# Wildcats blank Piper on road to get back on winning track



***Louisburg senior Matthew Sword slides in for a tackle on a Piper player Thursday at Piper High School. The Wildcats defeated the Pirates, 2-0.***

KANSAS CITY, Kan. – In a season filled with ups and downs, the Louisburg boys soccer team wanted to go into the postseason on an up swing.

In their final week of the regular season, the Wildcats are off to a good start.

Louisburg traveled to Piper in its second to last game of the regular season and put together one of its better performances of the season. The Wildcats blanked the Pirates in a 2-0 victory as they got a goal in each half to get the win.

“I’d say this has to be one of our biggest wins this season,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Piper has beaten several teams we either lost to or tied. The guys seemed to be firing on all cylinders, and I’m pretty happy with that.”

Piper, a Class 5A team, entered the match with a 9-5 record, but the Wildcats put together what could have been their best performance outside of their win against Spring Hill earlier in the season.

Louisburg moved the ball around and connected three to four passes together on multiple occasions to get good looks at the

goal. For the game, the Wildcats took 13 shots and seven of those were on target.

“That’s something we’ve been working on,” Bovaird said. “I love how they’re taking the concepts we work on at practice and apply them to the game. We’ve worked on supporting one another with our movement, communicating, and playing the way we’re facing, and with those skills, we were able to make some great attacks against Piper.”




***Louisburg senior Cade Gassman pushes the ball up the field Tuesday at Piper.***

The Wildcats got on the board in the 22nd minute when senior midfielder Toby Espina-Roca scored after a cross from sophomore Jacob Brown hit off a Piper defender and came right to the foot of Espina-Roca. He hit the shot from about 20 yards out and it found the upper-right corner of the net.

Espina-Roca, along with senior Cade Gassman, did a lot of work in the midfield to get the Wildcats multiple looks at the goal. Gassman led the way with three shots on the night, while Espina-Roca, Emmett White, Colin McManigal and Gavin York each had two.

“Toby and Cade have been playing together that way all season,” Bovaird said. “They’ve got a great understanding of one another and when one goes forward, the other hangs back to cover. It takes a huge amount of pressure off our shoulders when we’re not trailing on the scoreboard.

“At halftime, I gave the old ‘play like it’s still 0-0’ talk. I asked the guys to think about the moments leading up to Toby’s goal – what they were doing on the field was what enabled that goal to happen. There’s no need to change it, there’s no need to get desperate. Play solid soccer, go into your tackles hard, and move off the ball to support one another.”

The Wildcats (7-6-2) tacked on another goal midway through the second half. McManigal sent a corner kick into the box and it was headed in by a Piper player for an own goal and gave Louisburg the cushion it was looking for.

Defense also proved to be big for the Wildcats as senior goalie Brecon Klugman earned the clean sheet with six saves and a blocked shot. Klugman saved a breakaway opportunity and also another shot close to the goal.



***Louisburg senior Gavin York clears a ball out of the back Tuesday against Piper.***

The back line was strong for the Wildcats as Matthew Sword, York, Owen Barber, Ayden Deterding, Jackson Olson and Caden French all came up with big plays throughout the match.

“Gavin and Matthew were solid on defense,” Bovaird said. “Both were playing great games. Brecon had some amazing saves, too. We’ve been making our mark as a defensive-minded team lately, but with last night’s game, our guys really figured out some offensive things as well.”

The Wildcats travel to Leavenworth tonight for their regular season finale as they try to improve on their seeding for the postseason.

“It’s hard to predict how regionals will be set up, but with the win, it’s pretty likely that we’ll host our first round regional game,” Bovaird said. “A win against Leavenworth should secure the No. 6 seed for us. There’s a lot of variables and things beyond our control, so the game plan is to worry much less about how the seeds will turn out and focus

more on what we've been doing to get us to this place.

"A win today will help give us confidence with what we're doing. I keep telling the guys that the two things we can control are our attitudes and our actions. When we focus on those two things, we get consistency, and consistency is what will get us to our goals."

## Wildcats shutout at Topeka

On what was a rare Saturday game for Louisburg, the Wildcats traveled to Hummer Sports Park in Topeka for a match with Topeka High.



***Louisburg senior defender Owen Barber clears the ball away from the goal Saturday in Topeka.***

The Wildcats couldn't quite stay with the Class 6A program as they fell 2-0 as the Trojans scored a goal in each half.

Louisburg had three shots on target from senior Andrew Brown to the lead the Wildcats. Toby Espina-Roca, Colin McManigal, Caden French and Cade Gassman also took shots for Louisburg.