New coach to guide experienced Cats



Louisburg senior Austin Henderson is one of several returning starters from last season's Wildcat team that finished with 10 wins. Henderson will be one of seven seniors on the roster when the Wildcats open their season Thursday at home against Paola.

Sometimes in baseball, talent and experience can take you a long way and that is what Louisburg is hoping for this season.

The Wildcats finished with 10 wins last year – which more than doubled their total from the prior season – and have a big chunk of that same team back for another shot at it this season.

There will be one noticeable difference on the Louisburg bench.

Long-time coach Jeff Lohse, who resigned last May after 17 years, handed the reins off to assistant Joel McGhee, who has spent the last few years as the Wildcat junior varsity coach. McGhee also brings a new staff with him in Robert Ebenstein and Andy Wright.

McGhee has liked what he has seen out of his team so far and the transition has been a smooth one for him.

“Practices have been going well,” McGhee said. “We’ve been packing in a significant amount of work these first few weeks. The guys have done a great job adjusting to some of the changes that have been made. We’ve been keeping them very active and increased some of our offensive and defensive work in order to aid the players in their development. Many of the guys put in significant time in the weight room and participating in other sports which will be beneficial.

“It definitely helps to have been on the staff for the past few years. Being familiar with the players and not having to deal with ‘new-guy-itis’ has allowed things to flow a bit easier. Having coached a majority of the guys for at least a year on JV created familiarity with expectations and approach to the game. We haven’t changed too many things, but have made minor adjustments to what Lohse built over his years as head coach.”

The Wildcats lost just three seniors off last season’s 10-11 team and they are ready to take a big step forward with a big help from an experienced pitching staff.

Louisburg lost just one starter out of their rotation and looks to be the strength of their team. Senior Colton Smith, juniors Grant Harding and Sam Guetterman, along with sophomore Dalton Stone will all be in the Wildcats’ starting rotation.



Senior Colton Smith returns to help lead the Wildcats after earning all-league honors last season.

Seniors Matt Risenhoover and Cole Kramer will come in and play big roles in relief spots.

“It is great to have a number of guys that can throw strikes consistently,” McGhee said. “Everyone stays engaged throughout the game when strikes are thrown. Putting the ball over the plate and letting the defense work is something these guys are willing to do.

“Our defensive effort begins with these guys. Offering up a tempting buffet to hitters is key, so the defense can go and ‘grub’ as the guys have been putting it, on groundballs and fly balls. By filling up the zone, our staff puts us in positions to win games. We don’t have to strikeout all of them, but we’ve got to make it enticing and minimize mistakes made on the mound.”

As far the defensive setup goes, the Wildcats will have a familiar setup on the diamond. Senior Alex Dunn returns as the starting catcher, while Smith, a second-team all-league selection a year ago, will play third.

Seniors Cale Schneider and Risenhoover will play up the middle at second base and shortstop, respectively. Fellow senior Austin Henderson, an honorable mention all-league player last year, returns to first base.

Kramer, who was the Wildcats' lone all-league first team selection a season ago, will play centerfield and Harding will play an outfield spot. Blake Ruder and Korbin Hankinson will play the outfield as well.

"With the number of pitchers that we have and the experience behind them we have the ability to mix things up," McGhee said. "It is great to know that regardless of who you have pitching there is a solid defense behind them."

Offensively, Louisburg appears to be just as strong. As the team's leadoff hitter, Kramer hit .394 a season ago. He had a team-high 15 RBIs, six doubles, two triples, a home run and 15 stolen bases.

At third base, Smith finished last season with a .412 average with five doubles, a triple and 13 RBIs. Henderson also provided some pop with a .333 average, six doubles and 10 RBIs.

"Offensively we have a good mixture returning and several that are looking to play a larger role this year," McGhee said. "We have the ability to get on base, move around with contact, speed, or extra base hits. We have a group that is willing to sacrifice an at-bat to put runners in scoring position and to score runs."

Louisburg will try and get its season off to a good start Thursday when it plays host to Paola in a doubleheader. First pitch is set for 4:30 p.m.

2016 LOUISBURG HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL SCHEDULE

Mar. 31		
Paola		4:30 p.m.
Apr. 7		at Prairie View 4:30 p.m.
Apr. 9		at Fort Scott Tournament TBA
Apr. 12		at Eudora 4:30 p.m.
Apr. 19		
Baldwin		4:30 p.m.
Apr. 21		
Osawatomie		4:30 p.m.
Apr. 26		at De Soto 4:30 p.m.
Apr. 28		at Chanute 4:30 p.m.
May 3		at Ottawa 4:30 p.m.
May 9		Spring Hill 4:30 p.m.

Paola AD proposes bill to

help classification issue



Last October, Paola activities director Jeff Hines went to a Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) regional meeting to get updates on classification issues.

Six months later, Hines found himself in Topeka, in front of the Kansas Senate Education Committee to talk about a bill that could change the way schools are classified.

On Thursday, Hines sat in front of the committee to discuss Senate Bill 464 – a bill that he proposed with guidance of Sen. Caryn Tyson.

Statute 72-130 establishes specific guidelines pertaining to the organizational structure and functions of KSHSAA. Senate Bill 464 would change one part of the statute and strike the line which allows schools to be classified only by student enrollment.

“The total number of students in schools is a great starting point for classifying them,” Hines said. “It makes sense that the largest schools should play the largest schools and the smallest schools should play the smallest schools, but there are other things that need to be considered.”

For several months, KSHSAA has had a classification committee discuss different ways to have a competitive balance with its member schools. They came up with ideas of reducing the number of classifications or changing the number of schools in a division.

“There were no other factors being considered and that bothered me,” Hines said, “All that would do was reshuffle the schools just a little bit but we would have the same problem.”

The problem for the committee was its hands were tied thanks to the wording in Statute 72-130 that specifically states schools can only be classified by enrollment numbers and nothing else.

So Hines went to work and helped create Senate Bill 464, which does not give a specific solution to the problem, but rather would take wording out of the statute to allow KSHSAA to figure out how to classify schools on its own.

Hines gave a 15 minute testimony in front of the committee and then answered questions from the committee members for more than 30 minutes afterward. Before the hearing, Hines received support from every member in the Frontier League, Pioneer League and all but two schools in the Kaw Valley League, as those two didn’t respond before the hearing.

Following Hines’ testimony, Sen. Vicki Schmidt, R-Topeka, had concerns as to why KSHSAA did not come in front of the committee itself to ask for changes.

Hines informed the committee that it would be redundant for KSHSAA to endorse the plan, because if approved, member schools would still have to vote on it. He believes Bill 464 would let KSHSAA come up with a system and let schools improve it, instead of the legislature.

“KSHSAA wants to be neutral because this proposal would affect different schools in different ways,” Hines said. “It could be very beneficial to some schools and others may not like it because they might have to move up a class. So, why should KSHSAA have to pick sides in it and pit member against member? It doesn’t have to be that way in my opinion.

“Yes, a school that has to move up a classification might not

like it, but is it the best thing overall for the association? They can't look themselves in the mirror and say 'No, this isn't the right thing to do?'

A major problem for some member schools in KSHSAA is they do not believe it is competitively equal the way it is currently structured.

"I am not a believer in participation medals," Hines said. "If they are kindergartners, sure, but when you start playing, part of being successful later in life is learning how to compete. We all competed for a job when you have gone in for an interview and that is good. You need to have that skillset and I am not saying that we need to give more trophies out and give everyone a shot, but I just want a system in place that is equitable for all so that some don't have an unfair advantage at the expense of the rest and I think that is what is happening."

One of the problems is the lack of balance between championships won between public and private high schools. Hines did research and presented numbers at the hearing at the number of state championships won between private and public schools from 2004 to 2014.

Here is what he found.

- Private schools make up slightly less than 8 percent of the KSHSAA membership.
- Private schools have won slightly less than 32 percent of the state championships.
- Based on membership percentage, private schools should only win approximately 8 percent of the titles, not nearly 32 percent.
- Private schools are winning four times more state titles than should be expected based on their memberships.
- Private schools are nine times more likely to win five or more state titles than their public school peers.

“In that period of time, I looked for who has won five or more state titles,” Hines said. “That is a difficult feat. You look at Paola’s history and we have won like seven and Louisburg has won three in 100-plus years. During those 10 years, 37 percent of those private schools won five or more during that time and public schools had 4 percent win five or more. Private schools are nine times more likely to become a dynasty or a successful program with strong tradition. You tell me how we are all the same?”

Another problem they are facing is schools with a high percentage of low socioeconomic status (SCS) students, cannot compete against fellow schools in their own classification in many activities, including football.

“There is a whole bunch of schools in the Kansas City, Kansas school district that are 6A or 5A that have no business competing against those really hard schools,” Hines said. “They don’t have resources, they don’t have the students, there is no interest and they have all those things working against them and I feel bad for those kids. Who wants to trot out against some of those bigger schools and know you are going to get your ears boxed in? That is not fun. Moreover, it is not challenging for the kids those schools are playing against.”

Hines believes competition is important when it comes to the growth of the student athlete and it is beneficial for the school and its community.

“Not only what it does for grades, but for what it does for the human spirit,” Hines said.
“When I was the FFA advisor in Paola, we won 10 state championships in nine years and you could tell the interest by the students and the community went through the roof. You can say the same thing about Louisburg and what Jim Morgan does with his FFA kids. People flock to success.

“Naturally, when they are there they feel better about themselves, they want to work harder in the classroom to stay eligible and kids that want to stay involved are going to be more successful in life. It is all about having the chance to be successful.”

During Hines’ testimony in front of the Senate Education Committee, not all of the legislatures seemed open to the idea. Molly Baumgardner, R-Louisburg, asked Hines if he would be willing to relinquish state funding if the legislature agrees to release oversight of how KSHSAA classifies schools.

“If we relinquished the funding behind it, (high school activities) would disappear,” Hines said at the hearing.

No action was taken following the hearing, but the committee chairman spent 15 minutes with him and Tyson to help them strategize on what to do next.

One option is to amend the bill to include more specifics that could include a multiplier or a separate division for private schools and a low SCS school de-multiplier.

Another option, Hines said, would be to have the classification committee draft a letter to the Senate Education Committee that states they would like to study these other factors as part of a proposal for revamping the classification system, but not until they feel the legislature is open to changing the law.

Whatever decision comes next, however, Hines wants it to be decided by multiple people within KSHSAA on how to proceed.

“I don’t feel comfortable making that change because I feel a committee needs to do the work,” Hines said. “I shouldn’t be doing it, nor should 11 legislators, you need more. We should let the classification committee work on it and hopefully we can get some things accomplished.

“The only way to allow this to happen is to remove the barrier in place that exists due to the state statute.”

Top 10 stories of 2015

Here are the Louisburg Sports Zone Top 10 Stories of the Year. In each brief explanation of the story, there will be a link to the full story of when the event actually happened. Thanks again for a successful 2015 and I am already looking forward to 2016.



Hogan Welch (left) and Wyatt Reece each qualified for state in their respective sports.

10. Welch and Reece qualify for state

LHS students Hogan Welch and Wyatt Reece each put together

strong seasons in their respective sports.

In May, Welch qualified for the Class 4A state golf tournament after he shot an 85 at the Osawatomie Golf Course to become one of five individual qualifiers for state. It was the first time Welch had qualified for the state tournament and would shoot a 79 a week later in McPherson to finish 40th overall.

As for Reece, he qualified for the state cross country meet for the first time in his career in October. The Louisburg sophomore came in 13th overall and was also one of five individual qualifiers. A week later Reece traveled to Wamego to compete at the state meet and ran a 18:43 to come in 71st.



Louisburg's Jimmy Dolan (left) and Mya Diacono each suffered major head injuries from an accident just days apart. The Louisburg community rallied together to help the two families.

9. Accidents bring Louisburg community together

Jimmy Dolan and Mya Diacono live in the same community but were worlds apart from each other.

Jimmy, a junior at Louisburg High School, loves to wrestle, hang out with friends and live the life of a teenager.

It was a far cry from 9-year-old Mya who loves soccer, horses and spending time with her fourth-grade friends at Broadmoor Elementary. In a town of less than 5,000 people, the two had never met.

Two tragic accidents changed all of that.

On Jan. 12, Jimmy lost control of his vehicle while driving to school and suffered a major brain injury. Just 42 days later, Mya was involved in an automobile accident just outside the Louisburg city limits that left her with the same severe brain trauma.

That was when the Louisburg community came together to help the two families cope with a burden no family should have to bear. Since then, both Jimmy and Mya are on the road to recovery thanks to the help of a lot of people.



Louisburg Soccer Club president Karin Olson (second from left), Louisburg HIgh School junior Maddie McDaniel (middle) and fundraising organizer DIana Moore (right) receive the WIN for KC Sprint Teamwork Award on Feb. 13 in Kansas City, Mo.

8. Girls soccer raises funds to start program, wins award

A fundraising committee made a big push to make sure there was a girls soccer program at Louisburg High School.

The committee raised $39,000 in almost a year’s time to fund the program for three years. Thanks to all the hard work, the group was also recognized by the WIN for KC organization. The Lady Cats’ soccer season will kickoff in late March.



Louisburg graduates Kody Cook (left) and Garrett Griffin are each winding down their careers with their respective Division I football programs.

7. Griffin, Cook wrap up college careers

Louisburg High School graduates Kody Cook and Garrett Griffin have lived the lives a lot of football fans could only hope for.

Both are wrapping up their Division I collegiate football careers and are doing it with a lot of success. Cook is living his dream with the Kansas State football team as he has made contributions at both the wide receiver and quarterback positions to help the Wildcats to the Liberty Bowl.

Griffin, on the other hand, battled through an injury-plagued senior season to help Air Force reach the Armed Forces Bowl and made several big plays at the tight end spot.



Louisburg quarterback Austin Terry was one of several players responsible for the Wildcats' turnaround this season.

6. Wildcat football has big turnaround

After finishing with just three wins a year ago, the Louisburg High School football team put together a strong season in 2015 as they finished with seven wins.

Those seven victories put the Wildcats within a game of Paola for the Frontier League title and Louisburg also earned a spot in the regional playoffs before falling to Basehor-Linwood in a tight contest.



The Louisburg High School soccer team captured its first regional crown since 2010 after a 2-0 win over Coffeyville.

5. Louisburg soccer wins regional crown

Through much of the regular season, the Louisburg High School soccer team didn’t have much to cheer about.

The Wildcats had just four wins during the regular season, but they seemed to find the right chemistry in the postseason. Louisburg rattled off three consecutive wins in the postseason, including a 2-0 victory over Coffeyville-Field Kindley in the regional championship.

It was the Wildcats’ first regional title since 2010 and their sixth in the last 10 years.



Anders Vance won a regional title in the 285-pound weight class last February as he was one of five Wildcats to earn state bids.

4. Louisburg wrestling qualifies five for state

The Louisburg wrestling team hadn’t been a part of the state tournament since 2012 – that is before last season.

The Wildcats put together a breakout season as they qualified five for the state tournament, while Anders Vance won the regional crown at 285 pounds. Brenton Wrigley (195 pounds), Mason Koechner (220), Nathan Keegan (113) and Ryan Adams (138) all made the trip to Salina for the Class 4A state tourney.



Jeff Lohse (left) and Ben York each stepped away from their head coaching posts in 2015.

3. Long-time coaches resign from post

Jeff Lohse and Ben York had been fixtures in their respective sports for Louisburg High School, but both decided to call it quits this year.

Lohse, who spent the last 17 years as the head coach for the LHS baseball team, stepped down from his spot in May, citing personal reasons. Lohse led the Wildcats to two state tournament appearances.

York, who was the head coach when the boys soccer program started, also cited personal reasons for leaving the Wildcat soccer program after 13 years. York helped the Wildcats to six regional titles in the last 10 years.



Connor McMullen won the state title in the discus back in May and became Louisburg's first track state champion since 2011.

2. McMullen wins state title in discus, Dennis medals in hurdles

Louisburg High School senior Connor McMullen finally got the state title in the discus he had been searching for.

McMullen recorded a throw of 173 feet, 1 inch on his final attempt to win the Class 4A state discus title in Wichita back in May. He would also medal eighth in the javelin with a toss of 164-02.

Fellow senior Sean Dennis also garnered a state medal as he took fourth in the 110-meter hurdles. The boys and girls team combined sent a total of 11 athletes to the state meet.



The Louisburg High School volleyball team finished third overall in 2015 after making it to state for the fifth time in the last six seasons.

1. Lady Cat volleyball takes third at state

The Louisburg High School volleyball team has made a habit of making the trip to Salina in recent years and this season was no exception.

This time, however, the Lady Cats finished with a victory.

After ending their season with a runner-up performance and two fourth-place finishes at state the last three years, Louisburg won its final match of the season in 2015 as it defeated Tonganoxie in the third-place match.

The Lady Cats qualified for the state tournament for the fifth time in the last six years.

Opinion: Rough patch leads to new beginning



I am just going to come right out and say it, “I’m scared.”

Yeah, it is an unusual way to start out an opinion piece, but there is no two ways around it – I am petrified. But believe it or not, it is what keeps me going.

We have all had at least one point in our existence where our lives changed for better or worse. I have had more than a few of those in my life, but the latest one came on Jan. 9.

It started out like all the other Fridays over the last seven years. I reported to work, spent a few hours in the office getting ready for what was a busy weekend of prep coverage ahead. It was the first action after Christmas break and I was ready to get back into the swing of things.

That never took place.

My bosses came into my office early that afternoon to inform me I was being let go. The job of covering Louisburg athletics was no longer mine. I packed up my things, turned in my key, went home, punched the wall a couple times and cried.

I was scared.

After all the tears came the questions. How was I going to

support my family? What am I going to do for a job? The list went on and on and I couldn’t come up with many answers.

As it turned out, one of the worst experiences of my life turned into one of the best.

Thanks to a lot of prayers, and support from family and friends, I decided to start Louisburg Sports Zone. Yep, that’s right, I went from being unemployed to starting my own business for the first time in my life.

Not exactly the best way to alleviate fears.

However, when I kicked off the site just a month later, I was overwhelmed with the amount of support from students at Louisburg High School, employees throughout the district, parents and several others who offered encouragement and supported my new venture.

I finished the last half of the winter season and all of the spring doing what I took for granted the previous seven years. I got the chance to cover Louisburg athletics again.

You know, this whole starting your own business thing might not have been a bad idea after all. I would have never had the courage to go out on my own had I not been pushed in that direction.

Fast forward to the present and I am still alive and kicking, ready to start my eighth season of roaming the Wildcat sidelines with camera in hand, waiting to tell that next story.

This fall brings a lot of story lines to the Wildcat programs. The football team is looking to improve off its 3-win season a year ago and find its way back to the playoffs with a veteran group returning.

Volleyball is primed and ready to make its fourth consecutive state tournament this year after placing in the top four in

the last three years. The Lady Cats return five seniors that have a lot of state experience and that bodes well for another trip to Salina.

The Wildcat soccer team returns an experienced group from a year ago as they try to crack the top of the Frontier League standings. The cross country team also has several returning runners who will try and qualify for the state meet.

There is a lot to be excited about when it comes to Louisburg sports, but for me personally, I am just fortunate enough to still be a part of it in a small way.

I take a lot of pride in what I do and I hope that it shows when you read stories or look at pictures on this site. I started this business knowing that I will never be rich, but it gives me an opportunity to continue to do what I love.

Thanks to all those who have supported me and for the more than 23,000 views on the site in the last six months. I have said it before, but I am extremely blessed to live in a community that supports each other through good times and bad.

Every day I am fortunate enough to be able to go to work and support my family doing what I know how to do. That is all I have ever wanted, so thank you Louisburg for allowing me to do it.

I am still scared, though.

It is that fear that drives me to do the best I can in what I do in my job and in life. I don’t want what happened on that day in January to happen again and I will do everything to make sure it doesn’t.

Right now I am living the good life. I have the opportunity to work for myself, support my family and do what I enjoy. I can’t ask for any more.

I am living the American dream.

I just don’t want to wake up.

Five Wildcats earn all-league honors



Louisburg junior Cole Kramer was one of five Wildcats to be selected to the all-Frontier League team when it was released last week. Kramer was a first-team selection in the outfield.

The Louisburg baseball team put together quite a season as it doubled its win total from a season ago and the rest of the Frontier League took notice.

The Wildcats nearly doubled their all-league selections as well.

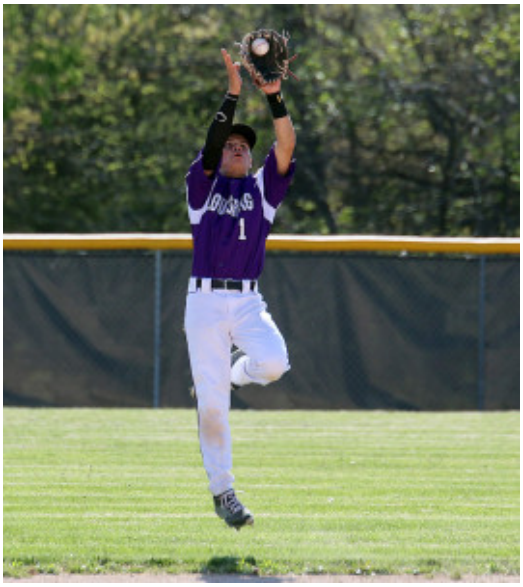
All-Frontier League teams were released last week and the Wildcats earned five spots, which was up from three last season.

Junior Cole Kramer (outfield) was selected to the first team. Senior Mitchell Caldwell and junior Colton Smith (infield) were named to the second team.

Junior Austin Henderson (infield) and senior Ethan Caldwell (outfield) were honorable mention selections.



Colton Smith: Second team all-league infield



Mitchell Caldwell: second team all-league infield

Kramer was one of the team’s best defensive options as he used his speed in centerfield to rob a lot of hits. He also added seven assists and had just one error.

As the team’s leadoff hitter, Kramer hit .394 on the season

and led the team with a .481 on-base percentage along with a .591 slugging percentage. He also had a team-high 15 RBIs, six doubles, two triples, a home run and 15 stolen bases.



Ethan Caldwell: honorable mention all-league outfield



Austin Henderson: honorable mention all-league infield

“Cole had a great year for us,” former Louisburg coach Jeff Lohse said. “The other league coaches saw that as well and rewarded him for it. He covers a lot of ground in the outfield and is always a threat on the base paths.”

Smith spent most of his time at third base for the Wildcats

and helped lead what was a strong infield with Mitchell Caldwell and Henderson. Smith finished the year with a .412 average to go along with five doubles, a triple and 13 RBIs.

Mitchell Caldwell, who played second base, was a strong No. 2 hitter for Louisburg as he hit .333 with seven doubles, 11 stolen bases and had a .432 on-base percentage to go along with just three errors.

Henderson manned first base for the Wildcats and had only three errors himself. He also batted .333 and had six doubles and 10 RBIs in the middle of the Louisburg batting order.

“Mitchell, Colton and Austin had great seasons as well for us,” Lohse said. “Due to injuries and other factors, Colton went from playing third base every other game to being our everyday guy. He ended up being very solid out there and had a great season at the plate.

“Mitchell and Austin anchored down the right side of our defense. Both of them are great with the glove and had good success with the bat as well.”

Ethan Caldwell was a part of a Wildcat outfield that committed just five errors all season. Caldwell also did some damage at the bottom of the Louisburg order with a .362 average, four doubles and 11 RBIs.

“Our outfield was very good at every spot this year and Ethan played a big role in that,” Lohse said. “He gets a good read off the bat and did a great job for us in right field. Ethan also provided us with some good offensive production from the bottom of our lineup.”

Lohse, who stepped down from his position as head coach following the end of this season, realizes this Wildcat team has a chance to be special in the near future.

“This program has a chance to be very, very good next year,”

Lohse said. “There are a lot of returning players who have played many innings at the varsity level. Some were recognized as all-league players, while there are others who were well deserving but just came up short this year. I look forward to watching them develop and to their success in the future.”

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE BASEBALL

FIRST TEAM

Catcher: Dayne Jung, Ottawa, senior

Utility/DH: Avery Boehm, Paola, senior

Pitcher: Sam Carver, Ottawa, senior; Ryker Johnson, Spring Hill, senior

Infield: Brock Randels, Baldwin, senior; Greyson Jenista, De Soto, senior; Tate Jung, Ottawa, senior; Ivan Hughes, Spring Hill, junior

Outfield: Kendall Freeman, De Soto, senior; Cole Kramer, Louisburg, junior; Jordan Henning, Spring Hill, senior

SECOND TEAM

Catcher: Garrett Kroutch, Spring Hill, senior

Utility/DH: Keegan Finch, Ottawa, sophomore

Pitcher: Nathan Mann, De Soto, senior; Aaron Foster, Eudora, junior; Hayden Yancey, Ottawa, senior

Infield: Collin Linder, Baldwin, senior; Colton Smith, Louisburg, junior; Mitchell Caldwell, Louisburg, senior; Nick Sloan, Paola, senior

Outfield: Ben Brungardt, Baldwin, senior; Cooper Lee, De Soto,

junior; Blaine Ray, Ottawa, sophomore

HONORABLE MENTION

Catcher: Tyler Davidson, Baldwin, senior; Brenton Michalek, De Soto, senior; Jared Fry, Eudora, junior

Utility/DH: Jackson Barth, Baldwin, junior; Donovan Sutti, Paola, sophomore; Charles Elam, Spring Hill, senior; Josh White, Eudora, senior

Pitcher: Ben Brungardt, Baldwin, senior; Garon Johnson, Paola, junior

Infield: Austin Henderson, Louisburg, junior; Connor Stepp, Ottawa, senior; Brayden Pearce, Paola, senior

Outfield: Devon Freeman, De Soto, senior; Ethan Caldwell, Louisburg, senior; Hayden Yancey, Ottawa, senior; Blain Ohlmeier, Paola, junior; Mason McDow, Paola, junior; Michael Londene, Spring Hill, senior

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Opinion: Lohse left lasting legacy



Louisburg coach Jeff Lohse spent 17 years as the Wildcat

baseball coach, but he was more than a coach to several involved with the program.

When you do something for as long as Jeff Lohse has, you tend to get a little sentimental, especially when you know it is coming to an end.

For the last five months, Lohse has known that his time left as Louisburg baseball coach was told in days and not years. When he took the field in Paola to start the season, Lohse knew it was going to be his last season opener.

On senior night against Ottawa, he knew this was his last senior class. When the Wildcats lost to Spring Hill in the regional semifinals, he knew he was going to have to say goodbye.

He was going to have to say farewell to more than just his team, but to the sport he loves and the program he spent 21 years of his life with.

It is a way of life that was tough for him to leave behind. No matter how difficult it will be in the future, the decision was ultimately an easy one.

Lohse couldn’t turn his back on the people he cares about the most – his family. His love for his children and to watch them grow up outweighs his passion for the game he played since he was a 5-year-old.

“It is time to stop coaching and just be a dad,” Lohse said.

A lot of us have wrestled with similar decisions in our lives. I know I have, and still do. You only get to watch your kids grow up once and I have nothing but respect for a person who puts his family before himself.

But Lohse was more than just a baseball coach to this community and his players – he was someone kids could look up to and try to emulate. He was a coach who loved his players and wanted to see them succeed the way he did when he was in their shoes back in his days as a Wildcat player.

Very rarely do you see a standout athlete in high school, who had success in college, come back and raise his family in his hometown and coach at his alma mater. For 17 years, Lohse gave back to the school and to the community he grew up in.

He was patient with his players and treated them with respect. You could tell there was a mutual respect on both sides every time I was in the dugout.

I never saw a player roll his eyes or talk back to him. They always listened to what he had to say and they tried to get better.

“I appreciated his organization of his program and his leadership as the head coach,” Louisburg High School activities director Darin Gagnebin said. “He always treated his players with respect and taught them how to be good young men. Jeff will be missed as a part of the Wildcat baseball team.”

For me personally – it was a depressing day when I found out Lohse was stepping down.

My first full season of covering sports in Louisburg was in the spring of 2008 and the first sport I covered was Louisburg baseball. Coach Lohse was kind enough to let me into the dugout, take pictures and he didn’t know that much about me.

Since then I have always looked forward to baseball season for the time I get to spend in the Wildcat dugout and have gotten to know a few of his mannerisms. For those former players and coaches who have heard or seen these before, you know what I am talking about.

After a good inning, he could often be heard saying “Thatta baby!” Or maybe something like “89…lets go,” referring to the spot in the batting order coming up.

“Tough with two,” he said when he wanted his pitchers to bear down and get that third out.

“Diving bodies, save a run,” he yelled with a runner on second with two outs.

Assistant coach Jarrod Worthington had his favorite.

“After every win, he’d always shake hands with assistant coaches right away,” Worthington said. “Those never got old.”

Maybe my favorite of all time is when a hitter has two strikes and a Wildcat hurler pounded the zone for an apparent third strike. Lohse could often be seen coming out of the dugout clapping his hands ready to congratulate his team on a good inning and trying to sell a call at the same time.

Sometimes it worked.

Other times he would come out of the dugout clapping, only for the ump to call a ball and Lohse would have to do a quick about face back into the dugout yelling “Looked good!”

Those are the types of things I will remember and it was a privilege to be able to cover his teams.

Since he was a 5-year-old boy, Lohse has always put on a jersey come baseball season. For two years in high school and his 17 years as coach, he put on the No. 12 every spring – it was almost like clockwork.

“It will be weird not wearing that uniform,” Lohse said. “I have done it as long as I can remember.”

Long enough to create a lot of great memories. Thanks for everything “Lohs.”

Lohse resigns LHS baseball post



Jeff Lohse speaks with his team before their regional semifinal game on May 18 in Spring Hill. Following the game, Lohse told his team that he had resigned after 17 years as the Wildcat head coach.

For the last 17 years, the end of the baseball season always found Jeff Lohse on a bus heading back to Louisburg.

Whether it was after a state tournament, or a regional championship game, it was always a difficult ride back home. However, No. 17 was the most excruciating of all.

When the Wildcats returned home on May 18, Lohse informed his team that he would not be returning for an 18th season as the Louisburg head coach after he officially resigned to Louisburg High School administration days earlier.

“I was dreading that day to be honest,” Lohse said. “The whole bus ride back from Spring Hill I just had an ache in my stomach and as we got closer to Louisburg it just kept getting worse. Telling them was very tough and a lot harder than I

anticipated. I don’t know if they were in disbelief or what, but it was a pretty quiet and somber locker room and it was very emotional.”

It was an emotional decision that had been on Lohse’s mind for the last year. He made up his mind in January but didn’t want anyone to know before the season started and he didn’t want any distractions.

The reason for the decision was simple – he wanted to spend more time with his family – including his two children Trevin and McKenna.

“It was a tough decision and one that I have thought about for a while,” Lohse said. “It wasn’t one of those decisions where I thought about it overnight and then snap, this is what I am going to do. I really put some serious thought into it. I pretty much made up my mind in January, but I didn’t want people to know.

“The overall decision was basically because I needed to be there for my kids more. Trevin and McKenna are getting involved in more activities and I need to be there for them and enjoy it.”

Not that he didn’t enjoy his job. Louisburg baseball has been a big part of Lohse’s life.

Lohse played on the varsity level for four years while in Louisburg High School, before returning to his alma mater to coach for 17 years following college. He is also a member of the LHS Athletic Hall of Fame.

It is that dedication to the program that will make Lohse difficult to replace.

“I would like to thank coach Lohse for his dedication to the LHS baseball program,” Louisburg High School activities director Darin Gagnebin said. “To be a head coach at one place

for 17 years says a lot about Jeff not only as a coach but as a person. He is a home grown Louisburg kid, who had opportunities to go elsewhere and chose to come back and make Louisburg his home, to raise his family here and to give back to his community by not only coaching, but teaching as well."

Lohse kept Louisburg baseball relevant as he took the Wildcats to two state tournament appearances and finished his time as the Wildcats skipper with a 184-163 record. His 17 years made him the Frontier League's longest tenured head coach.

"I just want to thank my current and former players and all my assistant coaches for being there for me and for the administration for always being so supportive," Lohse said. "This is my decision and I always knew that if I was going to get out that I was going to do it on my own terms and I didn't want someone telling me that it was my time to leave."

Lohse made several memories during his time at Louisburg, whether it was taking a team to the state tournament his first season, finishing a regional championship game at Lewis-Young Park against Fort Scott at 1 a.m., beating the top three seeds to go to state in 2009 or this year's team that doubled its win total from a season ago.

"These group of kids this year were great to go from five to 10 wins was a great accomplishment," Lohse said. "There have been a lot more positive memories than negative ones."

Lohse's fondest moment might be the way his teams took the field and represented themselves.

"Something I am proud about is that we as coaches taught the kids to play the game the right way," Lohse said. "I think we accomplished that for the most part and that our players respected the game."

Wildcats improve despite regional loss



Louisburg senior Mitchell Caldwell slides into home Monday during the Class 4A regional semifinal game at Spring Hill High School. The Wildcats fell to Spring Hill 9-6 to end their season with an 10-11 record.

SPRING HILL – The Louisburg baseball team had Spring Hill right where it wanted.

The Wildcats had just taken a two-run lead Monday in the semifinals of the Class 4A regional tournament at Spring Hill High School and witnessed one of Spring Hill's starters get ejected. Louisburg had all the momentum on its side.

In the sixth inning, however, everything changed.

The Broncos scored five runs in the top of the inning, and despite a late rally by the Louisburg, the Wildcats saw their season come to an end with a 9-6 loss in a back-and-forth affair.

"I think if we go out and get a quick three outs in the sixth that the outcome probably would have been different," Louisburg coach Jeff Lohse said. "We all feel that we let one

get away from us. We were sitting pretty good up 6-4 going into the sixth, but just didn't get the job done."

Despite the loss, the Wildcats still put together a strong season. Louisburg finished the season with 10 wins – doubling its season total from a year ago.

Louisburg ended the year with a 10-11 record and had several highs on the year, including a sweep of then-ranked De Soto.

"Going from a five-win season last year to a 10-win season this year was huge," Lohse said. "I still feel that we left three to four more wins out there, but that is the nature of the game. I am very proud of our team and how they represented themselves, their families and our program."



Grant Harding dives back to first base Monday during Louisburg's regional semifinal game against Spring Hill.

Louisburg, the No. 2 seed, trailed early as No. 3 Spring Hill scored two in the top of the first inning but the Wildcats answered right back. Grant Harding singled home Cole Kramer and Lucas Smith got an RBI on a sacrifice fly to score Austin Henderson to tie it. Smith then came around to score on a Spring Hill error to take a 3-2 lead.

The Broncos scored two runs in the top of the third, but the Wildcats tied it with a run in the third when Colton Smith singled home Harding. Louisburg added two more in the bottom of the fifth.

Colton Smith and Lucas Smith hit back-to-back doubles that scored Colton and then Lucas scored on a sacrifice fly from Alex Dunn.

Pitching became a problem in the sixth inning for Louisburg as it issued four walks in the inning and committed three errors that led to five runs for the Broncos as they took a 9-6 lead.

Louisburg put together one last rally in the bottom of the seventh. Harding reached on an error to lead off the inning and then Lucas Smith and Dunn both walked to load the bases with just one out.

Spring Hill held on as it got a strikeout and coaxed a fly ball to end the Wildcats' season.

"I didn't feel we were out of it being down three going into the bottom of the seventh," Lohse said. "We gave ourselves a chance getting the bases loaded and one out. Giving up a big inning has been our nemesis all year. It was very unfortunate to have that happen in a big regional game."

Sophomore pitcher Dalton Stone kept the Wildcats in it as he allowed just two earned runs in five innings to go along with six strikeouts. Sam Guetterman entered the sixth inning but gave up a hit and walked three. Kramer came in and pitched the final two innings of the game to help limit the damage.

"Dalton did a fantastic job for us," Lohse said. "He has really matured on the mound and has a very bright future ahead of him. His pitch count was getting up there otherwise we would have let him go six. I have all the confidence in the world in Sam Guetterman and I wouldn't hesitate to make the same move again."

Wildcats split with Spring Hill



Louisburg's Colton Smith slides safely into third base during Monday's doubleheader with Spring Hill at Spring Hill High School. The Wildcats won the nightcap 3-2 after losing the opener 7-4.

SPRING HILL – It may have been just one win, but it sent the Louisburg baseball team heading in the right direction for its most important part of the season.

The Wildcats salvaged a doubleheader with the Broncos on Monday at Spring Hill High School. Louisburg held on for a 3-2 win in the nightcap that also brought its record to 10-10 on the season after losing the opener 7-4.

The win gave Louisburg a little momentum heading into the Class 4A-Division I regional tournament this coming Monday, where they will return to play the same team at the same place. The Wildcats earned the No. 2 seed and will play No. 3 Spring Hill (9-9) at 4 p.m. in Spring Hill.

No. 1 Paola (12-7) and No. 4 Bishop Miege (8-11) will open the

tournament at 2 p.m.

“The guys are ready to go back to Spring Hill and try to win a regional championship,” Louisburg coach Jeff Lohse said. “It just so happens that we play them again, but our focus is to go over there and play good baseball while giving ourselves a chance to be successful.

“Winning game two was huge from a momentum standpoint. Our guys are feeling pretty good and ready to go compete on Monday.”

Sophomore starting pitcher Sam Guetterman provided a consistent presence on the mound as he held the Spring Hill offense in check for most of the nightcap. Guetterman pitched six innings and gave up just one earned run on four hits and struck out three.

The Wildcat offense jumped out to a 3-0 lead early to give Guetterman a little cushion to work with as he gave up single runs in the first and third inning.

“Sam has done an outstanding job this year for us,” Lohse said. “We can always count on him to compete and throw strikes.”

Louisburg got those three runs in the first when Cole Kramer led off with a walk, Austin Henderson singled and both came around to score following singles from Colton Smith and Lucas Smith. The Wildcat offense went quiet after that as they had just one hit in the final six innings.

In the seventh, Kramer came in to close the game out. After giving up a leadoff walk, Kramer got an out on a sacrifice bunt and then recorded two fly outs to secure the save.

“Cole has accepted the closer role,” Lohse said. “He is a kid who can come in at any time and in any situation and feel comfortable. He has been in a couple difficult spots (De Soto

and Spring Hill) and was able to secure the win for us.”

Walks hurt Louisburg in the opener as it issued 10 free passes to Spring Hill that led to three runs in the first two innings for the Broncos. Louisburg held a 4-3 lead into the fifth inning, but the Wildcats walked five batters in the fifth and sixth, and those eventually led to four runs and a victory for Spring Hill.

“You can’t give good baseball teams free passes,” Lohse said. “We are pretty good when we make the other team put the ball in play to beat us.”

Louisburg tied the game at 1-all in the second inning when Colton Smith led off with a double and scored on a Lucas Smith single.

Down 3-1 in the fourth inning, the Wildcats took the lead with three runs in the frame. Colton and Lucas Smith started the inning with singles and Colton scored on a sacrifice fly from Alex Dunn.

Blake Ruder followed with a walk and later came around to score with Lucas on a Spring Hill error.

Lucas and Colton led the Louisburg offense with two hits apiece and Grant Harding added a double in the loss.

Cats fall to Mother Nature, Ottawa on senior night



Louisburg catcher Alex Dunn attempts to tag out an Ottawa run during the Wildcats's doubleheader Thursday at Lewis-Young Park. Louisburg fell to the Cyclones 9-2 and 2-0.

Louisburg's doubleheader with Ottawa couldn't have been bigger as far as the Frontier League standings were concerned.

The Wildcats were tied with Paola for second place going in and Ottawa was just a game ahead in first. A sweep, or even a split, would keep them in contention going into the final game of the season.

Thanks to Mother Nature it took more than two days to finish the doubleheader, and like Mother Nature, Ottawa put a damper on Louisburg's chances of a title. The Cyclones swept Louisburg 9-2 and 2-0 on Thursday at Lewis-Young Park.

The doubleheader originally started Tuesday, but due to inclement weather, Ottawa took an 8-2 lead into the sixth inning on Thursday and completed the sweep.

"I thought we competed for the most part," Louisburg coach Jeff Lohse said. "Ottawa is a good team and we were really a play away or a hit away from making game one a lot closer that what it was.

"I would like to see our base on balls go down from a pitching standpoint. We are pretty good when we make the other teams put the ball in play. Walks, especially lead-off, eventually

come back to haunt you.”

In between games, the Wildcats honored seniors Mitchell Caldwell, Lucas Smith and Ethan Caldwell as the three played their final game at Lewis-Young Park.

All three have played vital roles this season as Mitchell has served as the team’s starting second baseman, Ethan as the team’s starting right fielder and Lucas came into the season as the Wildcats’ No. 1 pitcher.

“All three guys have played a very big role in our program,” Lohse said. “They work hard and play the game the right way. We wish them nothing but the best in the future.”

Walks did hurt the Wildcats (9-9) in the first game as they issued eight free passes. Leadoff walks in the fifth and sixth innings turned into three runs for Ottawa.

The Wildcats actually jumped out to the early lead. Cole Kramer was hit by a pitch to lead the first inning off, stole second and later scored on an RBI single from Austin Henderson.



Louisburg’s (from left) Mitchell Caldwell, Lucas Smith and Ethan Caldwell were honored during senior night Thursday at Lewis-Young Park.

It didn’t last long as Ottawa scored two runs in the second and four more in the fourth to take a 6-1 lead. Louisburg did get a run back in the fourth when Henderson doubled and later scored on an RBI single from Colton Smith.

Smith and Henderson accounted for four of the five hits in the opener as Louisburg struggled to get much going offensively.

Sophomore Dalton Stone kept Louisburg in the game in the nightcap. He pitched five innings and gave up just two runs on two hits, but Mother Nature intervened one more time on Thursday and cut the game short as it was called after five innings.

Singles from Smith and Grant Harding were the lone hits from Louisburg, however, the Wildcats hit the ball hard on several occasions – they were just right at the Ottawa defense.

Ottawa scored two runs in the third inning and it was all it needed to get the sweep.

“Dalton has thrown very well in his last three outings,” Lohse said. “He is starting to figure things out a little bit. We were able to put the ball in play, but most of the time it was right at them.

“Ottawa’s centerfielder ran down a couple of balls that would have normally been in the gap. We still had way too many fly ball outs, but at least we are putting it in play and making the defense work.”

Louisburg will play its final regular season game of the year today when it travels to Spring Hill for a doubleheader. First pitch is set for 4:30 p.m.