

Wildcats snap winless skid with victory over Ottawa at home



Members of the Louisburg team surround Cade Gassman after he scored the game's first goal Thursday at home against Ottawa.

It had been more than three weeks since the Louisburg boys soccer team had tasted victory and the Wildcats have gone through their fair share of tough times already this season.

On Thursday at home, the Wildcats got a chance to do a little celebrating again.

Louisburg senior Cade Gassman scored a pair of goals and the Wildcats secured a 2-1 home victory over Ottawa to snap a five-match winless skid. The win improved their record to 2-4-1 on the season.

"That win was greatly needed," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "Having a 5-game stretch without a win is demoralizing, that's for sure. Before the game, we talked about how things in life are cyclical, and sports are no different. They've got the talent, the desire, and the work ethic to make the change to get back on the winning track. The previous five games were not a forecast of the rest of the season; they were opportunities to grow and learn, and last night the guys showed they believed in it."

Gassman got the Wildcats on the board in the first half as he

collected the rebound off a shot and put it away from 15 yards out with 22 minutes left in the first half.

The Wildcats took that lead into halftime and doubled it in the second half. Sophomore Colton Blue was fouled while in the box and Gassman took the penalty kick and found the back of the net. It was Gassman's first goals of the season.



Louisburg sophomore Emmett White heads the ball away Thursday during the Wildcats' win over Ottawa.

"Cade has been a foundational player for the program since he started, and this year has been no different," Bovaird said. "Even though his goals last night were his first two of the season, he's been integral in getting the team going in every game. Sometimes it's tough to see the bigger picture.

"When you've got a key player who's not producing as many goals as he'd like, the challenge is to keep him positive and moving in the right direction. With Cade, we didn't need to step in and guide him – he's got the maturity and drive to refocus and keep on pushing. It's great to see him have some goal-scoring stats in his favor though."

Ottawa scored a goal with about seven minutes left in the second half, but the Cyclones didn't threaten after that. Louisburg goalie Brecon Klugman made a couple big saves early in the first half to keep the match scoreless.

Defensively, the back line of Jackson Olson, Ayden Deterding, Matthew Sword and Owen Barber worked hard in the back to limit the Cyclone opportunities.



Louisburg senior defender Owen Barber beats an Ottawa player to a 50-50 ball Thursday at home.

“Our keys to the game were using the outside channels to get some crosses sent in, improving on our defensive marking and transitions, and playing possession soccer,” Bovaird said. “We spend lots of time working on the keys to the game leading up to it, and I’d say the guys met the goal to do those things. We’ve got two younger players in the outside mid with Colton Blue and Emmett White, and both of them are capable of

delivering some nice crosses.

“The team is getting more confident in getting the ball to these two guys on our attacks. Some of the teams we’ve played this season have been utilizing a lot of movement up top and in the middle, which can disrupt our defense. Last night, I felt like our guys handled Ottawa’s offensive pressure and transitional runs pretty well. The possession game is something we’ve been working on quite a bit. Against Spring Hill, we had no strings of passes of more than 3 in a row. We definitely improved on that.”

The Wildcats will try and make it back-to-back wins Monday as they host Chanute. Louisburg will then face off with Baldwin on Thursday as the Wildcats get back to playing more Class 4A programs.

“We played Pittsburg (5A), Gardner (6A), Bonner Springs (5A), Lansing (5A), Tonganoxie (4A), and Spring Hill (5A) right off the bat,” Bovaird said. “We beat Pittsburg, and so far this year we’re their only loss. We have a strong schedule that’s meant to challenge us. At the end of the season, we won’t have a stellar record because we play so many larger and tougher schools. Five out of our next nine games will be against 5A and 6A teams, too.

“When it comes time to start the postseason run, we’re going to have honed our game by facing such tough competition. Next week, we play Chanute and Baldwin. Chanute lost to Pittsburg but beat Paola. Baldwin lost to Eudora but beat Bonner Springs. It’s a weird sport – wins and losses over common opponents don’t guarantee anything when we face these teams. We just need to keep ourselves focused and moving with an upward trajectory next week.”

Wildcats lose to undefeated Spring Hill on road

For the first half of Louisburg's road contest at Spring Hill, the Wildcats were more than holding their own against the undefeated Broncos.

Louisburg found itself down just one goal at halftime and the Wildcats put themselves in position for a possible road win.

Unfortunately for the Wildcats, Spring Hill recorded four goals in the second half and handed Louisburg a 6-2 loss Tuesday.

Spring Hill opened the game with a goal in the first minute, but junior Colin McManigal tied it up a few moments later.

"Take away that first goal, which was 11 seconds into the game, and we find ourselves up 1-0 within the first 10 minutes," Bovaird said. "We got caught flat-footed with their two first-half goals. The message Coach (Ben) York and I tried to give them at halftime was that this was still a competitive game that could go either way. We needed to step up and go to the ball more, clean up our touches and passes, and get the ball down the side, like we've been working on at practice.

"I think one huge positive from that game is that we never really gave up. The boys played hard against a very good team. We stayed disciplined in the face of adversity, which included some solid technical play from Spring Hill, a vocal crowd, and some physical tackles."

Spring Hill scored three unanswered goals in the second half to take a 5-1 advantage, before Louisburg senior Gavin York found the back of the net.

"A veteran Frontier League coach told me earlier this week that this is the best Spring Hill team he's coached against,

and I thought their teams the last two years were pretty good," Bovaird said. "This year's Spring Hill team is definitely going to make some noise in the postseason in 5A. They dominated with their passes and possession, capitalized on transitions, and won the 50-50 balls. They're a very well coached and experienced team."