Wildcats hope for another trip to the state tournament



Louisburg senior Alex Saad is one of five returning starters from the Wildcats state tournament team a year ago and is one of the leaders on the Louisburg pitching staff.

The loss was a difficult one to take for the Louisburg baseball team.

Despite having an historic season a year ago that resulted in the Wildcats' first league title in 22 years and first state appearance in 15 years, Louisburg suffered a close loss to rival Paola in the first round of the state tournament.

As disappointing as the loss was, the Wildcats are hungrier than ever to get back to state for the 2025 season.

"I think confidence is high going into this season, but we all know we have to show up and play tough every game," Louisburg

coach Kade Larson said. “The momentum from last season can definitely carry into this one and the guys have been practicing like they’re ready to build off of last season.”

Louisburg did lose a few key pieces from that historic 2024 team, especially on the offensive side, but the Wildcats return a bulk of their pitching staff that hopes to take another step forward.

Leading the way will be seniors Alex Saad and Meade Rutherford, who were both all-league players from a season ago.

Saad also earned second team honors as the Wildcats’ No. 1 pitcher. He led the Wildcats with 45 strikeouts and had a 4.20 ERA. Saad also had seven wins on the season, which was the third most in Louisburg history.

Offensively, the Wildcats return two first team all-league selections in senior Luke Schultz and junior Danny Napier.



Senior Meade Rutherford returns to help lead the Louisburg pitching staff after earning all-league honors a year ago.

As for Rutherford, he was the Wildcats' No. 2 starter and had a successful season on the mound. He tallied 26 strikeouts on the season with a 4.51 ERA in six starts.

"We lost some really good players to graduation last year, but we bring back some great players, as well," Larson said. "We have a majority of our pitching staff returning and some key bats. We will definitely have a few spots to fill, but I think we have a great group to step into those roles. We have five starters returning and three more that have had quite a bit of varsity experience. Alex and Meade were our leaders on the mound last year and they look to do so again."

Joining them on the mound will be senior Jayce Toms and junior Bristol Barbour, who both have varsity pitching experience.

Juniors Christian Owens, Evan Moreland and Ayden Spradling will also join the Louisburg staff.

Napier, who was the first team selection at catcher, will continue to work



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He was behind the plate for all 26 games and was the workhorse behind the Louisburg pitching staff that recorded a program record 172 strikeouts.

He also provided the Wildcats with a big bat in the middle of the lineup. Napier had a .367 average, to go along with 29 hits, 12 doubles and two home runs. He also finished with 26 RBIs.



Louisburg junior Luke Schultz is one of two returning first team all-league players from a year ago.

As for Schultz, who earned first team infield for his work at third base and with his bat. He had five home runs, a .381 average, 32 hits, 26 RBIs, and 32 runs scored.

Barbour and Rutherford both also had big hits at different points throughout the season and Barbour is a returning all-league player at shortstop.

“Danny and Luke will be some big bats returning for us this season,” Larson said. “Meade had some really clutch hits for us down the stretch last year, as well. I think we have a chance to be solid at the plate but might have to find new ways to produce runs compared to last year.”

Schultz, Barbour, Saad, along with seniors Rylan Carty, Carter Willey and Moreland will all compete for time in the infield.

Rutherford, Willey, Owens, Spradling and Max Amren will all be battling for a spot in the outfield.

Louisburg opens its season Tuesday when it travels to Harrisonville for a doubleheader. First pitch is set for 4:30 p.m., as the Wildcats begin another run at a state tournament.

“This group has some high expectations coming off a great season last year,” Larson said. “We will take it one game at a time and do everything we can to win every time we step on the field.”