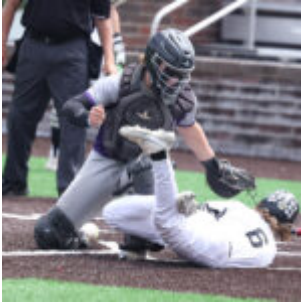


Louisburg baseball falls short in regional semis against Paola



Louisburg catcher Danny Napier tags out a Paola runner after centerfielder Declan Battle threw the strike home Tuesday during the Class 4A regional tournament at Benedictine College.

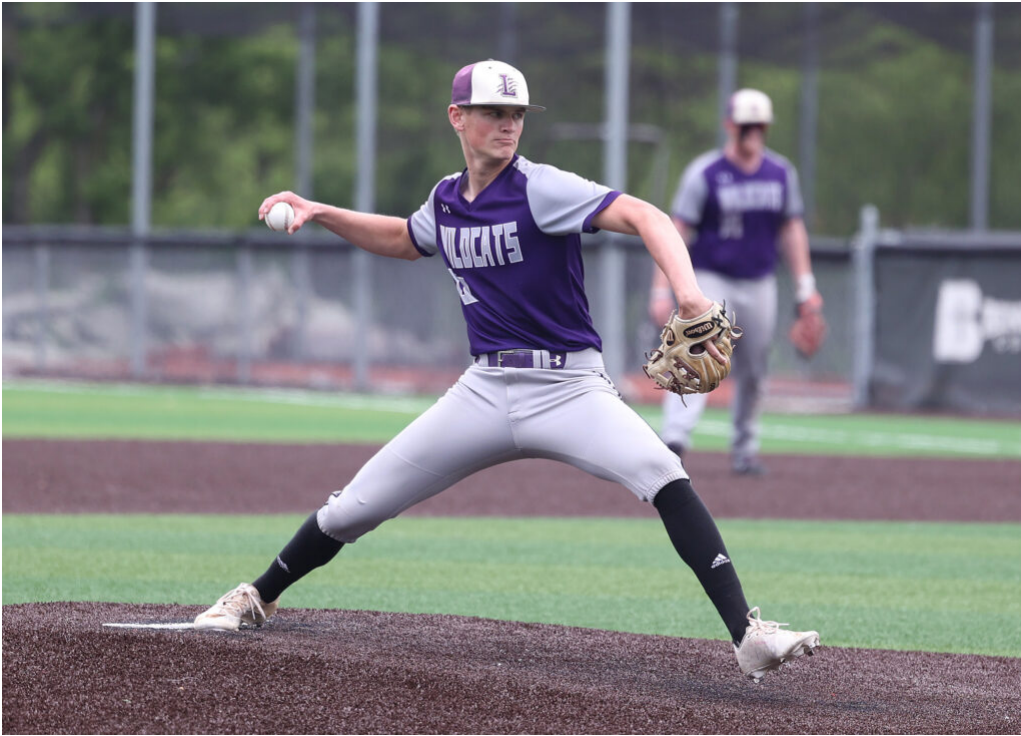
ATCHISON – Just a few days after playing its rival, Paola, to end the regular season, the Louisburg baseball team saw the Panthers again and the stakes were much bigger.

Louisburg and Paola squared off in the Class 4A regional semifinals Tuesday at Benedictine College in Atchison. Just like their previous meetings, it was a battle.

Unfortunately for Louisburg, its season came to a close after the Panthers scored two runs in the fifth and that was all they needed to hand the Wildcats a 2-0 loss.

“The guys were ready to play and played well,” Louisburg coach Kade Larson said. “Paola is a great team and just had a little bit better day than us. The Frontier League is always loaded and it’s never ideal drawing a league school in the first round.”

A week prior, the two teams squared off in Louisburg for a doubleheader and each team took a game in which they combined to score 30 runs.



Louisburg senior Corbin Hamman gave up just one earned run in nearly five innings of work against Paola on Tuesday in Atchison.

This showdown was a little different. It was a pitcher's duel from the start and the Wildcats got the performance they were hoping for from their starter, Corbin Hamman. The Louisburg senior pitched 4 2/3 innings and gave up just one earned run and struck out three.

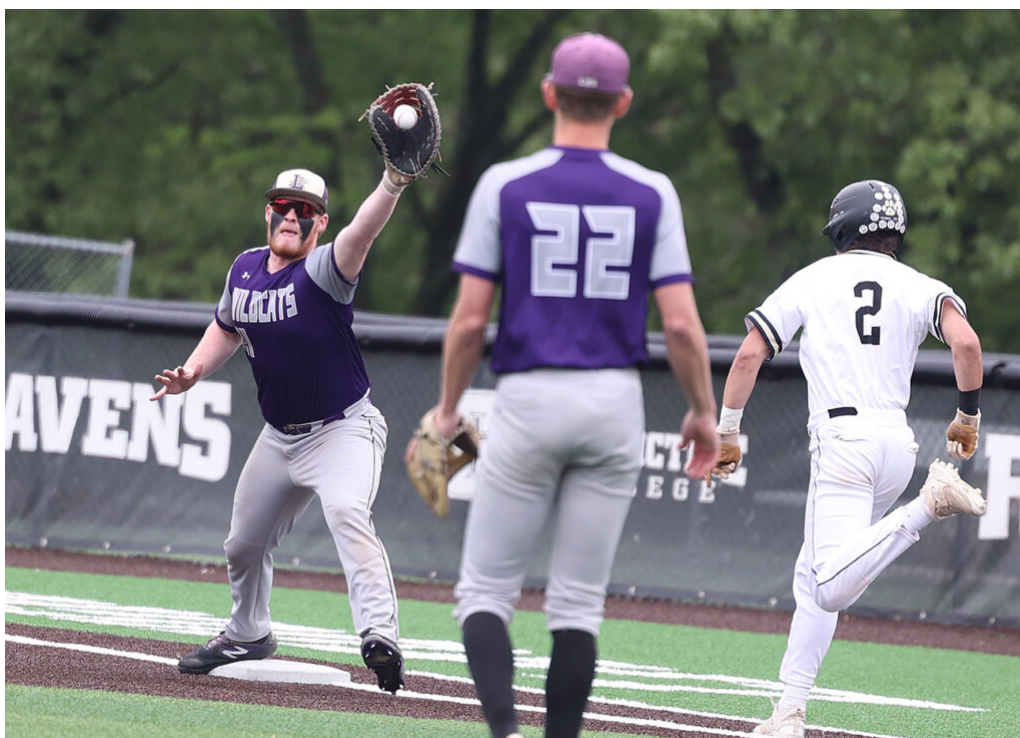
Sophomore Alex Saad came in for relief and didn't give up a run in 2 1/3 innings and struck out two.

The Wildcats had a tough time stringing hits together against Paola starter Keaton Matlick, who pitched a complete game and struck out eight.

"Corbin threw really well all day," Larson said. "He kept them off balance and they really had to scratch for runs. Paola's pitcher was really good as well. He kept us off the base paths and made it difficult to get guys into scoring position."

Louisburg was able to get base runners as the Wildcats worked four walks and tallied five hits, but couldn't string many hits together.

Declan Battle, Luke Schultz, Bristol Barbour, Jackson Howard and Jackson Kush each had a hit for the Wildcats.



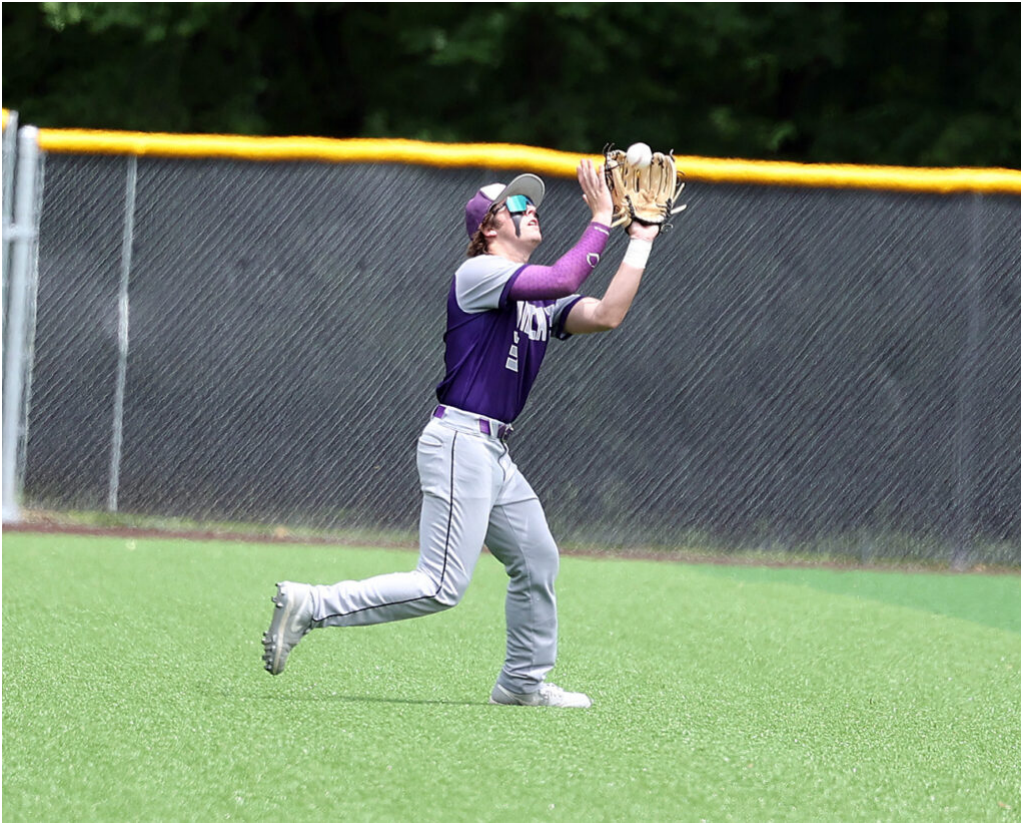
Louisburg first baseman Jackson Howard stretches for an out Tuesday against Paola.

Each team had runners on through four innings, and Paola nearly took the lead in the top of the fourth, but Battle threw a runner out from centerfield to keep the game scoreless.

Paola took advantage in the top of the fifth as the Panthers plated a pair of runs, including one on a squeeze play and another on a steal of home.

Louisburg had two runners on in the sixth, and another runner in the seventh, but the Wildcats couldn't take advantage.

"The guys never gave up and fought until the last pitch was thrown," Larson said. "That was how this team was all year and why we had so much success throughout the season."



Louisburg senior Jackson Kush tracks down a ball in left field Tuesday against Paola.

The Wildcats, who finished with a 13-8 record, had their first winning season in nearly 15 years. Louisburg had .500 record two years ago.

Although the Wildcats will return a majority of this season's team, they did have to say goodbye to four seniors in Hamman, Kush, Cade Driskell and Kaleb Carter.

"This season showed what we can do," Larson said. "It will be difficult to replace these four seniors, but I think we have some great pieces coming back that we can continue building on and take the next step."