

Magic runs out for Wildcats in regional title game loss to Rock Creek



Louisburg shortstop Rylan Carty turns a double play against Rock Creek on May 20 at Rock Creek High School.

ST. GEORGE – There was simply not enough magic left for the Louisburg baseball team.

After pulling off a memorable comeback against Ottawa in the regional semifinals, there was no comeback to be had in the championship game against Rock Creek on May 20.

Rock Creek, the defending state champion, scored three runs and handed Louisburg a 3-0 loss at Rock Creek High School as the Wildcats fell one win short of the state tournament.

“Obviously we didn’t reach our final goal but we did really

great things this year,” Louisburg coach Kade Larson said. “We grew as a team and always gave ourselves a chance going into the seventh inning. I’m really proud of this group and loved the way they competed. These seniors did a great job of leading and helping the sophomores/juniors learn how to be the next group of leaders.”

Giving themselves a chance was exactly what the Wildcats did in their regional semifinal game against Ottawa.

The Cyclones took a 4-0 lead into the bottom of the seventh and the Wildcats were two outs away from elimination. Louisburg could get nothing going offensively – then all of a sudden – everything went its way.

Louisburg scored five unanswered runs to pull off a 5-4 victory over Ottawa to advance to the regional championship

“The guys did a great job of competing and giving themselves a chance,” Larson said. “They never gave up. We really couldn’t get much going offensively for most of the game against Ottawa. Their pitcher threw really well for 6 innings.

“In the seventh, the guys did a great job of trying to keep the line moving and get the next guy up. It was pretty crazy how quickly it changed and went from down 4-0 to winning 5-4. I’ve never seen anything like it.”

Sophomore Max Amren got the rally started with a bloop triple down the right field line and scored on a single from Rylan Carty.

The Wildcats’ hottest hitter came up next in Luke Schultz. The Louisburg senior, who had been intentionally walked twice in the game, got a pitch to hit this time and cranked one over the fence for a 2-run home run.

More magic came the way of the Wildcats as Meade Rutherford reached on an error on a dropped pop-up at second base. That

set up the dramatics for Bristol Barbour.



Louisburg's Bristol Barbour stomps on home plate and his teammates are there to celebrate following his walk-off 2-run home run in the regional semis against Ottawa at Rock Creek High School.

Barbour, who had doubled twice earlier, got a hold of a pitch and hit a 2-run walk-off home run to give the Wildcats a 5-4 win.

"They didn't pitch to Luke all day by intentionally walking him," Larson said. "He got an at-bat and did more than you could ask for with it. Bristol was crushing the ball all day. He really swung it well and that didn't change in his last at bat. Off the bat I thought it had a chance and was pretty surreal to see it go out."

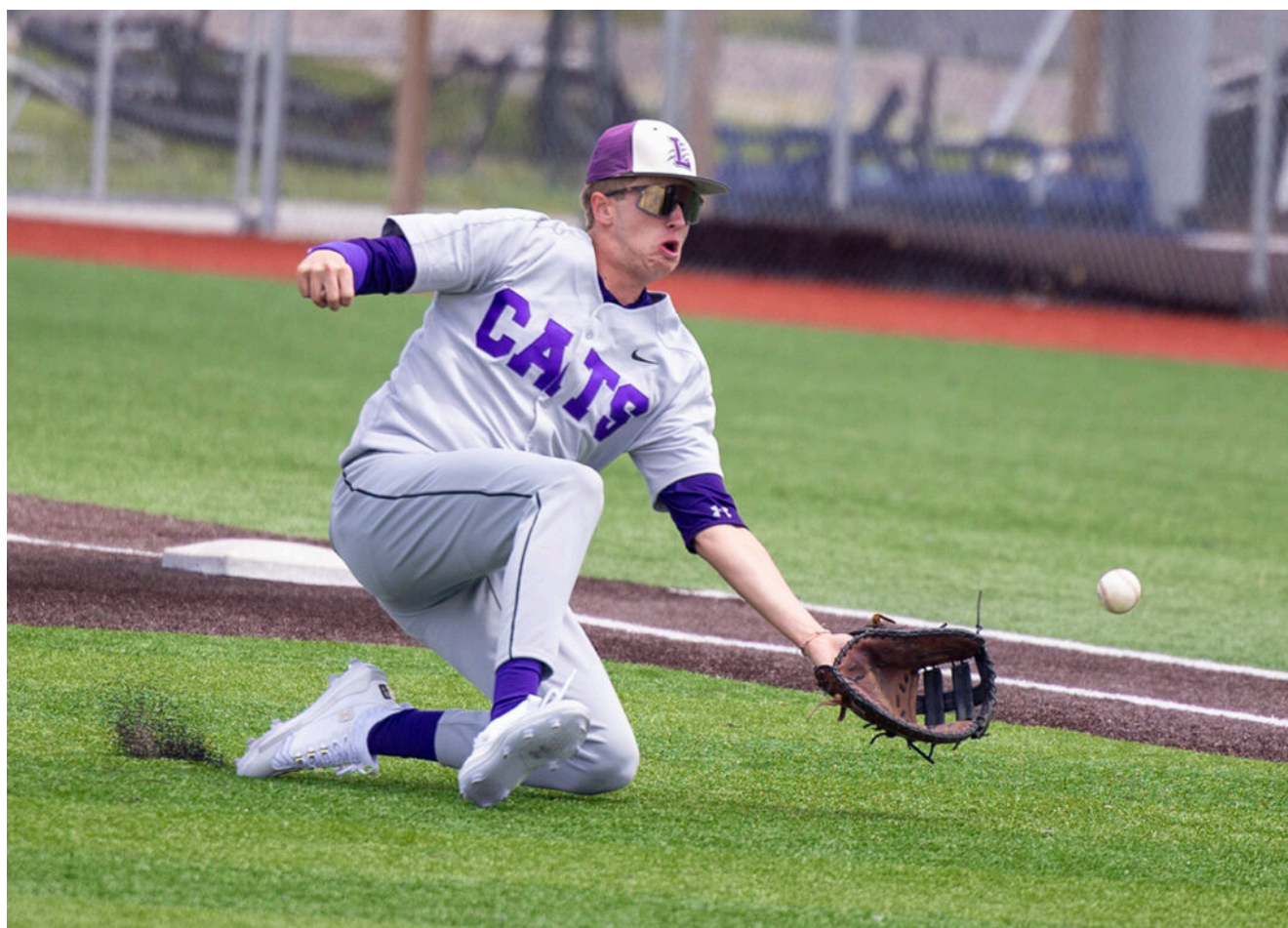
The Wildcats (18-7) also threw several arms at the Cyclones to keep the game close.

Rutherford started the game and gave up 2 earned runs in 2 2/3 innings and struck out three. Junior Christian Owens threw 3 1/3 and gave up two runs, both unearned, and also struck out three.

Senior Alex Saad pitched the final inning and gave up just one hit and a strikeout.

Saad went on to start the championship game against Rock Creek and held the Mustangs scoreless through three innings.

The Louisburg senior had to battle a tough strike zone in the top of the fourth and Rock Creek reached and scored a run on four straight walks.



Louisburg first baseman Evan Moreland slides to make a running catch on a bunt on May 20 at Rock Creek.

Owens came in for relief and was able to get out of the jam by allowing just one run. He pitched the final three innings and struck out six.

Rock Creek had just one hit the entire game, but were able to take advantage of free bases with two runs in the fourth and another in the fifth.

“I thought our pitchers battled all day,” Larson said. “Meade gave us some good innings to begin the day. Saad did really well and bridged the gap and did well keeping us in the game. Christian really threw well in both games. He never gets rattled and threw his butt off in both games to keep it close to give our bats a chance.”

The Wildcats had five hits on the contest, but couldn't get a runner across. Barbour had a double, his third of the day, and Amren had two hits to lead the Wildcat bats.