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.”

Rutherford looking forward to joining Rockhurst baseball program



Louisburg senior Meade Rutherford signed his letter of intent last November to join the Rockhurst University baseball program.

Baseball has been a part of Meade Rutherford's life for as long as he can remember and he isn't ready for it to be over any time soon.

The Louisburg High School senior has always wanted to play in college and it was all about finding the right fit.

Rutherford found it in Rockhurst University as he officially signed his letter of intent last November to join the Division II program.

"It meant the world to me knowing that all the hard work and effort put in by me, my parents, and my coaches payed off," Rutherford said. "Playing college baseball was my No. 1 goal and I'm glad I could meet it."

Rutherford, who was an honorable mention All-Frontier League player last season as a junior, helped the Wildcats both on the mound and in the field. It is that aspect that was important to him as he moved onto the college stage.

Rockhurst is providing him the opportunity to do both and it was one of the many reasons why he decided to join the Hawks program.

“Rockhurst is the perfect school because it checks off a lot of boxes,” Rutherford said. “It’s close to home, it has a nice campus, and has reputable baseball program.

“Rockhurst is giving me a 2-way opportunity, which is exactly what I was looking for in a home. I’m going to work as hard as I can to earn a spot on the field as soon as possible whether that’s pitching, or hitting/outfield.”



Louisburg senior Meade Rutherford signed his letter of intent with Rockhurst baseball. Seated next to Meade are his parents

Breck and Shane. Standing (from left) is his brother Madden and sister Malee.

The history of the program was also something that stuck out to Rutherford as he will play under coach Gary Burns, who has been at the school for 30 years, and has guided the Hawks to 16 postseason appearances.

“I’ve enjoyed getting to know the coaches at Rockhurst,” Rutherford said. “Coach Burns has led the program for 30 years now and I’m excited to learn a lot. The team had quite the gain in wins last year and I’m looking forward to contributing to that success.”

Rutherford and the Wildcats had a lot of success of their own last season as they won the program’s first regional title in 15 years and earned a spot at the state tournament.

He played a big part in that role as he was the team’s No. 2 starter as Rutherford earned the win in the regional championship game against Wamego. He, and the rest of the Wildcats, are hoping for even more success in his final season.

“Louisburg had a historical season last year, and it was awesome to be apart of it,” Rutherford said. “I think that with the coaches and players we have, we could make another deep run this year.

“I’ve played baseball my whole life. The journey has been unforgettable with the traveling, the memories, the teammates, and the coaches. It also included overcoming adversity, which is what baseball is all about.”

Top 10 Louisburg Sports Stories of 2024



It was a successful, and eventful, year for Louisburg High School athletics and for those who are connected to the Wildcat program.

This past year created a lot of school history for LHS and a few programs made their way to state competition.

Below are the top stories from 2024, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the writeup is the link to the actual story from the event.

When putting the list together, I took a lot of things into account – whether it was team vs. individual, popularity of the sport, historical achievements and the interest it drew on the web site.

This year was a blast to cover and I am looking forward to seeing what 2025 will bring. Thank you to everyone for their support and can’t wait for it all to begin again.



Jordan Roquemore was hired as the new head coach of the Louisburg girls soccer program after serving four years as an assistant.

10. Coaching Changes: Willer steps down from LHS volleyball, Roquemore takes over girls soccer

Louisburg volleyball and girls soccer saw some big changes in their respective programs.

Over the summer, Jordan Roquemore was hired as the head coach

for the Wildcat girls soccer program after spending several years as an assistant.

He became the third head coach in the history of Louisburg girls soccer. He replaced former coach Ben York, who coached the Wildcats the last two seasons.

“I feel tremendously honored to take over as head coach,” Roquemore said. “It’s an amazing opportunity to take over an exceptional program with a great group of athletes, supportive parents and invested community members. I don’t take the responsibility lightly, but I am also really excited.”



Louisburg volleyball coach Leanna Willer is stepping down from her post after serving as head coach for the last four seasons.

On the volleyball side, head coach Leanna Willer submitted her resignation in early December.

Willer has spent eight seasons with the Wildcat program,

including the last four as head coach. She accepted a new position as head coach at Olathe East.

“This decision is bittersweet, but deep down I know that this is the best decision for me and my life,” Willer said in an email to parents. “The team will move on, and I feel lucky that I could play a small part in the long-standing traditions of the program. To the alumni and class of 2024, I thank you for your commitment to this team and to this program, and for making my time at Louisburg unforgettable. To our younger players, I am sorry for not seeing your journeys all the way through, but please know that you have my unwavering support and I cannot wait to see what you all can accomplish with the time you have left as Louisburg Wildcats.”



Louisburg junior Sabra Brueggen swims the backstroke during the prelims of the Class 5-1A state meet in Lenexa.

9. Brueggen wins state swim medal

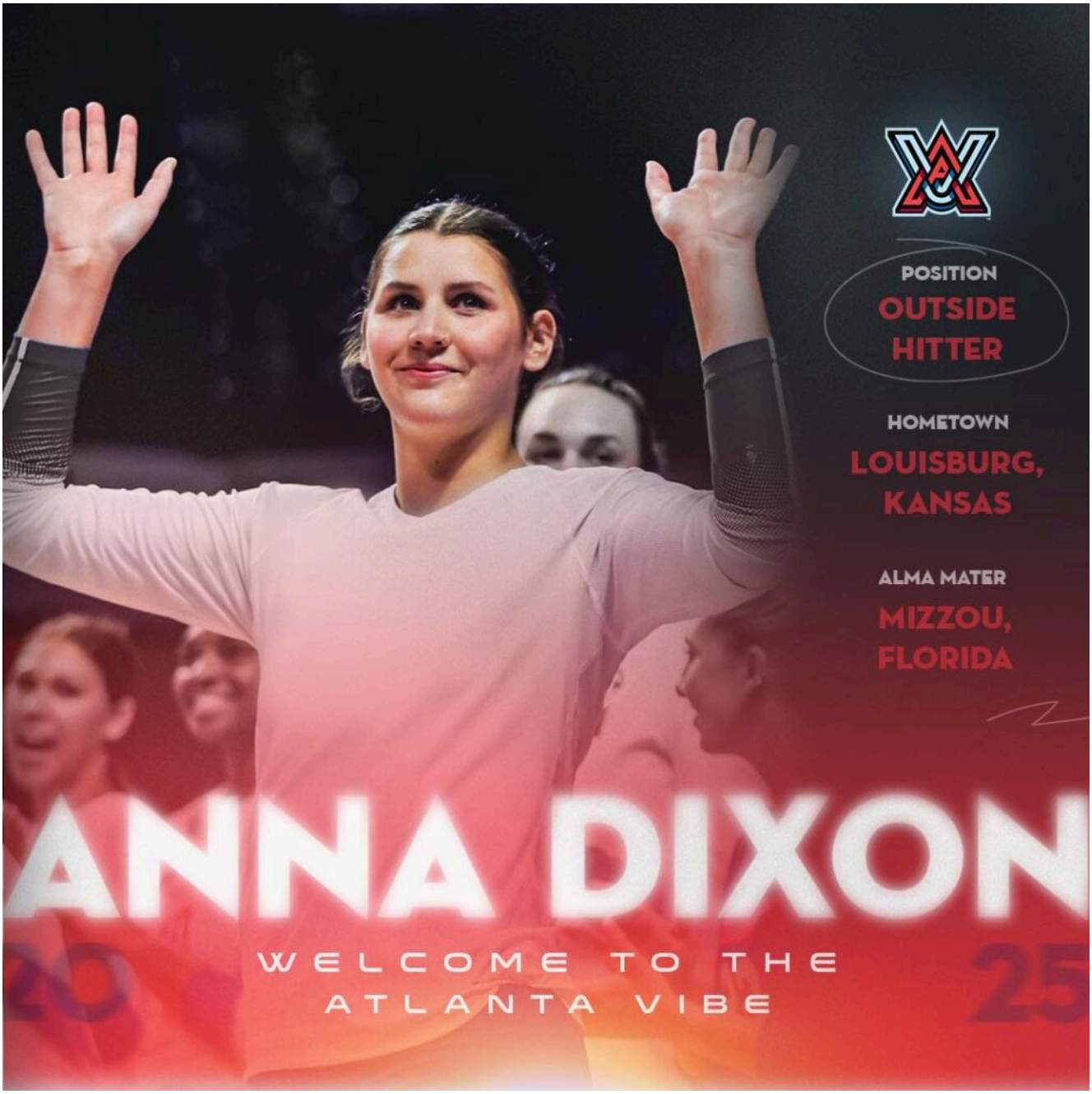
For the third straight season, Sabra Brueggen left the Class 5-1A state swim meet with some hardware.

The Louisburg junior showed why she is among the state’s best as she earned a fourth place medal in the 200-yard individual medley – her first ever state medal in that event – Saturday at the Shawnee Mission Aquatic Center.

The 2-day meet provided a lot of ups, and some downs, for the Louisburg swim program, but for Brueggen it was nice to return to the medal stand.

“I was very happy and content with my 200 IM swims last weekend,” Brueggen said. “Not only did I set a new personal best time, but I also walked away with fourth place in an event that is not one of my primaries.”

Janie Harth, Ella Bockelman and Cadence Weichert also joined Brueggen at the state meet as they qualified for the consolation finals in the 200 medley relay 400 freestyle relay.



8. Dixon achieves pro volleyball dream

It was setting up to be an epic finish to Anna Dixon’s collegiate volleyball career.

Dixon, as a graduate transfer, made the move to the University of Florida for her final season and quickly made an impact on the Gators’ roster.

Despite have to learn a new position due to an injury on the team, Dixon seemed to flourish. She helped the Gators out to a quick start and everything was going according to plan.

Then, the unthinkable happened.

Dixon suffered a season-ending elbow injury that put a premature end to her collegiate career. It was a devastating blow.

However, instead of sulking, Dixon worked that much harder to get back to the court and achieve her ultimate goal – playing professional volleyball.

All that hard work finally came to fruition back in July when Dixon, a 2019 Louisburg High School graduate, signed with the Atlanta Vibe, which is a part of the Pro Volleyball Federation.

“I am super excited to compete at the highest level, but also to be able to do that here in the US,” Dixon said. “It has been a dream of mine to be able to play professionally, in front of club girls who are in the same shoes that I was in many years ago. I am excited to give them the opportunity to have something to look forward to and work toward. Blessed for the opportunity and ready to get to work.”



Members of the Louisburg cheer team are: (Front row) Anna Brizendine, Addison Vargo, Reece Jones; (middle row) Leia Ward, Lilly Burnett, Taryn Osborn, Elle Keating, Brooklyn Roney, Harper Boyle, Kelsey Shelton, Kim Powls, Gretchen Reitz, Kinsley Rayne; (back row) Will Leach, Kayleigh Ramsey (Laney Stohs, Reece Younggren, Reese Anderson, Greta Gatzka, Addison Bishop, Maggie Wanjigi

7. Cheer takes third at state

TOPEKA – The Louisburg High School cheerleading squad is no stranger to the finals of the Class 4A Game Day competition.

Heading into the Nov. 23 showcase in Topeka, the Wildcats have made the final round in each of the last five seasons. Louisburg had no problem making it a sixth straight, and for the fifth time in six years, they came home with a state plaque.

Louisburg finished third in the state competition as it edged out Baldwin for the top three spot in Class 4A.

“Bringing home another trophy from the Game Day Cheer competition was a testament to our team’s hard work, dedication, and growth throughout the season,” Louisburg cheer coach Breanna Kostroske said. “It means so much to us because it reflects their skill, their heart, and spirit—three things we emphasize daily. For our athletes, it symbolizes their resilience and the countless hours they’ve spent perfecting their routines.

“As coaches, we are incredibly proud of their overall performance. They left it all on the floor, and while there is always room for improvement, they gave a performance that showcased their teamwork, precision, and energy.”



Louisburg junior Ashton Moore took fourth overall at 190

pounds at the Class 4A state wrestling tournament in February.

6. Moore medals at state wrestling

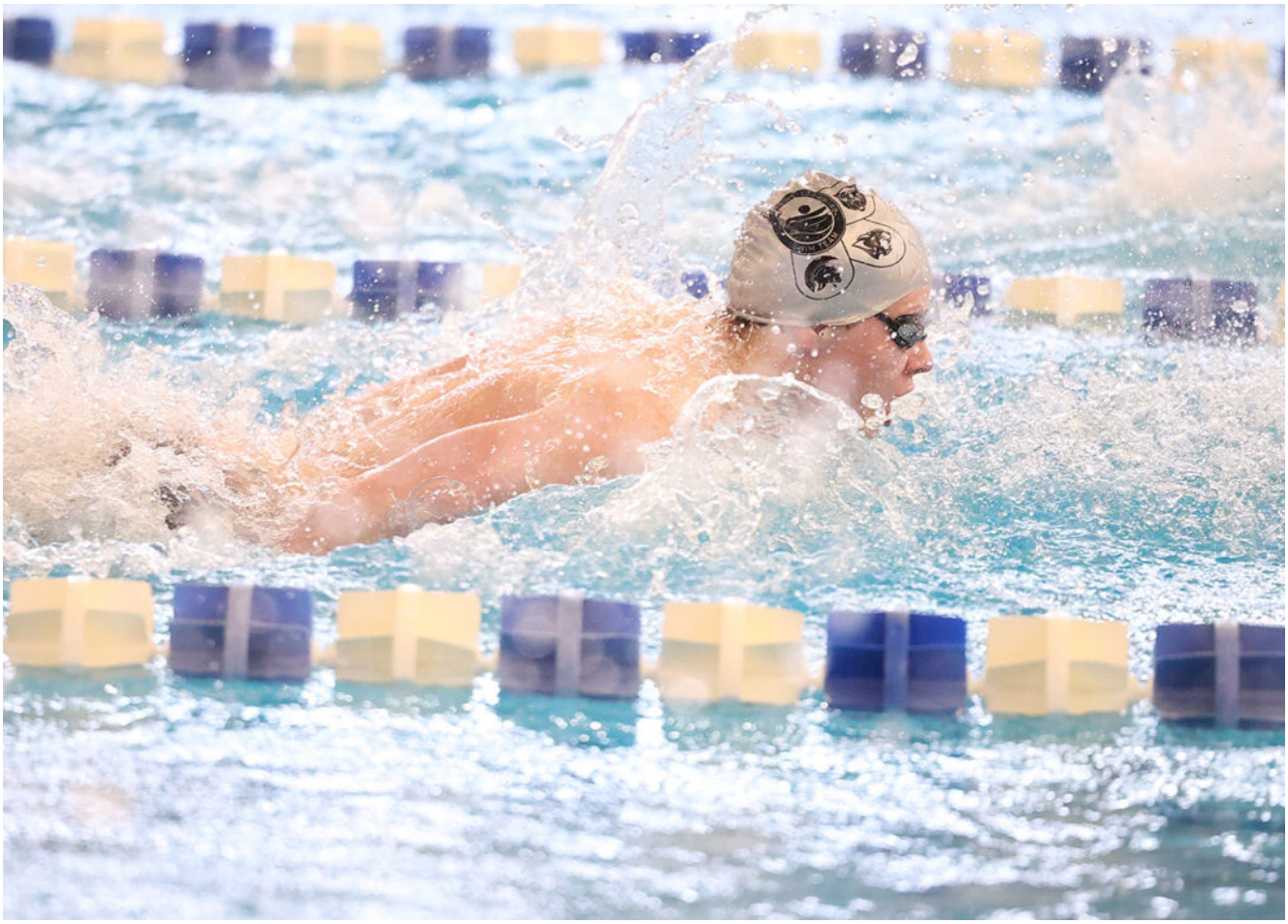
SALINA – Louisburg has been no stranger to the medal stand at the Class 4A state wrestling tournament and it was the case again back in February in Salina.

Louisburg junior Ashton Moore reached the semifinals at 190 pounds on the first day to secure himself a medal, and then finished fourth overall on the tournament's final day.

Moore had several close matches throughout the 3-day tournament at the Tony's Pizza Events Center and was challenged each day.

"I thought I wrestled some of my best matches of the season and it felt great to have it pay off with a medal," Moore said. "It felt amazing to win those first two matches and know I was guaranteed my medal. Those wins really helped me gain a lot of confidence going forward in the tournament."

Five other Wildcats made the trip to state, but faced some tough matchups. Juniors Canaan Clayton (113 pounds), Will Showalter (120), Logan Henry (132), Jay McCaskill (157) and senior Traden Noll (150) each finished 0-2 on the first day.



Louisburg sophomore Colin Brown earned medals in the 100 butterfly and 100 backstroke during the Class 5-1A state meet in Topeka.

5. Wildcat boys swim makes history earning 5 medals at state

TOPEKA – The Louisburg boys swim program is still relatively new compared to other teams around the state, but the Wildcats made its presence felt back in February at the Class 5-1A state meet in Topeka.

Louisburg had its best postseason finish in its young history as the Wildcats finished eighth overall in the team standings with 104 points thanks in part to just four swimmers.

Two of those athletes – Colin Brown and Andrew Jamison – each brought home individual medals. Brown, Jamison, Colton Prettyman and Noah Sharp also medaled in the 200-yard medley

relay.

Brown hit the pool strong as the Wildcat sophomore medaled fourth in the 100-yard butterfly and later finished fifth in the 100 backstroke with personal best times.

Jamison, another sophomore, earned two medals of his own. He finished fifth in the 200 individual medley and later took sixth in the 100 breaststroke.

Prettyman reached the consolation finals in the 50 freestyle and took 13th overall with a personal best time.



Louisburg senior Myles Vohs makes a leaping catch in the fourth quarter of Friday's game against Bishop Miege.

4. Wildcat football nearly pulls upset of Miege as successful season comes to early close

The mountain of playing Bishop Miege is always a tough one for public schools to climb, especially when it comes to football.

Miege, which has won seven state titles in the last 10 years, has never lost to a non-private school in the playoffs during that decade long of dominance.

Louisburg wanted to be the first team to hand it that loss as the No. 2 seed Wildcats hosted the No. 15 Stags in the first round of the Class 4A state playoffs.

The Wildcats were so close to that mountaintop, but came up just short as they fell to Miege, 21-14, to end their season with a 7-2 record.

Louisburg was behind 14 points, only to rally and tie the game at halftime. The Wildcats had one final drive to try and tie it again late, but a Miege interception dashed the Wildcats' hopes of an upset.

"In this moment, the only word I can come up right now is proud," Louisburg coach Drew Harding said. "I am so proud of the team. Our biggest emphasis was we had to start fast and we didn't. They got out to a 14-0 lead, and most times when you play teams like Miege that can snowball and get out of hand quick. Those guys just battled and were able to tie it up at halftime. Then for us to continue to fight and have a chance to tie it at the end – proud is all I can say about them."

The Wildcats ended their season with back-to-back losses after they won their first seven games of the season. They were in line to win their third straight league title, but lost a close game the week before to Spring Hill that also bumped

them off their No. 1 seed line, forcing a matchup with Miege in the first round.

Miege's streak of state titles came to an end later in the season as the Stags fell to Andover Central in the state championship game.



(Photo courtesy of Minna Meyer)
The Louisburg girls soccer team hoists the regional championship plaque following their 2-0 win against Maranatha Academy.

3. Wildcat girls soccer wins regional championship

For the last two seasons, the Louisburg girls soccer team has seen heartbreak in the Class 4-1A regional championship.

Losses to Topeka-Hayden and Bishop Miege have prevented the Wildcats from that regional title, with their last coming in

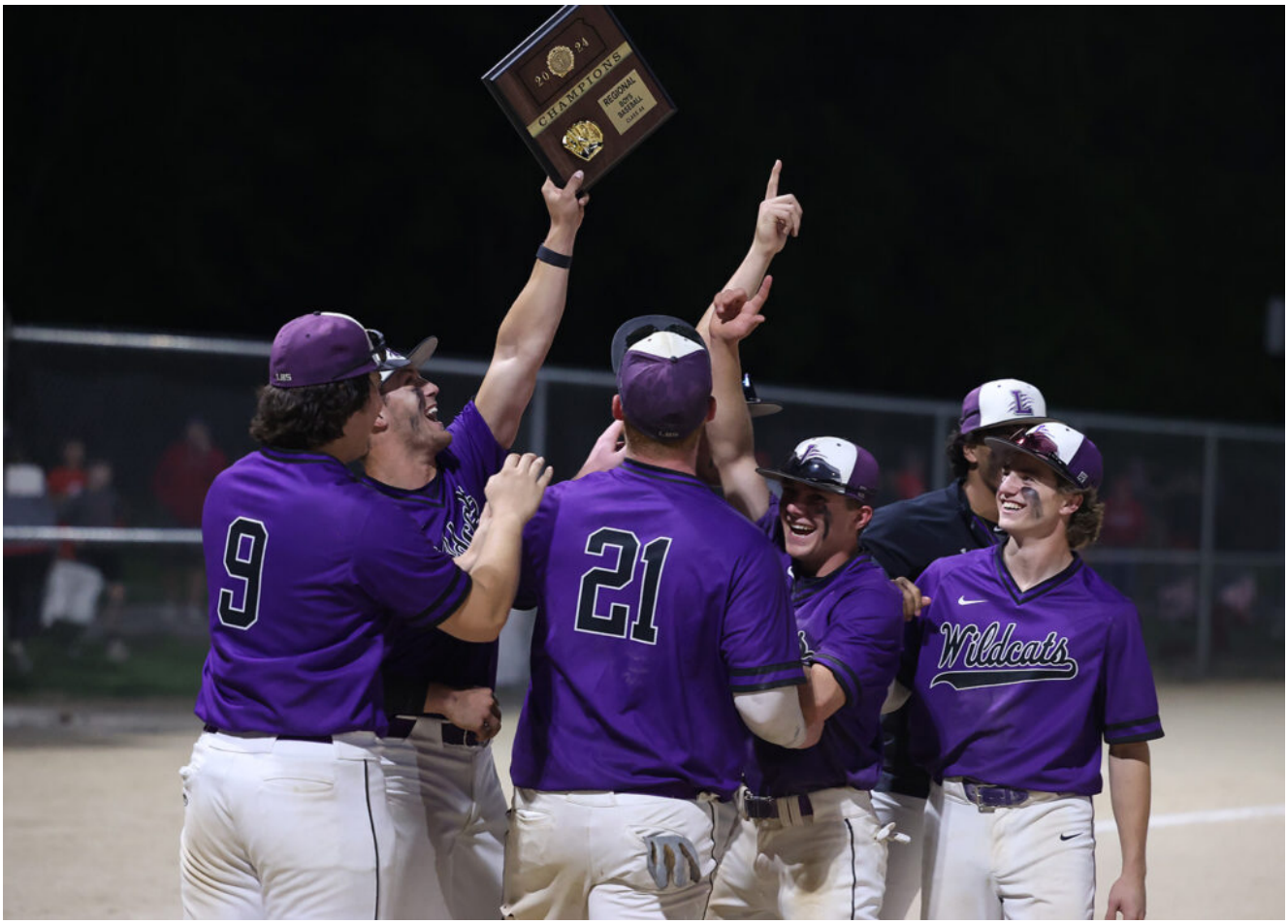
2021.

It is elusive no more.

The No. 1 seed Wildcats shutout No. 8 Maranatha Academy, 2-0, to win the Class 4-1A regional title at Wildcat Stadium. It was a dominating effort from start to finish as the Wildcats improved their record to 13-4-1 on the season.

“This was a preseason goal of ours,” Louisburg coach Ben York said. “We fell short last year and we wanted to do as much as we could in the regular season to control our own destiny. The girls put a lot of work in and were focused to get to this game and get a win. They definitely earned this one and it was good to see them enjoy it.”

Louisburg faced a tough matchup in the state quarterfinals as the Wildcats lost to Bishop Miege at home, 7-0.



Louisburg senior Declan Battle hoists the regional championship trophy following the Wildcats’ 10-3 win over

Wamego in Class 4A regional championship game.

2. Wildcat baseball earns first regional title in 15 years

The current members of the Louisburg baseball team couldn’t remember the last time the Wildcats made the state tournament even if they tried.

That’s because they were just wee toddlers the last time the Wildcats earned a spot a state – 2009 to be exact.

These players are going to have a hard time forgetting this one.

For the first time in 15 years, Louisburg is headed back to the state tournament after the Wildcats put together a convincing 10-3 victory over Wamego in the Class 4A regional championship back in May at Lewis-Young Park.

The Wildcats also defeated Parsons, 8-0, in the regional semifinal to put together what was a dominating performance from top to bottom.

“This is just amazing,” Louisburg coach Kade Larson said. “To see how much work these guys have put in, then to come out and get the job done, it is pretty surreal. We had a bunch of guys step up and do exactly what they needed to do. They played great defense, pitched great and everyone in the dug out was into the game. It was a great win.

“It has been awhile and it has been a long time coming. We have had some great teams and this team finally pushed through and got it done.”

In the state tournament, the Wildcats had to battle rival Paola in the first round, but lost in a pitcher’s dual to the Panthers, 3-0.



Louisburg senior Maddy Carpenter-Ross celebrates after clearing 12 feet at the Class 4A state meet in Wichita. That clearance gave Carpenter-Ross her second straight state championship in the event.

1. Wildcat sweep pole vault state titles, medal 8 at state

WICHITA – Cooper Wingfield and Maddy Carpenter-Ross found their way atop the medal stand last May at the Class 4A state track meet.

All season, Carpenter-Ross had her eyes set on a second straight state title in the pole vault and she dominated her competition.

Going into the Class 4A state meet at Wichita State, Carpenter-Ross won every competition going away and was ready to do the same against some of the state's best.

This time, however, it was much harder.

To get this state title, Carpenter-Ross was going to have to have to set a new personal best and break her own school record in the process.

She did it and accomplished that feat on her first try.

With two competitors left at 12 feet, Carpenter-Ross cleared it on her first try as did Holton's Piper Robinson. Both competitors missed at 12-6, and since they were tied, they decided the winner based on misses at 11-6, where the Louisburg senior got it on her first try.

"It is pretty awesome," Carpenter-Ross said. "I worked really hard for that and I am so relieved right now. It was a little stressful, but I was in that competitive mindset and I was so happy that I PR'd. Everyone was setting personal records, so I was just like 'My turn.'"



Louisburg junior Cooper Wingfield pumps his fist after

clearing 15 feet in the pole vault at the Class 4A state meet in Wichita. He captured his first state title in the event.

Wingfield, who was the state runner-up last season, entered the competition at 14 feet. He missed the first two attempts on his opening height, and another miss would not only prevent him from a state title, but a spot on the medal stand.

On the third attempt, the Louisburg junior cleared it with ease and eventually cleared 15 feet on his first attempt, which was the winning height.

“I was really nervous there on that last attempt (at 14 feet),” Wingfield said. “All I needed was a good jump to get in the zone and from there I knew I could jump pretty high. The competition was a lot harder this time around than it was last year. I knew I had to make everything on my first attempt and once I had one good jump, I knew I could do it.”

It had already been a special season in the pole vault for Wingfield, as he earned a league and regional title, and broke the school record.

Other state medalists were Gavin Lohse (third, long jump), Jaymes Melton (seventh, shot put), Ben O’Bryan (seventh, discus), Suzanna Dansel (seventh 100 dash) and Jacob Brown (eighth, pole vault). The girls 4×100 team of Dansel, Kendall Crossley, Emma Vohs and Addi Mallett medaled sixth.

Battle named Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year



Louisburg senior Declan Battle had a special season in his final year at Louisburg as he was voted the Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year.

Declan Battle has become synonymous with winning – more this past year than ever.

Battle was the starting quarterback for the Louisburg football team that won back-to-back Frontier League titles. Then during the baseball season, he helped lead the Wildcats to a league and regional championship.

It was certainly a year to remember for him and those were just some of the reasons Battle was named the 2024 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year.

“This award means the world to me,” Battle said. “It is such an honor to be named Athlete of the Year. I couldn’t have done this without my amazing teammates, coaches and community pushing me to be my best.”

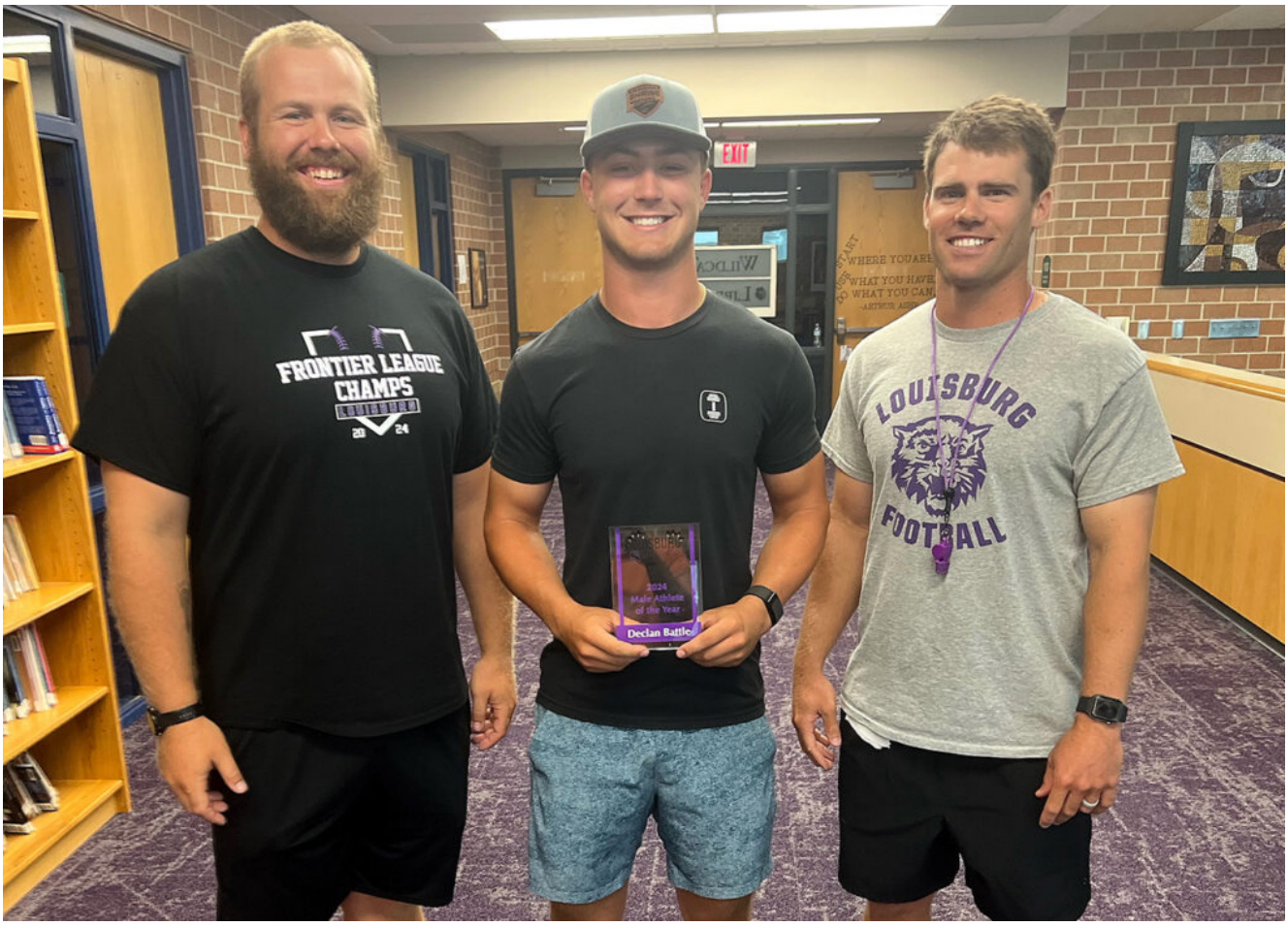
Battle was one of the best in the state when it came to his performance under the lights on Fridays and on the diamond.

Last fall, Battle was a first team All-Frontier League

quarterback and defensive back. He was also an all-state selection from multiple media outlets and was a finalist for the Frank Fontana Award, which is given annually to the best all-around small school player in Class 1-4 on the Kansas and Missouri sides of the metro.

In 10 games for the Wildcats, Battle completed 105 passes for 1,364 yards and had 16 touchdowns to just two interceptions. He also did a lot of damage on the ground with 1,009 yards rushing and 16 more touchdowns. As a defensive back, Battle finished with 36 tackles and also had an interception for a touchdown.

His efforts earned him a spot in the Kansas Shrine Bowl, which will be played Saturday (June 29) at Emporia State University. Battle also signed his letter of intent to join the Washburn University football team.



Declan Battle is pictured with Louisburg head coaches Kade Larson and Drew Harding after receiving the athlete of the

year award.

“Declan is certainly deserving of this award,” Louisburg coach Drew Harding said. “He was a standout athlete in both football and baseball. Besides that though he always represented himself and Louisburg in the right way.

“Declan was fantastic to coach. Obviously anyone who watched him play could see he was a tremendous athlete. However, Declan was also a great leader for us. He always approached things the right way and was dedicated to making himself, and his teams, better.”

Battle and the Wildcats also had a memorable season in baseball.

Louisburg captured its first Frontier League championship since 2002 and later went on to qualify for its first state tournament since 2009.

Battle was a big part of that group as well. He led the team in triples, stolen bases and runs scored that earned him first team all-league and first team all-state outfield.

He was atop the Wildcat lineup all season and set the tone in several games. Battle finished with a .378 average to go along with 34 hits, five doubles, three triples, a home run and had 23 RBIs.

Battle also led the team with 41 runs scored, which is a school record and had a team-high 15 stolen bases. He holds three individual career team records for runs scored (102), triples (8) and stolen bases (47).

“Declan was a great leader for us,” Louisburg baseball coach Kade Larson. “He found a way to get the job done all year long. It didn’t matter if it was hitting, pitching or fielding, Declan always made a big play when we needed it.”

Now that his Wildcat career has come to a close, Battle had

some time to reflect on what was a special time at Louisburg High School – one he won't soon forget.

"Playing at Louisburg was always great, knowing no matter what happened, the community was there supporting us," Battle said. "Playing sports at Louisburg was a great experience and I wouldn't change it for anything."

Previous winners:

2018: Austin Moore

2019: Blue Caplinger

2020: Garrett Rolofson

2021: Weston Guetterman

2022: Tom Koontz

2023: Mason Dobbins

Four Wildcats named to all-state baseball team



Louisburg seniors Declan Battle and Nathaniel Lamm, along with junior Luke Schultz and sophomore Danny Nappier were recently named to the KABC all-state team.

Winning a league and regional championship brought a lot of recognition to the Louisburg baseball team this past season and it continued at the state level.

After earning their first league title in 22 years and their first state tournament appearance in 15 years, several Wildcats were found on the all-state team.

The Kansas Association of Baseball Coaches released their all-state teams earlier this month, and four Wildcats made the list – including three on the first team.

Louisburg senior Declan Battle (outfield), senior Nathaniel Lamm (DH) and junior Luke Schultz (third base) were all selected to the first team. Sophomore Danny Napier (catcher) was an honorable mention selection.

“We were really well-represented on the all-state team,” Louisburg coach Kade Larson said. “We play in a tough league and had guys play at a high level all year against great competition and teams around the state took notice.”

Battle was atop the Wildcat lineup all season and set the tone in several games. He finished with a .378 average to go along with 34 hits, five doubles, three triples, a home run and had 23 RBIs.

He also led the team 41 runs scored, which is a school record and also had a team-high 15 stolen bases. As the team's centerfielder, he committed just four errors on the season.

Lamm was one of the team's best hitters all season. He led the Wildcats with 37 hits, which is the second most in program history.

He also had a team best .411 batting average and he tied for the team high with five home runs and 12 doubles. He also had a team-high 36 RBIs to go along with two triples.

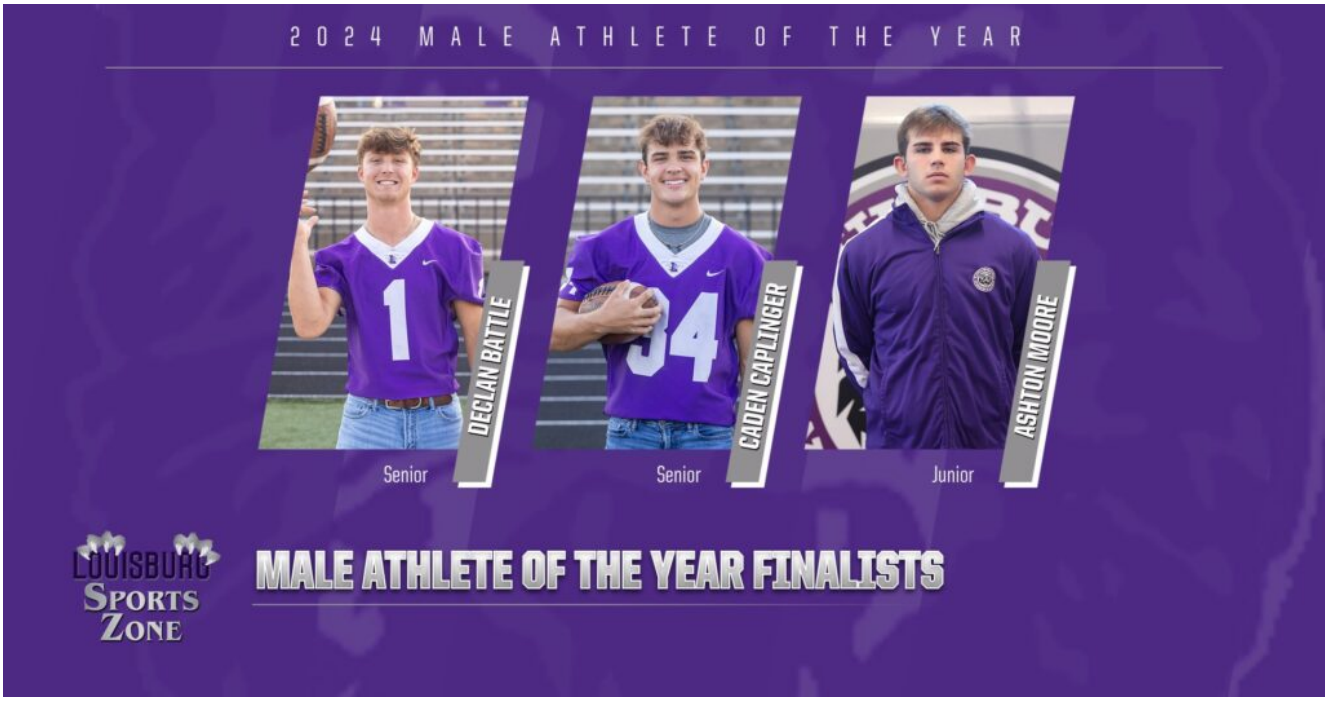
Schultz, the team's starting third baseman, had a big season with the bat. Along with five home runs, he had a .381 batting average, 32 hits, two doubles and three triples.

He also finished with 26 RBIs on the season in the No. 2 spot and scored 32 runs.

Napier was behind the plate for all 26 games as the Wildcat catcher 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.

2024 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year Finalists



Louisburg seniors Declan Battle and Caden Caplinger, along with junior Ashton Moore, are the three finalists for the 2024 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year award.

For the seventh consecutive year, Louisburg Sports Zone will be handing out an Athlete of the Year honor to a male and female athlete at Louisburg High School. I wanted the opportunity to recognize those who exemplify what it means to be an "athlete."

Although I am giving out the award, I wanted the process to be subjective, so I asked the head coaches at LHS to help me out. I asked each coach to send me nominations of who they thought exemplified the Athlete of the Year honor. Then they voted for their top 3 male and female athletes and I tabulated the results and determined the winner. The winner will be announced in the coming days.

Below are the three finalists for the Male Athlete of the Year

award in alphabetical order by last name.



DECLAN BATTLE – SENIOR – FOOTBALL, BASEBALL

Declan was a three year starting quarterback for the Wildcats and this year became the school's leading passer and fifth on the list for leading rusher as a team captain. Battle guided the Wildcats to their second straight Frontier League title and an undefeated league record.

Declan was a 1st team All-Frontier League quarterback and defensive back. He was an all-state pick from multiple media outlets and was a finalist for the Frank Fontana Award, which is given annually to the best all-around small school player in Class 1-4 on the Kansas and Missouri sides of the metro.

In 10 games for the Wildcats, Battle completed 105 passes for 1,364 yards and had 16 touchdowns to just two interceptions. He also did a lot of damage on the ground with 1,009 yards rushing and 16 more touchdowns. As a defensive back, Battle finished with 36 tackles and also had an interception for a touchdown. He will join the Washburn University football team next season.

On the baseball diamond, Battle helped the Wildcats to its first league title since 2002 and first regional championship since 2009. He led the team in triples, stolen bases and runs scored that earned him first team all league and first team all state outfield. He was also the team's best reliever earning multiple saves on the mound.

Battle was atop the Wildcat lineup all season and set the tone in several games. He finished with a .378 average to go along with 34 hits, five doubles, three triples, a home run and had 23 RBIs.

He also led the team with 41 runs scored, which is a school record and also had a team-high 15 stolen bases. He also holds three individual career team records for runs scored (102), triples (8) and stolen bases (47).



CADEN CAPLINGER – SENIOR – FOOTBALL, TRACK

Caden was a team captain for the Wildcat football team this past season and was a big piece of back-to-back Frontier League championship teams. Caplinger was an all-league selection on both sides of the ball, as a wide receiver and defensive back. He also holds the most career receptions in Louisburg football history.

Caplinger was named to the All-Frontier League second team at wide receiver and defensive back. He led the Wildcats with 33 catches, 510 yards receiving and four touchdowns. On defense, he finished with 41 tackles, 1.5 sacks, six pass breakups and an interception.

On the track, Caplinger is a two-time pole vault champion and a state medalist in the 4×100 relay. He was set to try for a third straight, but suffered a knee injury that ended his season. Caplinger won the season opening meet at the Ottawa Invitational, before having to sit out with the injury. He will be joining the Washburn University track team next season.



ASHTON MOORE – JUNIOR – FOOTBALL, WRESTLING, TRACK

Ashton put together a memorable football season for the Wildcats. Moore was one of the leaders of the Wildcat defense this past season. As a first-team All-Frontier League player on both sides of the ball, he posted a team-high 125 tackles,

including eight for a loss. He also had four forced fumbles and two sacks. He was named a finalist for the Bobby Bell Award, which is given annually to the best Class 1-4 offensive lineman/defensive lineman or linebacker in the KC metro area.

Moore was also the team's starting running back and made things difficult on opposing defenses. He carried the load for the Wildcats as he carried the ball 151 times for 1,110 yards and had 15 touchdowns. He also finished with 292 yards receiving and three more scores to earn first team honors.

On the wrestling mat, Moore was a state medalist as he took fourth at 190 pounds after making it to the state semifinals with an injured knee. He finished the season with 38 wins. He leads the program in the following categories: Career takedowns (117), career nearfall-3 (34), career escapes (57), career team points (510), season takedowns (51), season team points (229), and season pins (27). He led the team this year with most wins (38), most nearfall-2 (8), and the fastest pin (7 seconds).

Moore was also a returning state qualifier for the Louisburg 4×100-meter relay, but saw his track season come to an early end due to an injury.

Nine Wildcats named to all-league baseball, four earn first team



Louisburg's Danny Napier, Declan Battle, Jack Anderson and Luke Schultz each earned first team All-Frontier League honors.

The Louisburg baseball team won its first league title in 22 years this season, and with that, comes postseason honors and several Wildcats were recognized for their special 2024 campaign.

Louisburg earned four spots on the All-Frontier League first team that was released last week. In all, eight Wildcats were named to the all-league list.

Senior Declan Battle (outfield), sophomore Danny Napier (catcher), junior Luke Schultz and senior Jack Anderson (outfield) were all first team selections.

Senior Nathaniel Lamm (utility) and junior Alex Saad (pitcher) were named to the second team, while junior Meade Rutherford (pitcher), sophomore Bristol Barbour (infield) and senior Jackson Howard (infield) earned honorable mention honors.

"We were really well represented on the all-league team," Louisburg coach Kade Larson said. "The other coaches around the league definitely took notice of how well we played this year. We play in a tough league and had guys play at a high

level all year against great competition.”

Battle was atop the Wildcat lineup all season and set the tone in several games. He finished with a .378 average to go along with 34 hits, five doubles, three triples, a home run and had 23 RBIs.

He also led the team 41 runs scored, which is a school record and also had a team-high 15 stolen bases. As the team’s centerfielder, he committed just four errors on the season.

“Declan had a great season for us,” Larson said. “He started a lot of our games off with a big at bat that got us going. Declan also set the season runs record, career stolen bases, career triples and career runs scored record.

Anderson was alongside Battle in the outfield as the Wildcat right fielder had a big season. He finished with a .370 average to go along with five home runs, eight doubles and three triples.

He was second on the Wildcats with 32 RBIs on the season and scored 23 runs. Anderson also finished with just five errors on the season.

“Jack had an outstanding year for us this year,” Larson said. “Every ball he hit was hit hard. He had a chance to go yard every time he stepped to the plate.”

Anderson was one of three Wildcats to hit five home runs on the season and one of the others was Schultz.

Schultz, the team’s starting third baseman, had a big season with the bat. Along with five home runs, he had a .381 batting average, 32 hits, two doubles and three triples.

He also finished with 26 RBIs on the season in the No. 2 spot and scored 32 runs.

“Luke came in clutch for us more times than once this season,”

Larson said. “He had a great year at the plate and hit some of the farthest balls hit this year.”

Napier was behind the plate for all 26 games as the Wildcat catcher 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.

“Danny was lights out behind the plate for us this season,” Larson said. “He worked really well with our pitchers and was one of the best catchers in the state all season long.”



Lamm was a second team selection as was one of the team’s best hitters all season. He led the team with 37 hits, which is the second most in program history.

He also had a team best .411 batting average and he tied for the team high with five home runs and 12 doubles. He also had a team-high 36 RBIs to go along with two triples.

“Nathaniel swung it well all year,” Larson said. “He was one of the toughest outs in the state.”

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 is the third most in Louisburg history.

“Alex had a great season on the mound for us,” Larson said. “He competed well and gave us a chance to win every time he stepped on the mound.”

Howard, Barbour and Rutherford were all honorable mention selections for the Wildcats.

Howard, the team’s starting first baseman, had a .294 average with 25 hits to go along with five doubles and 24 RBIs.

Rutherford 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.

Barbour was the Wildcats’ starting shortstop and made big plays at the plate and in the field. He ended with a .386 average with 27 hits, four doubles and 10 RBIs.

“Jackson really became a leader throughout the year,” Larson said. “He did a great job staying locked in and keeping us in the game. Meade was a great pitcher for us this year. As the season went on, he really found his groove and became one of our top arms.

“Bristol was one of the smoothest infielders I have ever seen. He made some amazing plays at shortstop and backed it up with his bat. He really came on at the end of the season with some great at-bats for us.”

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE BASEBALL

FIRST TEAM

CATCHER: Danny Napier, Louisburg, sophomore

PITCHER: Merek Davenport, Tonganoxie, sophomore; Owen Blaine, Ottawa, senior

INFIELD: Holden Lough, Spring Hill, senior; Brock Gibbs, Tonganoxie, junior; Luke Schultz, Louisburg, junior; T.J. Kerns, Ottawa, senior

OUTFIELD: Declan Battle, Louisburg, senior; Jack Anderson, Louisburg, senior; Holden Miller, Spring Hill, senior

UTILITY: Trevor McGraw, Tonganoxie, senior

SECOND TEAM

CATCHER: Jagger Dey, Baldwin, junior

PITCHER: Tristen Kapelle, Baldwin, senior; Alex Saad, Louisburg, junior

INFIELD: Keaton Neal, Spring Hill, sophomore; Hunter Loethen, Paola, junior; Brett Davidson, Baldwin, junior; Eden Myers, Bonner Springs, junior

OUTFIELD: Brendan Briley, Tonganoxie, senior; Kaden Kerr, Eudora, senior; Blake Costlow, Paola, freshman

UTILITY: Nathaniel Lamm, Louisburg, senior

HONORABLE MENTION

CATCHER: Braeden VanDonge, Eudora, junior; Brandon Reynolds, Ottawa, senior; Brock Fish, Bonner Springs, junior

PITCHER: Jasper Logan, Paola, junior; Hunter Loethen, Paola, junior; Caden Stewart, Spring Hill, senior; Keaton Neal,

Spring Hill, sophomore; Xavier Raygoza, Bonner Springs, junior; Dakota Pringle, Eudora, senior; Kelton Ford, Eudora, senior; Meade Rutherford, Louisburg, junior

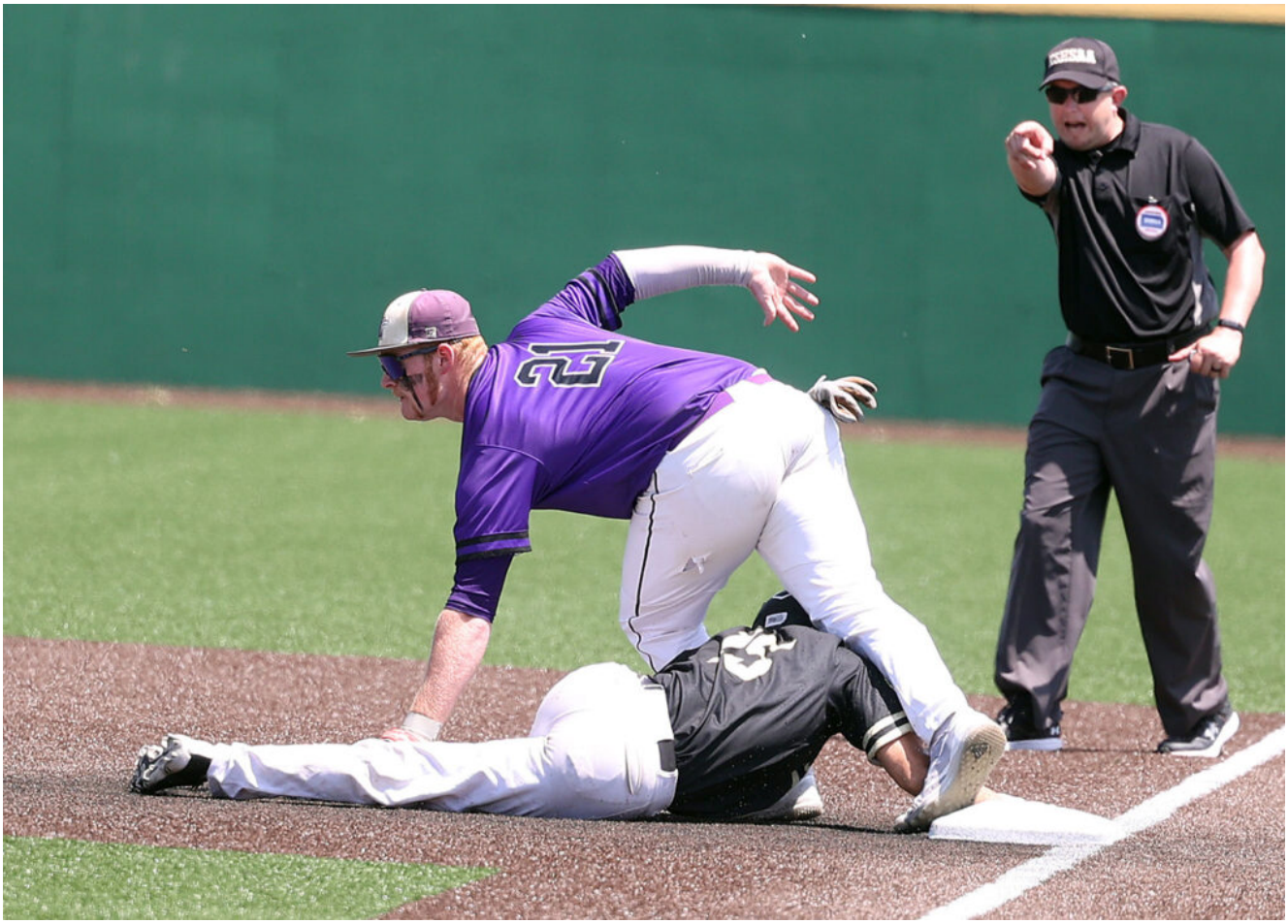
INFIELD: Jack Cline, Eudora, sophomore; Bristol Barbour, Louisburg, sophomore; Jackson Howard, Louisburg, senior; Carter Hepner, Ottawa, junior; Keegan Roemer, Ottawa, senior; JD Troutman, Paola, junior

OUTFIELD: Caden Campbell, Bonner Springs, senior; Boston Bloomer, Ottawa, junior; Ashton McCurdy, Ottawa, junior; Xander Meinig, Paola, junior; Cavin Meade, Spring Hill, senior

UTILITY: Caleb Hepner, Ottawa, junior; Jasper Logan, Paola, junior

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Wildcats fall in first round of state tournament to rival Paola



Louisburg senior Jackson Howard tags out a Paola runner at first base Thursday during the Class 4A state baseball tournament in Salina.

SALINA – It had been 15 years since Louisburg played in the state baseball tournament, and in its first game back, the Wildcats played an all-too-familiar opponent.

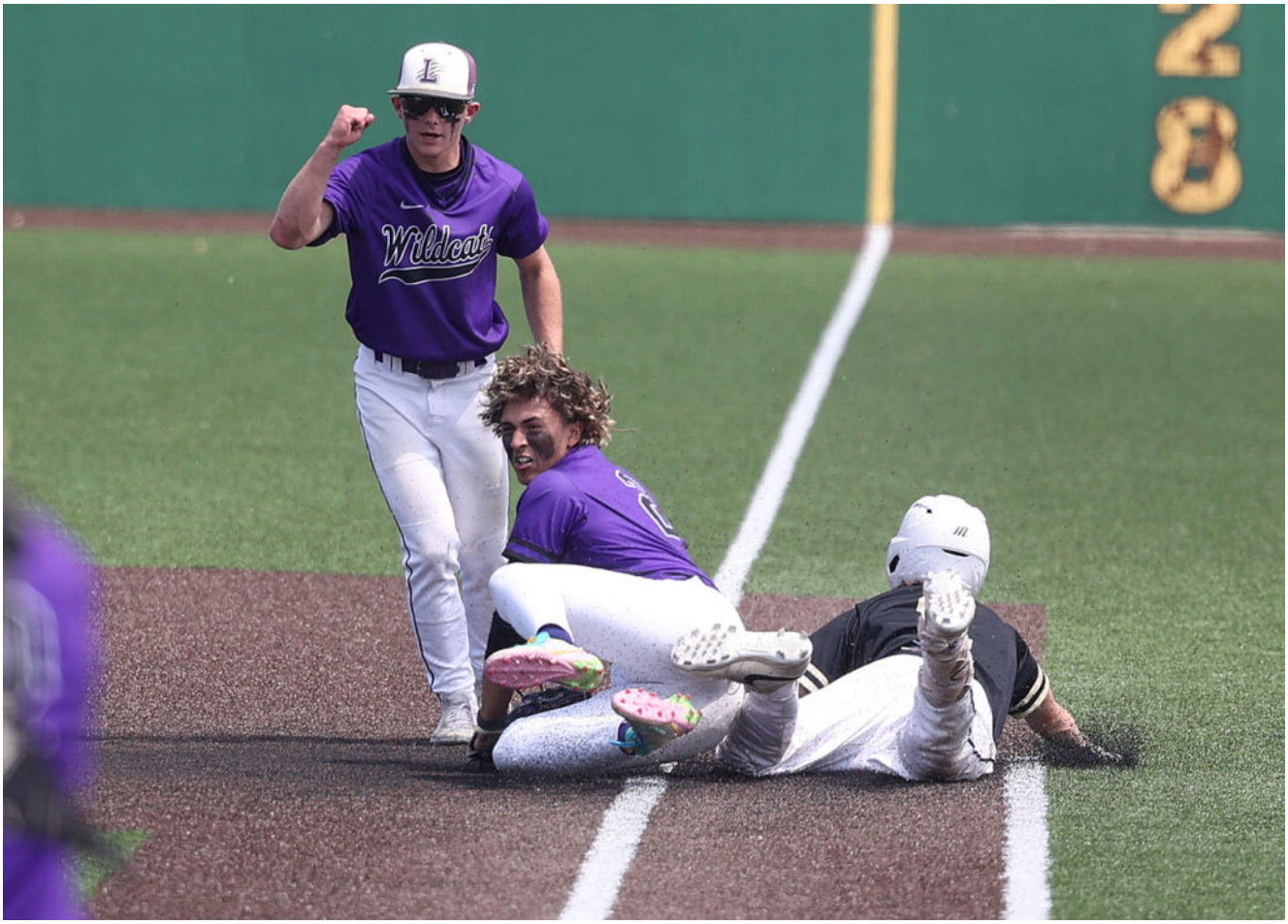
Louisburg squared off with Paola on Thursday in the first round of the Class 4A state baseball tournament in Salina. The two teams – a mere 10 miles from each other – traveled nearly three hours to play the most important contest in their rivalry matchup.

Unfortunately for the Wildcats, Paola made a couple more plays down the stretch as Louisburg fell in a pitcher's dual, 3-0, at Dean Evans Stadium.

Paola starter Hunter Loethen kept the Wildcat hitters off-balance most of the contest as he pitched a complete game. He

gave up five hits and struck out nine.

“It was a tough loss,” Louisburg coach Kade Larson said. “Paola was a really good team. Loethen threw really well and kept us off balance all day. When you get to state, you’re going to play a good team and that’s exactly what Paola was.”



Louisburg junior Alex Saad dives to the first base bag to beat a Paola runner, while senior Brody McGreer celebrates the play Thursday in Salina.

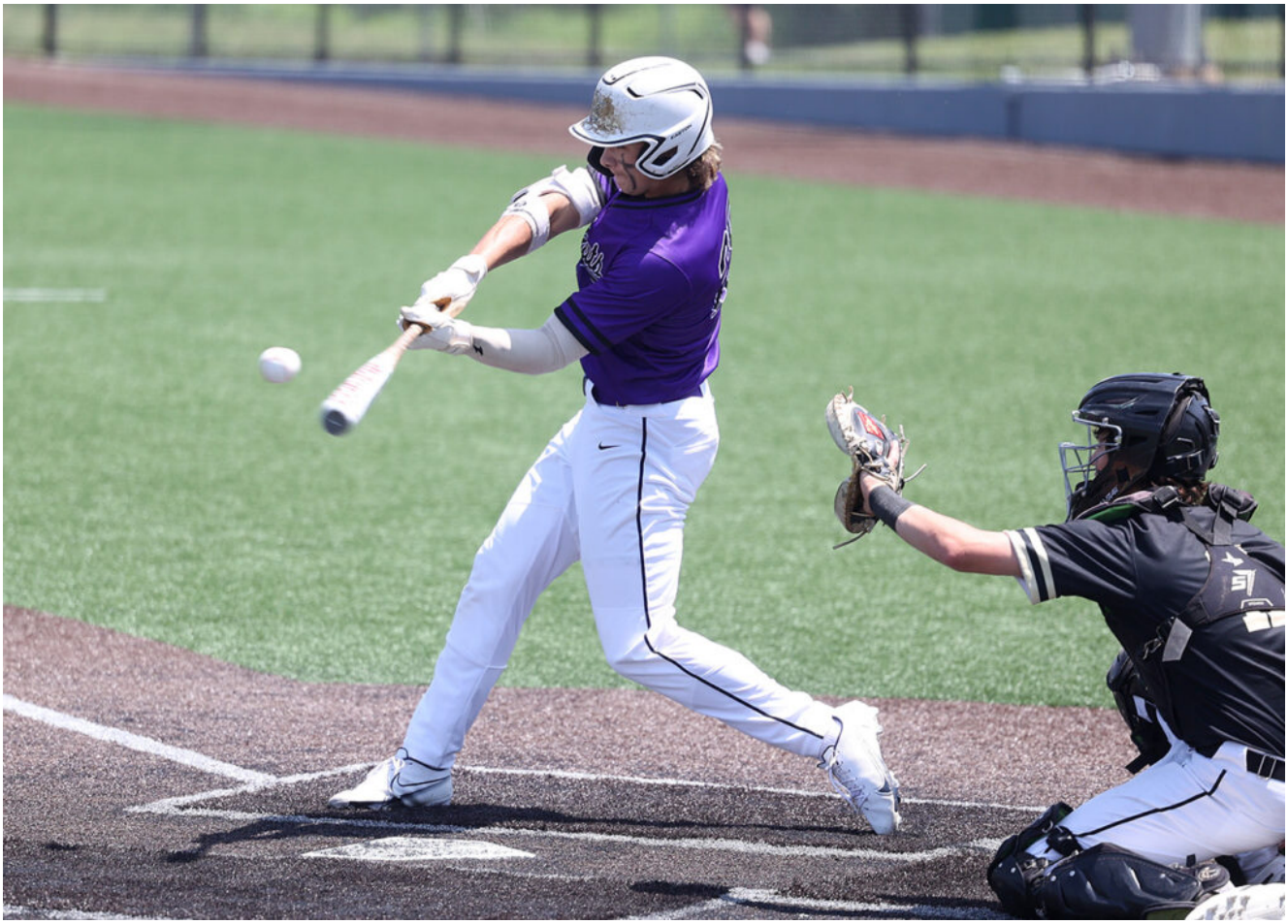
Louisburg got a good performance out of its starter, Alex Saad. The Louisburg junior went five innings and gave up just one unearned run and had five strikeouts.

He had to work around trouble in a couple of the innings as the Wildcats committed six errors on the day, but Paola had just the one run through five innings.

Offensively, the Wildcats had a few chances against Loethen, but Louisburg couldn’t get the big hit to break the game open.

“Alex threw really well for us,” Larson said. “He came out ready to go and kept us in the game. We had a few chances on offense to get ahead, but just couldn’t get the timely hit.”

The game was scoreless until the fourth inning, when Paola scored in the top of the frame that was aided on a pair of Louisburg errors.



Louisburg senior Jack Anderson makes contact with a pitch Thursday against Paola.

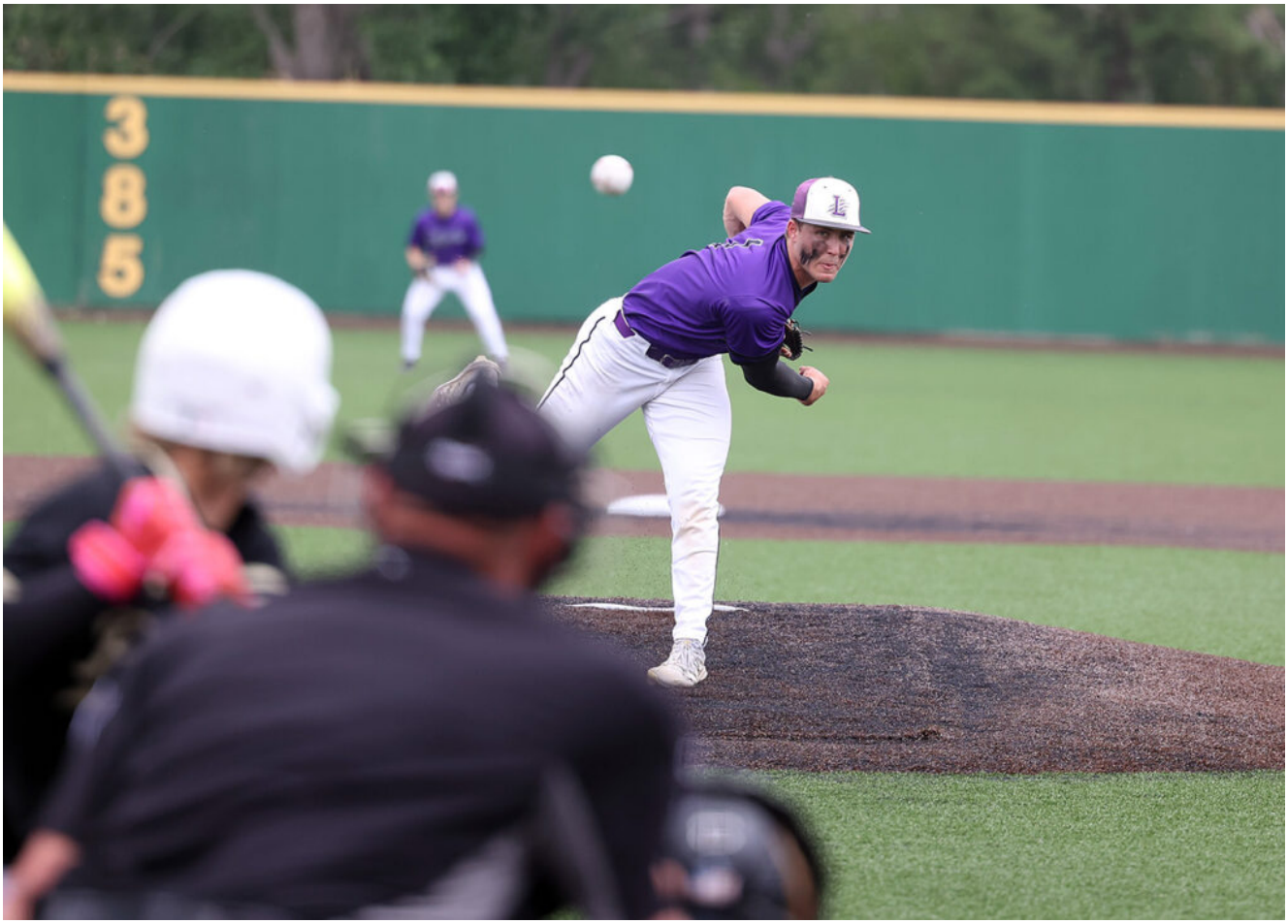
The Wildcats got things going offensively in the bottom of the fifth when junior Meade Rutherford and senior Brody McGreer hit back-to-back singles, but were erased on an inning-ending double play.

Louisburg senior Declan Battle came in for relief in the top of the sixth inning and got out of a bases loaded jam with a pair of strikeouts.

It was still a 1-0 game in the top of the seventh, when the

Panthers scratched a pair of runs across to all but seal the win.

Senior Nathaniel Lamm doubled for Louisburg in the bottom of the seventh to try and get something started, but the rally stalled out.



Louisburg senior Declan Battle pitched the final two innings Thursday against Paola.

McGreer had two of the Wildcats' five hits to lead the team offensively, while senior Jack Anderson, Lamm and Rutherford had the other four hits.

Paola went on to face the eventual state champion, Rock Creek, in the semifinals, before losing to the Mustangs and then again to Abilene in the third place game.

As for Louisburg, it was a special 2024 season that included its first Frontier League championship since 2002 and its first regional title since 2009. The Wildcats also recorded

the most wins in team history with a 19-7 record.

“We had a great season this year,” Larson said. “We really had a blast throughout the season and did some things that haven’t been done for a long time in Louisburg. It was definitely a memorable one that none of us will ever forget.”

Week 9 Athlete of the Week: Alex Saad



Here is the Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Week for week nine of the spring sports season, sponsored by Landmark National Bank.

ALEX SAAD, JUNIOR, BASEBALL

Louisburg junior Alex Saad put together his best performance of the season when his team needed him the most. The Wildcat starting pitcher got a complete game shutout over Parsons last Tuesday in the Class 4A regional semifinals. Saad pitched seven innings and gave up just two hits and struck out eight as the Wildcats advanced to the Class 4A state tournament.

On the season, Saad has been the Wildcats' No. 1 starter. He leads the team with a 7-1 record to go along with a team-high 40 strikeouts. Saad also has a 3.83 earned run average 38 innings pitched. He and the rest of the Wildcats will compete at the state tournament Thursday when they face off with Paola in the first round. It is the Wildcats' first state tournament appearance since 2009.

The athlete of the week award is announced every Wednesday morning during the spring season and the winner is selected by Louisburg Sports Zone with the help of nominations from coaches.

Previous Winners:

Week 1: Jack Anderson

Week 2: Nathaniel Lamm

Week 3: Derek Frederick

Week 4: Izzy Moreland

Week 5: Maddy Carpenter-Ross

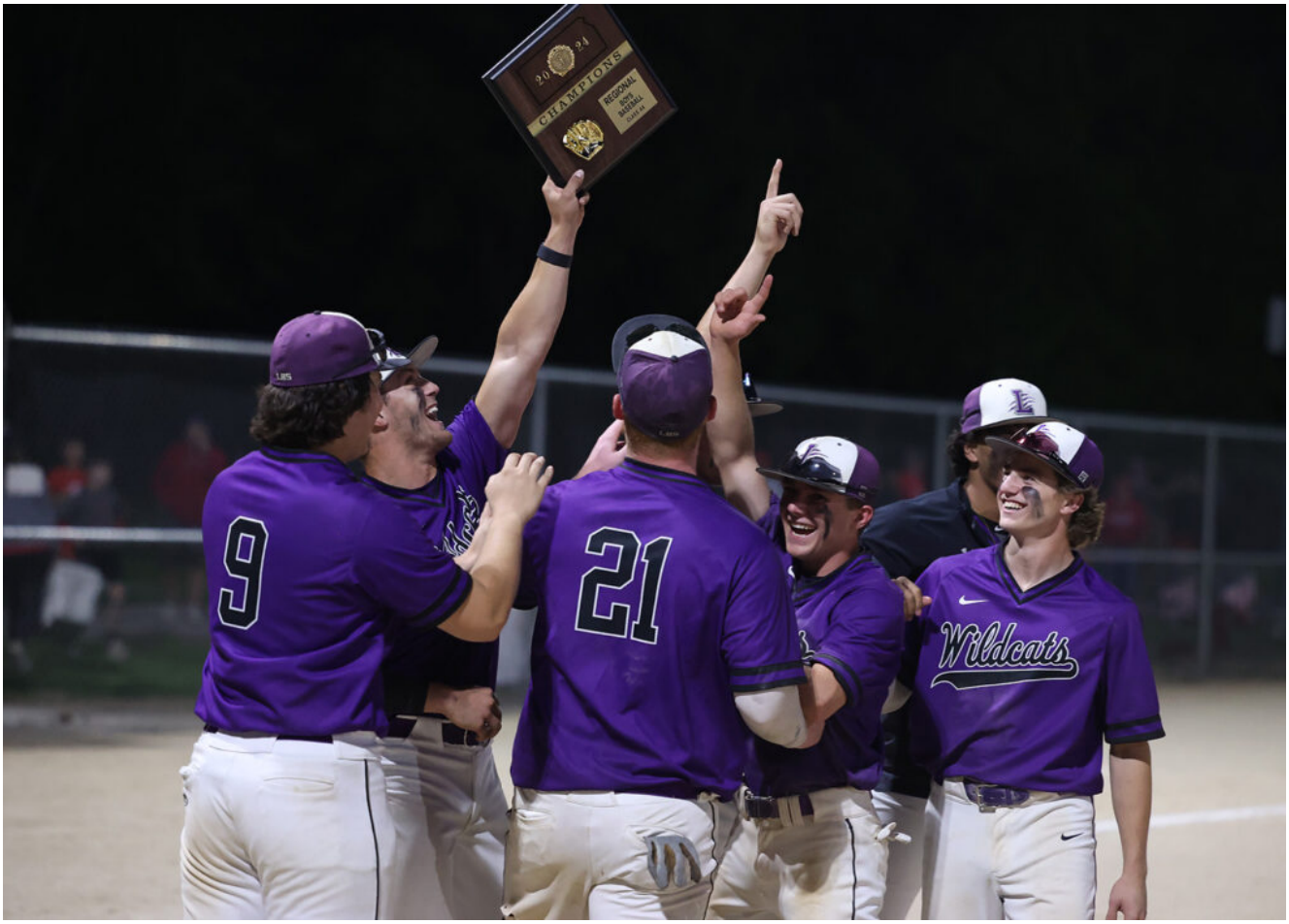
Week 6: Jaden Bentz

Week 7: Cooper Wingfield

Week 8: Sabra Brueggen



STATE BOUND: Wildcats win regional title for first time in 15 years



Louisburg senior Declan Battle hoists the regional championship trophy last Tuesday following the Wildcats' 10-3 win over Wamego in Class 4A regional championship game.

The current members of the Louisburg baseball team couldn't remember the last time the Wildcats made the state tournament even if they tried.

That's because they were just wee toddlers the last time the Wildcats earned a spot a state – 2009 to be exact.

These players are going to have a hard time forgetting this one.

For the first time in 15 years, Louisburg is headed back to the state tournament after the Wildcats put together a convincing 10-3 victory over Wamego in the Class 4A regional championship last Tuesday at Lewis-Young Park.

The Wildcats also defeated Parsons, 8-0, in the regional semifinal to put together what was a dominating performance

from top to bottom.

“This is just amazing,” Louisburg coach Kade Larson said. “To see how much work these guys have put in, then to come out and get the job done, it is pretty surreal. We had a bunch of guys step up and do exactly what they needed to do. They played great defense, pitched great and everyone in the dug out was into the game. It was a great win.

“It has been awhile and it has been a long time coming. We have had some great teams and this team finally pushed through and got it done.”

Although the Wildcats pounded out 18 runs in the two games, it all started on the mound.

Junior Alex Saad got the start for the Wildcats against Parsons and gave his team the performance they needed to advance. Saad pitched a complete game shutout, gave up two hits and struck out eight.



Louisburg junior Alex Saad pitched a complete game shutout in the Class 4A regional semis against Parsons.

“I think I threw pretty good,” Saad said. “My last couple of outings have been kinda rough and I haven’t been throwing enough strikes. My goal was to just throw some strikes and let my defense work behind me and we got some good results. Won the first game and it couldn’t be better.”

Another junior, Meade Rutherford, got the start in the championship game against Wamego and gave the Wildcats the performance they were hoping for. Rutherford pitched 5 2/3 innings, gave up one earned run, allowed five hits and struck out five.

“I threw very relaxed,” Rutherford said. “I wanted to go deep into the game, and I knew that if I just threw strikes that my defense would have my back. My 2-seamer worked really well, and although my velocity wasn’t where I wanted it, I thought I had good movement and it was working. (Catcher) Danny (Napier)

and I were on the same page and he did a great job behind the plate. Even if I gave up a couple runs, I knew our hitters were going to get some runs for me.

“I wasn’t nervous at all. Based on the energy we had from our last game, I knew if we played our game that we had it. I knew that if I come and do my job, the offense would do their job and they did.”

Although it took a couple innings to get going, the Wildcat bats heated up against Wamego at the perfect time.

Wamego took a 1-0 lead into the bottom of the third inning, before the Louisburg bats broke through with three runs in the third and then six more in the fourth inning to all but put the game away.



Louisburg junior Luke Schultz slides safely into home last Tuesday against Parsons.

Junior Luke Schultz and senior Jackson Howard each had two

hits and 2 RBIs to lead the way for Louisburg, while Declan Battle and Danny Napier each had RBI hits as well.

Taking a 3-1 lead into the fourth inning, Battle brought his teammates together in the dugout pleading for more runs and they answered the call.

“Wamego had a ton of energy and then they scored first and we didn’t have the energy they did for those first couple of innings,” Battle said. “Then we were able to score three and that definitely set the tone I think. I brought the guys together in the dugout the next inning and told them we need to score more and we just put it on them. Then all of a sudden we got 10 runs and we are going to state. It is pretty cool.

Sophomore Bristol Barbour opened the fourth inning with a single and a stolen base, but then faced with two outs, the Wildcats came through in a big way.

Battle got it started with an RBI single and stole second. He later scored on a Schultz single, who would score on a double from Napier. Howard added a single and pinch-runner Rylan Carty scored on a Wamego error.



Louisburg sophomore Danny Napier celebrates his RBI double against Wamego.

The Wildcats ended the inning with a bang as senior Jack Anderson hit a 2-run home run that inched over the right field fence to give Louisburg a 9-1 lead.

“I honestly didn’t think it was going out,” Anderson said. “I thought it was going to get caught, but I guess I back spun it enough for it to carry a little further. I will take it for sure. It was very exciting. To see everyone hyped for me at home plate, it was just a great feeling.”

After Rutherford exited with two outs in the sixth, Battle came in for relief and got a strikeout for the final out. He got two quick outs in the seventh, before running into a little trouble, but got the strikeout for the final out of the game and the celebration ensued.

“It was great to be able to come in with two outs and strike that first batter out,” Battle said. “Then I got two outs

easy, but then I kind of lost it a little bit. It definitely felt good to be able to finish the game with Danny and striking that last guy out. It just felt great."

It took a little while for the Wildcat bats to get going against Parsons, but they eventually whittled away at the Vikings with two runs in the third and fourth innings, three in the fifth and another in the sixth to all but seal the win.

Barbour had a big day at the plate with two doubles and an RBI, while Battle finished with an RBI triple. Senior Brody McGreer contributed an RBI double, while senior Nathaniel Lamm and Howard also had RBI base hits. Rutherford also had a double and a run scored.



Louisburg head coach Kade Larson gets nice ice bath from Luke Schultz following the Wildcats' regional title.

After capturing a Frontier League title and a regional championship, the Wildcats have their eyes set on a state title.

Louisburg (19-6) earned the No. 4 seed at the state tournament and will meet a familiar foe in Paola as the Panthers are the No. 5 seed. The game will take place at 1:15 p.m. on Thursday at Dean Evans Stadium in Salina.

The winner will advance to play two more games on Friday.

“Everything stays the same,” Larson said. “You throw strikes, play great defense, have great team at-bats. Ever since we lost to Basehor to end the year, we just told the guys you go win a game, then you get another. That is our motto going into state and we will see what happens.”

Win or lose, it will be a memorable experience for the entire Wildcat team and they are looking forward to the challenge.



Louisburg will play Paola at 1:15 p.m. on Thursday in a Salina in the first round of the Class 4A state tournament.

“I have played baseball for as long as I can remember,” Anderson said. “Growing up, you have tournaments and stuff, and you would win them every now and then, but they don’t

really mean a whole lot. But being with the team that we have now, being able to put our year up on the wall where it says ‘Regional Champions,’ is a very good feeling. I really think we can go all the way and I know that we can do it.

“Every team (at state) is there for a reason. I believe if we play our best that we can beat anyone in the state, but that is what we are going to have to do – play our best.”