

# Wildcats hoping to surpass last year's historic season



*Louisburg goalie Mack Newell leaps for a save during the team's intrasquad scrimmage last Friday. Newell is one of three returning starters on the defense for the Wildcats.*

Putting together the best season in program history is a pretty impressive feat.

The Louisburg boys soccer team did that last year as the Wildcats went on to finish third at the Class 4-1A state tournament. The Wildcats finished the year 16-2 as it was a season to remember.

As special as that season was for the players, they want more in 2021 and are settling for nothing less.

"We went to state last year, and we were one of the only two teams to finish the season with a win," senior captain Braden Yows said. "It was the best result in school history, but as a team we've set a goal to win state this year. We are working hard every day to achieve that goal. It's going to be a lot of fun this year."

Again, the Wildcats are considered one of the favorites to return to the state final four this season. Louisburg is currently ranked No. 3 in Class 4-1A by the Kansas High School Soccer Coaches Association going into the season, just behind Bishop Miege and Wichita-Trinity Academy.

Winning state is a tough goal to achieve, but it is one the Wildcats are looking forward to trying.

“Our boys are really focused on making another run to the state final four again,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “We obviously we have a lot of work to do to accomplish that, but the boys want that again.

“Practices have gone well. We have had adversities like everyone else in regards to the heat, but the boys are working hard and are determined.”

Louisburg returns an experienced group from a year ago and could be a dangerous team to go up against on both sides of the field.



***Louisburg senior captain Braden Yows heads the ball away during the team's scrimmage last week.***

The Wildcats figure to be strong on the attacking side and it starts with Yows in the midfield. Yows, who was a first-team all-league and all-state player a year ago, broke the program record with 21 assists and also had seven goals.

Junior Cade Gassman also returns to the forward spot as he was second on the team with 13 goals a year ago and had eight assists. Gassman was also a first team all-league and all-state player.

Juniors Colin McManigal and Gavin York also return as goal scoring threats at the forward position as they try to replace the team's scoring leader from a year ago, Treston Carlson.

Juniors Ethan Ptacek, Andrew Brown, Brock Varns, sophomore Austin Jamison and freshmen Emmett White and Colton Blue will also see some time as outside midfielders. Senior Isaac Guetterman will also return as a starter in the midfield.

"We do have a lot of options," Conley said of his depth. "We lost a big part of that in Treston graduating last season. He is currently playing at Hesston College and scored his first collegiate goal in his first game. We are returning a lot of options, but we are looking to fill that void. This is be a really fun group to watch and see them grow throughout the season."

The Wildcats also return an experienced defense, starting with its outside backs. Senior Michael Seuferling and junior Toby Espina-Roca return to anchor the outside. Seuferling was a first-team all-state selection a year ago.

Mack Newell is also back in goal for his second consecutive year. The junior goalie had a strong season as a sophomore with second team all-league and all-state honors as he had 88 saves on the year.



***Junior Toby Espina-Roca clears the ball out of the back last week during the team scrimmage.***

Senior Hunter Rogers also returns to fortify the defense at his starting defensive midfield spot.

New to the defense will be junior Matthew Sword, who will inherit the center back spot as he will try to make the Wildcat defense even stronger.

“In the back, we are returning several key players, but made a position change for Matthew Sword,” Conley said. “Matthew was a great goalkeeper, but he will be moving to center back for us. He has done an excellent job of learning the position and is executing very well.

“Seuferling has been the best outside back I have seen over the past three years. He will be fun to watch as he finishes his high school career. Newell, in his second year ever playing soccer, will look to build on his record setting season from last year. It is amazing to look how far he has come over only a year of playing soccer. Espina-Roca has been an attacking outside back that helps our team keep pressure on

our opponents defensively.”

Louisburg features just a five-member senior class this season in Yows, Seufferling, Rogers, Guetterman and Aidan Cannon. Still, Conley knows they will all provide great leadership.

“Braden has been fantastic for our program and is a quality player who just verbally committed to UMKC,” Conley said. “He was also added to the list of Preseason All American watch list for Kansas. Hunter brings a massive amount of experience in our midfield. He has great vision and possesses the ball really well. He is also great in the air. Isaac is another senior in the midfield for us. He works incredibly hard and has a massive work rate. He can cover a lot of ground and is exceptional at reading the play.

“Michael is the best outside back I have ever coached and has been the best outside back I have seen over the last two years of teams I scouted or we have played. He is strong on the ball defender, reads the game well and is great in the air. Aidan Cannon has played multiple positions for us in our program. He is an athletic kid who is smart and is familiar with our defense. He will be an asset for us this season.”

The Wildcats open their season today when they host Pittsburg at Wildcat Stadium. They kickoff a difficult schedule that features contests against numerous Class 5A and 6A programs.

“Our schedule has seven 4A schools, seven 5A schools, and two 6A schools,” Conley said. “Our schedule is solid for a typical 4A school. We will have our work cut out for us. This team needs to be pushed and our schedule does just that. Our league one of the strongest leagues for 4A schools you will find.

“We have a lot of different styles of play within our league and have some really talented schools. Our schedule with our league opponents and our out of league competition will

prepare this team for the playoffs.”