Wildcats split with rival Paola on Senior Night



Louisburg senior Luke Schultz slides into home during the second game of a doubleheader with Paola on May 13 at Lewis-Young Park.

Playoff seeding implications were at stake for Louisburg during its May 13 home doubleheader against Paola.

The Wildcats had a slim chance to host the Class 4A regional tournament with a sweep of their rival. Emotions were even higher as it was Senior Night for Louisburg as the Wildcats honored their six seniors and their families.

There was a lot to play for, and to make it more difficult, Paola was ranked No. 2 in 4A and ended the Wildcats' season at state a year ago.

All those emotions equaled out to a split between the two

teams.

Paola struck first as it scored 11 runs in the first three innings and handed the Wildcats a 14-3 loss in the opener. Louisburg was able to bounce back in the nightcap with a 9-4 victory after it jumped out to a big lead.

The Wildcats ended the regular season with a 17-6 record and earned the No. 5 seed in the regional tournament. Louisburg will travel to No. 4 Rock Creek on May 20 as the Wildcats try to get back to state.

“The guys did really well responding to a tough loss in game one,” Louisburg coach Kade Larson said. “Being able to get the momentum early in the second game was big for us.”

Louisburg jumped out to a 6-0 lead after two innings thanks to RBI singles from Jayce Toms and Carter Willey in the first. Max Amren and Carter Willey opened the second with a single and double, before Amren scored on a single from Luke Schultz.



Louisburg seniors (from left) Rylan Carty, Meade Rutherford, Alex Saad, Luke Schultz, Jayce Toms and Carter Willey were honored on May 13 with their parents during Senior Night.

Paola committed two errors that led to two more Wildcat runs and they led 6-0. The Panthers answered with four in the top of the third, but the Wildcats added two more insurance runs in the fourth, and another in the fifth, to seal the win.

Wildcat junior Christian Owens came in for relief and struck out five over 4 1/3 innings of work to help preserve the victory. Senior Alex Saad started the game and picked up the win.

Carty led the Wildcat offense with three doubles in the contest, while Amren, Toms and Meade Rutherford each had two hits. Toms also had a team-high 3 RBIs.

“Rylan and Jayce swung it really well, which was nice to see, and Christian came in to really shut the door on the mound,” Larson said.

Prior to the contest, Rutherford, Willey, Saad, Rutherford, Schultz and Carty were all honored with their parents for Senior Night. It is a special group for Larson, one that helped the Wildcats to a state tournament a year ago.



Louisburg junior Christian Owens pitched four scoreless innings of relief to help the Wildcats get the win against Paola.

“These seniors have been great leaders for us,” Larson said. “They have done a great job of helping turn this program into contenders and laying the groundwork for those coming up after them.”

With the regular season behind them, the Wildcats will now focus on the postseason. Louisburg will square off with No. 12 Ottawa in the first round of regionals at 2 p.m. on May 20 at Rock Creek. If the Wildcats advance, they will play for the regional championship later that night against the winner of Rock Creek and No. 13 Eudora.

Rock Creek is the defending 4A state champion and Larson knows his team is going to have to play well to come out of a difficult regional.

“The guys are ready to go for regionals,” Larson said. “They know we have a win or go home mentality and are excited to go compete for a regional championship. We’re trying to take it one game at a time and find a way to win in order to get another game.”