

Louisburg hopes depth, new faces breed success



Wildcat junior J.R. Rooney gets fired up after a big hit during the team's scrimmage last Friday against Fort Scott.

For most of last season, depth was always a concern for Louisburg football coach Robert Ebenstein.

He had a lot of athletes play on both sides of the ball, then throw in a slew of injuries, and the Wildcats found themselves worn down by the end of the game.

It was a common theme that only seemed to become a bigger problem during Louisburg's 4-5 season.

Needless to say, depth should be the least of the Wildcats' problem this year.

Louisburg has 83 players out in 2021 and Ebenstein decided to take a new approach. Since the Wildcats have depth, many of those athletes will only be playing one side of the ball.

It is something that Ebenstein hopes will pay off for the Wildcats in the long run.

"This is by far the most depth we have ever had," Ebenstein said. "We have a lot of kids who have put in the time and the work, they are varsity ready and have earned a spot. As of now we still plan on mostly having a full platoon for Friday. There will be nine guys on both sides that will be one way starters."

With that, there will be plenty of new faces on the field for Louisburg. The Wildcats have just 10 seniors and will feature a group that is made up of mainly underclassmen.

Sophomores and freshmen will play pivotal roles this season, but Ebenstein is excited to see what he players can do this year.

“These guys have been working hard, all summer long, two-a-days, jamboree week and this week as well,” Ebenstein said. “We have also changed our practice around to put an emphasis into film study and our guys have been putting in the time with film study as well. We are very excited to get going today against Spring Hill.”



Sophomore Declan Battle is the Wildcat starting quarterback this season.

Offensively, the Wildcats will feature a different look and will have a new signal caller in the process.

Sophomore Declan Battle will take the reins at quarterback this year as the Wildcats will run different schemes throughout the season.

“Declan is a competitor and a football guy,” Ebenstein said. “He understands the game extremely well for any high school player and he is only a sophomore. Our offense is quite a bit different than last year, but the mentality of tough downhill football will always be our focus.”

Senior Kolby Kattau will lead the running back group, along with junior Riley VanEaton, sophomore Caden Caplinger and freshman Ashton Moore.

Juniors Mason Dobbins and Jackson Kush, along with senior Liam DeVary, will be the team’s wide receivers. Isaiah Whitley, a junior, will be at tight end.

Senior Aiden Barker and junior Nathan Vincent are returning starters on the offensive line, and will be joined by senior Reid Justesen, junior Will Hutsell and sophomore Scott Thornton.

Defensively, the Wildcats will also show some new things and will have strong leadership from their linebacking core.

Senior Brandon Doles returns from a season-ending leg injury last season to lead the way, while fellow senior Bryce Gage, Vincent and Moore will also see a lot of playing time at that spot.



Sophomore Wyatt Holland wraps up a Fort Scott player last week during the team's jamboree.

Barker, junior J.R. Rooney, and sophomores Jackson Howard and Wyatt Holland will lead the way up front. While seniors Gavin Whisenhunt, Luis Rios, Terrance Foster, junior Trace Eslinger and freshman Lucas Swartz could all see time as well.

Junior Jase Hovey is a returning starter in the secondary and will be joined seniors Tom Koontz, Kattau, along with juniors Layne Ryals, Carson Wade and Kaven Bartlett. Sophomores Hunter Heinrich and Luke Hill could also see time.

“Coach (Drew) Harding, along with (Alex) Gentges and (Kade) Larson, have done a great job molding the defense into their vision. They have implemented a lot of new schemes, blitzes, and coverages. There are a lot of upperclassmen on the defense and very competitive players as well.

"The defensive line will be a solid group and the linebackers are a strength of our team. The secondary will have some playmakers and some of the smartest football players we have."

With so many new faces this season, Ebenstein got a good look at his team last Friday when Louisburg hosted Ottawa and Fort Scott for a jamboree.



Senior Aiden Barker will play big roles on both sides of the ball this year for Louisburg.

"The jamboree was a good experience and getting to break up the monotony of going against ourselves was a great change of pace," he said. "It also gave us a live game speed look, and we prepared well for it and for the most part executed as we should have."

It all counts beginning tonight when the Wildcats travel to Spring Hill for their season opener. Even with all the new faces, they are hoping for a memorable year.

"This group has very high expectations," Ebenstein said. "Undefeated league champs is always the goal, and hosting week

9 and going week by week from there. This team has a lot of potential, but potential is just that. We have a lot to learn and there will be many guys with their first Friday night action. As long as we catch up to the speed of the game and communicate well we will be fine. From there, effort will take care of the rest."