

Lady Cat softball ready to take another step forward



Louisburg junior Jenna Cauthon (7) celebrates with teammate Sabra Brueggen after a big play last year. The Lady Cats return seven starters going into the 2023 season.

The Louisburg softball team doesn't feature one senior on this season's squad.

That lack of experience might make some a little nervous, but the Lady Cats still have a veteran look to them.

Louisburg returns seven starters from last season's team that finished with an 8-13 record – a year in which the Lady Cats improved by seven wins from the year before.

Now those players are a year older and Louisburg head coach Nick Chapman is hopeful that his team can take another step forward in its progression.

"We are returning a lot of girls," Chapman said. "My expectations for both of our groups are high. On varsity, pretty much our entire infield is returning. We have a couple injuries that we are dealing with right now, but the younger girls are stepping up in practice and I think they are going to be a nice addition to our team. We will definitely have some experience this year which is going to be nice.

"The girls are working hard. They show up every day to get better and they are enjoying being together, which is nice to

see.”

The Lady Cats bring back a good amount of experience on the mound as juniors Izzy Moreland and Megan Quinn return to anchor the pitching staff. Both Moreland and Quinn started several games last season and Moreland earned honorable mention all-league honors.



Megan Quinn is one of two returning starting pitchers for the Lady Cats.

“Izzy and Megan are going to take on the pitching load this year,” Chapman said. “Both of them work hard year around to get better. They are both tough on the mound and very consistent. I’m excited to see what they bring to the team this season. What’s nice is they compliment each other very well and I think they will mess with teams in how they have to adjust to each of them.”

Louisburg also returns an experienced infield as four of the five starters are back.

Junior Jenna Cauthon will hold down the third base spot, while junior Ashley Moreau will play shortstop. Quinn and Moreland will share first base responsibilities.

At catcher, sophomore Brynley Bauer will start behind the plate after seeing varsity time a year ago. She will be joined by freshman Delaney Nelson.

Another freshman will also see time in the infield as Shyloh Waite will get the start at second base.



Louisburg junior Ashley Moreau returns for the Lady Cats at shortstop.

"We are returning most of our infield," Chapman said. "Jenna works very hard at third and gets better everyday and is very consistent. Ashley has been fantastic in practice and she's gotten very confident at short. She's fast and has been great at learning how to get to balls on either side of her and deep in the gaps. Megan and Izzy will be splitting time at first

base when they aren't pitching.

"Shyloh came in from the first day of practice and impressed us immediately. She's confident. She works her tail off and she's willing to get dirty to make plays. I'm excited to see her in the field. As for catcher, Brynley has worked really hard to get better back there in the offseason and she's become a fantastic vocal leader which is what I expect my catchers to be. Delaney has come in and impressed us back there as well."

Injuries have hurt the Wildcat outfield as two returning starters – junior Rylee Hickey and sophomore Sabra Brueggen – will miss the first part of the season, but Chapman hopes to have them back later in the year.

The Lady Cats will fill those roles with sophomore Katie McKain, along with freshmen Addison Mallett and Paytyn Van Tyle. Nelson, Waite and Bauer will also see time there as well.

"Outfield wise we will be pretty new," Chapman said. "We will have quite a few girls get reps out there and they have all done good things so far."

With all those returning starters, also comes experience at the plate and Chapman knows what his players are capable of producing.



Junior Izzy Moreland returns to lead the Lady Cats after earning all-league honors last season.

"Our key to being successful at the plate is hitting with confidence," he said. "We have a lot of great hitters that can get on base and score runners. We have hitters that are fast and smart and will be able to play small ball. I think we will be a well-rounded offense."

The Lady Cats are ready to take another step forward, but to do so, they will have to navigate through a tough Frontier League schedule, which include state tournament teams from a year ago in Spring Hill, Eudora and Ottawa.

Louisburg opens its season today as the Lady Cats travel to Baldwin for a doubleheader. First pitch is set for 4:30 p.m.

"Our goal is to be in the top three of our league," Chapman said. "Our league is always tough, but I think we have a tough team and we are going to do some really good things this season. We lost by one in our regional semifinal round last year. I think this group is hungry to get after it and make a run at trying to get to state this year. We have focused on

cleaning up our defense and doing the little things right. Our biggest key is to have fun playing softball and have fun playing with each other as a team."