

Wildcats pull upset of Spring Hill, get revenge win over Broncos



Louisburg senior Colin McManigal celebrates his goal Tuesday with teammates Jackson Olson (6) and Emmett White. The Wildcats earned the win at home over Spring Hill, 2-1.

Tuesday's home contest against Spring Hill seemed like a giant hill to climb for the Louisburg boys soccer team.

Earlier in the season, the Wildcats lost by four goals to Spring Hill and struggled to stay with the Broncos. It was a mismatch of a game.

On Tuesday, however, everything changed.

Louisburg handed Spring Hill its first loss in the Frontier League and got the big win it was hoping for as the Wildcats downed the Broncos, 2-1, at the Wildcat Soccer Complex.

For a team that has been struggling to find its identity, it was the signature win the Wildcats were looking for.

"For us, that was a huge win," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "We've definitely gotten some things figured out in the past two weeks, and I credit the players for that. They're a focused group of athletes who not only believe in themselves, but they also believe in the process. They trust their coaching staff and they study their film from previous games.

It's an awesome statement to be able to turn around and play so much better against a team that had pretty much thumped us the previous game.

"The tone of this game compared to the last one was totally different. In the first game, Spring Hill scored a goal within the first 10 seconds. In the second game, we nearly scored a goal in the opening seconds. That set the tone for the game. We took it to Spring Hill from the beginning, and even in the final moments of the game when we were hanging onto our lead, we were still looking to go at them and remain on the offensive."

The Wildcats (4-4-2) brought in a new sense of confidence with a lineup change. They moved Gavin York from forward to defender, and put senior Jackson Olson at midfield and sophomore Emmett White at forward.



Louisburg senior Gavin York clears a ball out of the back Tuesday against Spring Hill.

Moving pieces around seemed to pay off for the Wildcats as the defense of York, Matthew Sword, Ayden Deterding, Owen Barber

and Caden French limited the Broncos' dangerous chances to just five shots on target. Spring Hill had 22 shots for the game.

"Gavin has been playing up top for us, but when we considered our team's needs on the back line, along with some feedback from Gavin, the decision was made to slide him back, adjust Emmett up to forward, and swing Jackson to outside mid to see how that solidified things for us," Bovaird said. "We tried it out against Baldwin, and then played like that at practice throughout the week and we realized that this was not only a solid change, but it may have been the key to getting us to where we want to be to reach out postseason goals.

"Matthew and Gavin, along with Owen, Ayden, Caden, and Kaven Bartlett, have been growing together so well as a defensive group. Throw in the athleticism of Brecon Klugman in goal, and I'm feeling pretty confident with what we're doing back there."



Louisburg goalie Brecon Klugman makes a diving save in the first half of Tuesday's match with Spring Hill.

Klugman had his best game of the season for the Wildcats as he turned away several Spring Hill (8-3) shots. He recorded four saves, blocked seven shots and allowed just the one goal.

“Brecon came out for high school soccer for the first time last season, and even then he split time as JV goalie with a few other players the whole season,” Bovaird said. “Over the summer and through the first part of the season, he’s really made huge strides. It helps having some veteran players with goalkeeper experience in the back to help guide him during games (Sword and Olson). Brecon is starting to figure out a lot of things with the position, and he’s developing his own style to go along with his confidence.”

Spring Hill opened the contest with a goal in the 18th minute to take the early lead, but the Wildcats still put pressure on the Bronco defense. It eventually worked as senior Toby Espina-Roca chipped a shot over the Bronco goalie from about 25 yards away to tie the match.

Espina-Roca and senior Cade Gassman worked a lot in the middle of the field to help the Wildcat get opportunities as both players played most of the match.

“Toby and Cade really paired up well in that game,” Bovaird said. “Cade Gassman is our center forward, but for a lot of the games, he’s been dropping back as a ‘false 9,’ and he and Toby are collaborating in the middle both defensively and offensively. Just watch how Toby and Cade play together – they’re like a couple of bulldogs out there. They cover so much of the field, and their fitness is outstanding so they’re able to play so much of the game. They are vocal leaders on the field, and especially with Toby’s goal, they get the rest of the team inspired and motivated to keep battling.”

With the game still tied at 1 at halftime, the Wildcats struck early in the second half as Olson sent a header down the line and senior Colin McManigal raced to get it. McManigal beat the

Bronco keeper on a breakaway for the 2-1 advantage.



Louisburg sophomore Emmett White goes up for a header Tuesday against Spring Hill.

Spring Hill had a few more opportunities, including a shot that hit off the crossbar with 16 minutes left in the match, and then Klugman turned away two more chances with eight minutes remaining.

Louisburg will try and build off its biggest win of the season tonight as the Wildcats travel to Eudora for another Frontier League match. Varsity will begin at approximately 6 p.m.

The Cardinals are just 2-6-2 on the season, but have played a tough schedule, just like Louisburg. Bovaird is anticipating another tough challenge.

"Tonight's game is a test of our character and our culture," he said. "We've shown that not only can we beat a team that's

beaten us previously, but we can also compete with the best teams in the state. Eudora has become an established program with a respectable coaching staff.

“They can beat good teams and they’re not afraid to step onto the field against the best teams in the Kansas City area. That strong schedule makes them dangerous, but we’re in the same boat. It’ll be a dogfight tonight, but I think this game will show the rest of the league, the region, and the state what we’re capable of.”