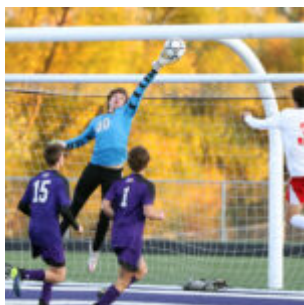


Heartbreaking loss to Miege ends Louisburg's hope of state final four



Louisburg goalie Mack Newell reaches out for a save Friday during the Class 4-1A regional championship game against Bishop Miege at Wildcat Stadium.

It had the drama of a state championship match, but instead the No. 1 and 3 ranked teams in the state were playing for the Class 4-1A regional championship title.

Louisburg hosted Bishop Miege on Friday in hopes ending the Stags' string of consecutive state championships.

Instead, the Wildcats once again saw their season come to a close after a 2-0 loss to the Stags at Wildcat Stadium and ended their season with a 12-5-1 record.

The loss was heartbreaking defeat for the Wildcats, who had their sights set on another state final four – and possibly – a state title. To make matters worse, it was to a Miege team that has handed Louisburg a loss in five of the last six postseasons.

“Miege is the best team in the state year in and year out.,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “They are incredibly talented and their historical accolades are incredible. Such as 26 straight 4A-1A playoff wins in a row, 10 straight regional championships and 21 regional

championships overall, and won five straight state championships. This game should be been played much later in the season, but it is what it is.

“This will be the toughest game they play in the East side of the bracket and maybe even in the whole tournament. With that being said, our boys absolutely battled and didn’t back down. They kept fighting and playing for each other. The amount of effort and heart we played with was incredible. Just would have been nice if we finished our chances.”



Louisburg senior Hunter Rogers heads the ball away from the Bishop Miege side Friday in Louisburg.

Unlike in year’s past against Miege, the Wildcats had their fair share of chances. However, it was the chance that never was that seemed to change the course of the match.

Midway through the first half, the center referee called Miege for a penalty in the box on a takedown of Ethan Ptacek. However, after consulting with the side official, he decided to reverse the call.

Instead of a possible one goal advantage for Louisburg, it turned into a one goal lead for the Stags when Victor Lopez dribbled down the field and found the back of the net with 11 minutes left in the first half.

It could have also played another big role as the Stags were issued a red card early in the second half after a player threw a punch. The Stags had to play a man down the rest of the match.

“If that PK was called and we capitalized on it, we would have changed our defensive strategies and would have ensured one of their players would have never touched the ball,” Conley said. “Even if it is 2-1, getting the red card would have added way more pressure on them to defend. Also, when a team goes down a goal, you never know how they will respond, but I felt that call that was ridiculously overturned by a lineman that changed the outlook of the game tremendously.

“When you go down a goal in a game, it would have created a massive amount of pressure and you never know what would have happened. I am not saying the overruling cost us the game, but it definitely changed the outlook of the game and how the game would have been played.”

The Wildcats took another blow as Miege scored on a shot from 30 yards out to go up 2-0 at halftime and put the pressure on Louisburg.



Louisburg junior Gavin York goes up for a header against the Bishop Miege goalie Friday in the Class 4-1A regional championship match.

Despite that, Louisburg did what it could to try and find the back of the net. The Wildcats had 13 shots to 17 for Miege, including four on goal.

Junior Colin McManigal had four of the Wildcats' shots and senior Braden Yows had three. Junior Gavin York had a team-high two shots on goal, including a header that almost found the back of the net.

Louisburg also had six corner kicks to try and find a way to get on the scoreboard. Although there were some close opportunities, Conley was happy with the way his team responded throughout the night.

"We played really well and created a lot of dangerous

opportunities, but we just could not get one to go,” Conley said. “We had a penalty kick taken away from us, which was an obvious penalty. We just kept fighting and playing with so much energy. Then after their red card for throwing a punch at one of our players, we had so many opportunities. We just could not find the back of the net. We hit the post several times, we hit defenders, or we hit it right to their keeper. We just couldn’t get one to go.

“The boys absolutely battled and left it all out there. They have nothing to hold their head about. They represented their families, the school, community, and our program in the absolute best possible way. This was a very special group and did some very special things. This game was as close as a state final four game as you will ever see. Both teams played really well and neither team backed down from the other. It was a great game, but we just couldn’t find the net.”



Louisburg's Braden Yows was one of five Wildcat seniors who played their last match for the program Friday after the loss to Bishop Miege.

What made the loss even more difficult to take was the five Wildcats seniors who played their last match, including four starters. Yows, Michael Seuferling, Hunter Rogers, Isaac Guetterman and Aidan Cannon.

It is a group of players that helped Louisburg to a program-best finish a year ago with a third-place finish at state.

"Our seniors were special," Conley said. "Every day they came ready to go and gave their all each and every night," Conley said. "They were always prepared and led our team as well as any coach could have imagined. They are going to be missed dearly. I am so proud of everything that they accomplished as a team and individually. They are going to be very hard to

replace and they definitely left their impact on this program.

“This group helped lead this program to its best finish in school history (third in 4A-1A), won three straight Frontier League titles, and two regional championships. These young men are great leaders and are going to go on to do great things in their lives. I am honored to have the opportunity to be their coach. I will never forget this group of seniors.”