

Wildcat bats come alive in sweep of Osawatomie



Louisburg senior Matt Madison makes contact with a pitch Thursday during the Wildcats' doubleheader against Osawatomie at Lewis-Young Park.

It all came together for the Louisburg baseball team Thursday when it hosted Osawatomie.

The pitching, the hitting, the defense – the Wildcats seemed to play well in every phase of the game as they came away with 15-0 and 11-1 victories over the Trojans at Lewis-Young Park.

“Our pitching was stellar,” Louisburg coach Kade Larson said. “We threw a ton of strikes and I was very pleased with how they did. The guys played very well all around. We put pressure on them from the beginning and didn’t look back.”

Louisburg did just that as the Wildcats’ bats exploded for 15 runs in the opener and won the game in four innings. The Wildcats were led on the mound by Brandon Doles. The Louisburg junior pitched the complete game shutout and gave up just three hits and struck out three.

The bats followed suit as junior Kolby Kattau and freshman Declan Battle each had three hits and 2 RBIs. Kattau scored four times and Battle three, while Battle also had a triple.

Junior Maverick Rockers, junior George Reichart and sophomore Mack Newell each had a pair of hits and 2 RBIs, while Reichart

also had a double.

The Wildcats (6-5) were also a threat on the base paths as they stole nine bases, including three from Kattau and two from Battle.



Shortstop Maverick Rockers tags out an Osawatomie runner sliding into second base Thursday.

In the nightcap, Louisburg led 1-0 in the bottom of the fourth, and with two outs, scored eight runs to blow the game open. The Wildcats ended the contest with two more in the fifth.

“The guys had a great approach at the plate and stuck to it the whole night,” Larson said. “When we got two outs in one of the innings we ended up plated eight runs with those two outs. The guys battled and found a way via walk or hit, and that was great to see.”

Trevin Lohse started the nightcap and kept the Trojan hitters

off-balance in his four innings of work. The Louisburg senior allowed no hits in those four innings and struck out seven.

Doles led the Wildcat offense as he was 3-for-4 with four RBIs, including a double. Kattau also added two hits, one of which was a triple, and two RBIs.

Lohse, Rockers and sophomore Cade Driskell each had two hits as well, while Rockers also scored three times. Seniors Matt Madison and A.J. Drew each added a double to their line, while Rockers had a triple.

Louisburg will try and build off the sweep tonight when it hosts Ottawa for a Frontier League doubleheader. It is a make-up contest from the postponement last week.

Madison signs on to play baseball at Labette Community College



Louisburg senior Matt Madison recently made it official as he signed his letter of intent to play baseball at Labette Community College.

Matt Madison has always loved the game of baseball and has played it ever since he can remember.

It started as a hobby and eventually grew into something way bigger for him.

“I started playing baseball when I was 7 and I played in the local recreation league in Louisburg,” Madison said. “I played baseball as something to do for fun with friends. Then it grew in to a love and obsession for the game, to where I strived to do better at some aspect of it everyday.”

As a senior at Louisburg High School, Madison wasn’t ready to give up his love just yet.

In front of family at friends at the school, Madison signed his letter of intent to play baseball at Labette Community College and he is looking forward to what his future has in store for him.

“I am more than excited to be able to take my baseball talent and play to the next level,” Madison said. “It means a lot to me to be able to play at a higher level and to know that I can compete at that level as well.”

Playing collegiate baseball has always been a goal of Madison, but it all became a little trickier last year when COVID-19 hit and cancelled his junior season.



Senior Matt Madison signed his letter of intent to play baseball at Labette Community College. Seated next to Matt are his father Bill and mother Becki, along with his sister, Maggie.

It meant a potential year of playing and showcasing his talents went down the drain and Madison had some make up work to do. Luckily, he was able to find the right spot for him.

“Recruiting for me went well with the circumstances that COVID gave me,” Madison said. “I had already been talking to schools before the COVID shut down. Summer baseball really put me ahead of the game recruiting wise. Being able to play this summer and get seen given the troubles with COVID, helped tremendously.”

With several options on the table before receiving an offer from Labette, Madison had a tough decision ahead of him, but in the end Labette gave him the best offer.

Madison, who is the Wildcat starting catcher this season, will do the same for Labette the next two years and is looking forward to getting to know his new team.

“What really stood out to me with Labette was the offer they gave me,” Madison said. “At the time of me touring the campus, I had already had 3 other offers from other schools. The offer Labette gave was way better than any of the other offers I had received from other schools. What really stood out to me was the league they are apart of. It’s a league where I could grow and have many options to go to from there. They recruited me as a catcher and DH.

“My expectations when I get on campus is to really get at it. I want to try to win that starting spot right when I step on campus. I want to see what I can do to help the school win a championship.”

Wildcats snap losing streak with sweep of Bonner Springs



Louisburg junior Brandon Doles brings home a pitch Tuesday during the Wildcats’ home opener against Bonner Springs.

In the midst of four-game losing streak, the Louisburg baseball team needed something positive to go its way.

The Wildcats hosted Bonner Springs on Tuesday for their home opener at Lewis-Young Park and they christened their home field with a pair of victories.

Louisburg defeated Bonner Springs, 5-4, in the first game as it won in walk-off fashion and then followed it up with a 9-6 win in the nightcap to complete the sweep.

“That was a much needed sweep,” Louisburg coach Kade Larson said. “After playing good Piper and Spring Hill teams, it was nice to get back in the win column. We didn’t play our best game and definitely have some areas to clean up, but whenever you can come out with two wins in a night you’re happy with that.”

The Wildcats were staring at five losses in a row in the first game as they were down 4-3 going into their final at-bat.

Senior Matt Madison led off with a walk, while Brandon Doles and Trevin Lohse each followed with singles to load the bases. George Reichart then walked in pinch-runner Sam Hastings to tie the game.

Sophomore Mack Newell provided the heroics in the next at-bat as he hit a sacrifice fly that scored Doles and the Wildcats were able to pull out the win.

Louisburg rallied despite struggling in the field with seven errors. The Wildcats held a 3-0 lead, but Bonner Springs tied it in the fifth thanks to a pair of Louisburg errors.

The Braves then tied it in the seventh on another Wildcat mistake, before the Wildcats put together their comeback.



Second baseman George Reichart tries to turn a double play Tuesday against Bonner Springs.

"One thing I loved is that we never gave up," Larson said. "We had a rough day with costly errors, but we kept battling and found a way to give ourselves a chance to win the game. We needed base runners and we found a way to get them.

"Mack found a way to hit a deep enough fly ball to bring in the winning run. I was really proud of his approach and doing what he needed to do to help the team."

Doles started the game for the Wildcats and pitched five innings where he gave up three earned runs and struck out five. Junior Kolby Kattau came in for relief to get the win and allowed just one unearned run in two innings.

Lohse led the Wildcat offense with three hits on the day, while Reichart, Newell and senior A.J. Drew each had a run

batted in.

Louisburg (4-4) had no problems getting its bats going in the second game as it took a 7-1 lead after four innings – thanks to a 5-run fourth.

Lohse started the game and had the Bonner offense off-balance for four of his five innings and struck out five. Sam Hastings came in for the final two innings of relief and allowed just one run on two hits.

Hastings also provided a two-run single in the bottom of the sixth to all but seal the win for the Wildcats.



Sophomore Cade Driskell scoops up a ball at first base Tuesday against Bonner Springs.

“In the second game we were patient at the plate and did a great job of situational hitting,” Larson said. “Two guys that

really stood out were Trevin and Sam on the mound. Trevin has a no-hitter through 4 and controlled the game really well. Then Sam came in and closed it out and added two RBI's for insurance in the bottom of the 6th that turned out to be a big help."

Sophomore third baseman Cade Driskell had a big day at the plate as he went 3-for-3 with a double. Junior Maverick Rockers and Doles each finished with a pair of hits and a run batted in, with Doles adding a double.

Louisburg will try and make it three in a row today when it hosts Tonganoxie for one game.

Wildcat lose two to Spring Hill

On April 6, the Wildcats traveled to Spring Hill for a Frontier League doubleheader and the Wildcats had a tough time with a pair of 12-1 and 10-4 losses.

The Broncos used a seven-run fourth inning in the opener that broke open a 5-1 game at the time.

In the nightcap, Louisburg actually had a 4-3 lead in the fifth, but the Broncos scored four runs in the fifth and three more in the sixth to pull away.

Freshman Declan Battle led the Wildcat offense in the the nightcap with three hits, including a triple. Sophomore Cade Driskell had two hits, one of which was a double.

Battle, Driskell and A.J. Drew each had an RBI.

Maverick Rockers provided the Wildcats with a good start as he gave up three runs in three innings and struck out three.

Week 2 Athlete of the Week: Kolby Kattau



Here is the Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Week for week two of the spring sports season, sponsored by IronHorse Family and Cosmetic Dentistry.

Kolby Kattau, Junior, Baseball

Louisburg junior Kolby Kattau had quite the opener for the Wildcat baseball team as he hit a bases-clearing triple to help give the Wildcats a 7-4 win over Baldwin. Along with the game-winning hit, he pitched the final four innings of the contest and struck out six batters.

On the week, Kattau had a .429 batting average and recorded two doubles, a triple and 7 RBIs. He also stole four bases and scored five runs as Kattau helped the Wildcats to a sweep of Baldwin last week.

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: Lexi Hampton



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Kattau sparks Wildcats to season opening sweep of Baldwin



Junior Kolby Kattau records one of his four hits last Tuesday against Baldwin. Kattau had a bases-clearing clearing triple in the seventh that broke open a tie game to help the Wildcats to a sweep.

BALDWIN CITY – The Louisburg baseball team recorded a few firsts during its season opener last Tuesday against Baldwin.

The Wildcats got their first win of the season, their first doubleheader sweep – and in the process – head coach Kade Larson got his first career head coaching victory.

That first win came in dramatic fashion as the Wildcats

rallied for four runs in the seventh to defeat Baldwin, 7-4. The nightcap was a little more strange as Louisburg scored 12 runs on just one hit as the Wildcats cruised to a 12-1 victory to complete the sweep.

"It was a great team win," Larson said. "Everyone contributed. We were able to get a lot going offensively and had some timely hitting paired with some great situational bunting. The guys played great and I'm glad we were able to complete the sweep."

Louisburg found itself down 4-3 in the top of the seventh inning, but the Wildcats got the rally started with one out thanks to the lower part of its lineup.

The. No. 6 and 7 hitters, George Reichart and Cade Driskell opened with singles and Reichart scored on an RBI single from Mack Newell.

Freshman Declan Battle, the No. 9 hitter, worked a walk to load the bases. After a Louisburg strikeout, junior Kolby Kattau came to the plate and broke the game open with a bases-clearing triple.



Freshman Declan Battle slides safely into third base last Tuesday in Baldwin.

"The lower part of our lineup really stepped up," Larson said. "After getting those first game jitters out in the first part of the game, everyone settled down and did what they knew how to do. I was really proud of how they did."

Kattau then was able to close out the game on the mound. He pitched the final four innings and gave up just one earned run, while striking out six.

Senior Trevin Lohse started the first three innings and gave up two runs, both which were unearned and struck out four.

"Kolby really helped us," Larson said. "He did a great job on the mound. The defense was playing him heavy on the pull side and he got a pitch away and went with it perfectly. After he hit that triple to take the lead I told him this game is yours

on the mound so go win it and he did.”

For the game, Kattau and senior Matt Madison led the Wildcat offense with three hits each, while Newell had 2 RBIs in his first varsity game. Madison and Battle also had a run batted in.



Louisburg senior Trevin Lohse rears back to fire a pitch to home plate against Baldwin.

In the nightcap, the Wildcats got a strong pitching performance from Brandon Doles as the Wildcat junior nearly went four innings as he gave up just the one run and struck out six.

Junior Maverick Rockers came in to pitch the final inning-plus to secure the win for Louisburg.

As for the 12 runs on one hit performance, a lot of things

worked in the Wildcats' favor for that to happen. Baldwin committed five errors on the night, walked seven and the Wildcats were hit by a pitch three times.

Kattau provided the Wildcats' lone hit, which was a double, and also had 3 RBIs in the contest.

"We did a great job of seeing pitches and getting runners on was a huge key in keeping the pressure on," Larson said. "Our guys were very opportunistic and put the ball in play and Baldwin had a few errors that we struck big on. We also had three stolen bases to get guys into scoring position which helped a lot, as well. It is not a stat I ever thought I would see in a baseball game, but a win is a win and we don't care how it happens."

Piper sweeps Louisburg in makeup contest

It was supposed to be its season opener, but thanks to inclement weather, Louisburg had to reschedule its game with Piper.

That road trip didn't turn out to be an enjoyable one Friday as the Wildcats fell in both games of the doubleheader, 7-5 and 9-7.

"I loved that we never gave up," Larson said. "We had guys on the bases all night long. We just couldn't get them in to score. We were in both games until the end and I was proud of how my guys kept battling until the last out. A few errors early in each game ended up being the difference at the end. We'll clean those up and be ready to go for the next game."

Three Louisburg errors haunted the Wildcats despite getting out to a good start in the opener. Louisburg scored five runs in the first two innings, but were shutout the rest of the way.

Piper scored two in the first, two in the second, two in the

fourth and another in the sixth to get the win.

The Wildcats were swinging the bat well early on as junior Brandon Doles hit a 2-run home run to put the Wildcats up.

Freshman Declan Battle followed suit for first varsity home run – a 2-run shot – that helped extend the Louisburg lead.

Battle, along with Trevin Lohse, George Reichart and Matt Madison, each had two hits for Louisburg.

In the nightcap, the Wildcats were forced to play catch-up from the start as Piper scored four times in the first two innings and they had to overcome three errors.

Kolby Kattau, Doles, Lohse and Newell each had three hits for Louisburg, while Doles finished with 2 RBIs.

The Wildcats were down 9-1 in the seventh inning, rallied to score four runs, but it wasn't enough as the Pirates were able to hold on.

Wildcats hope to make up for lost time after no season a year ago



Louisburg junior Maverick Rockers will be one of a few

returning players for the Wildcats this season after having no spring season a year ago.

A year ago, Kade Larson was preparing for his first season as the Louisburg head baseball coach.

It was an exciting time for the LHS alum and the rest of the Wildcats – but it didn't turn out how anyone thought it would.

The spread of COVID-19 halted the 2020 campaign and his first season as head coach would have to be put on hold. Along with that, seniors lost a chance to play their final year and the rest of the team lost a year of competition.

Louisburg will have just three seniors on the roster this season and the Wildcats will feature a group that is young and inexperienced in some spots.

Still, Larson likes what he has returning and the potential this team has.

"I'm very excited for the guys to get out there and represent their school," Larson said. "Missing a year of school ball is really tough and I can't wait to see how we play. The biggest problem with missing last year is a whole season of experience. We were going to be a younger team last year and this year we will be even younger. That experience will be missed, but I think our guys can really step up this year. "

The Wildcats return five starters off the 2020 team, including a few that saw time during the 2019 season as well.

Seniors Trevin Lohse, Matt Madison and AJ Drew, along with juniors Brandon Doles, Kolby Kattau and Maverick Rockers, will each play big roles for the Wildcats this season.



Junior Brandon Doles will help lead the Wildcat pitching rotation this season after seeing time on the mound as a freshman.

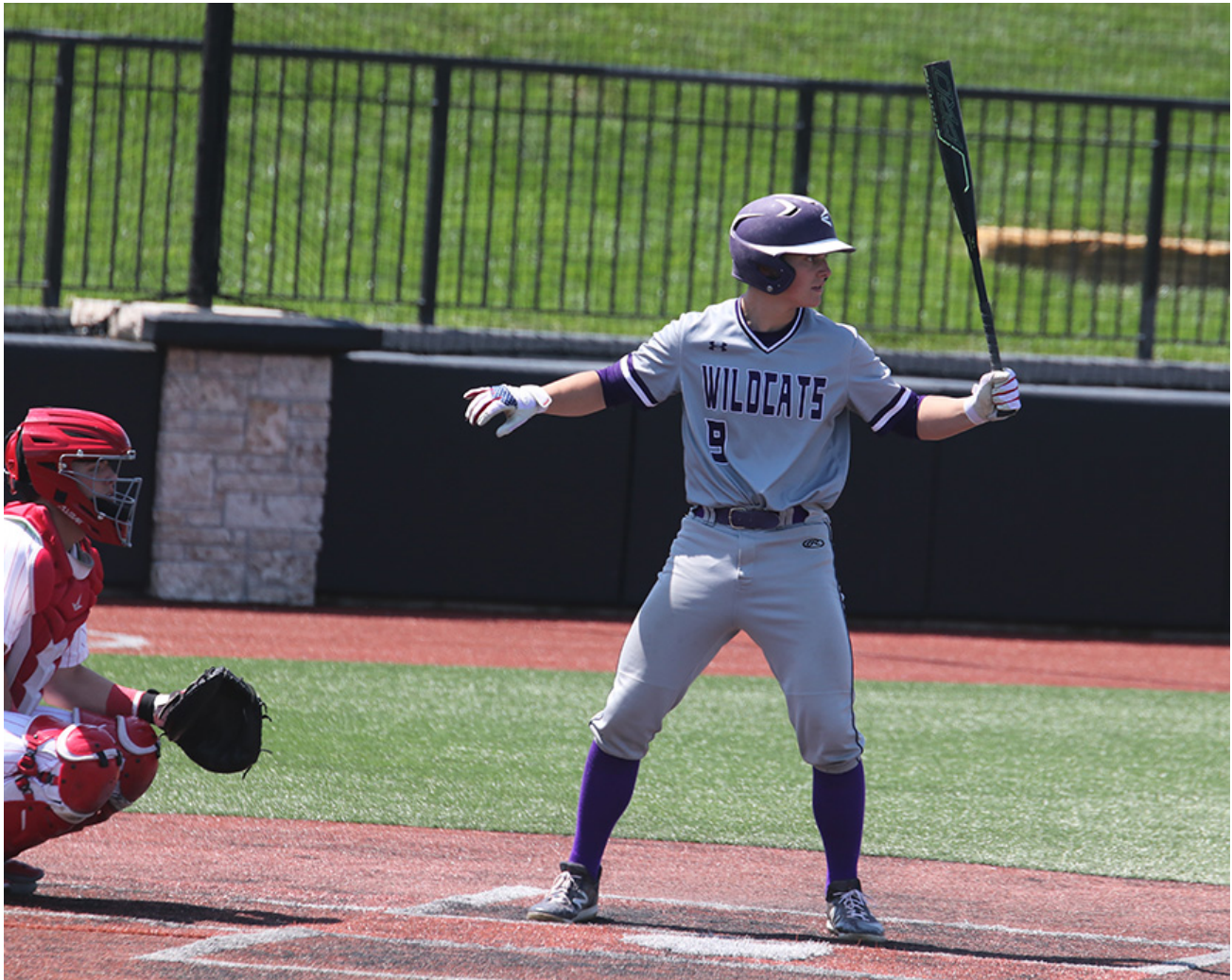
Lohse, Rockers, Doles and Kattau will lead the Louisburg pitching staff, with Madison serving as the team's catcher.

"Pitching-wise it will be nice to have a little experience back on the mound," Larson said. "Trevin, Maverick, Doles, and Kolby will need to step up and be leaders on the mound for us this year. I like what these four have been doing on the mound, and if we can get a couple others around them to step up, I think we can be a solid team this year."

Madison will be one of the team's top returning hitters, along with Doles, Rockers and Kattau. Junior George Reichart will also fixture into the mix on the infield, while sophomore Mack Newell will open the season at third base and freshman Declan

Battle will be in the outfield.

"It was pretty tough on all of us not getting that year to play with each other and missing out on a year to make memories," Madison said. "With some guys not being there last year, and growing up with them playing, I could see how it hurt them as well.



Senior Matt Madison will be one of the team's top returning hitters this season and will be the team's starting catcher.

"I am very excited for the season to get started this week. It's a big year for me and the team as well. This being my last year I really want to see what I can do to help the team win. Not only that, but help them out in a way that will help them in the future."

Larson agrees that his lineup has potential and he is looking forward to seeing what this group can do when it opens its

season today at Piper.

“On the offensive side, Matt, Doles, and Kattau will be our leaders,” Larson said. “I’ve seen a lot of improvement from Trevin, George Reichart, and Maverick. If those guys can step up I am very excited about our run producing capability.

“I think we have potential to surprise some teams. If we can make the routine plays, we will be in every game at the end with a chance to win.”

Top Louisburg Sports Stories of 2020



There hasn't been a year like 2020, and for most people, they are ready to put it behind them and forget it ever existed.

Still, with all the challenges that 2020 brought, there were still plenty of positives to talk about when it came to Louisburg High School sports. History-making state places and state medals were plentiful on this list, but it wasn't all positive. Louisburg had to say goodbye to a beloved town figure and athletes had to deal with the loss of spring sports.

Below are the top stories from 2020, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the explanation 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. Thanks to the cancellation of spring sports, I don't have the top 10 like I normally do, but I got close.

This year was a blast to cover, when I had the opportunity, anyway. Still, I am looking forward to what 2021 will bring. Thank you for everyone's support and can't wait for it all to begin again.



8. Ratliff-Becher wins state powerlifting title

After winning a state championship in 2019 Reilly Ratliff-Becher had every intention of backing up her performance during the Class 4A State Powerlifting Championships on March 7 at Piper High School.

In fact, the Louisburg senior wanted to improve it. Last

season, Ratliff-Becher took first in everything but squat, which she got runner-up.

This time around, she got the clean sweep.

Ratliff-Becher took first in bench, squat and clean and that led to her second straight state championship in the 180-pound class.

“It means a lot to me that I was able to win the state title again,” Ratliff-Becher said. “I set a goal for myself to win first in everything since I had got second in squat last year and I achieved it. Even though it wasn’t my best showing with the numbers I got on my lifts.

“The competition was very good this year, as it always is. But, fortunately with all the work I put in to at least maintain my numbers from last year, meant I was able to lift bigger amounts than my competition.”



7. Conley named state and midwest coach of the year

After a third place finish to end the year, Louisburg boys

soccer coach Kyle Conley was recognized among the state's best.

Conley was named as the Class 4-1A Coach of the Year by the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association in November.

He guided the Wildcats to a 16-2 record on the season and the team's highest finish in program history when Louisburg ousted Rose Hill, 3-0, in the state third-place game.

Just a few weeks later, Conley was honored once again – this time on the girls' side.

Despite the lost season, the United Soccer Coaches wanted to recognize coaches for their past accomplishments and for what this past spring was supposed to hold.

Atop that list was Conley as he was named as the Small School Midwest Coach of the Year.

"I am absolutely honored to receive this award," Conley said. "There are so many great coaches in the Midwest, but to me this is a program award. None of this is possible without everyone involved; girls coming to work their tails off everyday, parents traveling and supporting us anywhere and everywhere, community helping with supporting the program, the school supporting the girls, etc. Without the support and buy in from the girls, parents and community none of this is possible."

The Wildcat girls program has had a successful start in its four years. Conley has a 54-22-2 record during that span, that included two state runner-ups and another state final four appearance.



6. Louisburg cheer places third at state

The Louisburg cheer squad had to do its postseason competition a little different this year thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It didn't seem to bother them much as the defending state champions found themselves right in the thick of things again.

Although they didn't repeat as champs, they were still among the state's best as the Wildcats cheerleaders finished third in the state back in November.

Unlike performing in front of judges like they did in 2019, the Wildcats had to video tape their performance and send it in to be judged. It fared well as they tallied 83.35 points to finish in the top 3.

Baldwin earned the state title with 88.85 points and Abilene was second with 85.25.

Members of the Louisburg cheer squad are Bella Feikert, Addison Drake, Brooklyn Harmon, Jayden Trester, Maddy Carpenter-Ross, Sophie Katzer, Sammy McDaniel, Julia Arriola, Andrea Gaza, JoJo Hendrickson, Sydney Dudzik, Abby Bradley, Anna Poe, Sienna Finch, Mable Graham, Audrey Anderson, Zoe Weers, Anna Morrison and Maggie Madison



5. Holtzen, Owens earn state medals for Wildcat wrestling

Ryan Owens and Cade Holtzen both had their own agendas going into the state wrestling tournament.

Owens, qualified for state last year, but left without a win and he vowed to fix that this time around. As for Holtzen, he came up short in his efforts for a second state medal as a

sophomore last season and had all the motivation not to come home empty-handed again.

Both wrestlers more than made up for their rough patches a year ago.

Owens and Holtzen left Salina with a state medal during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships on Friday and Saturday at the Tony's Pizza Events Center.



Owens made it to the semifinals and wound up earning a fourth-place medal at 120 pounds, while Holtzen finished fifth at 126 pounds.

It also marked the first time since 2016 that Louisburg finished the season with multiple state medalists, when Nathan Keegan and Mason Koechner each brought home medals.

The Wildcats nearly had three medalists as sophomore Brandon Doles finished one win shy of a state medal at 160 pounds with a 2-2 record.



4. Dennis steps down as LHS team doctor

Almost every day of the week, if you were looking for Damon Dennis, he could be found at his office on 11 S. Broadway St., helping treat those pesky aches and pains, taking X-rays, or mending those beaten up athletes after a game.

Doc D – as he is affectionately known – opened Louisburg Chiropractic Office 28 years ago and has served as the

Louisburg High School athletic team doctor for almost that same amount of time.

Dennis has seen it all. The walls in his office are lined with mementos from his years of service to both the community and the high school.

He has taped thousands of ankles, seen even more patients and has touched many lives during his time in Louisburg. That is why this week is one of the more emotional times in his life.

In May, he left Louisburg Chiropractic Office and handed the reins over to Dr. Jake Polzin. Add to that, Dennis also stepped away as LHS' team doctor and left an absence on the sidelines and behind the mic that many in Louisburg have come to know.

"My decision to step down and sell the practice has turned out to be the hardest thing I have ever done," Dennis said. "I have poured everything I have into my job and community. It has become my entire existence. I was taught from a young age to serve others and your community. I feel like the pressures I have put on myself have become unhealthy. I have put about 40 years work in to 28 and feel like there is never going to be a good time to make such a huge life change.

"That being said, I feel like I need to make changes while I am still able to do the things that will be best for my family. Dr. Polzin came along and I think he will carry on the work at the office wonderfully. We are a lot alike in many ways. I could not have found anyone better to replace me."

For many, Dennis has been a big part of people's lives, especially in the athletic arena. He has served as the LHS team doctor since 1992 and has treated many athletes in those 28 years.



3. Girls Cross Country Takes Third at State

For 23 years, the Louisburg cross country program has been chasing a top three finish at the Class 4A meet.

The Wildcats have had several teams qualify, especially in the last few seasons, but have always come up short of their goal. Following Saturday's race in Wamego, the Wildcats can finally stop running after it.

The Louisburg girls put together an historic performance at the Class 4A Kansas State Cross Country Championships at Wamego Country Club. The Lady Cats earned a state plaque with a third place finish as they surpassed Buhler by eight points to record the school's first top three state finish.

Junior Reese Johnson, sophomores Claire Brown, Bree Gassman and Nova Ptacek, along with freshmen Lola Edwards, Maddy Rhamy and Erin Apple, will all go down in school history as they became the first Wildcat team to bring home state hardware.

"It means the world to me to be a part of the first team ever to place at state," Rhamy said. "Coming into the state meet, I was just hoping our team would be in the top half, so you could imagine my excitement when our team placed third. I didn't even know we made school history until our coaches told us."

Rhamy was one of two freshmen who earned top 10 finishes individually, along with Edwards. Rhamy finished eighth overall in 20 minutes and 58 seconds, while Edwards was right behind her in 10th in 21:02.

Junior Reese Johnson also garnered a state medal as she was 15th in 21:28 to help the Lady Cats to an historic performance.

It was a proud moment for many in the Louisburg program, and included in that is John Reece. The longtime Wildcat head coach was all smiles following his team's performance.

"It is 23 years the making," coach Reece said. "You always have the plans and goals to get to state and then you get a group to go to state and do something great. This year was one of those. With the Frontier League as tough as it is, and then getting third there, put it in our heads that maybe we could do this. They all went out and ran their races, and that just shows their grit and determination and who they are."

A week earlier, the Wildcats also made history as it was the first time in school history when they qualified the entire boys team to the state meet as they took third at regionals.



2. Boys Soccer Finishes Runner-Up At State

As the Louisburg players huddled around their state plaque, many of them looked at it in awe and wonder.

“Hey guys, we won this,” a player shouted.

The statement was obvious at the time, but nonetheless, their excitement was more than warranted.

For the first time in program history, the Louisburg boys soccer team brought home a plaque from the state final four as the Wildcats defeated Rose Hill, 3-0, on Saturday in the third place match of the Class 4-1A state tournament at Stryker Sports Complex in Wichita.

It was only the second time in school history that the Wildcats had it made it this far, with the other being in 2016, when they finished fourth.

“There are only six teams in the entire state that get to end their year with a win and we wanted to be one of those teams,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “We want to be able to hang up a banner on our field and we wanted a plaque so that no one can forget what these kids earned and what they did this season. I am so proud of all of them.”

It was a program defining moment for the Wildcats as they began the weekend searching for a state championship, but lost 2-0 to Bishop Miege on Friday in the semifinals. Still, recording the best finish in school history is nothing for someone to hang their head about, and the Wildcats came out Saturday wanting to make sure they brought some hardware home.

“It’s absolutely crazy to think about what we have accomplished this year, partly because I have only played soccer in high school,” senior captain Logan Faulkner said. “Bringing a state plaque back will just be a reminder of what we did and how we reached our goal.”



1. COVID-19 Cancels Spring Sports

In March, Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly closed all schools for the rest of the 2019-20 school year due to the spread of COVID-19.

When most students hear school has been closed, especially in the winter, cheers erupt. In this case, however, the tone was much more somber – especially among the senior class.

Proms were canceled. Any plans they had for a graduation ceremony were put on hold, and for more than 30 seniors, their last opportunity at playing a sport at Louisburg High School was taken away.

In fact, close to 200 students were planning on participating in an activity in the spring, but with no school, the Kansas State High School Activities Association followed suit and canceled the spring season the day after Gov. Kelly's declaration.

Students, parents and coaches alike have had to come to grips that a season they had been looking forward to all year, was never going to happen. Tears flowed, walls were punched in frustration and some were left speechless.

There would be no game days, no Senior Nights and no postseason runs. Athletes had to figure out how to cope with this fact and it was a challenge for the Louisburg girls soccer, track and field, baseball, softball, golf and swim teams.

Many of those teams had big postseason aspirations after success in 2019 and were left wondering what could have been.

2020 Athlete of the Year Nominees



For the past four years, Louisburg Sports Zone has given out Athlete of the Week awards during each of the three sports seasons. I do it to recognize special athletic achievements and to highlight the athletes.

For the third straight 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.”

Obviously, 2020 has not been the typical year when the spring was cancelled due to COVID-19. However, I still want to make sure those athletes that were set to make an impact in the spring were recognized as well.

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. They voted for their top male and female athletes and then I tabulated the results. I will release the results in the coming days.

Below are the nominees for this year’s award in alphabetical order by last name. Congrats to all those who were nominated and best of luck!

Female Athlete of the Year Nominees



Haley Cain – Senior – Volleyball, Basketball, Soccer

Haley was a three-sport athlete during her time at Louisburg High School and recorded the rare feat of earning 12 varsity letters.

In the fall, she helped the Louisburg volleyball team to its third consecutive state tournament and was selected to represent Kansas in the Greater Kansas City All-Star Match. She was also named to the All-Frontier League second team as a middle hitter.

Cain was also a two-time team captain for the Louisburg girls basketball team and was a key player for the Lady Cats this

past season. She was also set to be a big contributor for the Wildcat soccer team in the spring as well.



Trinity Moore – Senior – Cross Country, Soccer

Trinity made cross country history for the Wildcats this past season as she medaled third at state and broke her own school record in the process. The Louisburg senior also medaled at state all four years.

Moore was also a returning starter for the Wildcat soccer team and was a key factor in helping the Wildcats to three consecutive state final fours and two state runner-up finishes.

She started 43 games for the Wildcats and concluded her career with 18 goals and eight assists. She is fifth in school

history with 44 points.



Erin Lemke – Senior – Volleyball, Soccer

Erin was another multi-sport athlete for Louisburg as she was a member of the volleyball and soccer teams. Lemke was an outside hitter for the Lady Cat volleyball team and was selected to represent Kansas in the Greater Kansas City All-Star Match.

On the soccer team, Lemke was a two-time team captain for the Wildcats and was a returning all-league and all-state player. She was also one of the team's top goal scorers.

Lemke had a very productive career for the Wildcats as she started 48 of her 59 games and earned all-league and all-state honors as a sophomore and a junior.

She finished her career with 29 goals and 27 assists and Lemke has the second-best assist mark for a season in program history with 17 and is third in career assists. She also added seven game-winning goals.



Reilly Ratliff-Becher – Senior – Volleyball, Powerlifting, Softball

Reilly was a multi-sport athlete for Louisburg High School as she competed in volleyball, power-lifiting and softball. She was an honorable mention all-league selection in volleyball as she served as the Lady Cat libero.

Ratliff-Becher was a big part of the Lady Cats' state tournament runs the last three years. She was also selected to participate in the Greater Kansas City All-Star game last November.

As a powerlifter, Reilly recorded her second-straight state championship and took first in each of the three individual events.

Ratliff-Becher was also a returning starter on the Lady Cat softball team after she helped Louisburg to a state tournament appearance a year ago as a catcher and outfielder.

Male Athlete of the Year Nominees



Garrett Rolofson – Senior – Soccer, Basketball, Golf

Garrett is a three-sport athlete for Louisburg as he was a member of the soccer, basketball and golf teams. In soccer, Rolofson served as the Wildcats' goalkeeper and helped Louisburg to a regional title and a school record 16 wins.

Rolofson was named to the All-Frontier League first team and to the all-state second team. He posted eight shutouts on the season and allowed only 17 goals, four of which came from penalty shots. He also finished with 78 saves on the season and allowed the second fewest goals in Class 4-1A.

In basketball, Rolofson was a starter on the Wildcat basketball team and this spring he was all set to help the Wildcat golf team to their second consecutive state tournament

appearance. He was the team's No. 3 golfer a year ago.



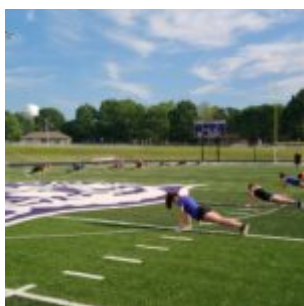
Madden Rutherford – Senior – Football, Baseball

Madden was a multi-sport athlete for Louisburg as he was a key member of the Wildcat football and baseball teams.

Rutherford, who was a team captain on the football team, was selected as a first team All-Frontier League quarterback. Rutherford finished the year with 671 yards passing with eight touchdowns and he also added 245 yards on the ground and four more scores.

On the baseball team, Rutherford was also a returning all-league player and was slated to be the Wildcats' No. 1 starter this spring.

Wildcat athletes report back for summer conditioning



Almost 80 high school girls attended the first day of summer conditioning on Monday at Louisburg High School.

For the first time in almost three months, Louisburg High School and Louisburg Middle School athletes found themselves back on the field starting Monday at Wildcat Stadium.

It didn't include any balls, equipment, weights and wasn't indoors, but more than 300 athletes participated in the mandatory conditioning drills that were set by the Kansas State High School Activities Association.

"The turnout was exceptional, and considering the limit on group sizes, distance restrictions, and getting creative in using multiple spaces to accommodate the large numbers in appropriately sized groups allowed in phase three, these coordinators did a great job setting a standard," Louisburg activities director Michael Pickman said.

This was all following the cancellation of the spring season to the spread of COVID-19 and KSHSAA allowed school districts to begin conditioning exercises on June 1. The Louisburg school district started this past Monday and each athlete must participate in 10 sessions before being able to attend in any team activities or camps.

Several coaches were in attendance running athletes through drills in three separate stations that would allow some space between everyone. Football coaches Robert Ebenstein, Ty Pfannenstiel, Joel McGhee and Drew Harding were on hand to lead drills, along with other staff from within the USD 416 school district.

“There are many coaches who are volunteering and just want to be there to support their athletes,” Pickman said. “It’s what makes the LHS coaching staff stand out from others. However, I have encouraged coaches not directly coordinating weights to stay home as much as they can with numbers restrictions, but so far we haven’t had that be an issue.”

High school boys begin each morning at 6 a.m., for the hour-long workout and high school girls follow and then it all finishes up with middle school. To start there were 121 high school boys in attendance, 79 girls and 126 middle school students.



More than 120 Louisburg High School boys attended the first day of summer conditioning at Wildcat Stadium.

To start the day, each athlete is screened before the start of

conditioning with a temperature check and then they are divided into three groups. Each of them will participate in three stations that focuses on different workouts. There are no more than 45 athletes in a group and the coaches design workouts to promote the six feet of distance.

“There were temperatures that needed to be taken and protocol for sanitizing hands and checking in that went efficiently and smoothly overall,” Pickman said. “A lot of planning went into this with the coaches to make sure it went well. And Mr. Holloway (LHS principal) volunteered his time to help take temps at the various sessions.”

As far as cross country goes, interested runners instead attend running sessions held by coach John Reece that will take place throughout the summer and they do not have to attend conditioning.

Whenever the athletes have completed their 10 sessions, they are allowed to participate in team activities the rest of the summer. As of right now, everything is on track to allow athletes to begin attending camps after June 29.

“Everything is progressing so far to according to schedule,” Pickman said. “Assuming the governor’s phase out stage begins when it is supposed to, we will be ready to begin using the weight room, gyms, and sports equipment. Coaches will be able to have practices and then middle school and high school age camps after June 29. The younger kids who do not have to have the 10 days of acclimatization are able to run the week of June 22. With the schedule the way it is, kids should have no problem getting their 10 days of acclimatization needed to participate in camps.”

Dennis leaves lasting legacy in Louisburg, LHS athletics



Damon Dennis, and his wife Karla, pose for quick picture during a timeout at a Louisburg High School basketball game Dennis was announcing. Dennis, who is better known as Doc D, is handing over his business at Louisburg Chiropractic Office to Dr. Jacob Polzin and is stepping away as the LHS team doctor after 28 years of service. His last day at the office is tomorrow (Saturday).

Almost every day of the week, if you were looking for Damon Dennis, he could be found at his office on 11 S. Broadway St., helping treat those pesky aches and pains, taking X-rays, or mending those beaten up athletes after a game.

Doc D – as he is affectionately known – opened Louisburg Chiropractic Office 28 years ago and has served as the Louisburg High School athletic team doctor for almost that same amount of time.

Dennis has seen it all. The walls in his office are lined with mementos from his years of service to both the community and the high school.

He has taped thousands of ankles, seen even more patients and has touched many lives during his time in Louisburg. That is why this week is one of the more emotional times in his life.

On Saturday, he will officially leave Louisburg Chiropractic Office and hand the reins over to Dr. Jake Polzin. Add to

that, Dennis is also stepping away as LHS' team doctor and will leave an absence on the sidelines and behind the mic that many in Louisburg have come to know.

"My decision to step down and sell the practice has turned out to be the hardest thing I have ever done," Dennis said. "I have poured everything I have into my job and community. It has become my entire existence. I was taught from a young age to serve others and your community. I feel like the pressures I have put on myself have become unhealthy. I have put about 40 years work in to 28 and feel like there is never going to be a good time to make such a huge life change.

"That being said, I feel like I need to make changes while I am still able to do the things that will be best for my family. Dr. Polzin came along and I think he will carry on the work at the office wonderfully. We are a lot alike in many ways. I could not have found anyone better to replace me."

For many, Dennis has been a big part of people's lives, especially in the athletic arena. He has served as the LHS team doctor since 1992 and has treated many athletes in those 28 years.



Dennis (left) and Dr. Jake Polzin pose for a picture in their office. Polzin will officially take over the practice from Dennis after this week, but both have been seeing the patients the last three months.

During the school year, Dennis would leave his place of business every day after 3 to go to the high school to tape up athletes from all different sports and made sure they were all ready to go for practice. After that was over, he would rush back to his office to finish the day treating his patients.

It would be hectic life for some, but it is one that he has treasured for the last nearly three decades.

“My time in practice has been a blessing,” Dennis said. “I truly care about all of the patients and people in the community that I have been involved with. I have tried to be a positive impact on the town through my involvement in different organizations. As with any business, there are bumps in the road. I genuinely appreciate everyone who has had a positive impact on me through these years.

“I have poured my heart and soul in to every aspect of my business and involvement in the community, sometimes at the sacrifice of my wife, Karla. I am eternally grateful for her patience and love. Part of the reason why I am handing over the reigns is that I have a lot of making up for time to do.”



Damon Dennis (middle) walks out of the locker room with the Wildcat football coaches prior to a game.

Dennis and his family have made a lot of sacrifices during his

time and many of the Wildcat coaches – both former and present – appreciate what he has done for them and their players.

“As far as what he has meant to the community, it is immeasurable,” longtime former coach Gary Griffin said. “He came in the first year and made himself available to all the coaches and was there for whatever the kids needed from the medical stuff, to a new pair of shoes, or money to go to a team dinner. He was even there to lend an ear to a kid that was having issues from girlfriends, teacher issues or problems at home.

“For me personally, he was a cheerleader when times were not good, he was an advocate for kids when I didn’t always know what was going on behind the scenes. I trusted Doc like he was a member of the coaching staff. I told him a lot of things in confidence so I could get his advice knowing it would not go any further. As far as the community goes, he is a pillar and he is involved in everything and is held in high regards by most. It is really hard for Doc to tell anyone no, so most of his days are longer than just his office hours. Doc is going to be missed in so many ways. He is a very humble man and he is very deserving of slowing down and enjoying the fruits of his labor.”

A Small Beginning

Back in June of 1992 is when Dennis began to plant his roots in the town he would begin to call home.

Dennis purchased the small satellite office from Dr. Larry Fulk, who at the time also had a practice in Paola. Dennis was less than a year out of school and was eager to get involved in the Louisburg community.

Two months later, Dennis reached out to then Louisburg High School administrator Doug Chisam and asked if he could serve as the team’s doctor – free of charge. Since August of 1992,

Louisburg High School would not be the same.

Dennis made trips over to the high school for treatment and would also follow many of the team's to their games after work was over. It was a life that would go on to create many memories.

"Jim Knox, Don Meek and Doug Chisam were all very supportive and I am forever in their debt," Dennis said. "I started out just going to all games, home and away, and every sport that I could. At that time I was in the office from 6 am to 7 pm and then off to games 3-4 nights a week. The things I have always enjoyed about being the team doctor was the kids and the coaches. High school athletes have not changed since day one. They want someone who cares about and shows interest in what they are doing. I am still close with a lot of the students who have come through the high school and will continue to be.

"My role evolved over the years. I began doing all the taping before practice and games, Impact testing, announcing basketball and other roles as the coaches requested. I enjoy helping others and that is how my role evolved in to so many other areas. Over the years, the coaches have included me and I will always be grateful to them for allowing me to be a part of the experience."



Damon and his wife Karla pose for a picture in front of his office back in the early 90s.

His role got even bigger when the new high school was built and Dennis was asked if he would like to announce basketball games. He certainly didn't mind having a mic in his hand and loved playing off the crowd and making sure the athletes felt a little extra special.

"We had a girls' tournament and Dave Tappan asked me if I would announce the game," Dennis said. "He thought it would be a nice touch to have an announcer. I am not sure he ever asked me to continue, I just did it. I had to be at games anyway and I like to talk, so it worked out. Dave never said to quit, so I just kept doing it.

"I really did enjoy that. I would try to throw in a little funny once and awhile just to see if people were listening. Dottie Cook had a birthday every game night for several years. Knowing the kids so well, it was fun to add their middle name or nickname at the game."

Tappan, who is currently the USD 416 assistant superintendent, worked as the LHS activities director and principal during many of Dennis' years in Louisburg and the two became quick

friends.

With that, Tappan is well aware of Dennis' work ethic and commitment to Louisburg athletics. In fact, he has seen it firsthand.



Doc D lets out a cheer on the sidelines following a big play during the Wildcats' 2010 state championship game.

"Most people know that Doc doesn't take vacations very often," Tappan said. "In fact, it usually takes a team of us to get him out of the office for more than a day. But in 2010, he and Karla scheduled a trip over Thanksgiving break to Chicago. Well, that was also the year of our run to the state football championship and there was no way he was going to miss it. In typical Doc D fashion, he lined things up to perfection. He takes a 5 a.m. flight from Chicago to Kansas City, has Karla drive him to the Legends off of I-70 and at about 6:30 I'm

picking him up and we beat the team to Salina. When the bus finally rolls in, he looks at Coach (Gary) Griffin with a grin and says, 'What took you so long?' About four hours later we were celebrating a championship.

"The commitment that Doc D has demonstrated over the years to the students of Louisburg schools is second to none. From the football sidelines on a Friday night in the fall, to being behind the mic in the LHS gym during basketball season, Doc always supported the students, the coaches and the administration of USD 416. I am proud to call Damon Dennis my friend."

Beyond The Call of Duty

Running a business can be difficult enough, but when you have other responsibilities on top of all that, it can be stressful at times.

The coaches at Louisburg High School never got that when working with Doc D. Veteran and young coaches alike were amazed at the dedication he displayed.

"Doc D is one of the most honest and honorable men I have ever met," Louisburg soccer coach Kyle Conley said. "He has donated countless hours and years for helping Louisburg student athletes. He always went out of his way to help anyone and everyone. He wasn't always just helping players. He would always check in on the coaches as well – checking on their well-being, their teams, and their families.

"Doc always went out of his way to make someone feel important and special. He was NEVER too busy for anyone. He will be greatly missed and he is irreplaceable. Thank you Doc D for everything that you have done for my teams, my family and for myself. You are someone I am lucky enough to call a friend."

That dedication would not only be found after school in the evenings, but even before the sun came up as well.



Doc D checks out Louisburg's Hallie Hutsell following an injury during last soccer season.

"Doc D will be greatly missed," Louisburg volleyball coach Jessica Compliment said. "He unselfishly devoted many hours to our athletes and was always a phone call or a text away. I can't count how many times he would meet myself and an athlete or two at the school at 5:30 a.m. prior to departure for a volleyball tournament. Not only was he a great role model and mentor for the athletes, but he served as a great mentor to a young coach for the past 14 years. He will be greatly missed by many."

However, where Dennis is most recognized was on the football sidelines. He did anything from tending to injured athletes, mentoring future trainers and handing out free food or candy to the student section before certain games.

It wasn't gone unnoticed as many around the school and

community know what Doc D has meant to the district.

"If Louisburg had a Mt. Rushmore, Damon would definitely be up there," Louisburg graduate and longtime coach Jeff Lohse said. "Doc is one of the most selfless people that I know. He was always more than willing to help anyone out and never expected anything in return. I consider Doc to be a great friend of mine and this is definitely bittersweet. I wish him and Karla nothing but the best as they open up this new chapter in their lives. Damon will be missed but his legacy in Louisburg will live on forever."

Dennis always made sure to welcome the new coaches to the district and made them feel a part of the family and that was the case with boys basketball coach Ty Pfannenstiel when he came to the school three years ago.



Doc D was presented with a team signed helmet following the team's award banquet two years ago.

"Doc D is the most selfless man I know," Pfannenstiel said. "What Doc gave to this school and community is unprecedented. He cared so much for all of our athletes, there's no way we are going to be able to replace what he brought to this school. I feel bad for whoever is going to come in and try to fill his shoes – he set the bar way too high."

Dennis has been on the sideline for many of Louisburg's greatest athletic achievements, including three state football appearances and has watched many athletes along the way achieve great individual accomplishments.

He knows that he has been blessed to be able to be a part of Wildcat athletics in one form or another the last 28 years.

“As for favorite memories, it is not always about the wins and losses,” Dennis said. “The things I have most enjoyed is the time spent with athletes and coaches. The things that go on in the locker room, before and after games were the fun part. I have had a behind the scenes view of some pretty amazing people.

“Obviously the 2010 state football championship is at the top of the list. We had gone to the championship twice and come home in second on two occasions. It was a great group to be around and a great experience. If I had to choose a group of kids that really stand out the most, it would be the seniors my first year here (class of 1993). They welcomed me with open arms and made me feel like I was appreciated. I still speak to members of that class often and consider them friends. It was a really special group. I also loved seeing kids accomplish their dreams of success. Louisburg has had its share of champions and athletes that have gone on to do some amazing things.”



Doc D was also good with equipment as he works on Madden Rutherford's helmet prior to a game.

In his last week at the office, Doc D has seen a lot of visitors that have come to thank him for everything he has done. Although Dennis won't be around as much as he used to, he wants people to know that this isn't a farewell – but more of a see you later.

"I want everyone to know how much I appreciate their kind words," Dennis said. "There has been talk of various activities surrounding my career change that have been proposed. While I genuinely appreciate this, I don't think I can handle the attention. My emotions have gotten the better of me and I am not sure that I can handle any celebrations publicly, unless everyone wants to see me cry.

"I am not going away. I just won't be at 11 South Broadway or at the high school every day. Thank you to everyone that has

supported me as I have made every effort to support my community."

No, Doc – thank you...