

# After a year away, Louisburg girls soccer ready to get back on the pitch



*Louisburg junior Reese Johnson is one of three returning starters from the Wildcats' 2019 state runner-up team as they get back on the field for the first time in almost two years.*

The last time the Louisburg girls soccer team was on the pitch, the Wildcats walked off with its second consecutive state runner-up finish.

That, unfortunately, was almost two years ago.

The Wildcat soccer team, along with every other spring program, is back at it after having its season cancelled last year due to the spread of COVID-19.

Last year was supposed to feature a team of 12 seniors that were trying to make their third straight state championship game. They never got that chance, and this year's team will look different.

Also, thanks to the success of the girls basketball team that finished third at state, head coach Kyle Conley didn't have his full regiment of players until yesterday's practice.

Louisburg opens its season at 5 p.m. today when it hosts Lansing.

"If last season taught us anything, it's never to take

anything for granted,” Conley said. “These girls are working incredibly hard and are focusing on maintaining the standard that the previous teams set. This team isn’t last year’s team, but they are going to leave their own legacy. The girls have done a nice job preparing and focusing on this team.

“This is a group of girls who are there for each other and play hard. With the crazy spring, spring break and girls basketball success, Monday was the first time I had my entire team at the field together. We have done the best we could to prepare for the season. This team is going to grow a lot throughout the season and it is going to be fun to watch.”

The Wildcats return six seniors on this year’s team – seniors that haven’t played in a Louisburg uniform since they were sophomores. It is just one of the many things they have tried to work through.

“We did graduate 12 seniors in a season that never was last year,” Conley said. “It was an incredibly gifted group of players that we are looking to replace. This group of young ladies are ready for the challenge, though. They have worked really hard and are a really young team with the majority of the players being sophomores and freshmen.

“This will be a year where more than half our team never completed a high school season. We will have some growing pains, but this a smart and athletic group that will grow each and everyday.”



***Louisburg senior Madi Quinn will be one of the leaders for the Wildcat defense this year.***

Three Wildcats return from the state runner-up squad and will help guide the young team this season and it starts in the midfield.

Senior Olivia Barber and junior Reese Johnson will lead the Louisburg attack in the middle, while senior Madi Quinn will be one of the leaders in the back on defense.

Sophomores Bree Gassman and Adyson Ross will start also start in the midfield for Louisburg, and the Wildcats will look to a pair of freshmen up top in Lola Edwards and Alexis Hampton at the forward position.

Defensively, along with Quinn, will feature a back line of senior Melissa Meigs, junior Ruth Minster and freshman Hailey Sword.

Junior Sierra Hahn will be the team's starting goalkeeper after backing up Carson Buffington on the 2019 squad.

Even though they are young, Conley hopes his older players like Quinn, Barber and Minster, who were named team captains, can help guide the team through rough times.

"I think this team is going to be very dynamic," Conley said. "We are going to put up some goals and defend well. This group is determined with their play to be successful. They are pushing themselves for the greater good of the team.



***Junior Ruth Minster was named as one of three team captains, along with seniors Madi Quinn and Olivia Barber.***

"Our team is very even in regards to breaking down of classes on the varsity squad. This group is a good group of kids that are focused to get better. We also have solid leadership and that helps so much when they are willing to help teach, guide

and lead.”

The Wildcats will also have a deep bench as senior Emma Christy, sophomore Nova Ptacek, freshman Bronwynn Williams and juniors Catie Lemke and Sammy McDaniel will all play in the midfield.

Seniors Kennady Wilkerson, Liz Guzman, along with junior Bailey Hallas and sophomore Brianne Kuhlman will serve as back up defenders, while sophomore Tehya Harvey could see some time up top.

The team, which has been practicing since early this month, is ready to break out and see what it can do, and that starts today against Lansing.

“As a coach I love preseason, but it drags on,” Conley said. “It’s fun to line up against another team and just compete. We finally get to do that against Lansing. As a coach, you are always interested to see how your team measures up to other teams. The girls are excited and ready.”