

# REGIONAL CHAMPS: Wildcats blank Maranatha to advance to state quarters



*(Photo courtesy of Minna Meyer)*

***The Louisburg girls soccer team hoists the regional championship plaque following their 2-0 win Thursday against Maranatha Academy.***

For the last two seasons, the Louisburg girls soccer team has seen heartbreak in the Class 4-1A regional championship.

Losses to Topeka-Hayden and Bishop Miege have prevented the Wildcats from that regional title, with their last coming in 2021.

It is elusive no more.

The No. 1 seeded Wildcats shutout No. 8 Maranatha Academy, 2-0, to win the Class 4-1A regional title Thursday at Wildcat

Stadium. It was a dominating effort from start to finish as the Wildcats improved their record to 13-4-1 on the season.

"This was a preseason goal of ours," Louisburg coach Ben York said. "We fell short last year and we wanted to do as much as we could in the regular season to control our own destiny. The girls put a lot of work in and were focused to get to this game and get a win. They definitely earned this one and it was good to see them enjoy it."

The Wildcats dominated possession from the opening whistle as they peppered the Maranatha defense with 22 shots on goal, with 12 of those coming in the first half.



(Photo courtesy of Minna Meyer)

***Louisburg head coach Ben York gets doused with the water bucket following the Wildcats' win over Maranatha.***

Junior Baileigh Johnson got the Wildcats on the board late in

the first half as she scored on an assist from freshman Ellia Gibbons and Louisburg took a 1-0 lead at halftime.

The Wildcats built themselves a little cushion in the second half as senior Lexi Hampton found the back of the net on an assist thanks to junior Rowan Yows.

"It was odd because on paper we controlled the game with probably 70-75 percent possession," York said. "We just sometimes have problems figuring out how to score. We have good opportunities, we just need to be a little more refined. I mean we had several go off the post or others were just wide. We knew Maranatha wasn't going to score on us, so it was good stay patient and work the ball around to get good looks."

Defensively, the Wildcats limited Maranatha's chances as senior goalie Macy Lemke earned the clean sheet with two saves. The back line of Hailey Sword, Jaden Bentz, Lila Edwards and Faith Sewell turned away any kind of attack as well.





***(Photo courtesy of Minna Meyer)***

***Louisburg junior Lola Edwards takes the ball away from a Maranatha player Thursday.***

"We have one of the more talented defensive groups we have had in a long time," York said. "We let in the least amount of regular season goals, I think, as we have given up just 14 goals in 16 games coming in. We aren't scoring in big lumps as we have in the past. I think we scored 21 more goals last year, but we had more wins this year, so it has been a different year, but a successful one."

No matter what happens moving forward, York wants his team to make sure they enjoy what they have accomplished so far this season.

"I try to make sure they understand to enjoy the moment and how special it is to win a regional title," York said. "There



are a lot of schools who would love to have the success we have had. They really did accomplish something and you like to see them celebrate these types of wins.”



*(Photo courtesy of Minna Meyer)*

***The Louisburg girls soccer team poses with its regional championship plaque following Thursday's regional title win in Louisburg.***

Louisburg will now square off with Bishop Miega in the state quarterfinals at 6 p.m. Tuesday at Wildcat Stadium. It will be a rematch of last year's regional title game, where Miega ended the Wildcats' season.

The Stags have also won the last seven state championships, so York knows the task will be a challenging one for his team.

“Miega is fast and has a lot of skill,” York said. “They know how to take lumps and they learn that playing such a hard schedule. They have depth against 4A schools that they can run out and have ability to wear you down. If you don't make them pay for the mistakes, you don't get second chances. We will

definitely be tested. I just want the girls take it to them the best that they can, and if we can have a good day and some luck, it should be a competitive game."