

Wildcat soccer features young roster for 2023 season



Louisburg junior Emmett White is one of two returning starters for the Wildcats this season. White was named a team captain along with fellow juniors Colton Blue and Will Showalter.

The Louisburg boys soccer team was one of the “older” teams in the Frontier League last season, if not in all of Class 4-1A.

The Wildcats featured a 15-member senior class that helped Louisburg to a spot in the regional championship. In 2023, they have now switched roles.

After losing nine starters to graduation, the Wildcats are one of the younger teams in the Frontier League and have just one senior this season.

It is quite the role reversal for the Wildcats as they enter this season with just two returning starters. Still, head coach Bobby Bovaird believes the future is bright for his young squad.

“Last year’s senior group was a special one, and they’ve left some big shoes to fill,” Bovaird said. “We only have two returning starters, and there’s just a handful of players with substantial varsity time. Honestly, I feel like the juniors and sophomores have been really stepping up their game. They had some great leaders the past couple of years, and that will be key for them to transition into becoming leaders themselves.

“While we might not have a lot of high school varsity experience, we have guys on the field who are either very athletic or have some great soccer knowledge.”

Leading the way for the Wildcats this year will be a pair of juniors in midfielders Emmett White and Colton Blue. Each of those players have seen varsity time since their freshman year and were named team captains, along with fellow junior Will Showalter.

“Emmett, Will and Colton have grown and matured quite a bit in the past year,” Bovaird said. “Emmett and Colton are our two returning starters, and that will be invaluable experience for them as they step into their leadership roles. Will has been very active in the summer months with encouraging his teammates, leading through drills and games, and being a vocal leader. I’m excited to see these three as captains this year.”



Louisburg junior Colton Blue is one of two returning starters for Louisburg this season.

Despite having to fill a lot of spots vacated from last season, the Wildcats do have the numbers to fill them. They had 41 athletes that came out for the team, including a good number of freshmen to replace the outgoing senior class.

Although it could take time to get several new players used to the varsity level, Bovaird is pleased with the work his team has put in up to this point.

“Most of our team will be seeing their first varsity time this season,” Bovaird said. “They’ve had some great leaders come before them, but I believe that this year’s team will get things figured out. Their lack of varsity experience won’t be holding them back. All summer and for the start of the season, we’ve been working on a possession style of soccer. The idea is to move off the ball, make runs to space, and let the ball do the work.

“We’ll be adjusting our formation a little bit this year as well. The thing about soccer is that our season is more of a marathon and less of a sprint. We’ll need to be patient and keep the bigger picture in mind.”

The strength of the team will be the midfield for the Wildcats as they return White, Blue and junior Jacob Brown, who all logged varsity minutes last season. Sophomores Caleb Feldkamp and Renner Erickson, along with freshmen Cody Courtney and Carter Schneider could also see varsity minutes.

At the attacking spots up top, senior John Pows, junior Jose Cuevas, along with sophomores Owen Marsh, Tanner LaBrie and freshman Brody Bovaird, will all see time at the forward positions.

Defensively, juniors Dan Minster, Ethan Sharp, Cole Clover and Showalter will look to anchor the Wildcat back line. Junior Mika McKitrick, sophomore Ryan Barbaric and freshman Fletcher

Viterna could also see time there as well.

The Wildcats will also have a new face in goal this year. Sophomore Evan Moreland is the team's new keeper after starting as the junior varsity goalie last season.

If having an inexperienced team wasn't challenging enough, the Wildcats have also had to face off with Mother Nature.

Excessive heat warnings all week have pushed all practices to the early morning hours prior to school and they have shared the turf field with the football team.

It has been a unique start to the season, but one the Wildcat players have made the best out of in a tough situation.

"Going into the (last) weekend, I felt pretty good about everything, and then we got hit with the extreme heat," Bovaird said. "This week has been full of uncertainty and the guys have done a great job being flexible. We made things work Monday with some indoor conditioning in the morning and a short skills practice in the gym in the evening. We've had full practices the past three mornings on the turf, but we've had to share with the football team.

"Our grass game field has lights, but it isn't playable in the mornings due to the treatment schedule and the build-up of moisture in the morning. The guys are pretty excited – they have been working their tails off, and they want more time on the field."

They are going to get it Monday as the Wildcats open their season at home against Leavenworth. Varsity is set to begin at approximately 6 p.m., and junior varsity will begin at 4:30.

Their first road contest is Thursday when the Wildcats travel to Independence.