

Eight seniors ready to lead Louisburg soccer after tough 2023



Louisburg senior Emmett White celebrates a goal during a match last season. White is one of three returning all-league players for the Wildcats.

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The Wildcats posted just four wins in 2023 as they featured a roster with only one senior at the time. It was a young, and inexperienced group.

Fast forward to the present and this year's version of the Wildcats have a little different look to them. While many of the names are the same as they return almost everyone from last year's roster, the players are now a year older with more varsity experience.

It is something head coach Bobby Bovaird hopes pays off in a big way for the 2024 season.

"These guys have the advantage of being able to use last year as a trial run for this year," Bovaird said. "Lots of lessons learned from the 2023 season, and I'm so excited to see how much they've all grown. They're stronger and faster, and they've grown considerably with their soccer IQ.

"It's been a great start to the season. We've got 41 boys out for soccer this year, and eight of them are seniors. All summer long we've had incredible participation with practices, the Ottawa Summer 7v7 League and conditioning."

Louisburg has built a strong foundation to work with and it starts with its eight seniors – three of which are returning All-Frontier League players.

Senior Emmett White is the Wildcats' top returning player from a season ago. White earned second-team all-league honors and had eight goals and two assists last season.

White was a big focus of several opposing teams last season and will more than likely be the same this year.



Louisburg senior Cole Clover is one of eight returning seniors for the Wildcat boys socce team.

He is just one of several important pieces in the midfield

that includes seniors Colton Blue and Will Showalter, who each earned all-league honors last season. Senior Jacob Brown also returns to join Showalter at the defensive-mid spot.

"We'll have a string of experienced seniors in the middle of the field – Emmett as our striker, Colton as our center attacking mid, Will Showalter and Jacob Brown as our center defensive mids, and Ethan Sharp and Cole Clover as our center backs," Bovaird said. "They're all poised to have great seasons. We'll have a lot of talent on the outside, and with that strong core in the middle being able to dish the ball out wide, we are looking to get a lot of goals this year."

The Wildcats will also have few returning options at forward to help those potential goals. Sophomore Owen Marsh and junior Caleb Feldkamp return after seeing several varsity minutes last season, as did Brody Bovaird. Grant Cannon and Cody Courtney will also see time up top as well.

"We've been making huge gains with playing a possession style of soccer," coach Bovaird said. "One of my goals for the summer was to help the team improve on consistently stringing together passes, and it's been great to see their progress. We'll be possessing the ball and moving it up the field with solid passes and movement to space, and I think that will be the key. It's an old soccer cliché – let the ball do the work."

Defensively, Sharp and Cole Clover will join outside backs Dan Minster and Mika McKitrick to form the Wildcat back line, as will Ryan Barberich and Renner Erickson.

Junior Evan Moreland returns as the team's starting goalie and Bovaird believes he is ready to take the next step.

"From the start of last year to the end, Evan made so many huge strides," Bovaird said. "He went from playing a half as goalkeeper on JV as a freshman, to being the starting keeper on varsity as a sophomore. Talk about a trial by fire. This

season, though, he's going to be ready for a great experience."

There will also be a new voice on the sideline with Bovaird as Nick White was hired as the team's assistant coach and Bovaird is excited to see what is in store for his team's this season.

"Last year was a total anomaly," Bovaird said. "It's such a rare thing for a high school team to have such a lack of seniors, and I don't see that situation happening again in the near future. Our seniors are taking on outstanding leadership roles, the underclassmen are buying into the system and coach White and I are totally in tune with the goals of the season and how we're going to get there.

"Our season motto for this year is simple: 'Believe.' We're looking to get back to the top of the league, and we're looking to bring home a state trophy, and Coach White and I fully believe that the guys can do just that this year."

Louisburg begins its season Tuesday when the Wildcats travel to Basehor-Linwood for a 6 p.m., match. Louisburg has its home opener Thursday against Independence.