

Wildcats' season comes to an end with loss to Baldwin in regional title game



Louisburg senior defender Ethan Sharp heads the ball away from the goal Thursday in Baldwin.

BALDWIN CITY – There wasn't a whole lot that went right for Louisburg on Thursday during the Class 4-1A regional championship game against No. 1 seed Baldwin.

The No 8 seed Wildcats saw their starting goalie get injured prior to the contest and Baldwin used a pair of second half goals to pull away for a 3-0 victory over Louisburg.

The loss ended the Wildcats' season with a 9-9 record as Louisburg saw a big improvement from just four wins a season ago.

“From last season to this season, it was a huge step forward for the program,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “It’s not just the skills we showed on the field; it was also the mindset growth that everyone experienced. We’ve improved in nearly every area – our defense tightened up and we gave up fewer goals, our possession was much better, and we really came together as a team.

“Yes, it was a heartbreaking way to see the season come to an end, but that doesn’t change how proud I am of how far we’ve come and the foundation we’ve built for next year.”

Louisburg gave the Bulldogs a fight, especially in the first half. After playing them week earlier, in which the Wildcats lost 5-2, Louisburg found itself down just 1-0 at halftime.

Toward the end of the first half, the Wildcats had a chance to tie it up when senior Colton Blue crossed the ball to the box and it found the foot of senior Emmett White. His shot was knocked away by the Baldwin keeper and it was the best opportunity the Wildcats had all afternoon.

The Bulldogs doubled their lead five minutes into the second half and added another goal with 12 minutes remaining to pull away for the victory.

“It’s really tough to beat a team more than once in a season, but Baldwin made sure to get things done against us,” Bovaird said. “I thought we showed a great deal of heart and resilience, despite the loss. There were times in the game when we controlled possession very well and made some great offensive threats. While we were unable to capitalize on our chances, Baldwin made the best of their chances. Both teams fought like crazy, and while the game’s outcome didn’t go our way, we battled and never gave up.”



Louisburg goalie Carter Schneider stretches out to knock a shot away Thursday at Baldwin.

Louisburg faced some adversity early as starting goalie Evan Moreland suffered a leg injury during warmups and was unable to play.

Reserve goalie Carter Schneider took his spot and made five saves and had two blocked shots in what was his first, true varsity action.

“I’d say that the key to being successful in so many situations is to expect the unexpected,” Bovaird said. “There was no way we could have seen Evan getting hurt like he did during warm-ups, but the great thing was that we had a player like Carter right there, ready to step up and fill a role. That shows the great mindset he had as a player, the depth of our bench, and the faith that the team had in him.

“Evan has been a consistent presence for us in goal all season, and he has been such a vocal leader. I was really

impressed with how Carter stepped up. He was thrown into a high-pressure situation, and he handled it with composure. It's not easy to be called up like that, but he showed his potential and kept us competitive. I think he has a bright future ahead."



Louisburg senior Jacob Brown dribbles the ball past a Baldwin player Thursday.

It was also a tough ending for eight Louisburg seniors as White, Blue, Ethan Sharp, Dan Minster, Mika McKitrick, Will Showalter, Cole Clover and Jacob Brown all played their final matches for the Wildcats.

It was a group Bovaird had a chance to work with for several years at junior varsity level and then again as a varsity coach.

"We've been incredibly blessed to have had these eight guys leading our team this year," Bovaird said. "They have been the heart and soul of the team, and I couldn't have asked for a

better group of leaders. Many of them began high school soccer when they played for me on the JV team as freshmen, and then as sophomores they've been right there on the varsity team with me as their head coach.

"They've shown incredible dedication, leadership, and commitment to the program. They've set a standard and created a culture that the younger players can look up to. It's hard to put into words how much they've meant to the team—they've been great mentors and role models, and their legacy will last for years to come."

Wildcats edge Chanute to reach regional title game

Before Louisburg had at the opportunity to play Baldwin for the regional title, the Wildcats first had to get past Chanute in the Class 4-1A regional semifinals on Oct. 29.

The Wildcats battled the Blue Comets and gusty winds to hold on for a 1-0 victory over Chanute.

Senior Emmett White scored the game's lone goal early in the first half on an assist from Colton Blue. The Wildcats controlled possession for much of the contest to get their ninth win on the season.

"Any time you've got the wind blowing straight up the field like it was last Tuesday, you're going to see some adversity for either team," Bovaird said. "Our game against Chanute was challenging, especially with the weather. Wind like that changes everything, and it forced us to adjust our game. Regardless, we did our best to adapt to things. We battled through all that and stayed focused. They didn't let the conditions get the best of them and stayed tough from start to finish."

Louisburg dominated play as the Wildcats outshot the Blue

Comets, 17-3. White led the way with three shots on target, while Blue, Owen Marsh, Jacob Brown and Ryder Erickson each had one.