

Improbable run leads Louisburg girls to state final four



The Louisburg girls soccer team was all smiles following its 3-0 victory Tuesday over Heritage Christian in the Class 4-1A state quarterfinals.

OVERLAND PARK – The Louisburg girls soccer team is defying the odds – which is saying something considering its history.

The Wildcats, which have won five regional titles in their five seasons of existence to go along with two state runner-up finishes, have possibly done something more extraordinary.

On Tuesday in the Class 4-1A state quarterfinals at Heritage Christian, Louisburg left with a 3-0 victory and a spot in its fourth state final four. The way the Wildcats got there was the unexpected part.

Louisburg had to say goodbye to 12 seniors from a team that lost their season due to COVID in 2020 and were expected to vie for a state championship. In 2021, the Wildcats replaced many of those seniors with freshmen and sophomores and it was considered to be a rebuilding season.

Instead, Louisburg has a chance to win its first state championship in school history Friday and Saturday in Wichita as the Wildcats (12-6-1) will face Mulvane (15-4) at 5 p.m. Friday in the state semifinals.

"It is incredible," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "The last time we played in 2019, we lost six seniors. Then in 2020, COVID took our season and we lost 16 kids (12 seniors). This was literally like a rebuild and these kids have done nothing but step up and live up to these expectations. They are beat up to no end and they are still out there battling. We are kind of a MASH unit right now, but we live to see another day."



Freshman Lola Edwards makes a move toward the goal Tuesday in the Class 4-1A state quarterfinals.

The Wildcats do have a few players from their last state runner-up team, including senior Olivia Barber who has advanced to the state final four in all three of her seasons. She realizes this season was a little different than most.

"Not many people can say that they've gone to state every year

so it really makes this year even more special,” Barber said. “To be completely honest back in March I wasn’t really sure what this season was going to look like, but we’ve defied so many odds and grew so much as a team.

“I really wasn’t sure if we would make it to where we are now, but I am so proud of us for facing so much adversity and getting to this point. Our first couple weeks of practice we were looking a bit rough, but once we figured it out we didn’t look back.”

It didn’t take long for the Wildcats to get on the board against Heritage Christian.

About 15 minutes into the match, Barber crossed ball into the box. The Heritage goalie dove, missed it and senior Emma Christy was there to tip it in to score the game’s first goal.

It was a 1-0 game at halftime, but with 25 minutes left in the match, sophomore Adyson Ross knocked a shot from close to 25 yards away to double the Wildcats’ lead.

“We wanted to attack the flanks cause their goalie plays high near post,” Conley said. “If we hit it hard to the back side, we worked on just running through and hitting it and Emma did just that. We missed a couple early, but Emma got there and buried it.

“On Adyson’s goal, she just hit it hard. She has a powerful left foot, and we just told the girls to hit it hard and low, and it would create problems for them and we did just that.”



Louisburg junior Reese Johnson makes a pass Tuesday against Heritage Christian.

Barber sealed the win for the Wildcats with a goal of her own late in the match and the celebrations ensued.

Junior Reese Johnson, who had three shots on goal of her own, was also a part of that state runner-up team in 2019 and is looking forward to going back.

“It really means a lot to me to be able to go to state again,” Johnson said. “I’m very proud of us and although Louisburg soccer always seems to find their way into state, nothing is ever guaranteed, so being able to go means the world.”

Louisburg was strong on the back side as well as the Wildcat defense limited the Chargers’ opportunities. Captains Madison Quinn and Ruth Minster cleared a lot of balls away, while goalie Sierra Hahn earned the clean sheet, including a diving

save in the second half.



The Louisburg girls soccer team celebrates its fourth straight trip to the Class 4-1A state final four following their win Tuesday at Heritage Christian.

"I thought the back line did really well and didn't let much get through," Conley said. "Madison did a good job of going straight to the ball and sticking it hard. I thought maybe this was her best game of the year.

"Heritage has a really good, young team and they are very athletic. They are going to be good for years to come, but I thought we did a good job standing them up."

The Wildcats will try to make their third consecutive state championship match at 5 p.m. Friday when it squares off with Mulvane at Stryker Soccer Complex in Wichita. The championship and third place matches will be played Saturday.

"I'm extremely excited for this weekend and know that we can

do great things," Barber said. "It's gonna be tough, but if we show up and play our game we'll be a force to be reckoned with."