Pittsburg spoils Louisburg's season opener



Louisburg senior guard Justin Sievert drives the lane on a Pittsburg defender Friday at Louisburg High School. Pittsburg defeated the Wildcats 76-48 in their season opener.

Starting off the season with just one returning starter from a state tournament team last year is difficult enough, but to do it against the No. 7 team in the state is even more challenging.

The Louisburg High School boys basketball team hosted No. 7 Pittsburg on Friday in its season opener and the Purple Dragons handed the Wildcats a 76-48 loss.

The defeat also spoiled the debut of Wildcat head coach Ty Pfannenstiel, who is in his first season with Louisburg.

"I was very impressed with them," Pfannenstiel said of Pittsburg. "I thought we battled hard early, got down and then fought back again which was good versus this team. Pittsburg just opened it up in the second half and they are relentless on the boards.

"They have some athletes out there, but our kids will learn from this. We will watch film and to see how hard we are really playing. It isn't that we aren't trying to play hard, I just don't think they realize what it takes yet."

Louisburg faced adversity early as three starters picked up two fouls in the first quarter, including the team's lone returning starter in senior forward Dalton Ribordy. Junior point guard Brayden Gage and senior Ben Minster were also saddled with a pair of fouls, but Ribordy and Gage later picked up their third in the second quarter.



Louisburg junior Dylan DeShazer goes up for an easy basket Friday. DeShazer led Louisburg in scoring with 16 points.

The Wildcats were forced to go to their bench early and they were able to keep their team in the game in the first half.

"We did some good things out there," Pfannenstiel said. "We had some cold shooting and I don't think we expected three starters to get in foul trouble early. With Ribordy, I don't

think that is what he was expecting from his first game and I think he was a little over aggressive. I liked his intensity, but he just needs to play a little smarter after getting the first foul early.

“We just have to learn and that will come. Pittsburg played with a different speed than what we have seen in practice and hopefully that will open their eyes.”

Junior Dylan DeShazer came off the bench in place of Ribordy and had a big night with a team-high 16 points, including a pair of 3-pointers. DeShazer scored eight straight points in the second quarter to trim Pittsburg’s lead to eight.

Senior Desmond Doles hit a pair of free throws to make the deficit just six, but Pittsburg ended the first half on a 10-0 run to go up 38-22 at halftime.

“Dylan did some good things and he can really shoot it,” Pfannenstiel said. “He bodied up well, played good defense and grabbed some big rebounds. He is going to be a player for us and I was proud of the way we battled back. I don’t think we understand the momentum we could have had if we could have kept building on that.”

DeShazer was the lone Wildcat to score in double figures, but had some help as Minster finished the game with nine points, while Doles and fellow senior Justin Sievert each scored seven.

Louisburg will try and get back on track starting today as it travels to Baldwin High School for the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic. The Wildcats will face off with Burlington at 5:30 p.m. today and then will meet Baldwin at 7 p.m., tomorrow.

“This is the best way to get that taste out of your mouth is to get right back on the court,” Pfannenstiel said. “We will see what kind of mistakes we can correct and we have to make sure we are ready to go.”

LOU	**12**	**10**	**16**	**10 – 48**
PITT	**19**	**19**	**21**	**17 – 76**

LOUISBURG (0-1): Dylan DeShazer 16, Ben Minster 9, Justin Sievert 7, Desmond Doles 7, Dalton Ribordy 3, Parker Perentis 3, Noah Hill 2, Kohl Vogel 1. 3-point field goals: 4, (DeShazer 2, Sievert, Perentis)

Wildcat boys basketball hopes to build on state appearance



Louisburg head coach Ty Pfannenstiel is in first year with the Wildcat boys basketball team as he tries to build off the program's best finish in 12 years.

Last season, the Louisburg High School boys basketball team had its best finish in 12 years as the Wildcats earned a spot in the Class 4A-Division I state tournament.

It was a senior-laden team that caught fire at the right time and put together one final run.

However, almost every part of that team is gone and the Wildcats are ready to start anew for the 2017-18 season – from the players all the way to a new coaching staff.

Louisburg returns just one starter from a season ago and two other players that saw varsity time. The rest is a different lineup and a new head coach in Ty Pfannenstiel, who took over for Jason Nelson after he resigned at the end of last year.

Although there will be several fresh faces for the Wildcats, they hope this team can build on what last year's version accomplished.

"Absolutely we want to build off of that momentum," Pfannenstiel said. "The schedule is going to be grueling right off the bat, so we will have a battle on our hands each night. These guys are competitors and the expectations are extremely high for this group."

It has been a good offseason for the new Wildcat head coach as he used that time to get to know his team and what to expect out of this group. He also wanted to make sure the players knew what to expect from him.

Pfannenstiel came to Louisburg from Oakley High School, where he was the school's athletic director, head football coach and head girls basketball coach. He also spent time as an assistant boys basketball coach at Gardner-Edgerton.

"I feel like the transition has been very smooth," Pfannenstiel said. "We got a good start with our summer workouts and are just continuing to build off of that. My expectations are for our kids to be good representatives of Louisburg High School in how we prepare and compete on the court, and how we conduct ourselves off of the floor.

"Obviously, my system and terminology is new to these guys so there is a big learning curve. I think as the year moves on we will get more comfortable in what we do."



Senior Dalton Ribordy is the team's lone returning starter from last season's state tournament team.

The Wildcats will lean heavily on their five returning seniors, including returning starter Dalton Ribordy. The Louisburg forward was a factor inside for the Wildcats last season and was among the team leaders in rebounds.

Ribordy (6-foot-4) will join seniors Ben Minster (6-1), Desmond Doles (6-4), Justin Sievert (6-0) and junior Brayden Gage (5-9) in the starting lineup. Minster and Doles also saw a lot of varsity minutes a season ago.

"I really like this group," Pfannenstiel said. "First of all, they are all good kids which makes coaching so much fun. Even though we have five seniors, our varsity experience will still be pretty limited at the start. Dalton has the most experience on the court. He has really emerged as a leader for us in

practice. He’s a workhorse day in and day out and we are expecting a big year out of him. I think all the seniors are going to be major contributors for us, each in their own way.”

Senior Parker Perentis (5-10), juniors Dylan De Shazer (6-4), Noah Hill (6-4), Kohl Vogel (6-1) and sophomore Madden Rutherford (6-3) will all see varsity time as well off the bench.

Pfannenstiel is also excited about the depth he has this season, which will allow the Wildcats to do some different things on both ends of the floor.

“I think we have pretty good depth and athleticism,” he said. “I think this will allow us to play up tempo and be great on defense each night. Our kids are excited to play. We have a lot to learn, but I think we have made good progress each day.”

Louisburg will get its season started Friday when it hosts Pittsburg. The tipoff will follow the varsity girls game, at approximately 7:30 p.m.

The Purple Dragons were picked to win SEK League and Pfannenstiel knows his team will be tested early and throughout the season.

“I want us to be extremely competitive each night,” he said. “I think with last year’s success, the expectations have been raised for this group, which is exactly how we want it. We expect to be great each night we step on the court.”

KSHSAA releases 2017-18 classifications

The Kansas High School Activities Association released the classifications for the 2017-18 season on Tuesday morning, and for Louisburg High School, much remains the same.

The Wildcats are currently a Class 4A-Division I program with 532 students, but after this season the classification system will change. Class 4A will get rid of the divisions and 4A will have just 36 schools. Louisburg is still expected to be in 4A for the foreseeable future.

However, several schools across the state made classification changes.


Kansas State High School Activities Association

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE


Kansas State High School Activities Association

2017-2018 Classifications and Enrollments

Enrollment figures as of September 20, 2017 based on ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades.

Note: Schools are listed in descending order



Arkansas City and Sumner Academy dropped from Class 5A to 4A for the upcoming season, while Galena, Hugoton and Marysville all moved up to 4A. Maize South jumped from 4A to 5A.

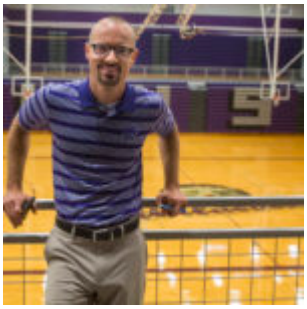
Colby , Goodland, Scott City and Haven all dropped from 4A to 3A schools, while McLouth moved up from 2A to 3A.



Hays is currently the largest 4A school with 791 students, followed by Sumner Academy (782), Andover Central (764), Bonner Springs (762) and Arkansas City (757).

Sub-state and regional assignments for the fall season will be released in the coming days.

Holloway excited for new role as LHS activities director



Louisburg High School activities director Jeremy Holloway is looking forward to his new position as he starts his 17th year in the USD 416 school district.

Growing up, Jeremy Holloway wasn’t one to stay in a place for too long.

Holloway spent most of his childhood and young adult life moving from place to place. He wasn’t the type of person who envisioned himself putting down roots.

“I was a constant migrant,” Holloway said.

That was until he moved to Louisburg with his wife Megan. Now instead of a migrant, Holloway is deep-rooted in a town he loves.

It made his decision, almost two months ago, an easy one.

Back in June, Holloway was hired as the new Louisburg High School activities director and assistant principal, following the resignation of former activities director Darin Gagnebin. Holloway, who has spent the last 16 years as a teacher at Louisburg Middle School, is ready for the new challenge.

“I am really looking forward to it,” Holloway said. “I have been here in Louisburg for 17 years. I never lived anywhere for more than four years in my life until I came to Louisburg. I never knew what it was like to be a part of a community and when I got here I just fell in love with the town. I was excited to become a part of it and Louisburg became important

to me. The teaching was great and getting to know all the kids and see them grow up all the way through college was fun. Now I see some of my former students teaching in the building here and it is an amazing feeling. It just felt like home to me."

Fate seemed to step in at the right time for Holloway. He entered the summer still planning to teach history at the middle school, but the dominoes quickly started to fall into place.

Holloway was well on his way to getting his administration degree this past school year as he was planning on holding on to it until something in Louisburg came open. He didn't have to wait long.

"I had to get recertified, so I talked with my wife and I said why get an education masters if it is just going to move me on the pay scale," he said. "Why not get an administration degree to have options? There are other places near here that are looking for people, but that isn't what I want. The only move I would make is to stay in Louisburg. I happened to be down in Eureka Springs on vacation and I got a text in middle of night that Gagnebin had resigned. I had just got my diploma the day before we left. I applied and it turned out well and hopefully it was a good thing."

Louisburg USD 416 superintendent Dr. Brian Biermann had to sift through more than 20 different applicants for the job, but he believes Holloway is going to do great things in the position.

"Jeremy has been a loyal and dedicated teacher and coach in our community for 17 years," Dr. Biermann said. "Jeremy possesses many strong leadership attributes that will allow him to be a strong, instructional leader at Louisburg High School. He is passionate about education, has a strong work ethic and is committed to our community.

"Jeremy is all about building positive relationships with

students, staff and the community. For 17 years he has been building these relationships. Now, he will be able to build upon his unique skill set in a leadership position in our district. I am excited to see the great things Mr. Holloway can contribute to our district and community in this new role."

One of the first things Holloway wanted to do was to get to know his new coaching staff. Several new coaches were hired this past school year and he wanted to see what they were all about.

"I just want them to feel comfortable with me and let them understand that I am approachable," Holloway said. "That relationship piece is huge. I am getting to know where they are from, how many kids they have and I want them to feel comfortable coming to me. We do lose some great experience, but we have gained some capable coaches and a lot of enthusiasm. I just want to be a positive impact for them."

Since he started officially on July 24, Holloway has been hard at work in several different areas, but one of the bigger things going on now is the shuffling of the Frontier League.

The league, which will be at seven schools this year, will move up to nine starting for the 2018-19 school year. Bonner Springs, Tonganoxie and Piper will join the league, while De Soto will depart.

Baldwin, an original league member, is concerned the school will move down to Class 3A starting in 2018-19, thanks to changes in the classification system. If it happens, it will create scheduling conflicts for football.

"The biggest conflict right now is Baldwin is right on the edge of becoming 3A and they think it will happen," Holloway said. "If Baldwin is in our league, which is what we plan on, they are required to play five district games for football, which only leaves them three league games. If only three

league teams play Baldwin, then the rest of the league teams have to find another team to play. I have schools from Lansing, Independence, Coffeyville, Chanute and other schools calling me trying to lock up games. There are so many different scenarios so we just have to wait and see. That is one thing that I am really working on right now."

With the activity season fast approaching, Holloway is excited for everything to get underway. He is also looking forward to getting to know the fan base more.

"I have always been highly impressed of Louisburg and the support of its teams and the turnout we will get, especially for football games," Holloway said. "I encourage Louisburg to continue the tradition of being a class act. I think that every town has its own culture and a lot of it starts with the coaches. If your coaches are harassing refs, your players are probably going to start to learn that they can do that and that will trickle down to the parents and crowd. Without pointing fingers, there are certain places where that is the climate. I think Louisburg has been great. There are always going to be situations, but I would encourage fans and parents to support our coaches and let them coach.

"I am looking forward to an exciting year. We have great coaches, that are experienced and they are very innovative. They are organized and they all seem truly excited about what is going on. The community can rest assured that the coaches that are in place right now have the best interest of the kids and the programs."

Opinion: Time to look back and enjoy successes



The Louisburg High School football team was one of many bright spots for LHS athletics this past school year.

We live in a world where, especially in sports, we often don't take time to reflect on our accomplishments – and instead we are in a rush to move on to the next set of obstacles.

In reality, we are in a "what have you done for me lately" society and sometimes don't remember, or enjoy, those special moments where our hard work has paid off.

Yes, I understand you don't want to relish in those accomplishments as that doesn't make you a better athlete, or whatever your specialty may be, but not taking the time to enjoy the ride can be detrimental.

And what a ride it was for Louisburg High School athletics this past season.

The Wildcats had a special year in several sports, and before we focus on the 2017-18 campaign, we should look back at what the 16-17 season brought us. Just take a look at what these Wildcats accomplished.

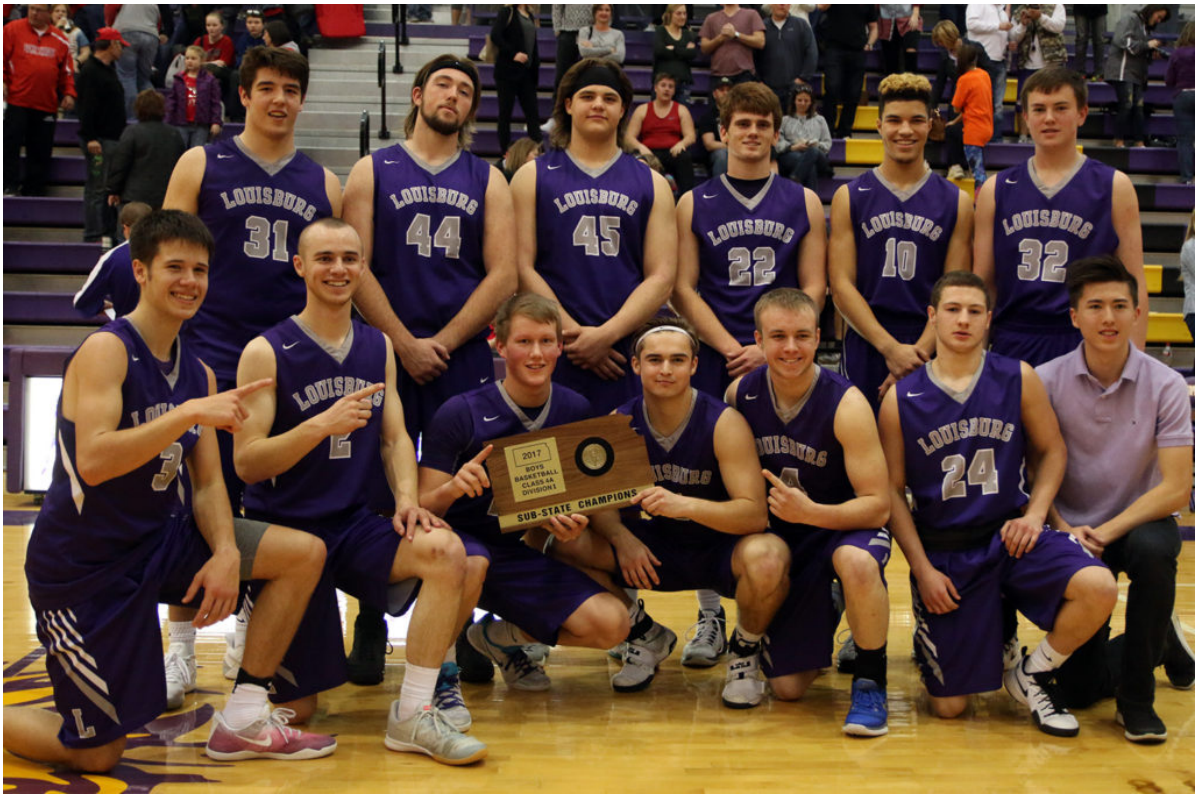
- There is probably no better place to start than the Louisburg soccer teams. Both the boys and girls teams earned spots in the state semifinals for the first time

in program history and both finished fourth. The boys team made it to state for the first time in their 14 years, while the girls advanced to the state tournament in just their second season.



The Louisburg High School girls soccer team finished fourth in the state in just their second season. The Wildcat boys also finished fourth as they advanced to the state semifinals for the first time in program history.

- It was quite the season for the Wildcat boys basketball team as they advanced to the state tournament for the first time since 2005. Louisburg won its sub-state tournament with a 64-52 win over Fort Scott in the championship game.



The Louisburg boys basketball team qualified for state for the first time since 2005.

- The Louisburg football team made quite the run in the 2016 season. The Wildcats won their first playoff game since 2012 and earned a regional title in the process with a win over Independence. Even though their season came to an end in the next round to eventual state champion Bishop Miege, the Wildcats' still finished with an 8-3 record.
- Wrestling had another big season as the Wildcats qualified eight for the Class 4A state tournament in Salina. Although Ryan Adams was the lone state medalist, as he finished sixth overall at 138 pounds, the Wildcats tied a school record for number of state qualifiers that was set back in 1984.
- In cross country, the Wildcats sent three runners to the state meet and had their first state medalist since 2006 when freshman Trinity Moore finished 19th overall, as she, Wyatt Reece and Tim Smith competed at the Wamego meet. Moore was also the school's first female runner to earn a state medal.

- Freshman golfer Calvin Dillon became the Wildcats' first state medalist in several years as he finished 10th at the Class 4A state tournament and was one of two Wildcats, along with Ty Martin, to qualify for state. Dillon could quite possibly be the first freshman golfer in school history to get a medal, but since golf stats aren't quite as well kept, it is hard to tell for sure.
- T.J. Dover and Isabelle Holtzen came through with state medals of their own following the state track meet. Holtzen finished seventh at the Class 4A meet in the pole vault and Dover was eighth in the discus as both medaled for the first time. Holtzen also broke the school record in the pole vault earlier in the season after she cleared 11 feet, 1 inch.
- The girls basketball and softball teams both had big improvements from a season ago as they each reached 10 wins despite falling in the first round of their sub-state and regional tournaments. Softball doubled their win total from 2016, while the girls basketball team improved by seven victories.
- The Louisburg volleyball team advanced to the sub-state championship game against rival Paola and was just a few points away from advancing to its fifth consecutive state tournament. The Lady Cats also finished the season with 23 victories.

Most schools across the state would love to have the kind of success Louisburg experienced this year and to me that doesn't seem like it is talked about enough.

Sometimes we get caught up in losses or not meeting expectations, when in fact, compared to a lot of schools, Louisburg exceeds expectations – at least it does mine.

Could these programs be better? Sure they could and the coaches would be the first to tell you. At the same time, we all need to take a step back, look at the big picture and enjoy the success we have.

To me, Louisburg athletics is as healthy as it has been in a long time.

A lot has been made about all the coaches that have left recently. Louisburg will have four new head coaches this upcoming school year and several new assistants.

Some people have considered this a mass exodus due problems at the school. It couldn’t be further from the truth. A lot of it is just coincidence. For some it was retirement, others wanted to spend more time with family and a few more just wanted a change.

Former activities director Darin Gagenbin left to be closer to his family and work in the town where he lives. I know all about how great of an opportunity that is and it is the same thing I did almost 10 years ago when I moved here with my family. Working in the town you live in is something you can’t put a value on.

Louisburg found a great replacement in Jeremy Holloway, who has been with the district for 17 years and is invested in the community. The school has also brought it a lot of new, young coaches that have come in with excitement and new ideas.

It is bittersweet for me as a lot of those coaches I had a chance to get to know really well are now gone. Although I am mainly a solo operation, I consider a lot them my co-workers and it stinks to see them move on, but I also know they are doing the best for themselves and their families.

The same could be said for the class of 2017. The group of seniors I worked with this past year were great to get to know, just like all the senior classes before them.

I appreciated all their support and what I do could not be done without those kids. It is great to see them grow up and watch them become successful outside the classroom. I am not a teacher or coach, but still appreciate all they accomplish.

With 2016-17 in the rear view mirror, it will soon be time to focus on the upcoming season and I couldn’t be more excited to see what accomplishments this group of Wildcats have in store. It has all the makings of a fun and special year.

Gagnebin steps down as LHS activities director



Louisburg High School activities director Darin Gagnebin presents the Wildcat girls soccer team with their regional championship trophy last month. Gagnebin resigned his post earlier this month to take a similar position in Paola.

Darin Gagnebin has a fondness for Louisburg High School, his coaches and students.

That made it all the more hard to say goodbye.

Gagnebin resigned his post as LHS assistant principal and activities director earlier this month to tentatively take the same position at Paola High School. His last day in Louisburg was last week.

Gagnebin spent a total of 17 years in the Louisburg school

district, with the last six spent as activities director. He was also a teacher and coach for 11 years.

Family was the biggest reason he decided to make the move. Gagnebin and his family currently reside in Paola and his two children attend schools in Paola.

“People have come and gone, but it is still family here,” Gagnebin said. “I am comfortable here and Louisburg has done a lot for me. I just can’t pass up an opportunity to be where my kids are at. I know I could have brought my kids here, but my wife and I made that decision a long time ago of where we were going to live because of where she taught and I taught. I never thought back when we first moved to Paola and when we had kids, that we would be in this position.”

It was a difficult decision for Gagnebin as he leaves behind a group of coaches, several of whom he recently hired. The Louisburg district had a number of new coaches come on board for the upcoming school year.

“We have gone through some trials in the last couple of years and that is with any school,” Gagnebin said. “I told my wife, that if this was going to happen the way it did and I could pick the time, I wish the timing would have happened two years down the road. I would have loved to see what this young group of teachers and coaches are going to do coming in.

“I told my wife that I was really excited about coming back next year and I felt we made some good hires. We have a passionate coaching staff coming on and they are great people with new ideas. It just happened out of the blue.”

The opening came when former Paola High School principal Phil Bressler took the new principal job at Pittsburg High School. Paola assistant principal and activities director Jeff Hines was elevated to the Paola principal position, which left the Panthers needing an activities director.

It can be traced back even further when the Pittsburg High School journalism class wrote an investigative piece that ousted its newly hired principal, which forced the school to reopen the position and eventually hired Bressler.

“Had Pittsburg’s journalism class not done their job, we wouldn’t be sitting here talking right now,” Gagnebin said.

The Paola position was an opportunity Gagnebin just couldn’t pass up as he will have an opportunity to watch more of his children’s events and work closer to home.

“I have missed a lot of my own kids’ stuff,” he said. “But the people here have been really great, (Principal) Tammy (Thomasson) now and Dave (Tappan) before her, to let me try to get to as much stuff as I can. I still miss things. These opportunities don’t come around very often and I just figured this would be a great fit for me and my family.

“But I couldn’t ask for a better group of coaches here in Louisburg. They are good and passionate about what they do. I really have developed some good bonds over the years. I know some have left and some have stayed on, but the coaches and staff I have had has been great.”

Changes to classification system will impact Louisburg

Member schools in the Kansas State High School Activities Association sent ripples across the state last week when they passed two proposals that will affect high school athletics beginning in the 2018-19 season.

For football, the two 4A divisions and Class 2-1A have been eliminated. They have been replaced with 32 team classifications in 4A, 5A and 6A, while 3A and 2A will have 48-team classifications. The remaining schools will play in 1A.

The second proposal was for all other sports. Other than football, classes 4A, 5A and 6A will have 36 teams in each division. Classes 3A and 2A will have 64 schools each, while the remaining schools will be in 1A.

The football proposal passed with a vote of 215-73 and the all-sports proposal passed with a 207-145 majority. All of the classes, except 6A and 1A, were in favor.

With those new proposals comes a different playoff system for many of the sports.

Louisburg High School, which is a Class 4A school, will see changes in five sports programs – football, basketball, baseball, softball and volleyball.

In football, Louisburg will no longer have district play as the playoffs will begin in week nine. Class 4A will play an eight-game regular season and then each side of the state will be seeded in a bracket from 1 through 16, based on their record.

Given the fact the Frontier League currently has nine teams after recently adding three schools in Tonganoxie, Bonner Springs and Piper, the Wildcats will no longer have to play a non-league opponent. De Soto recently chose to leave the Frontier League following the 2017-18 season to join a new league made up of 5A schools.

“Normally we go out in October to Salina, we would redistrict for 2018 and 2019,” Louisburg activities director Darin Gagnebin said. “I don’t even know that we will have to go cause our league has nine teams, so we would play eight league games and the ninth game gets assigned to you for the playoffs. As of right now in football, we will no longer have any out of conference opponents as long as we maintain nine in the league.”

Another change will be in basketball. For the postseason, there will no longer be substates, instead the 18 teams on each side of the state will be bracketed out by record beginning with two play-in games.

From there, the bracket will be sized down to four-team pods, with the higher seed hosting the game. Teams will have to win two games to reach the state tournaments. Pods will be 1-16-8-9 seeds, 4-13-5-12, 2-15-7-10 and 3-14-6-11. The eight pod winners will advance to the state tournament.

“Depending on where we fall, it could increase travel depending on where we are seeded,” Gagnebin said. “We could have to drive down to Coffeyville or drive up to Atchison, you just don’t know until the end of the year.”

Basketball schedules will also be different with the addition of the new league teams in 2018-19. There will no longer be double round-robin schedules. There will be eight league games, six tournament games and athletic directors will have to find a way to fill the other six.

“We will start in August about building the new league

schedule and it will be tough," Gagnebin said. "One thing you will see is we won't have double round-robin's anymore because we can't play everyone twice. I think there will be traditional rivalries that are held to where we would play those twice due to proximity. Quite frankly, it wouldn't be smart for Louisburg not to play Paola, Ottawa or Spring Hill twice due to higher attendance numbers and proximity. It will probably increase travel costs because you are playing more non-conference opponents."

Baseball and softball will be similar as there will no longer be regionals. Like basketball, there will be two play-in games with the same pod structure. The top four overall seeds will each host all games in their pod on the same day.

In volleyball, there will be four substates across the state, broken into eight brackets. There will also be nine teams in each substate, which will require a play-in game. Teams will need to win two games to qualify for state.

Postseasons for wrestling, track, soccer, cross country and golf will remain the same.

However, even with the new changes, the proposals don't address the competitive balance issue between public and private schools that many members have been talking about for the last several years.

Although he likes the new playoff system, the fact these changes don't address the problem is one of the reasons Gagnebin voted no on the new proposals.

"It was a shock because I didn't think it was going to pass," Gagnebin said. "Other than the playoff system, in my opinion, it doesn't do anything for Class 4A. All the work that went into splitting 4A into two divisions is now gone. I feel bad for those schools because they put in a ton of work. It doesn't really affect us because we are locked into 4A and we are right in the middle of the pack.

“I didn’t see how it benefited Louisburg or 4A, other than the playoffs system where it should ensure you have more competitive teams at state. Since you are seeding them out now, you shouldn’t have a substate of teams with losing records. They could have done that without this.”

Although private schools like Bishop Miege, which have won several state titles in the last few years, could find itself moving up a classification with the new measures, it isn’t a permanent solution according to Gagnebin.

“Enrollment could bump some private schools up a class, but that doesn’t fix the problem,” Gagnebin said. “Private schools can control enrollment. According to (Miege) they are losing enrollment and could be back in 4A. It doesn’t impact the private issue at all and that is why I didn’t vote for it. It is not fixing what the 80 percent of athletic directors polled in Kansas asking what the biggest problems in classifications are. It doesn’t address the real problem.”

Pfannenstiel ready to lead Wildcat boys basketball



Ty Pfannenstiel has been hired to take over the Louisburg High School boys basketball program. Pfannenstiel, who was previously the athletic director, head football coach and head

girls basketball coach at Oakley High School, will also serve as Louisburg's strength coach.

Coming off its first state tournament appearance in 12 years, the Louisburg High School boys basketball team had to find a new leader for the program, following the resignation of former coach Jason Nelson.

The Wildcats came across a good fit during their coaching search.

Louisburg hired Ty Pfannenstiel to take over the Wildcat team for the upcoming season. Pfannenstiel has experience in several different sports. He had different coaching jobs during his time at Oakley and Gardner-Edgerton high schools and is looking forward to working with the Wildcat players.

"I'm extremely excited about taking over the boys program," Pfannenstiel said. "From my days of teaching and coaching at Gardner Edgerton High School, I've always had a lot of respect for Louisburg High School and their sports teams. This is a community that has high expectations, and that is exactly what I was looking for."

Pfannenstiel has been at Oakley High School since 2014 and was the school's athletic director. He was also the head football, head girls basketball and assistant track coach.

He came to Oakley from Gardner-Edgerton, where he taught and coached at the school from 2005 to 2014. During his time with the Blazers, he was an assistant football, boys basketball and baseball coach.

Although Pfannenstiel has his own ideas on what he wants to implement into the Wildcat program, he knows the players are going to have to buy in to the team concept first.

"The two most important things I will expect of my players

is commitment and character," Pfannenstiel said. "I want kids in my program that are committed to their teammates and committed to making themselves a better player. If they make a commitment and work hard…good things will happen.

"And more importantly than that, I want good character kids in my program. I want kids that are going to be the leaders and role models for our school. We plan on winning lots of basketball games at Louisburg, but I'm much more concerned with these kids being successful in their life outside of basketball."

Pfannenstiel will get a chance to work with his team starting this month, including during the team camp beginning on June 19.

"As for our system, we will try to play an exciting brand of basketball…hard-nosed defense with an up tempo offense," he said. "I'm excited about getting started with our players this summer and seeing the makeup of our team."

Along with his job as head boys basketball coach. Pfannenstiel will also be the head strength and conditioning coach for Louisburg High School and he knows that getting better on the court starts in the weight room.

"The weight room is going to be an integral part of developing our program," he said. "I don't think there's any coach out there that wouldn't want his/her athletes to be as strong and explosive as possible. That will be our goal in the weight room at Louisburg High – develop strong and explosive athletes. I can't wait to start working with all of the Louisburg athletes in the weight room."

Harding signs to play basketball at Hesston College



Louisburg High School senior Grant Harding signed his letter of intent on May 2 to play basketball at Hesston College. Sitting next to Grant are his parents Dotty and Ken Harding. Standing (from left) is former Louisburg head coach Jason Nelson, brother and assistant coach Drew Harding and Hesston coach Dustin Galyon.

It has been quite a year for Grant Harding.

The Louisburg High School senior helped the Wildcat basketball team to their first state tournament in 12 years, he led them in scoring and rebounding and was rewarded for those accomplishments with first team all-Frontier League honors.

Now Harding is ready to take the next step in achieving a dream.

On May 2, Harding signed his letter of intent in front of family and friends at LHS to play basketball at Hesston College.

“I am very excited to play basketball at the next level,” Harding said. “(Hesston) has been talking to me since December and called me during Christmas break for the first time. They have always seemed like a good option to me and the Hesston program is a very respectable program and a very good team. I

am very excited to finally know where I am going next year.”

Hesston College, which is two-year school located in Hesston, Kan., has had a successful men’s basketball program in recent years, including two years ago when the Larks earned a spot in the junior college national tournament in 2015.

Hesston Coach Dustin Galyon hopes Harding can be one of the pieces that can help get the Larks back on the national stage in the near future.

“I am super excited to have Grant be a part of the Hesston College basketball family,” Galyon said. “We are excited for the role he will play on our team – a team that has been nationally ranked three out of the last five years.

“We think Grant can be an impact guy for us as a freshman and that is saying a lot. There is a great responsibility that comes with that. We think his best basketball is ahead of him. After watching him play, working him out and talking with coach (Jason Nelson), we think he has the chance to be a full-ride kid at the Division II level or higher after he is done with us.”

Playing at a high level has always been a goal for Harding, but he also wanted to get a chance to play right away. Harding feels Hesston helps him in both regards.



Grant Harding, who averaged 17 points a game for the Wildcats, is excited about the opportunity to play at Hesston.

"It is even more exciting to know that after the first two years, I will still have plenty of opportunities to play college ball somewhere – maybe even more that what I had this time around," Harding said. "Through high school, I have always played three sports, but it is exciting to only play basketball for the next couple years and get better at basketball and staying in basketball shape. It has always been a big adjustment from sport to sport every year."

Harding, who averaged 17 points and eight rebounds a game for the Wildcats last season, had a few options to play at the college level, but it was Hesston that stood out following his official visit to the school.

“When I went for my visit, I met all the players and they all seemed like great guys,” Harding said. “I had a chance to sit down with all of them and they are all extremely nice. A lot of them are very talented. Coach is a great guy and I know he cares for his players and he has won a lot of games. The whole thing seemed to plan out like I wanted it to do.”

Harding is also ready to take the next step in the academic world as well. While in college, Harding plans to major in secondary education with an emphasis in history.

“Hesston is not just a great fit for him from a basketball perspective, I think it is a great fit off the floor as well,” Galyon said. “He will receive a private education and transfer to anywhere in the country. Hesston is not the typical 2-year school as we have kids from 35 states and 19 countries. He fits the academic piece to that as well and we are a Christian college.

“Grant is going to be challenged on the basketball floor, he is going to be challenged in the classroom, and he is going to be challenged as a young man in his faith. We are seriously excited to have him a part of our program.”

Three schools to join Frontier League



Three schools have accepted invitations, or will soon, to join the Frontier League for the 2018-19 season and beyond.

Piper, Bonner Springs and Tonganoxie will be leaving their current home – the Kaw Valley League – to join the Frontier after all three were offered spots during a meeting in early April.

Their addition will now bring the Frontier League to 10 members, along with Louisburg, Paola, Ottawa, Spring Hill, De Soto, Baldwin and Eudora. The trio of schools made presentations to the current Frontier League members for admittance due to the fact the Kaw Valley is in the process of breaking up. Current member Bishop Ward is leaving the league next school year, which leaves them at six.

Piper quickly accepted the invitation following a vote of its board of education and is looking forward to joining the Frontier.

“We are extremely excited to get into a league with like-size schools and competition levels,” Piper High School activities director Doug Key said. “We believe Piper High School is good fit for the league due to the competition level in all activities and will match up well. We have played all current schools in various activities and felt like this would be a positive move for the future.

“Being in a league with various size schools and us being the smallest wasn’t going to be optimal. We are still are competitive in many areas, but we needed to secure a more balanced future. We feel like being in the middle, size-wise, will keep us competitive for years to come.”

According to this year’s classification numbers, Piper has a current enrollment of 601 students. Turner is the Kaw Valley’s biggest school with 1,114 students, followed by Lansing (910), Bonner Springs (758), Basehor-Linwood (710) and Tonganoxie (618).

Bonner Springs, Piper and Tonganoxie compare to other Frontier League programs. De Soto is the biggest school in the league with 854 students, followed by Ottawa (709), Spring Hill (699), Paola (612), Louisburg (563), Eudora (471) and Baldwin (410).

Bonner Springs' board of education also approved the move to the Frontier League and Bonner Springs High School principal Rick Moulin echoed Key's statement.

"We have competed against teams in the Frontier League the past several years," Moulin said. "The schools in the Frontier League are a lot like Bonner Springs – we are competitive and value sportsmanship. The teams in the Frontier League are similar in size to Bonner Springs, which will be a great gauge for us as we try to compete at the highest level possible in 4A. Bonner Springs is a small town community, with great community support, much like the schools in the Frontier League.

"We are excited to be joining with Piper and Tonganoxie. We hope to continue to be able to compete against Basehor-Linwood, Lansing and Turner. I have a lot of respect for their schools and their programs. Ultimately, the Frontier League was a better fit for our students and our community."

Tonganoxie hasn't officially accepted the invitation, but it is just waiting for its board of education to approve the move during its May 8 meeting. At that point, according to Tonganoxie High School principal Mark Farrar, it will immediately send letter accepting the invite.

"We are very excited to join the Frontier League," Farrar said. "This new partnership will be very good for our students as well as our community. Joining the Frontier League will provide some great opportunities for our students from an athletic and activities standpoint. Tonganoxie mirrors many of the activities that most or all Frontier League schools offer.

We see it as a league that will be a good fit for many years to come.

“One of the things that I think gets overlooked is the idea that a strong league doesn’t just offer opportunities on a playing field, but it also offers a chance for kids to network and make lifelong connections with students from all across the league. The Frontier League is a strong and stable league and we believe that it can advance the overall mission of what we want to do at Tonganoxie.”

Louisburg High School activities director Darin Gagnebin now believes the league is healthier than ever.

“By adding teams to our league, it solidifies our league numbers for years to come ensuring that we, as a league, will remain strong and competitive whether schools decide to leave or stay,” Gagnebin said. “We could have been in a situation in which the Frontier League could have dwindled to four or five schools, but instead we will be stronger at 10 teams, if all teams decided to stay.

That situation came about in March when it was reported by the Tonganoxie Mirror that Kaw Valley League member Lansing wanted to create a larger league that would have contained all or some combinations of Lansing, Blue Valley Southwest, De Soto, Leavenworth, Bonner Springs, Basehor-Linwood, Tonganoxie, Ottawa, Piper, Spring Hill, Turner and Topeka schools Seaman, Shawnee Heights and Topeka West.

A meeting was held between all the schools to look at possibilities of building a stronger league that would rebuild the current Kaw Valley that has Lansing, Turner, Piper, Bonner Springs, Tonganoxie and Basehor-Linwood.

The Frontier League responded with meetings of its own shortly after to discuss each member’s happiness in the league after De Soto, Spring Hill and Ottawa attended the March meeting with Lansing.

De Soto mentioned needing more competition at the sub-varsity level since it has a growing enrollment and looked at the possibility of playing in a league with bigger schools since it has made the jump to Class 5A.

Spring Hill's enrollment also looks to make that jump in three to four years, while Ottawa's enrollment usually hovers around the line between 4A and 5A. Still, all three schools stated during league meetings they were happy in their current position, with De Soto and Spring Hill stating they might need to make a move due to increasing enrollment numbers.

Faced with the possibility of losing at least two members, the Frontier invited Kaw Valley members to make presentations to join the league in order to fill those spots. Piper, Tonganoxie and Bonner Springs all made presentations and the Frontier League principals all offered invitations shortly after.

At this point, it appears the league is going to move forward with 10 members as no school has stated their desire to leave the Frontier – however, it doesn't mean it can't happen in the near future.

"I cannot speak for other schools in the Frontier League about their desire to stay or to leave," Gagnebin said. "I know some are considering their options and will do what they believe is in the best interest of their school, and I would support them in whatever they decide. I do believe though whatever they decide, with the addition of these new schools to our league, the Frontier League will remain solid in numbers and will continue to be one of the most competitive leagues in Class 4A.

"I believe the three schools that chose to petition our league for membership will be a great fit for the Frontier League. They offer all sports and activities that are currently offered by the league at all levels. Their enrollments, though

larger than Louisburg, will put them in the middle to upper middle in size within the league.”

The league schedule will also look different beginning with the 2018-19 season, as there will no longer be a double round-robin schedule in certain sports and not every school will play each other in football.

“The biggest challenge will be league scheduling,” Gagnebin said. “Although it will change how we schedule things as a league, most league schools already have some or all of these schools on some of their athletic schedules already. It could increase the amount of non-league games we have to go out and find in some sports, since with 10 teams you can no longer play a double-round-robin schedule as we have currently, due to the amount of games allowed by KSHSAA.

“This is both good and bad, meaning, it could increase travel and some expense, but it allows us greater flexibility in the schedule to play other teams outside the league as well. One negative will be in football. With 10 teams, we will not be able to play every team in the league as we do now. As stated before though, solidifying the league as far as numbers go and increasing the competitiveness of the league are also positives.”