

State soccer streak comes to an end in Wildcats' loss to Hayden



Louisburg coach Kyle Conley hugs his players following the Wildcats' 1-0 loss to Topeka-Hayden in the Class 4-1A regional championship match Thursday in Louisburg.

Streaks are meant to be broken eventually, and unfortunately for the Louisburg girls soccer team, its streak of four consecutive state final four appearances came to an end.

The Wildcats saw its season come to a close with a 1-0 loss to Topeka-Hayden on Thursday in the Class 4-1A regional championship game in Louisburg.

The loss was difficult in its own right. Louisburg also had to say goodbye to its seven seniors, and also to its coach – Kyle Conley – who has led the program since its inception.

It was a more somber mood than most losses after the Wildcats saw their season end with a 13-5 record.

"This team did a lot of good things throughout the season," Conley said. "They never backed down to an opponent. They played for each other and played so hard. I am extremely proud to coach them. They were a very focused and determined group. I am really going to miss these kids."

Louisburg and Hayden have had their battles in recent years,

including a pair of victories that helped Louisburg to the state championship matches.

However, it was Hayden that struck early in this match as Sloane Sims scored the game's only goal in the first five minutes and Louisburg was unable to answer.



Louisburg senior Reese Johnson crosses the ball into the box Thursday against Hayden.

"It was really tough," Conley said. "We knew what kind of team they were and how tough they were going to be, but it was just unfortunate we had to play them that early in the playoffs. We faced them twice before in the state semifinal games in 2018 and 2019. Those were incredible games that were fortunate enough to win. This time, I guess it was their turn."

After Hayden's early goal, the Wildcats had a few chances to even the score and sophomore Lola Edwards had the best chance with a pair of shots on goal, including one a good save by Hayden keeper Macy Smith.

"I think we were extremely calm after that first goal," Conley said. "In fact, we may have been a little too calm. We had our heads right and were focused the entire match. I just felt we

were going to get one, but it never came.

“We struggled a little finding our feet in the final third, but I really think our press created issues for them. We took advantage of a couple things in their formation, but could capitalize. They are a very tall team that was very aggressive. I think we did a nice job of matching their intensity. It was just a really good game.”



Senior goalie Sierra Hahn makes a diving save for the Wildcats during Thursday's regional championship game against Hayden.

The Wildcat defense played tough and turned away several Hayden opportunities as senior goalie Sierra Hahn finished the game with five saves.

Hahn, along with Reese Johnson, Ruth Minster, Sammy McDaniel, Catie Lemke, Kassidi Lomax and Bailey Hallas all played their final game for the Wildcats.

Louisburg ended its season with one of the best records in Class 4-1A and Conley knows there is nothing his team should hang their heads about.



Louisburg junior Tehya Harvey heads the ball toward the goal Thursday against Hayden.

"Topeka Hayden is a very talented and physical team," Conley said. "They play really hard and they are always a tough team to beat. They kept a lot of pressure on us early, but I think the second half our press worked well and caused them problems. Our girls played with so much heart and never backed down. We kept fighting until the last whistle.

"I told the girls they have nothing to be ashamed of after the game. They left everything on the field. We wanted to honor all the people we came to watch us and honor the crest as well. Honor all the players that played before them. We didn't want to let anyone down."

Louisburg did nothing of the sort.