# Wildcat baseball has high hopes for 2024 season




***Louisburg senior Declan Battle is the Wildcats' top returning player after earning all-league and all-state honors last season.***

Louisburg baseball had a young team in 2023, but that didn't stop the Wildcats from finding success.

They put together their first winning record in more than a decade and played their best toward the end of the season.

Now, the Wildcats return most of their starting lineup from a season ago and are ready to take another step forward, which they hope is a deep run in the postseason.

"Practice has started off really well," Louisburg coach Kade

Larson said. “We’ve had some great senior leaders step up in the short time we’ve been together. This team has a lot of potential and I am excited to see what we can do. We return quite a few pieces from last year’s team and I think we can make another good jump in the right direction.”

Louisburg will have some extra opportunities to make that jump. In the offseason, the Kansas State High School Activities Association approved the increase in the number of games played.

Teams across the state can now play a maximum of 26 games, up from the previous mark of 20. The Wildcats have taken full advantage, and while it has some drawbacks, Larson believes this will help his team in the long run.

“We’re all really excited to make the jump to 26 games this season,” he said. “We have a full schedule and that leaves little to no time for makeup games, so we are hoping for some great weather this season. With rainouts happening every year I feel having 26 games gives us the best shot at playing as many games as possible.”

Although the Wildcats still have several underclassmen on the varsity roster, they will be led by a six-member senior class that is headed by returning all-league and all-state player, Declan Battle.

Battle will lead the Louisburg bats at the top of the lineup after hitting .429 last season to go along with 17 stolen bases. He will also be the team’s top returning outfielder.



***Louisburg sophomore Danny Napier led the Wildcat bats with five home runs last season.***

Joining Battle are seniors Brody McGreer and Nathaniel Lamm, who were both honorable mention all-league selections last season. Jack Anderson, Jackson Howard and Conner Heston will also play big roles for the Wildcats.

Junior Luke Schultz and sophomore Danny Napier, who were also all-league honorable mention selections last season, return to lead the top of the Louisburg lineup. Schultz hit .368 with 16 RBIs, while Napier led the Wildcats with five home runs and 30 RBIs last season.

“On the offensive side, we return quite a few pieces,” Larson said. “Anytime you have experience coming back is great, but with how much we have returning, the excitement and expectations are pretty high.”

Like with every season, success starts on the mound and the Wildcats have several arms with experience.

Junior Alex Saad, sophomore Bristol Barbour, along with Battle and Schultz, each return to lead the Louisburg staff. Newcomers Meade Rutherford, Jayce Toms and Anderson will also see plenty of innings throughout the season.




***Louisburg junior Alex Saad is one of the team's top returning pitchers this season.***

Defensively, Napier will handle a bulk of the team's catching responsibilities. Schultz, McGreer, Barbour, Toms and Rylan Carty will see time in the middle infield, while Anderson and Howard will split time at first base.

Battle, Anderson, Saad, Rutherford, Lamm and Heston are the team's outfielders.

Louisburg opens its season Tuesday when it hosts Harrisonville for a double header as the Wildcats begin their quest to what they hope ends in a state tournament appearance.

“We return quite a few this year and this group has some pretty high expectations,” Larson said. “We have the potential to take another step forward this year and see where we land at the end of the season to give us a shot to make it to state.”