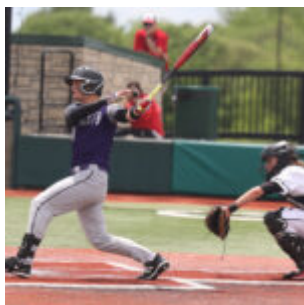


Wildcats fall one win short of state following regional title game loss to Hayden



Louisburg senior Matt Madison follows through on his swing during the Class 4A regional semifinal game against Ottawa last Tuesday in Topeka.

TOPEKA – For the first time since 2009, the Louisburg baseball team found themselves one win away from a state tournament berth.

The Wildcats, who defeated Ottawa 7-1 last Tuesday in the regional semifinals, squared off with Topeka-Hayden later that day for the regional championship at Bettis Sports Complex in Topeka.

Unlike 2009, the Wildcats found themselves a victory short of a regional title.

Louisburg couldn't get much going offensively as it lost 4-0 to Hayden and ended its season with an 11-11 record.

"They played awesome during regionals," Louisburg coach Kade Larson said of his team. "I was really impressed with how well our defense played. That was our best two games on defense all year and it was a great time for it. Any time you can hold teams to 2.5 runs per game, I really like our chances.

"The pitcher in the second game was really good and had our

number. Even until the end, we didn't give up and battled the whole game."

Louisburg, the No. 12 seed, started the regional tournament with a shocker as it upset No. 5 Ottawa in convincing fashion. The Wildcats got out to a quick start in their 7-1 victory and never looked back.

The Wildcats opened with two runs in the first inning when Kolby Kattau and Matt Madison opened the game with back-to-back doubles, and then Trevin Lohse followed with an RBI single.



Louisburg senior A.J. Drew rounds third base and scores one of the Wildcats' seven runs against Ottawa.

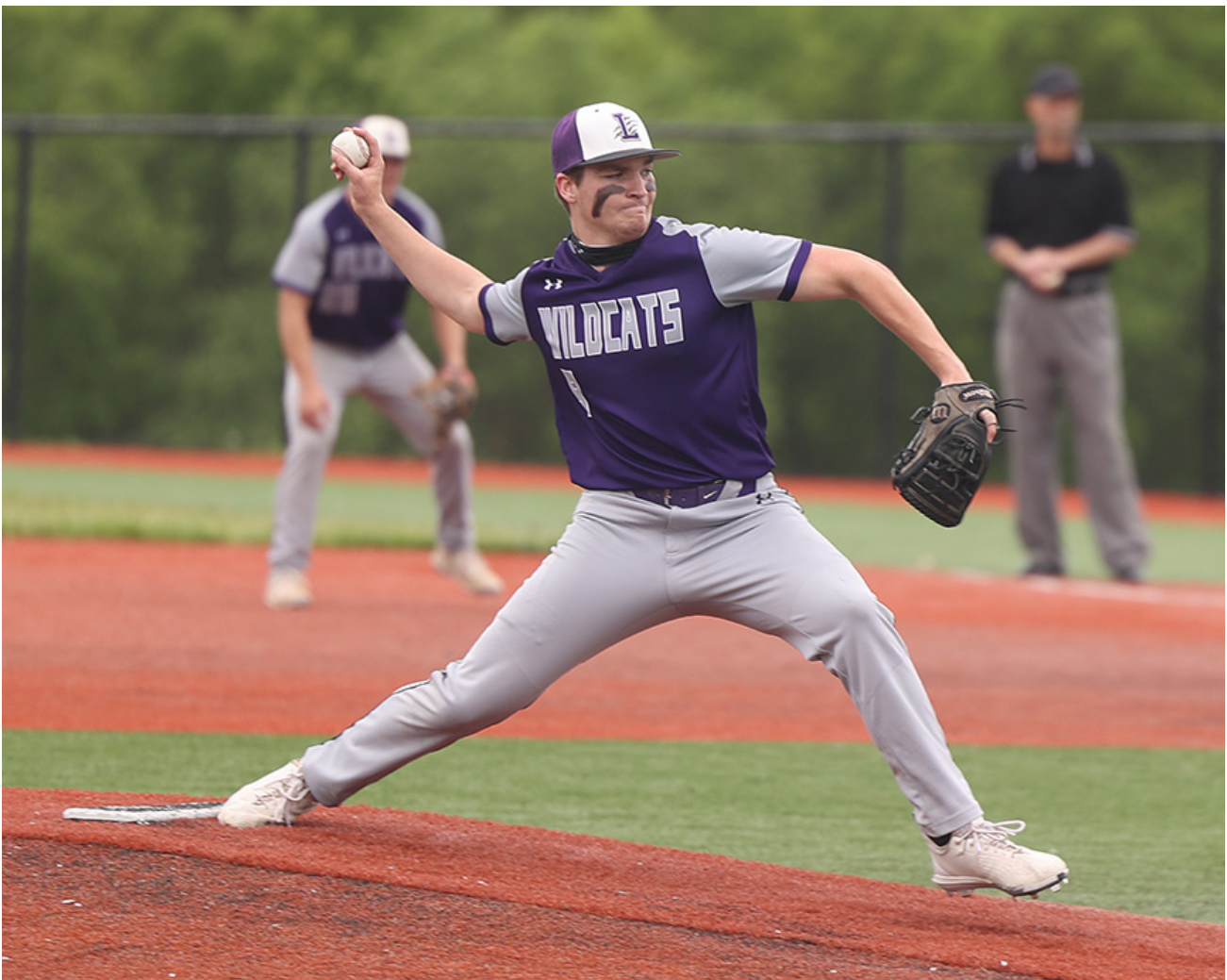
Ottawa answered with a run in its half of the first, but Louisburg scored three times in the fourth on a 2-run single by Madison and an RBI single from Declan Battle after an A.J.

Drew double.

Louisburg scored two more times in the fifth to all but seal the win. Junior Maverick Rockers singled on a line drive to score Cade Driskell and Battle to make it 7-1.

“Going out and putting up two runs in the top of the first inning against Ottawa was huge,” Larson said. “I think it gave us that boost of confidence we needed and we never looked back. As the innings went on we definitely got more and more confidence.”

Madison led the Wildcat bats with three hits and 3 RBIs, while Kattau also had three hits. Battle finished with two hits in the victory.



Louisburg junior Brandon Doles pitched a complete game in the Wildcats' 7-1 win over Ottawa last week.

Wildcat junior Brandon Doles kept the Cyclone bats silent as he notched the complete game victory. Doles gave up just one run on five hits

“Doles was absolutely lights out,” Larson said. “He got in a few jams and then he threw another ground ball double play and we were headed back to hit. It was a really impressive game. He had great defense behind him and we swung it well too. It was all-around our most complete game as a team and it came at the perfect time.”

Topeka-Hayden made things difficult on the Wildcats in the regional championship game.

Hayden struck for three runs in the first inning off starter Trevin Lohse, and the Wildcats managed just three hits in the loss.

Rockers came in for relief and gave up just one run on five hit in six innings, but Louisburg couldn't put a rally together. Kattau, Madison and Lohse each had singles for Louisburg.



Louisburg second baseman George Reichart makes an over-the-shoulder catch against Topeka-Hayden in the regional championship.

“Against Hayden, their pitcher was really solid,” Larson said. “He kept the ball down and got out of jams every time we had a baserunner. He kept us off balance and really did well on the mound. We’ve leaned on our offense all season long and he managed to shut us down the whole night, kudos to him.

“Maverick pitched really well in relief for us. Maverick and our defense kept us in the game. We just couldn’t get our bats going.”

It was a strong finish to the season by the Wildcats, but like most seasons, they are forced to say goodbye to some teammates.

Seniors A.J. Drew, Trevin Lohse and Matt Madison all played

vital roles on the team this season, but Larson believe his team was playing their best ball at the right time.

“Overall, this was a really great season,” Larson said. “I was extremely proud of how we battled and never gave up throughout the entire season. I believe we were playing our best baseball of the season at the end, and that’s all I can ask for as a coach. We will lose three great seniors going into next year, but they really set the tone for how this team can play this in the following years.”