

REGIONAL CHAMPS: Wildcats edge Ottawa to move on to state quarters



The Louisburg soccer team was all smiles Thursday after the Wildcats won the Class 4-1A regional title following a 1-0 victory over Ottawa.

Last week's regional championship has become a common occurrence for the Louisburg boys soccer team.

For the fourth time in the last five years, the Wildcats captured a regional title following a 1-0 victory over Ottawa at Wildcat Stadium. It has been a dominating two years for Louisburg as the Wildcats have put together a combined record of 31-3-1 and are currently 14-1 on the season.

With all that, the celebration was a little muted from the Wildcat sideline. They are more than happy to advance, but they know there is a lot of work to be done to get to where they want to go – a state championship.

Even with all those great numbers, this group has never advanced to the state final four and they will get that opportunity at 5 p.m. tonight when it hosts Baldwin at Wildcat Stadium.

"To win back-to-back regional titles is amazing and exciting," senior captain Logan Faulkner said. "But I am super excited for this game coming up. This is the game that can get us to

the state final four and I feel our team is good enough to beat them if we play our game and each player does their job.”

Immediately following their win at Ottawa on Thursday, every player realized they were able to get a win without playing their best match and they know it will have to change if they want to advance past Baldwin.

“I had two kids tell me that is the worse game we have played all year and they know they have to get better,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “Sometimes you have win an ugly game and that is what the kids did. They kept grinding and they kept fighting. They played hard and I am really happy for them to be able to move on. These boys deserve it”



Hunter Rogers heads the ball in for the game's only goal Thursday against Ottawa.

Louisburg got out to a quick start and scored the game's lone

goal just minutes into the match. Braden Yows sent a corner kick into the box, and found the head of junior Hunter Rogers, who knocked it past the Ottawa keeper.

Opportunities continued to pile up for the Wildcats throughout the contest as Louisburg had several shots from Yows, Cade Gassman, Treston Carlson, Colin McManigal, Faulkner and Gavin York. They were either turned away by the Cyclone goalie or said just wide of the goal.

"No one ever said it would be easy," Conley said. "Both teams played with a massive amount of energy and heart. Ottawa played very determined soccer and we had a lot of chances, but struggled to finish and frustration started to set in. As it happens in playoffs, when you let a team stick around and they start believing, anything can happen.

"I am happy how the boys held their ground and how we dominated the game. It was also frustrating when our opponents park the bus in front of their goal playing a 5-4-1 formation, but it's part of it and we need to do a better job of executing and finishing. This time of year though, a win is a win. Hats off to Ottawa for how determined they played."



Centerback Luke Faulkner heads the ball away from an Ottawa player last Thursday.

Ottawa made a couple of attempts to tie the match in the final few minutes as the Cyclones put pressure on the Wildcat back line, but they held strong, including a couple saves from goalie Mack Newell. Outside back Michael Seufferling was also a factor in making things difficult for Ottawa.

"We have given up like nine goals in the 14 games we have played and we have nine shutouts," Conley said of his defense. "We have a pretty stout group back there. They bent a little bit, but they didn't break. Ottawa put on a lot of pressure there toward the end and I think they only had one or two shots on goal. They did a good job standing them up or forcing bad shots."

Now, the Wildcats have their eyes set on Baldwin as they will try to beat the Bulldogs for the first time this season.

Louisburg defeated Baldwin 1-0 in overtime early in the year and the Wildcats put together a 2-0 win in Baldwin.



Goalie Mack Newell punches the ball away to deny an Ottawa scoring opportunity.

Win or lose, Louisburg has already put together a memorable season – one that they didn't think might happen with all the uncertainty of the spread of COVID-19.

"We just step to the next thing," Conley said. "To be honest, nobody knew what was going to happen with this COVID thing. You see football teams and others getting shut down around the state due to COVID, and it is frustrating because you don't know. You can be as prepped as you want to be for your opponent, but you also have to prep against a virus you can't see and don't know when it is going to come. Still, I am happy for the boys and we are looking forward to the challenge of

making it even further.”

Wildcats roll Chanute to advance to regional semis

To get to the regional championship, Louisburg had to first get past Chanute last Thursday at Wildcat Stadium and the Wildcats had no issues in a 9-0 win.

The Wildcats scored five times in the first half and never looked back.

Senior Treston Carlson, junior Jaden Vohs and sophomore Cade Gassman each scored two goals for Louisburg, while Colin McManigal and Braden Yows also found the back of the net.



Logan Faulkner (13) battles a Chanute player for the ball last Tuesday at Wildcat Stadium.

Goalies Mack Newell and Matthew Sword combined for the shutout.

"I felt the boys did a great job of spreading the field out and making Chanute move defensively," Conley said. "We had plenty of runs down the side and also cut them down the middle. Other than the first 5-10 minutes, we absolutely dominated the game. We did a nice job of finding our marks and taking them away. I did feel that we needed to play with more energy than we did in the first half and the boys really responded in the second half and showed some passion."