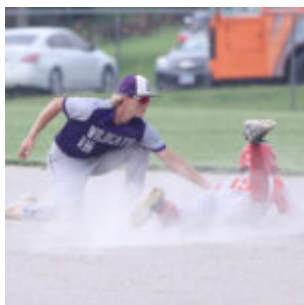


Wildcats fall in weather-shortened regional title game to Paola



Louisburg shortstop Maverick Rockers puts a tag on an Atchison player Tuesday during the Class 4A regional tournament at Atchison High School.

ATCHISON – The regional tournament for Louisburg baseball started out with a bang.

The end was about ready to be another firework-type explosion, only to find out it was a dud.

The No. 15 Wildcats opened the Class 4A regional tournament with a 10-0 victory over No. 2 Atchison and found themselves in the championship game against No. 7 Paola.

Louisburg put together a rally late against the Panthers as it was down two runs, but the game was officially called in the seventh inning with two runners on and one out, due to inclement weather.

Paola was awarded the 3-1 victory at Amelia Earhart Stadium in Atchison and the Panthers earned the state tournament berth.

Since five innings had been played, it had become an official game and the Wildcats weren't able to see it all the way through.

It also meant the final game for Louisburg seniors Maverick

Rockers, Brandon Doles, Sam Hastings, Kolby Kattau and George Reichart.

“I hate that this is how these seniors are going out,” Larson said. “They had their sophomore year taken away due to Covid and then their final chance to try for a win together taken away, too. They worked their tails off for this program for four years to get to that position to have a chance to win a game to go to state.

“They got into the position and then the opportunity was taken from them. Couldn’t be more proud of the work they put in and how they always did things the right way on the field.”



Brandon Doles celebrates with teammate Declan Battle after a scoring a run Tuesday against Paola in the regional championship game.

The Wildcats (8-14) had a big challenge on their hands as they had to go up against Paola ace Caden Marcum. The Panther senior, who has signed to play baseball at the University of Tennessee, struck out 11 Wildcats over six innings and gave up just one run.

However, Marcum was at his pitch-count limit and couldn't pitch the seventh, and final inning. Paola went to its bench and the Wildcats were able to take advantage.

"We had a plan to try to work the count and not help Marcum on the mound while we were at the plate," Larson said. "The guys did it really well and got to the bullpen in the top of the seventh. We may have only managed one run, but we had some of the best at bats we've had all year. Guys were locked in all night and I can't express enough how proud I am of them for the way they showed up in this regional."

After an out to begin the inning, sophomore Brody McGreer singled and senior Kolby Kattau worked a walk to put runners at first and second with one out. The heart of the Louisburg order was coming up next.

Unfortunately for the Wildcats, lightning got too close to the complex that forced a delay, which eventually turned into an official game.

"The guys had no idea that would be the last time they touched the field together," Larson said. "We were ready to come back and finish up at midnight if we had to. When I told them, everyone seemed to be in shock that they would let it end this way. I think for the most part all of us still are."



Louisburg junior Corbin Hamman winds back for a pitch Tuesday against Paola.

Had the Wildcats taken the lead, their starting pitcher would have gone back out for the bottom the seventh.

Junior Corbin Hamman had his best outing of the season as he gave up just three runs on five hits and struck out nine. A pair of solo home runs by Dalton Picek and Marcum turned out to be the difference in the game.

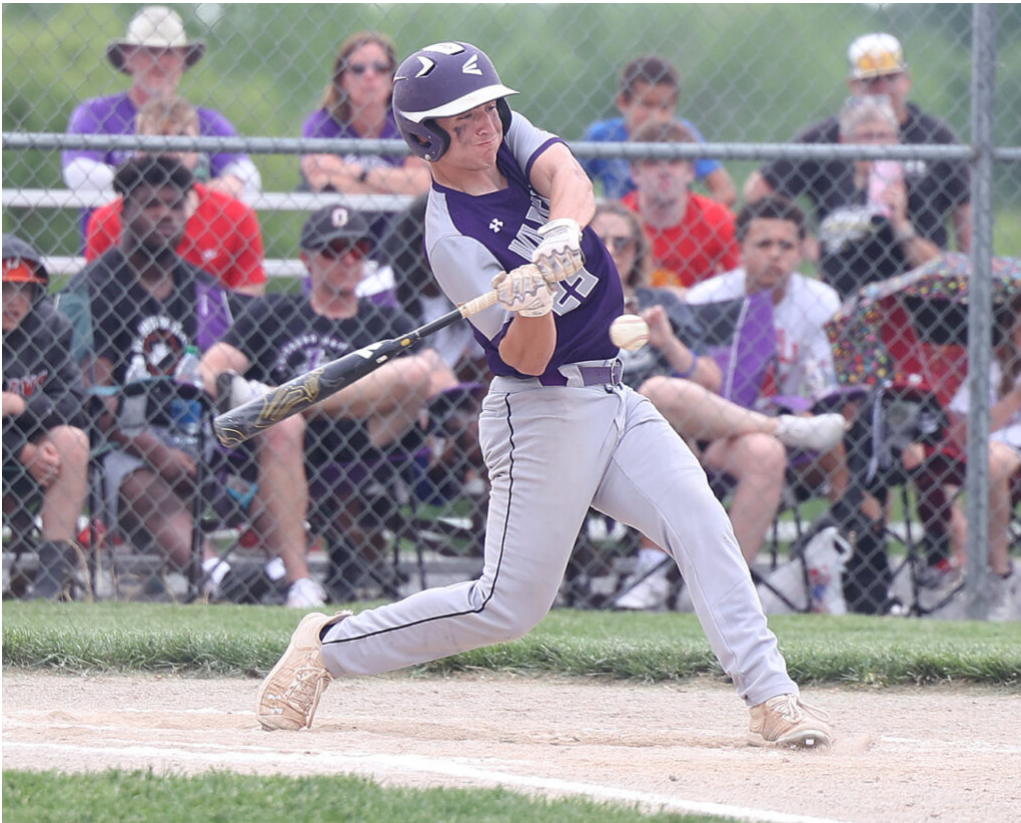
“Corbin threw his best game of the season and did it at the perfect time,” Larson said. “He filled up the strike zone all game and competed his butt off. Minus only 2 pitches he kept it a 1-1 game for 6 innings.

“Had we taken the lead in the seventh, Corbin was ready to go in the bottom half. I wouldn’t have been able to take the ball away from him with how great he was pitching all night.”

The Wildcats opened the tournament against Atchison and got out to a fast start and never looked back.

Louisburg scored eight runs in the first inning and added two

more in the third to complete the run-rule victory.



Senior Kolby Kattau swings at a pitch during the regional championship game Tuesday at Atchison.

Doles led the Wildcat offense with four hits, including a double and a run driven in. Mack Newell and Kattau each finished with a pair of RBIs, while McGreer and Rockers also had two hits.

Declan Battle, Jackson Howard, Jackson Kush and Hamman also had an RBI in the opener.

Newell started the game for Louisburg and went the distance for the Wildcats. He pitched five innings, gave up just two hits and struck out 10 Atchison batters.

“Mack came out and threw very well,” Larson said. “I was extremely proud of how he pitched. He worked ahead in the count all game which he had struggled with earlier in the season. That was great to see. That hot start at the plate helped everyone. We were able to relax and play our game.”