

Louisburg girls soccer ready to make another run at state tourney



Louisburg senior Lexi Hampton returns to help lead the Wildcat attack after scoring 19 goals last season.

The Louisburg girls soccer team found itself just one win away from the state tournament last season.

Unfortunately, the Wildcats had a big road block in their way in eventual state champion Bishop Miege. Despite the loss to the Stags in the regional championship game, Louisburg finished with a strong 13-5 record on the season.

After a memorable run in 2023, many of those same Wildcats are

back once again as they try to earn a spot in the state tournament.

The Wildcats return five all-league performers from last season that are included in their seven returning starters. It is a veteran group that has high goals for themselves.

Louisburg is led by seven seniors, including returning starters Macy Lemke, Lexi Hampton, Hailey Sword, Lola Edwards and Ellery Allen. Aliya Klugman and A.J. Fire will also see playing time throughout the year.

"When it comes to leadership, this group has a good handle on it," Louisburg coach Ben York said of his seniors. "They are a little more serious than some, but they know what they want to try and do. They work really hard. Macy is a 2-year starter, Lexi has started since she walked on the field was a freshman, Hailey has played a lot, as has Lola.

"There are a lot of leaders in that group and this will be one of those classes that is very easy to coach and they don't need any extra motivation from me. They will be looked up to by a lot of younger players."

Although the season hasn't even started, the injury bug has hit the Wildcats. Allen, who was an honorable mention all-state defender from a year ago, will be out most of the season.

It forced York to shuffle his lineup, but he believes his team can overcome not having her on the pitch.

"There is a small chance that she could join us at the end, but I am pretty heartbroken for her as this is her senior year," York said. "The best thing is to make sure she is still healthy and we are thinking of her. We have a good cohesiveness from last year's team. We have some eager young people wanting to get in and prove they can contribute."



Louisburg junior Rowan Yows is one of the top returning goalscorers for the Wildcats after scoring 19 last season.

The strength of the Wildcat team is up top as they present plenty of firepower, including Hampton and junior Rowan Yows. Hampton, the team's starting forward, returns after scoring a team-high 19 goals and seven assists.

Yows, who was a first-team all-league midfielder a year ago, also had 19 goals and also finished with 11 assists. Louisburg will lean on that 1-2 punch throughout the season.

Junior Baileigh Johnson will start at forward along with Hampton, while Edwards, sophomore Mena Fercho and junior Riley May will start in the midfield.

On defense, Sword will lead the back line after earning second team all-league last season. She will be joined by junior Jaden Bentz, who started last season on the outside.

Sophomores Faith Sewell and Lila Edwards will also start on defense.

Lemke returns for her second year in goal for Louisburg after earning all-league honors last season. She finished with 56 saves and nine clean sheets.



Louisburg senior Hailey Sword will be one of the team leaders in the back this season for the Wildcats after earning all-league honors a year ago.

“We are going to play a little different this year defensively as we are going to play flat in the back with two center backs and see how that goes,” York said. “I think it gives everyone a little more flexibility. That is the main goal. We had plans to move Hailey to the midfield, but with Ellery’s injury that is how we are going to start. There will be time where Lola could play back there as well.”

The Wildcats have set goals for themselves this season, but right now they are more concerned with the present as they prepare for their season opener today at Lansing.

“I don’t want to set an expectation at the beginning of the season, other than just being physically fit and mentally stronger,” York said. “Those two things were key factors and everyone identified with those after last season. I don’t like to have a goal that it is regional championship or state or bust. Our goal is it to be better tomorrow than we are today.

“No question we have talent on this team, but this is a new year and we need to see how is this team going to work together and getting a starting 11 that works for us. It is a mature group, but will just have to wait to see how it goes. We have team goals that we want, so hopefully we can accomplish some of those.”