

# Wildcats nearly pull upset of Miego in first round of playoffs



***Louisburg's Ashton Moore finds some running room Friday against Bishop Miego in the first round of the state playoffs.***

The mountain of playing Bishop Miego is always a tough one for public schools to climb, especially when it comes to football.

Miego, which has won seven state titles in the last 10 years, has never lost to a non-private school in the playoffs during that decade long of dominance.

Louisburg wanted to be the first team to hand it that loss Friday as the No. 2 seed Wildcats hosted the No. 15 Stags in the first round of the Class 4A state playoffs.

The Wildcats were so close to that mountaintop, but came up

just short as they fell to Miego, 21-14, to end their season with a 7-2 record.

Louisburg was behind 14 points, only to rally and tie the game at halftime. The Wildcats had one final drive to try and tie it again late, but a Miego interception dashed the Wildcats' hopes of an upset.

"In this moment, the only word I can come up right now is proud," Louisburg coach Drew Harding said. "I am so proud of the team. Our biggest emphasis was we had to start fast and we didn't. They got out to a 14-0 lead, and most times when you play teams like Miego that can snowball and get out of hand quick. Those guys just battled and were able to tie it up at halftime. Then for us to continue to fight and have a chance to tie it at the end – proud is all I can say about them."

Bishop Miego got out to a quick start as they took a 7-0 lead on a 4-yard touchdown by Vinny George in the first quarter and then Stag quarterback Marco Rodriguez scored on a 4-yard run of his own to put Miego up 14-0 early in the the second quarter.

It didn't get much better as the Wildcats found themselves on their own 2-yard line on their next drive. However, it was there when the game started to turn.

Louisburg made several big plays, including a 40-yard pass from quarterback Alex Saad to Rickey Giles, and the Wildcats drove 98 yards that ended on a 13-yard run by Ashton Moore to cut the Miego lead in half. Moore also had a 22-yard screen pass from Saad that set up the score.

"We had a negative play that set us up in a bad situation," Harding said. "For them to battle through that, put a drive together and get a touchdown was great to see and 98-yard drives don't happen very often, especially against a good defense like Miego. I think that drive was a good representation of what these guys did all night."



***Louisburg senior Brayden Yoder celebrates a sack Friday against Bishop Miege.***

The Wildcat defense then came up with a big play as senior Brayden Yoder recorded a sack on third down and force a Miege punt near midfield with under three minutes left in the first half.

Louisburg got its quick strike offense going as Saad connected with Myles Vohs on a 43-yard pass to get into Miege territory. That set up a 17-yard pass from Saad to Moore to tie it up with 40 seconds left in the second quarter.

The Wildcat offensive line of Yoder, Miles Meek, Xander Lucas, Nate Capuro and Johnny Hendrickson, along with tight ends Conlee Hovey and Erik Lien, opened holes for several big plays in the first half.

Hovey had a team high five catches for 78 yards to lead the Wildcats, while Vohs had 4 catches for 57 yards. Saad alluded pressure for most of the night as he completed 17 of 27 passes



for 251 yards.

“Their confidence was high at halftime and they were feeling good about their situation, especially after being down 14 points and battling back,” Harding said. “Unfortunately we weren’t come out and put a drive together in the second half, but our defense played phenomenal all game and kept us in the game.”

Louisburg’s defense had one of – if not its best – game of the season. The Wildcats held a high-powered Miego offense to 21 points, despite being put in tough situations most of the night.



***Louisburg senior Lucas Swartz dives to try and bring down a Miego player Friday at Wildcat Stadium.***

They held the Stags to three field goal attempts, two of which were missed and the other was blocked by senior Lucas Swartz to keep it a one score game in the second half.

Junior Gage Feldkamp also had a big interception to keep the Stags out of the endzone. Senior Russell Wiseman had seven tackles, while Vohs and Yoder each had six to be among the team leaders in stops.

"I would have to say this was our best defensive performance of the year," Harding said. "We shut down their run game and made them throw it. We did a good job against that as well. They are a high-powered offense, so to hold them to 21 points, especially when they had good field position for most of the night, was really good."

Moore had a big night for the Wildcats as he finished with a team-high 10 tackles. He also ran the ball hard on offense as he tallied 70 yards from scrimmage to go along with his two scores in his final game in a Louisburg uniform.

"Ashton was extremely motivated," Harding said. "You could tell that by the way he was running the football. He was flying around on defense and he is a great player. We are extremely lucky that he is at Louisburg and he had a great career for us. I know he is going to have a great career moving on as well."

Miege added a touchdown in the third quarter to take a 21-14 lead, but the Wildcat offense would stall for most of the second half, until one final drive in the fourth.

Louisburg's defense forced a Miege punt with just under two minutes left in the game.



***Louisburg senior Myles Vohs makes a leaping catch in the fourth quarter of Friday's game against Bishop Miege.***

Saad immediately hit Vohs on a leaping 16-yard catch to put the ball at the Miege 40 yard line. With 1:12 left in the game, Saad threw a pass toward the endzone that was tipped and Miege made a diving interception that all but ended the contest.

"We were going to go for 2 for sure and go for the win," Harding said. "I was really looking forward to having that opportunity. We got down there, but we had a penalty and couple negative things happen to where we couldn't get it in the endzone.

"I don't think we are into moral victories by any means, but I think every one of them can hold their heads high. They all put their best efforts into this and this was the most focused

we have been all year in terms of preparation. They came out and played really well. They should be proud of everything they have accomplished.”

It marked the end to what was a special season for the Wildcats as they won their first seven games to start the year and just missed out on a third consecutive Frontier League title.

It was also the last time 24 seniors will wear the Louisburg uniform as they gave everything they had in their final contest.

“To have a senior class that is this large is a great thing,” Harding said. “Every single one of them had a role on our team, and they did a good job playing that role. We are very lucky to have each and every one of them and they are going to be great individuals past high school and beyond football. I am proud of all their accomplishments.”

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**BM 7 7 7 0 – 21**

## **SCORING SUMMARY**

### **First Quarter**

B: Vinny George 4 run (kick good)

### **Second quarter**

B: Marco Rodriguez 4 run (kick good)

L: Ashton Moore 13 run (Blaise Vohs kick)

L: Ashton Moore 17 pass from Alex Saad (Vohs kick)

### **Third Quarter**

B: Teryn Jackson 33 pass from Rodriguez (kick good)

# STATISTICS

RUSHING – Ashton Moore 14-32; Darby Van Eaton 2-18; Alex Saad 7-12

PASSING – Alex Saad 17-27-251

RECEIVING – Conlee Hovey 5-78; Myles Vohs 4-57; Ashton Moore 4-48; Rickey Giles 1-40; Josh Holtzen 1-12; Reid McCaskill 1-9; Darby Van Eaton 1-7

TACKLES – Ashton Moore 10, Russel Wiseman 7, Myles Vohs 6, Brayden Yoder 6, Conlee Hovey 5, Jimmy DeVary 4, Lucas Swartz 3, Gage Feldkamp 3, Logan Henry 2, Bryce Thompson 2, Erik Lien 2, Miles Meek 2, Rickey Giles 1, Reid McCaskill 1