

# Comeback falls short as Wildcats suffer playoff loss to Basehor-Linwood



***Louisburg seniors Caden Caplinger (34) and Hunter Heinrich bring down a Basehor-Linwood player short of the endzone Friday at Wildcat Stadium.***

Louisburg had been in this situation a few times over the last two seasons.

With their backs against the wall, and the game on the line, the Wildcats always seemed to find a way en route to two back-to-back Frontier League titles.

On Friday, the Wildcats were there once again, but this time the stakes were a little bigger – a Class 4A regional championship was on the line.

Unfortunately, the Wildcats came just a few yards short of pulling off another miraculous comeback. Basehor-Linwood handed Louisburg its first loss of the season, 22-20, and ended the Wildcats' season and nine-game winning streak.

The Wildcats, down two points, had to drive 81 yards in the final 61 seconds with no timeouts to try and pull off the comeback. They nearly did.

“It is for sure a heartbreaking loss,” Louisburg coach Drew Harding said. “On the bright side, I am incredibly proud of them for not giving up. We didn’t have a whole lot that was going our way, and to get the ball back with a minute left we had a chance. For them to put a 2-minute drive together with no timeouts and get us right on the doorstep, really shows what kind of kids we have and the resiliency they have. Still, this is a pretty tough one to swallow.”

Louisburg’s duo of Declan Battle and Caden Caplinger provided the Wildcats they hope they were looking for late.



***Louisburg quarterback Declan Battle fights for some extra yards Friday in the Class 4A regional championship against Basehor-Linwood.***

The Wildcat seniors, who have pulled out several game-winning

plays the last three years, nearly had another as Battle hit Caplinger on a 57-yard pass play that took it down to the Basehor 24-yard line.

Battle found junior Reid McCaskill on an 11-yard pass play. Battle then ran for 5 yards on first down and then spiked it to stop the clock.

The Louisburg quarterback then hit Caplinger at the 5-yard line, and with time running out, the Wildcats had one last chance on fourth down. Unfortunately the game-winning pass fell incomplete and the Wildcats' season came to a close.

"You have to be at a breakneck pace and you don't have any timeouts," Harding said of the last drive. "You have to execute and play on the fly pretty well. That is something that we practice, but it is hard to simulate what you will experience on game day. They did a good job with it. We were five yards short, and maybe just a few seconds more or one timeout left, there are a 100 different things that could put yourself in a slightly different situation. It makes it tough"

The Wildcats found themselves down early as Basehor took a 7-0 lead into the second quarter, but the Wildcats managed to tie it up on an 11-yard touchdown pass from Battle to Conlee Hovey.

Louisburg's defense came though with a big stand as it turned the Bobcats over on downs at the 2-yard line and prevented a Basehor score. The momentum was short lived as the Bobcats recorded a safety to take the lead back, and then on the ensuing drive scored another touchdown to go up 16-7.





***Conlee Hovey makes a diving catch in the endzone for a touchdown right before halftime Friday in the Class 4A regional title game.***

The Wildcats put together one last drive in the first half. With 14 seconds remaining before halftime, Battle found a diving Hovey in the back of the endzone for an 18-yard touchdown and trimmed the Basehor lead to two.

To start the second half, Basehor drove down the field, but had a fourth down on the Wildcat 24-yard line and Louisburg had a chance to turn the Bobcats over on downs again. However, Basehor quarterback Brady Vandonge found Kaleb Scott on a 24-yard touchdown pass, and after a missed extra point, the Wildcats trailed by just eight.

It stayed that way till the fourth quarter when the Wildcats manufactured a drive that ended on an 9-yard touchdown run by Ashton Moore. Moore then was just inches away from converting the 2-point conversion and tying the game, but was ruled just

short of the goal line.

Moore and Battle provided many of those running plays in that drive. On the game, Moore finished with a game-high 163 yards rushing and Battle had 67 yards on the ground and 153 through the air.



***Louisburg running back Ashton Moore rushed for 163 yards Friday against Basehor-Linwood.***

Moore also was all over the field for Louisburg from the linebacker spot as he recorded a team-high 18 tackles.

“That was a 6-7 minute drive that ate up a lot of clock and it was a grinder,” Harding said of the last touchdown. “Those guys, especially Ashton and Declan, were taking a beating all night. They were playing defense and making tackles. Those two guys continued to fight and incredibly proud of what they accomplished this year. Excited to see what Ashton can do as a senior and excited to see what Declan can do at the next level.”



The Wildcats had a tough time moving the ball against a big and athletic Basehor defensive front and it was a struggle at times offensively to get into a rhythm.

“That is not something we have experienced a whole lot this year,” Harding said. “They (Basehor) were incredibly physical and they were big up front. They moved well and they had a fast defense. They gave us a heck of challenge.”

Also on defense, Hovey, along with his two touchdowns, was second on the team with 12 tackles and senior Wyatt Holland was in double figures with 10.



***Louisburg senior Brady Hickey looks to make a tackle on a Basehor-Linwood player Friday at Wildcat Stadium.***

The Wildcats also forced a turnover as Moore forced a fumble and Brady Hickey got the recovery. Louisburg senior Brody McGreer also led the secondary with four pass breakups.

“I thought the defense played well overall,” Harding said.

“Basehor is a really high-powered offense, and in reality, we limited them to 20 points. They got big stops when we needed them and kept them out of the endzone on a couple big drives. They definitely played well.”

Although Louisburg’s season has come to a close, the Wildcats still have plenty of positive memories to look back on, including winning a second straight Frontier League title.

“This season was a lot of fun,” Harding said. “It is a great group of kids and they worked incredibly hard. They were loose and made it fun every single day. I can’t say enough about how good of kids they are and how hard they work. We hoped to still be moving on, but this loss doesn’t take away from what these kids did all year.”

**LOU 0 14 0 6 – 20**

**BL 7 9 6 0 – 22**

## **SCORING SUMMARY**

### **First Quarter**

B: Sam Boetcher 4 run (kick good)

### **Second Quarter**

L: Conlee Hovey 11 pass from Declan Battle (Alex Saad kick)

B: Safety

B: Brady Vandonge 1 run (kick good)

L: Hovey 18 pass from Battle (Saad kick)

### **Third Quarter**

B: Kaleb Scott 24 pass from Vandonge (kick failed)

### **Fourth Quarter**

L: Ashton Moore 9 run (run failed)

## STATISTICS

RUSHING – Ashton Moore 24-163; Declan Battle 22-67

PASSING – Declan Battle 15-30-153

RECEIVING – Caden Caplinger 4-67; Conlee Hovey 4-49; Reid McCaskill 1-11; Brock Vohs 2-11; Hunter Heinrich 1-9; Ashton Moore 3-6

TACKLES – Ashton Moore 18, Conlee Hovey 12, Wyatt Holland 10, Brady Hickey 7, Brody McGreer 5, Brayden Yoder 5, Brock Vohs 5, Declan Battle 3, Hunter Heinrich 3, Caden Caplinger 3, Russell Wiseman 1, Logan Henry 1, Lucas Swartz 1, Jack Anderson 1