

BOMBS AWAY: Wild finish lifts Wildcats past Paola on Senior Night



Louisburg freshman Danny Napier jumps onto home plate as his teammates celebrate his 3-run walk-off home run Wednesday against Paola at Lewis-Young Park.

It may have taken a day to finish it all, but for the Louisburg baseball team, the wait was well worth it.

After having to suspend the first game due to weather, and wait a day to finish what was a 7-2 loss to Paola in the first game of the doubleheader Wednesday, the Wildcats made it a memorable Senior Night finish in game two.

Louisburg had a flair for the dramatics as the Wildcats lost the lead twice – only to get it back on a Wyatt Holland pinch hit grand slam the first time. The Wildcats then won it in walk-off fashion with a Danny Napier 3-run home run in the seventh, to give them a 12-9 victory over the Panthers.

It was the perfect ending for the four Wildcat seniors – Jackson Kush, Corbin Hamman, Kaleb Carter and Cade Driskell – who were playing in their final game on their home field.

“That was a huge win heading into regionals,” Louisburg coach Kade Larson said. “The guys fought hard all night. When things didn’t go the way we planned, everyone kept battling and found a way to win. It was a crazy game all around. Credit to Paola

as they continued to battle from behind, just like we did.”

Through four innings, there wasn’t much drama to be had. Louisburg had 3-0 lead and the Panther bats hadn’t been able to touch Wildcat starter Alex Saad.

Paola eventually was able to break through in the top of the fifth when the Panthers exploded for six runs in the inning that was aided by a couple Wildcat errors. Down 6-3, the Wildcat bats got to work in their half of the inning.

Jackson Howard and Brody McGreer opened the inning with singles and Bristol Barbour was hit by a pitch to load the bases. Jack Anderson worked a walk to score Howard.



Junior Wyatt Holland connects on a pitch for a grand slam Wednesday against Paola.

Holland then came up to bat as a pinch-hitter, and on a 3-1 count, the Wildcat junior smacked the ball over the centerfield fence for the grand slam to give Louisburg the 8-6 lead.

“Wyatt did a great job of coming in, in a spot we needed and did his job really well,” Larson said. “He worked the count

well and got ahold of one. That was really great to see.”

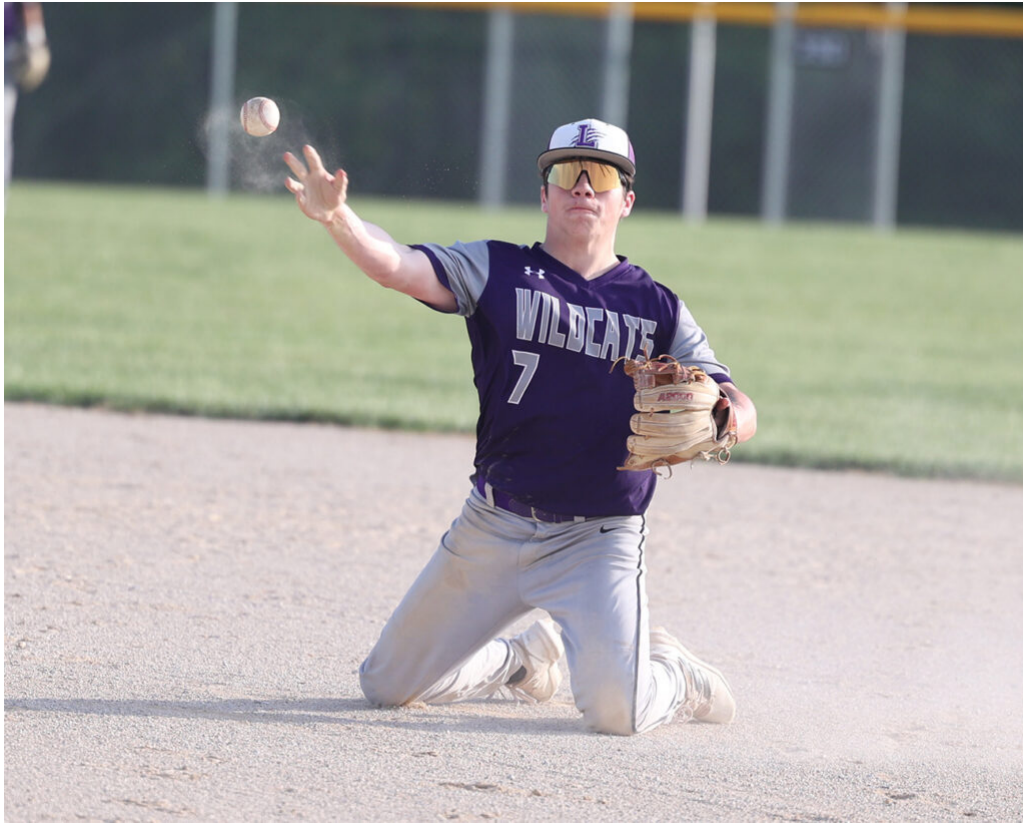
With the Wildcats two outs away from victory, Paola struck again. The Panthers doubled, reached on an error and walked to load the bases. Paola then scored on a ground out and another a single to take the 9-8 lead.

Louisburg reliever Declan Battle got a strikeout to end the seventh and gave the Wildcats one final opportunity to get the win.

Anderson opened the bottom of the seventh by getting hit by a pitch and Holland worked a walk. Then after a strikeout, Battle reached on a fielder’s choice and the Wildcats were down to their final out.

Sophomore Luke Schultz came up in a big way for the Wildcats as he singled home Anderson to tie the game. The Louisburg freshman catcher walked to the plate with a chance to end it – and he did.

Napier, who was robbed of a home run by a Paola outfielder earlier in the game, cleared the fence this time on a home run to right field and the celebration ensued.



Louisburg senior Kaleb Carter makes a throw from his knees for an out Wednesday against Paola.

"Danny was hitting the ball well all night," Larson said. "He had a really hard hit ball right at the third baseman and a home run robbed earlier in the game. He went with the pitch and hammered it to right field."

McGreer and Jackson Kush led the Wildcat bats with a pair of hits, while Kush had a double. Battle also doubled and scored a pair of runs, while Anderson scored three times and had an RBI.

Saad and Battle competed to keep the Wildcats in it as the two combined to give up five earned runs, with the rest of the Panther runs coming on four Louisburg errors.

"I thought our pitching did well in game two," Larson said. "We had a few mistakes in the field that need to get cleaned up, but Saad and Battle competed on the mound and that's all you can ask for."



Louisburg junior Declan Battle steals second base against Paola last week.

The Wildcats also got out to a good start in game one last Tuesday as they took a 2-0 lead into the sixth inning. Paola tied it with two in the sixth and then added another in the seven to take the lead.

Storms then rolled in and forced the postponement and the two teams picked up where they left off Wednesday. Paola struck for five runs in the seventh and handed Louisburg the 7-2 loss.

Battle led the Wildcat offense with four hits, including a double, while Napier and Barbour both had RBI doubles.

Senior Corbin Hamman pitched the first six innings for Louisburg and gave up five runs, but struck out five



Louisburg seniors (from left) Kaleb Carter, Cade Driskell, Corbin Hamman and Jackson Kush were all honored with their parents Wednesday on Senior Night.

Louisburg will now begin postseason play Tuesday in Atchison as the Wildcats are the No. 7 seed and will have a rematch against No. 10 Paola at 1 p.m. at Benedictine College in Atchison.

If the Wildcats advance, they will play the winner between No. 2 Atchison and No. 15 Eudora for the regional championship later that night.

"The guys are really excited for the postseason," Larson said. "They know they can hang with anyone and it's time to go see what happens. We always want to give ourselves a chance near the end and I think we're playing our best ball heading into regionals. I'm excited to see what happens."