”

A big reason for some of the excitement around the program is the Wildcats return 15 letter-winners from a season ago, including 10 who saw time in the starting role at some point and time.

Between varsity and junior varsity, the Wildcats have 40 players on the roster, including 10 seniors. Even with that, Louisburg has a very young group that includes a 19-member sophomore class.

Since the Wildcats have so many returning players on the roster, it has helped them weather the COVID-19 pandemic that forced restrictions on teams throughout the summer, along with taking extra precautions during the season.

“Practices have been going really well,” Conley said. “The boys are doing a great job dealing with adversities well and are really focused on their goals. Overall, we are still a young team, but for a young team we have extremely high goals. I think the best strength that this team may have is our depth at every position.

“The team is very determined and focused for this season. Covid is what it is and the boys will do whatever it takes to make sure their goals are achieved. They are spread out during water breaks by designated cones for each player, spraying with hand sanitizer, we are masking up during any down time, and we are refraining from unnecessary high fives or fist bumps. The boys are ready to show 4A what we are all about and that we are not just a fluke.”

One of those strengths can easily be found on the attacking side of the field as the Wildcats feature speed in the middle of the field and up top.



**Junior Braden Yows returns to lead the Wildcats this season after being named the Class 4-1A Co-Midfielder of the Year.**

Junior Braden Yows, who was named as the Co-Midfielder of the Year by the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association in 2019 and was a first-team all-league player, returns as a key cog in the Wildcats' attack. Yows had a big season as he finished the year with 11 goals, three of which were game-winners, and ended with a team-high 14 assists. He also had 44 shots on goal.

Sophomore Cade Gassman played just as big of a role in the Wildcats' success as he finished with a team-high 18 goals, including four game-winning scores, to go along with five assists from his forward position. Gassman, who also earned first-team all-league and all-state honors a year ago, will give the Wildcats a nice 1-2 punch with Yows.

"Cade and Braden are extremely talented players," Conley said.

“These two provide a lot of attacking ability for us, but also a lot of versatility. Both of these young man have played a variety of positions for us this preseason and we will love to be creative in our lineups to maximize those two talented young men.”

In fact, the Wildcats return 91 percent of their scoring from a season ago and senior Treston Carlson will join Gassman and Yows as goal scoring threats. Carlson was a second-team all-league and all-state player in 2019 as a forward and finished the year with 12 goals and five assists.

Junior Jaden Vohs and sophomores Colin McManigal and Gavin York, will all see time at the forward spot throughout the season. Seniors Haden Yeager, Logan Faulkner, Dacey Wieland, Caleb Shaghnessy and Reece Jones, along with juniors Isaac Guetterman, Hunter Rogers and sophomore Ethan Ptacek, are all vying for playing time in the midfield.

“Attacking is going to be our strong suit this year,” Conley said. “In 2019, we scored 58 goals and had 35 assists. This team returns 91 percent of our scoring and 88 percent of our assists. I think we are going to be extremely dynamic up top and going to cause a lot of problems for teams. Treston has worked hard to get stronger and more dynamic this summer and it is showing.

“Once again, that was last year. On paper this team looks very impressive, but good on paper doesn’t mean a whole lot. That has been our message to the boys. Each game, we are going to step out with something to prove.”





**Michael Seuferling (1) and Toby Espina-Roca (29) return as starters to help lead the Louisburg defense.**

Louisburg lost a few key pieces from its defense from a year ago, but will still feature a lot of familiar faces. Gone is all-league and all-state goalie Garrett Rolofson, Co-Defensive Player of the Year in Ryan Haight and long time starter Will Frank.

Still, the Wildcats return several defenders who saw starting time a season ago, including outside back, Michael Seuferling. The Louisburg junior was a second-team all-league and all-state player last season.

Also returning are seniors Ethan Showalter, Luke Faulkner, Weston Frank, sophomore Toby Espina-Roca and freshman Austin Jamison. A pair of sophomores in Mack Newell and Matthew Sword are also competing for the starting goalie spot.

“Losing Ryan, Garrett and Will are going to be tough to replace, but Ryan and Will missed a lot of time with injuries last year and we had to play younger experienced players at those positions,” Conley said. “That helps a lot this year, because those young players were forced to step up and fill the void. Losing Rolo will hurt, but we have two really talented players battling to fill that position in Mack Newell and Matthew Sword. I think centerback is our weakness going into this season, but we spent our preseason looking to fill that position and the boys have been working hard.”

With their season opener at 4:30 p.m., Tuesday at Fort Scott, the Wildcats begin their journey for a spot in the state final four and are excited for what the season has in store.

“This group will have the same goals as the previous teams I have coached here,” Conley said. “They are wanting to win more than 10 games in the regular season, compete for a Frontier League title, win a regional championship and make a 4A-1A State Final Four. This senior class has won two Frontier League Titles and two Regional Championships. They are hungry to add to that and they want more.”