

Doles happy to be back on field after season-ending injury



Louisburg senior Brandon Doles is congratulated by his teammates after recovering a fumble against Fort Scott during a scrimmage last week.

Brandon Doles remembers the day well.

It was Sept. 18 and the Louisburg football team hosted Baldwin and Doles was hoping for a big junior year with the Wildcats.

That night couldn't have gotten off to a better start as Doles caught a pass and lumbered 80 yards near the goal line to set up a Louisburg score.

Doles was pumped. The fans were going crazy and so were his teammates. Unfortunately, at least for that moment, it was a brutal combination.

Following the catch and run, Doles jumped up to celebrate with his teammates only to suffer a freak accident. In an instant, his hope for a special season was dashed away.

After the celebration, Doles landed wrong and suffered a broken fibula and dislocated ankle, in which all the ligaments were torn.

"When it happened it felt like it was a dream because you never really think these things will happen to you," Doles

said. "You see it on TV of other athletes doing it, but you never think it will happen to you. I just remember not feeling anything when it first happened. But once the adrenaline wore off, it was the worst pain I have ever experienced."

When Doles came down, teammates and coaches instantly knew something wasn't right and head coach Robert Ebenstein got onto the field along with the trainer.



Brandon Doles goes up to catch a pass during a game earlier last season.

"Brandon's injury was such a weird, unfortunate and freak situation," Ebenstein said. "To be honest it wasn't even a football injury. Everyone was so amped up and excited to get to him, he was met full force to do his celebratory ritual with a teammate. Too much steam rolling in caught him off guard and just came down funky on it and it as a gnarly

break.”

The injury not only ended his season, but also cost him his wrestling season after becoming a state qualifier as a sophomore.

The disappointment was hard to get over, especially after being saddled to a wheelchair as he recovered from his injuries. He tried to get through it as best he could.

It was a six month recovery process for Doles, that included not doing anything the first two months, which was hard.

“It’s always tough to miss a game, but to miss your whole season is even worse,” Doles said. “Knowing that I would never play football with those seniors again was pretty hard and knowing that I could have medaled at state for wrestling made me really upset. But once I was able to kinda move around I tried to stop thinking about the fact I couldn’t play, I just tried to be there for my team and help support them from the sidelines.”

He then followed up with physical therapy for three straight months, trying to get strength back in his leg for baseball season.

Doles was slated to be a big part of the Wildcat team a year ago, as he was the starting tight end, linebacker and long snapper. It was a difficult blow for Doles and the Louisburg coaches.

It was a tough loss for sure,” Ebenstein said. “Last year our depth was a major issue, so moving forward without him was tough.”

Depth is no longer an issue for the Wildcats this season as they have more than 80 players out for football. Instead of playing both ways, Doles will just play on defense at the linebacker spot.

As for the recovery, he is all healed up and ready to join his teammates under the Friday night lights again when they open up tonight at Spring Hill.

"I'm so excited and ready to be back on the field with my brothers," Doles said "We haven't beat Spring Hill on their own field in awhile and it will feel so good if we can finally beat them.

"Since I've been back I've tweaked my ankle a couple of times at the beginning of baseball. But since spring I haven't had a problem with it. Sometimes it will be sore, but for the most part I'm back to 100 percent."

That is good news for the Wildcats as they prepare for what could be a special season as they try to get that Frontier League championship and a good seed in the playoffs.

"All summer long we put in a lot of work to get to where we are now," Doles said. "We are working hard everyday at practice and learning everything the coaches are putting in so that way we can beat Spring Hill. Only playing one side of the ball will be nice because players will be able to rest when they are not on the field so that way once they get back out there we will all be ready to go 100 percent every snap."

Along with the typical practice work, Ebenstein has also focused on the art of celebrating with his players.

"We now are perfecting celebratory handshakes where our feet stay on the ground," he joked.

That is all right by Doles.