

Big stop in overtime lifts Wildcats past Tonganoxie in season opener



Louisburg senior Lucas Swartz (22) celebrates with his teammates after he recorded a stop on Tonganoxie's 2-point conversion in overtime to secure the win.

Louisburg's season opener against Tonganoxie seemed to have it all.

Big plays for touchdowns, mistakes, injuries and everything in between – including overtime. After Louisburg scored on its first possession of overtime to take the lead, Tonganoxie did the same.

However, instead of going for the tie, the Chieftains tried to win the game on the 2-point conversion.

Enter Lucas Swartz.

The Louisburg senior came around the end to stop the 2-point conversion for a loss and sealed the Wildcats' 21-20 win Friday, in what was a memorable season opener.

"That was a big time play there by Swartz," Louisburg coach Drew Harding said. "We talked about how those guys have to work through the tight end and down the line of scrimmage and that is exactly what he did. It was a big time game-clinching play."

It was one of several big performances on the Wildcat sideline Friday.

Louisburg opened the 2024 season with a couple of highlight plays that both came thanks to senior Myles Vohs. On the game's opening drive, quarterback Alex Saad shoveled the ball to Vohs, who reversed field, and eventually scored on a 26-yard touchdown pass to put Louisburg up 7-0.



Louisburg senior Myles Vohs sheds a tackle to score one of his two touchdowns on Friday against Tonganoxie.

The Saad to Vohs connection came up big again in the second quarter when Saad hit Vohs on a short pass, and Vohs sped past several Chieftain defenders on what was a 41-yard score to put Louisburg up 14-0.

In all, Vohs had three catches on the night for 108 yards and it could have been more, but he had to sit part of the second half and overtime with cramping issues that he, and several other Wildcats, had to fight through.

“We thought before the season that Myles was going to be a big-time playmaker for us,” Harding said. “We said we have to figure out how to get him the ball, and then in his first game he got the ball twice and both times he scored touchdowns. That just shows how explosive he can be. I thought Alex played a good game in his first game as a starter as well and I didn’t think he was fazed at all.”

Tonganoxie eventually cut the Wildcat lead to 14-7 at halftime and then tied the game late in the third quarter. Neither team could find a rhythm offensively, and for Louisburg, injuries hampered drives as several starters had to leave with cramps.

“The first game can sometimes be kind of choppy and sloppy at times and this one was definitely some of that,” Harding said. “With all the cramping issues we had for a while, we weren’t even sure who all was in the huddle at certain times. We had to dig deep and some guys stepped in and made some big plays for us. Hopefully it will just help us in a long run.”

One of those big plays came in the overtime as senior running back Darby Van Eaton broke through a hole to score a 10-yard touchdown, and after a Blaise Vohs extra point, Louisburg had a 21-14 lead.

Van Eaton finished with 59 yards rushing as he started in place of Ashton Moore, who was limited to the defensive side of the ball.



Louisburg senior Darby Van Eaton runs through a hole to score a touchdown Friday in overtime.

“I thought Darby did a phenomenal job all night,” Harding said. “He is someone that might not have as many carries as others because we have Ashton, as they are in the same grade. He has always been ready to go and he got some tough yards out there. Then to see him burst through that hole and have that run in overtime was awesome.”

The Wildcat defense did a good job limiting big plays and buckled down in the second half with several big stops.

Moore led the way from his linebacker spot with 13 tackles, including two for a loss. Senior Erik Lien had 10 stops and two pass break-ups.

Another senior Logan Henry, had eight tackles to go along with an interception, while Swartz had seven stops, including 2.5 tackles for loss.

Louisburg will try and make it two straight wins to start the season this Friday when the Wildcats travel to Paola for a 7 p.m. start.

“I don’t think we played perfect by any means, and I am sure that we have a lot that we can improve on,” Harding said. “I know that it is definitely a lot more fun to do after a win than it is a loss.

“We know Paola will give us everything they got and it is a great rivalry. They are going to protect their home turf and there is no easy game for us on the schedule. It is going to be a grinder and that is just life in the Frontier League.”

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SCORING SUMMARY

First Quarter

L: Myles Vohs 26 pass from Alex Saad (Blaise Vohs kick)

Second Quarter

L: Vohs 41 pass from Saad (Vohs kick)

T: Tanner Hand 41 run (kick good)

Third quarter

T: Hand 1 run (kick good)

Overtime

L: Darby Van Eaton 10 run (Vohs kick)

T: Todd Brown 9 pass from Talon Langford (run failed)

STATISTICS

RUSHING – Darby Van Eaton 21-59

PASSING – Alex Saad 9-19-162

RECEIVING – Myles Vohs 3-108, Martin Alicia Soto 1-15, Rickey Giles 1-13, Conlee Hovey 2-11, Darby Van Eaton 1-11

TACKLES – Ashton Moore 13, Erik Lien 10, Logan Henry 8, Lucas Swartz 7, Conlee Hovey 5, Brayden Yoder 5, Russell Wiseman 4, Myles Vohs 3, Aidan Meyer 3, Gage Feldkamp 3, Rickey Giles 1, Bryce Thompson 1, Kael McGuire 1, Johnny Hendrickson 1, Jimmy DeVary 1.