

# Wildcat football falls to rival Paola in home opener



***Louisburg quarterback Max Amren finds some running room Friday during the team's home opener against Paola.***

Louisburg has found itself in a pair of close games to start the 2025 season, but unfortunately, the Wildcats couldn't get the big play they were looking for in either one – which included Friday's home opener against Paola.

The Rivalry on 68 wasn't kind to the Wildcats as the Panthers pulled away in the second half and handed Louisburg a 28-21 loss. In a contest filled with game-changing plays, the Panthers made just a couple more.

The biggest swing came late in the third quarter. Down 21-14, the Wildcats drove all the way down to the 1-yard line. After a couple Paola stops backed it up to the 4, Louisburg starting

quarterback Max Amren had to leave the game with cramps on third down.

Louisburg decided to go for it on fourth down at the 5 and the Panther defense held the Wildcats short. The Panthers swung the momentum with a fourth down conversion of their own.

On fourth and 2 near midfield, Paola running back Bodhi Shay broke free around the left side and scored on a 46-yard touchdown early in the fourth quarter in what was a 14-point swing for the Panthers.

“There were probably several turning points in this one,” Harding said. “We had a really good drive going and weren’t able to finish it off and then they got a big fourth down where they were able to turn it into a touchdown. That was a big one, and then at the end of the first half we weren’t able to keep them out of the endzone and gave up a score. We aren’t playing our best situational football just yet, but we will keep working on it.

“That is your rival, so you want to beat your rival, so these types of losses sting a little extra. They are a good football team and they can do a lot of good things.”





***Louisburg sophomore Mathias Wright beats a Paola defender for a 90-yard kickoff return for a touchdown.***

Louisburg (0-2) wasted no time getting on the scoreboard to begin the game as sophomore Mathias Wright broke free for a 90-yard kickoff return for a touchdown to put the Wildcats up early.

Paola answered on its first possession, and it ended on a 2-yard touchdown run by Shay to tie the game. The Wildcats took the lead back again late in the first quarter as Amren found the endzone on a 5-yard touchdown run.

In the second quarter, the Panthers answered as quarterback Mason Stein hit Trace Metcalf in the back of the endzone for a 10-yard pass. Then with seconds left in the first half, Stein found Sasha Pichnenko for a leaping 12-yard grab in the corner of the endzone and the Panthers took a 21-14 halftime lead.

After Shay's big run in the fourth quarter made it a two-score game, the Wildcats kept fighting as Amren hit Martin Soto for

a 32-yard pass on a third and 23. It eventually ended on an 8-yard touchdown run by Amren.

The Wildcats got the ball back with under two minutes remaining, but time ran out on their possible game-tying drive.

"I was obviously proud of the way our guys battled," Harding said. "It was a pretty similar situation to our first game where we were down two scores in the second half and were able to get back in it. There wasn't a lot of flow to the game. Both sides were cramping and it really slowed the game down. At the same time, we have to play more complete football to put us in better situations."



***Louisburg's John Guetterman (right) makes a tackle with help of teammate Will Norton (29) Friday against Paola.***

Amren was big on offense for the Wildcats. The junior quarterback led the team with 242 total yards of offense, including a pair of touchdowns, and 125 yards rushing.

Soto was Amren's favorite target on the night as he had five catches for 94 yards. Sophomore John Guetterman led the Wildcats on defense with a team-high 12 tackles and fellow linebacker Bryce Thompson added eight.

Louisburg will look for that first win this Friday as the Wildcats travel to Clay Center for a 7 p.m. kickoff.

"We have to play more complete football," Harding said "We have been making a lot of mistakes that hurt ourselves. We have these lapses where we don't execute, but we have to continue to play a complete football game and be better in situations. We will battle a tough Clay Center team with a long road trip. We know it won't be easy, but we will get back to work to continue to get better."

**PAO 7 14 0 7 – 28**

**LOU 14 0 0 7 – 21**

## **SCORING SUMMARY**

### **First Quarter**

L: Mathias Wright 90 kickoff return (Owen Jewett kick)

P: Bodhi Shay 2 run (Tate Trachsel kick)

L: Max Amren 5 run (Jewett kick)

### **Second Quarter**

P: Trace Metcalf 10 pass from Mason Stein (Trachsel kick )

P: Sasha Pichnenko 12 pass from Stein (Trachsel kick)

### **Fourth Quarter**

L: Shay 46 run (Trachsel kick)

P: Amren 8 run (Jewett kick)



## **STATISTICS**

**RUSHING** – Max Amren 21-125, Bryce Thompson 9-29, Tate McGreer 4-24

**PASSING** – Max Amren 12-17-117

**RECEIVING** – Martin Soto 5-94; Maddox Day 1-14; Rickey Giles 3-10, Ayden Spradling 1-3

**TACKLES** – John Guetterman 12, Bryce Thompson 8, Cole Heinrich 6, Rickey Giles 5, Ayden Spradling 5, Murphy Adams 5, Mathias Wright 4, Michael Foote 4, Johnny Hendrickson 4, Max Amren 3, Tate McGreer 3, Martin Soto 3, Gage Feldkamp 3, Will Norton 2, Cole Lanz 1, Freddy Moreau 2, Braxton Koechner 1, Colin Schleicher 1, Devin Goerman 1