

Wildcat football hoping for third consecutive league title



Louisburg senior Ashton Moore is one of several returning starters for a Wildcat team that features 24 seniors.

For the last two seasons, Louisburg football has been the cream of the crop in the Frontier League.

The Wildcats are coming off their second straight league title and haven't lost a league contest in that 2-year span. They have been a dominating force and they want to continue that again in 2024.

However, Louisburg knows it won't be easy and will have a

target on its back all season.

"A league title is something they have certainly set as one of their goals," Louisburg coach Drew Harding said. "We have talked a lot about that, but we can't be focused on that at this point. It has to be on a week by week basis, take opportunities given to us and get better. It is certainly a goal of theirs, but we just have to win one game at a time mentality and hopefully put ourselves in a good position at the end of the season."

Although the Wildcats lost six starters that earned All-Frontier League honors last season, they return several key pieces, along with 24 seniors, from last season's team and it starts with a pair of Division I recruits in Ashton Moore and Conlee Hovey.

Moore, who committed to Kansas State over the summer, was also one of the leaders of the Wildcat defense at linebacker. He posted a team-high 125 tackles, including eight for a loss. Moore had four forced fumbles and two sacks.

As the team's starting running back, Moore carried the load for the Wildcats as he carried the ball 151 times for 1,110 yards and had 18 total touchdowns.

As for Hovey, he has earned several Division I offers already and for good reason. The Louisburg tight end is a big target down the field and had 250 yards and two touchdowns. He also finished with more than 40 tackles, had two sacks and a forced fumble on the defensive line.

"It is huge to have those guys back with that much experience and the caliber of athletes they are," Harding said. "We are going to expect a lot out of them this year and we are really excited to see what those guys can do. They are really good football players."

"Ashton is in very good shape and we fully expect him to be the

leader of that defense and carrying the load for us on offense. You always want to get your best players the ball and Conlee is a big target with good hands and he helps us a lot in the run game. Getting him involved will be big for us.”



Louisburg senior Conlee Hovey returns to the Wildcats after earning all-league honors on both sides of the ball.

The Wildcats have had the same signal caller the last three seasons in Declan Battle, but the Louisburg graduate has moved on to Washburn and they will have a new quarterback under center.

Senior Alex Saad will take the reins of the Wildcat offense, and after seeing a little bit of time last season, will be thrust into the starting role this year.

“We lost a 3-year starter which is always tough to replace, but the good thing is we have another talented quarterback to step into that role,” Harding said. “Alex is very talented and I think he would have played for a majority of our opponents

last year. He can do a lot of really good things for us.

“There will be some differences for sure between Declan and Alex for sure. As coaches, you have to adjust that scheme to what fit your players the best. Both are talented but they are different and we have some things that suit Alex a little better.”

Louisburg also returns a fixture on both the offensive and defensive lines. Senior Brayden Yoder, who earned first team all-league honors on both sides of the ball, is back to lead the players on the line of scrimmage.

Yoder will join Miles Meek, Xander Lucas, Johnny Hendrickson and Nate Capuro on the offensive line, while Yoder, Hovey, Meek, Jimmy DeVary, Capuro and Lucas Swartz could all see time on the defensive line.



Louisburg senior Brayden Yoder (56), who earned first-team all-league honors on both sides of the ball, will anchor both the offensive and defensive lines.

“Brayden doesn’t say much, but he just works his tail off every single day,” Harding said. “He doesn’t need a break and that same mentality is still with him this year. He is a tough guy to move on defense and he can move people on the offensive side. We are going to rely on him and excited to see him step up into that leadership role.”

The Wildcats also bring back a few wide receivers who earned varsity minutes last season in seniors Myles Vohs, Josh Holtzen and Reid McCaskill. Senior Garrison Bloustine, along with juniors Rickey Giles, Blaise Vohs and Martin Alicea Soto could see time as well.

On the defensive side, Moore and senior Erik Lien will lead the linebacking crew and the Wildcats will see several new faces in the secondary.

Swartz, Logan Henry, Russell Wiseman, Rickey Giles and Holtzen will all see time at the safety spot, while Vohs, Saad, McCaskill, Gage Feldkamp and Aidan Meyer will all see cornerback duty.

It will be another different schedule for the Wildcats this season as they open with Tonganoxie on Friday and then turn around to play rival Paola on the road the next week.

It will also feature games against unfamiliar foes in Clay Center and Wichita West, and the Wildcats will also be on the road for three straight weeks in the middle of their schedule.

“It is definitely a unique schedule and we start off with Tonganoxie and next week is your rival in Paola,” Harding said. “Then you play a team (Clay Center) we haven’t played before the week after that. Then we go on the road for three straight. There are no easy opponents and they all have good players and coaches. There won’t be an easy game on the

schedule.”

Louisburg has set several goals for itself in 2024, but with a tough schedule, the Wildcats know they will not be able to overlook anyone.

“Our expectations is try to keep it week by week,” Harding said. “We have some long term goals, like winning a league title, and we want to go on a playoff run. The players set the expectation to have fun every day and win the next game. It was a cool goal for them to set and it highlights what we are trying to do.”