

OPINION: 2017 was a banner year for Louisburg



Having the opportunity to cover Louisburg High School athletics, for what has been almost 10 years now, I have seen a lot of different highs and lows.

I have been lucky enough to cover state championship teams and watched several athletes perform at the highest level. However, this last year has to be one for the record books when it comes to success at Louisburg High School.

For Wildcat athletics, 2017 was a banner year for many reasons.

Louisburg qualified for the state tournament in three different sports – volleyball, girls soccer and boys basketball – and the first two each placed in the top four.

The volleyball team was just a point away from winning the school's first state title after the Lady Cats finished second to defending state champion Rose Hill, and tied for the best finish in school history.

The Wildcat girls soccer team qualified for the state semifinals in just its second year of existence and suffered a heartbreaking 1-0 loss in the semifinals to eventually take fourth overall.

In boys basketball, the Wildcats qualified for the state tournament for the first time in 12 years despite getting

knocked out in the first round by defending state champion Bishop Miege.

Most schools would love to have that success with their athletic programs, but for Louisburg, that was just the tip of the iceberg. As special as the seasons were for those three programs, the Wildcats also thrived in a few other sports.

Louisburg's cross country program, which has been around for 19 years, had the best season in its history – by far. Not only did the Wildcats have three state medalists for the first time ever, but it had a year that featured the school's first female league champion in Trinity Moore and the best league finish by a male, Wyatt Reece, who took second.

Tim Smith continued the Wildcat success as he became the school's first regional cross country champion, and Moore, Reece and Smith each went on to win a state medal. Moore and Smith also set school records for the fastest time.

The Wildcats also qualified the girls team for the first time in school history as Moore, Carlee Gassman, Reilly Alexander, Isabelle Holtzen, Kaitlyn Lewer, Payton Shaffer and Emily Williams took third at regionals and eventually 10th at state.

The Wildcat wrestling team tied a program best by qualifying eight for the state tournament and came back with a medal by Ryan Adams, who finished sixth.

Louisburg's track and field team persevered and qualified for state in 10 events and had two regional champions in Quinn Rigney and Chris Williams. Isabelle Holtzen and T.J. Dover each brought home their first state track medals.

The boys soccer team was one goal away from making its second consecutive trip to the state semifinals, but their run was halted by a loss to McPherson in state quarterfinals. Still, the Wildcats won a regional title, which was the seventh in team history.

Freshman Calvin Dillon led the Wildcat golf team this past year and recorded the program's first state medal in more than decade as he took 10th overall.

All these things and more I described in detail when releasing my top 10 stories of the year and what a year it was.

Obviously, I haven't had a chance to look through all the results, but I can't imagine a more successful year for LHS when you are talking about athletics. There may have been years in the 70s, 80s and 90s that I don't know about, but I find it hard to imagine one that tops 2017.

Sure, the 2010-11 school year featured two state championship teams in football and boys track and field and that was a fantastic time to be Wildcat, but as far as calendar years go, 2017 was one to remember.

Even outside the sports world, Louisburg High School put together many great accomplishments as the Wildcat Marching Band was selected to participate in the Tournament of Roses Parade and put on a great show for the nation on New Year's Day.

Then in October, the FFA Food Science team of Hallie Hutsell, Faith Seuferling, Addie Katzer and Hattie Harris won a national championship, while Hutsell and Seuferling placed second and third in the nation, respectively.

I don't get a lot of opportunities to cover programs or groups outside the sports world, but these are fantastic accomplishments and deserved to be recognized.

For me, 2017 was a whirlwind. It seemed around every corner, school history was being made and there aren't many schools around the state that can boast about the successes Louisburg has experienced.

It was an honor for me to cover many of these historic runs in

Wildcat history and I hope you all realize how lucky you have it. Louisburg is a school filled with great coaches who care about the student athletes.

Believe me, I know how fortunate I am to be able to be a part of something special and this place is it. If 2018 is half of what 2017 was, it will be a fun ride.

I can't wait for what 2018 has in store and hopefully you all will follow along to see what these Wildcats can accomplish.

Lady Cats get win over Ottawa before holiday break



Senior Mikayla Quinn goes up for two of her nine points Tuesday during Louisburg's home contest against Ottawa. The Lady Cats rolled to a 64-37 victory to even their record at 3-3 on the year.

The Louisburg High School girls basketball team got it exactly what it needed before taking some time off during the holiday break – a victory.

After losing in overtime last week to Eudora, the Lady Cats rebounded in a big way as they controlled Ottawa from the

opening tip Tuesday and never looked back in a 64-37 win at Louisburg High School.

The victory evened the Lady Cats' record at 3-3 and was important as they wrap up the first part of their season.

"After letting one slip away from us against Eudora, we had a week to prepare and the girls worked hard to get ready for this," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "It was at home, and our last game before break and it is always tough with it being finals week. The girls were really focused though, and they were really focused in practice and I thought it carried over into the game."

Focus certainly wasn't a problem for Louisburg as it dominated almost every aspect of the game and it started on the defensive end. Louisburg forced 23 Ottawa turnovers, a lot of which turned into transition points and easy baskets on the other end.

The Lady Cat offense took a big step forward Tuesday as it bounced back from just scoring 37 points in a loss against Eudora.

"It just shows that we can get out and run the floor," Lowry said. "We have some things that we want to work on over break with that, but we were good offensively. It was a good collective effort from everyone and I thought it was good to get the win."

"Defensively, I still see some breakdown stuff, but we are working hard and the effort is good because we care about being good for each other. We still need to clean up some stuff on the defensive end, but I like our effort and how hard the girls are playing."

Louisburg got a nice boost off the bench from Madilyn Melton. The freshman forward scored a team-high 14 points, including three 3-pointers and had six rebounds. Senior Bailey Belcher

also finished in double figures with 12.



Sophomore Haley Cain puts up a shot over two Ottawa defenders Tuesday.

Seniors Isabelle Holtzen and Mikayla Quinn each added nine points in the win and junior Carson Buffington just missed out on a double-double with eight points and 11 rebounds.

The outcome of the game never seemed in doubt as the Lady Cats opened the game on a 16-6 run, and after an evenly-played second quarter, led 31-21 at halftime.

Ottawa would get no closer as Louisburg put the game away in the third quarter as the Lady Cats outscored the Cyclones 17-4 in the frame and never looked back.

The big lead allowed Lowry to play young bench players at several different points throughout the contest.

"That is what you hope for as a program is that you can get girls experience that are on the sophomore and freshman levels," Lowry said. "I talk to them all the time in practice about making sure they are doing the things to put themselves in position when it is their time to be on the floor. They have taken it to heart. Those young players are going to make those young player mistakes, but their effort is really good and they are starting to figure out that toughness piece."

Louisburg will open the 2018 part of the schedule on Jan. 4 when it hosts Baldwin at 6 p.m. The Bulldogs are currently the No. 1-ranked team in Class 4A-Division II.

LOU	16	15	17	16 -
64				
OTT	6	15	4	13
- 37				

LOUISBURG (3-3): Madilyn Melton 14, Bailey Belcher 12, Isabelle Holtzen 9, Mikayla Quinn 9, Carson Buffington 8, Haley Cain 4, Carlee Gassman 4, Alyse Moore 3, Reilly Ratliff-Becher 1. Totals: 17 12-24 64. 3-point field goals: 6, (Melton 3, Buffington, Holtzen, Quinn)

Lady Cats fall to Eudora in overtime



Louisburg guard Carlee Gassman dribbles into the lane Tuesday during the Lady Cats' contest against Eudora in their Frontier League opener at Eudora High School.

EUDORA – Following its league opener, the Louisburg girls basketball team walked off the floor at Eudora High School knowing it let a victory slip through its fingers.

The Lady Cats had a lead late, went into overtime, but came up short in a 46-37 loss to Eudora, in a game that was plagued by foul trouble and turnovers. It was a combination they weren't able to overcome.

As disappointing as the loss was for the Lady Cats, they plan to use this setback as a positive moving forward in what is a long season ahead.

"They care and they want to do the right things," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "Their effort continues to be good, but there is a lot of things that we have to clean up. There are a lot of things we have to get better at, and collectively our mental toughness has to get better."

"It was very soft in many aspects, whether it was our passing, our cuts, catching the ball or our play around the rim. There was a lot of soft play for us and we will fix that."

Louisburg was able to get up and down the floor in the first quarter and those transition points helped the Lady Cats jump out to a 13-8 lead. Their offense slowed down a little bit in the second quarter, but still took a 19-14 halftime advantage.

Foul trouble and turnovers caught up with the Lady Cats in the third quarter as starting point guard Carlee Gassman and forward Carson Buffington each picked up their fourth foul and had to sit for several minutes. Louisburg also committed seven turnovers in the period, which took the Lady Cats out of what they wanted to do offensively.

Eudora was able to use its zone defense to keep Louisburg out of the middle and limit its scoring chances as the Cardinals outscored Louisburg 15-7 in the third.

"We like to attack the rim, but if you push the ball in the open court then they can't set their zone up," Lowry said. "We didn't do a very good job of pushing the ball or running the floor. Once they got set in their zone, it was a challenge for us to get into some things and our passing just wasn't very good."

The Lady Cats (2-3) were able to tie the game early in the fourth on baskets from Haley Cain and Gassman, and then took a 34-32 advantage on a bucket from Buffington with four minutes left.



Senior guard Isabelle Holtzen grabs a rebound Tuesday at Eudora.

Eudora scored the next two to go back on top before Gassman tied the game on an assist from Cain with a minute left. Both teams had a chance to take the lead at the end of regulation, but their attempts fell short.

In the overtime, the Cardinals scored six straight points, while starters Gassman and Isabelle Holtzen fouled out, leaving the Lady Cats short-handed.

Cain led the Lady Cats as she finished with 12 points, six rebounds and three steals. Holtzen also scored in double figures with 10 points to go along with three steals.

Buffington led the Lady Cats with 11 rebounds and freshman Madilyn Melton recorded seven. Senior Bailey Belcher led Louisburg's defense with four steals.

Louisburg will try and get back on the winning track Tuesday in its final game before the holiday break. The Lady Cats will host Ottawa at 6 p.m.

"We are going to be ready to play," Lowry said. "We have a week off and it is not easy having a week of practice from a loss to our next game, especially since this is our last game before break. We are going to work really hard to get some of this stuff fixed."

LOU	13	6	7
10	1 - 37		
EUD	8	6	15
7	10 - 46		

LOUISBURG (2-3): Haley Cain 12, Isabelle Holtzen 10, Bailey Belcher 6, Carlee Gassman 6, Carson Buffington 2, Madilyn Melton 1. Totals: 16-44 5-12 37. 3-point field goals: none

Rebounding lifts Lady Cats to win over Anderson County



Louisburg junior Carson Buffington leads a fast break down the floor Friday against Anderson County in the final game of the

Wildcat-Bulldog Classic at Baldwin High School. Buffington pulled down a team-high 20 rebounds in the Lady Cats' 54-32 win.

BALDWIN CITY – The shooting percentage may not be where he wants it yet, the execution wasn't always there either, but Louisburg girls head coach Shawn Lowry couldn't help but smile.

His team showed him exactly what he wanted to see.

The Lady Cats' effort and aggressiveness was in midseason form Friday during the final game of the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic against Anderson County and it showed on the glass. Louisburg pulled down 42 rebounds, including 20 on the offensive end, that led to a 54-32 victory over the Bulldogs at Baldwin High School.

Louisburg finished the tournament with a 1-2 record after it opened with losses to a pair of state-ranked teams in Burlington and Baldwin.

"We knew those two games against Burlington and Baldwin would be challenging and tough games," Lowry said. "We just wanted to come out against Anderson County and be physical and aggressive. We wanted to set the tone and the girls took that to heart. Our rebounding was really good, but we are still making a lot of mistakes as a young team. At the same time, that is great to do with a win."

At the heart of those rebounding numbers was Carson Buffington. The Louisburg junior forward pulled down a game-high 20 rebounds to go along with her seven points and four steals.

Buffington was all over the floor for the Lady Cats as she created several second chance opportunities with her nine

offensive rebounds.

"No one can coach that and no one can tell her to do that – it is just what she does," Lowry said. "I have officials that are coming over and talking to me saying 'That No. 4 (Buffington) is a beast and she is what – like 5-7?' She plays like she is 6-2. That is someone who hasn't seen her play before.

"It is crazy, but it is all about want-to. It is nothing other than she wants to rebound more than anyone else and wants to get to that ball more than anyone else. It is special."



Freshman Alyse Moore battles for a loose ball on the floor Friday against Anderson County.

Buffington's willingness to rebound has seemed to rub off on the rest of her teammate as the rest of the Lady Cats are constantly fighting for rebounds or loose balls.

Senior guard Bailey Belcher is a prime example as she was next on the team with six rebounds to go along with a team-high 14 points. Point guard Carlee Gassman and freshman forward Alyse Moore each had four rebounds, while Moore finished seven points off the bench and Gassman added four assists.

Isabelle Holtzen, who battled foul trouble in the first half, responded well in the second half as she finished with nine points to go along with a pair of assists and two steals. Sophomore Haley Cain added eight points and three rebounds in the win.

"I am seeing our guards crash the boards more and I thought Holtzen and Belcher really rebounded well," Lowry said. "Haley is starting to get into her own rebounding and Alyse Moore comes in off the bench as a freshman and she has some of the same characteristics that Carson had as a freshman about how she sees and reads the ball. It is neat that Alyse, and the rest of the younger girls, get to see Carson play and that will just help them later."

Louisburg (2-2) struggled offensively early on as Anderson County took an 11-8 lead, but the Lady Cats closed out the first quarter on a 9-0 run to grab a 17-11 advantage.

It was all Louisburg in the second quarter as it outscored Anderson County 17-7. The Lady Cats' defense also came up big as it held Anderson County to just 10 points in the second and third quarters combined.

"Defensively we did some things that helped us do some things offensively," Lowry said. "It gave us that attacking mentality. Our shooting percentage is not where we want it to be yet, and we are not doing some things the way we need to, but our effort and toughness is really good. That is probably what I am most proud of right now."

"Our effort never changed and our toughness didn't change no matter who we were playing in this tournament. The other stuff

we can continue to work on, but those are things that I would be really concerned if we weren't doing that."

Louisburg will try and make it back-to-back wins Tuesday when it travels to Eudora for its Frontier League opener. Tipoff is set for approximately 6 p.m.

LOU	17	17	7	13 -
54				
AC	11	7	3	
11 - 32				

LOUISBURG (2-2): Bailey Belcher 14, Isabelle Holtzen 9, Haley Cain 8, Carson Buffington 7, Alyse Moore 7, Madilyn Melton 4, Mikayla Quinn 3, Carlee Gassman 2. Totals: 20 8-13 54. 3-point field goals: 2, (Holtzen, Quinn).

Lady Cats fall to back-to-back state-ranked teams



Louisburg junior Haley Cain puts up a shot in the lane Tuesday against Baldwin in the second round of the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic at Baldwin High School. The Lady Cats fell 62-31 to the Bulldogs, who are ranked No. 5 in the state.

BALDWIN CITY – Not even a full week into the season, the Louisburg High School girls basketball team wrapped up what might be its toughest two games of the year.

After getting a season opening victory Friday against Pittsburg, the Lady Cats opened the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic with back-to-back games against a pair of state-ranked opponents.

On Monday, Louisburg faced off with Burlington, which is the No. 4 team in Class 4A-DII and then had to meet Baldwin, the No. 5 squad in 4A-DII, the following day.

For a team with just one returning starter from a year ago, it was a tall task for the Lady Cats as they fell to Burlington, 76-46, and then lost to Baldwin, 62-31, on Tuesday. Despite the setbacks, Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry believes his team can learn from this experience.

“I think it’s very beneficial for our young team to play some of these top caliber teams early in the season as we are learning and growing,” Lowry said “It provides a great platform to develop the type of toughness we want to play with. I am confident this group of girls will continue to improve throughout the season as they gain experience and confidence.”

Against Burlington, the Lady Cats got a big game from their two team captains. Junior Carson Buffington recorded her second straight double-double with 16 points and 10 rebounds, to go along with four steals.

Senior Isabelle Holtzen also scored in double figures with 10 points to go along with seven assists and six rebounds. Freshman Madilyn Melton scored nine points and had five rebounds, while senior Bailey Belcher pulled down six boards.

Despite that, the Lady Cats just couldn't slow down Burlington as it scored 45 first half points on its way to a 45-21 halftime advantage.

It was the same type of start Tuesday against Baldwin. The Bulldogs used pressure defense and 3-point shooting to take a 36-17 lead at halftime. Baldwin hit 10 3-pointers on the night to pull away from the Lady Cats.

"Burlington and Baldwin are very good teams that are well deserving of their current state rankings," Lowry said. "Both teams returned some very talented players from last year and are well coached. We expected these to be very competitive games and I was proud of how our girls responded."

Holtzen and Buffington once again led the Lady Cats on both ends of the floor. Holtzen responded with a team-high 11 points, while Buffington added nine points and a team-high 18 rebounds.

Sophomore Haley Cain was also a factor on the glass for Louisburg as she was second on the team with 10 rebounds.

"Through these first few games, Carson and Isabelle have been great leaders and unselfish in their play," Lowry said. "Haley, Bailey and Carlee (Gassman) have and continue to gain valuable experience and are getting more confident with each outing. We have some younger players that are beginning to see they can compete at this level and how they can contribute to the team's success"

Louisburg will try and end the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic with a win Friday when it travels back to Baldwin for a matchup with Anderson County. Tipoff is set for 7 p.m.

BUR	22	23	15	16 -
76				

LOUISBURG (1-2): Carson Buffington 16, Isabelle Holtzen 10, Madilyn Melton 9, Carlee Gassman 5, Haley Cain 3, Bailey Belcher 2, Alyse Moore 1. Totals: 15-52 7-16 46. 3-point field goals: 3, (Buffington 2, Gassman)

LOU	8	9	8	6
- 31				

BAL	22	14	14	12 -
62				

LOUISBURG: Isabelle Holtzen 11, Carson Buffington 9, Bailey Belcher 5, Haley Cain 4. Totals: 10-45 7-18 31. 3-point field goals: 4, (Holtzen 2, Buffington, Belcher)

Lady Cats hold on to win season opener over Pittsburg



Louisburg junior Carson Buffington (right) and Isabelle Holtzen battle a Pittsburg player for a loose ball Friday in Louisburg during the Lady Cats' season opener. Louisburg defeated Pittsburg 46-43.

In its first game after losing four starters from a year ago, there were times where Louisburg High School girls basketball team looked like a seasoned club.

The Lady Cats jumped out to a double digit lead in the first half thanks to an offensive burst against Pittsburg on Friday in their season opener.

Then came the second half where both teams filled up the stat sheet with turnovers.

“I kept asking the official, ‘This has to be the first game, right?’” Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. “It was, and those are some things you expect from a young team first team out.”

However, the Lady Cats accomplished something a lot of others didn’t expect – a victory. Despite a late charge from the Class 5A school, Louisburg held on for a 46-43 win and got its season off on the right foot.

“It felt so good,” junior Carson Buffington said. “I know there are a lot of people out there who are doubting us, but it felt so good to prove that we can do it and that we are actually a pretty good team.”

Buffington, the team’s lone returning starter, couldn’t have asked for a better start to her season as she was three steals shy of a triple-double. She finished with a team-high 12 points and 13 rebounds to go along with seven steals.

Louisburg’s other team captain, senior Isabelle Holtzen, rose to the occasion as well as she added seven points, six rebounds, four assists, two steals and two blocks.

As a team, the Lady Cats forced 25 turnovers that included 14 steals and four blocked shots. Defensively, Louisburg held Pittsburg to 28 points through three quarters.

"The defense did play well at times, but we have a lot of stuff to work on rotation wise," Lowry said. "Our veterans in Carson and Isabelle really stepped up at different times for us and we are going to learn a lot from this win."

The Lady Cats (1-0) got help from several other players as well.



Louisburg freshman Madilyn Melton goes up for two of her nine points Friday against Pittsburg.

Freshman Madilyn Melton came off the bench to score nine points in her first varsity game and added seven rebounds. Sophomore Haley Cain scored seven points, while senior Bailey Belcher made her varsity debut and scored seven points as well. Sophomore point guard Carlee Gassman added four points.

"It was great to get a win, at home, and in our season opener," Lowry said. "We had a great crowd and a great student

section and it was a lot of fun. For what we are right now, we learned so much throughout this game and grew up so much. Them watching film on their mistakes is going to be so awesome for them and understanding their responsibilities.”

Louisburg got off to a quick start as it took an 8-2 lead on baskets from Belcher, Gassman and a 3-pointer from Buffington, who knocked down three in the game. Pittsburg eventually whittled the lead down to one, before Cain hit a jumper at the buzzer to give Louisburg momentum into the second quarter.

The Lady Cat built their lead to start the second as they went on a 10-1 run that was keyed by a pair of 3-pointers from Holtzen. Melton ended the run with a steal and score to put Louisburg up 10 points and took a 32-23 lead at halftime.

“Everyone played really well and stepped up,” Buffington said. “It is amazing to see how far we have come since we started practice two weeks ago.”

Both teams took a step back in the third quarter as the defenses took over as Louisburg and Pittsburg combined to commit 21 turnovers during the eight minute stretch.



Point guard Carlee Gassman puts up a shot in the lane Friday in the Lady Cats' win over Pittsburg.

"The first half was good offensively, but we knew that team over there (Pittsburg) is a good team and they are well coached and that it was going to be a battle in the second half," Lowry said. "It was a sloppy, slow third quarter and it probably wasn't a lot of fun to watch."

Louisburg held a 42-30 lead with four minutes left in the contest, before Pittsburg turned up the pressure and forced the Lady Cats into eight turnovers. The Purple Dragons whittled the Lady Cats' lead down to three, but Louisburg wouldn't let them get any closer.

"They persevered and they were tough through adversity," Lowry said of his team. "They did the things that you hope for as a coach and that you constantly talk to them about and it is up

to them to pull through. They were faced with adversity and making a lot of mistakes that a young, immature team will make, but they got through it and came together."

The schedule doesn't get easier for the Lady Cats this week as they take part in the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic at Baldwin High School. Louisburg will face Burlington today and will play Baldwin tomorrow before finishing up with Anderson County on Friday. Burlington and Baldwin are both ranked in the top 10 in Class 4A-Division II.

"This is the last year for the tournament, so the girls are looking forward to playing in it one more time," Lowry said. "Burlington is always well-coached and a really good team that returns a lot from last year. They do a lot of things that we will have to prepare for. Baldwin is one of the best teams in 4A and Anderson County is always a scrappy team, so it should be a fun tournament."

LOU	14	18	6	8 -
46				
PITT	11	12	5	15
- 43				

LOUISBURG (1-0): Carson Buffington 4-7 1-2 12; Madilyn Melton 2-7 4-6 9; Bailey Belcher 3-13 1-4 7; Haley Cain 3-10 1-6 7; Isabelle Holtzen 2-6 1-3 7; Carlee Gassman 1-7 2-5 4. Totals: 15-54 10-26 46. 3-point field goals: 6, (Buffington 3, Holtzen 2, Melton).

Louisburg girls basketball excited for upcoming season



Senior Isabelle Holtzen is one of three seniors for the Louisburg girls basketball team this season and one of just four returning varsity players from a season ago.

The Louisburg High School girls basketball team will have a little different look to it this season – and for good reason.

Louisburg had to say goodbye to five seniors, four of whom were starters, off a team that improved by seven wins last year and finished with a 10-11 record and a close defeat in the sub-state semifinals.

The loss of production will be a hurdle for the Lady Cats to overcome this season, but they are welcoming the challenge with open arms as head coach Shawn Lowry is excited about his group of players.

“With having new and young players that have limited experience in the program, and at this level, the players with experience will be asked to play different roles at different times and I expect there to be a learning curve,” Lowry said. “However, what’s great about this group is that they are making big improvements each day because of how hard they work, their passion for wanting to learn and their unselfishness to do what’s best for their team.”

Lack of varsity experience is something the Lady Cats will have to deal with from time to time during the season.

Junior forward Carson Buffington is the team's lone returning starter. Buffington is a two-time all-Frontier League player after earning honorable mention honors a season ago.

Buffington led the Frontier League with 11 rebounds a game to go along with six points and two steals a contest. Lowry is hoping Buffington can have an even bigger season this year, especially on the offensive end.



Junior Carson Buffington is the lone returning starter for Louisburg, who led the Frontier League with 11 rebounds a game.

Louisburg returns senior guards Isabelle Holtzen and Mikayla Quinn, who gave the Lady Cats minutes off the bench last season. Senior Bailey Belcher, who is in her first year with

the program, will also look to give the Lady Cats some help at the guard/forward spot.

"Isabelle and Mikayla have been in the program for all four years," Lowry said. "They have both grown so much in that time and have really matured into good leaders. They embrace the process, they are great teammates and have a great deal of pride in their program.

"Bailey is a great fit and has already made an immediate impact to our team by her work ethic, toughness and athleticism. She is a great competitor and will continue to make big gains with each day."

Buffington, Holtzen and Belcher will begin the season in the starting lineup and will provide the Lady Cats with a lot of quickness and athleticism.

Louisburg will also feature a new point guard in sophomore Carlee Gassman, who transferred in from Iowa this year. Gassman will be the floor general and will be joined by sophomore forward Haley Cain in the starting five. Cain saw some time off the bench last season as a freshman.

Quinn, along with sophomores Sydni Keagle, Reilly Ratliff-Becher and freshman Madilyn Melton, will also see time off the bench.

The new personnel will bring some changes to the Lady Cats' offensive and defensive philosophy, but the attitude hasn't changed.

"What's been great about our program the last couple of years has been the growth and maturation in the leadership of our young players," Lowry said. "We have several sophomores that came into this season much stronger, more confident and with much improved fundamentals because of their commitment.

"Although the mentality with how we want to play the game

doesn't change year to year, we will look to change up some things we do both offensively and defensively based on our personnel this year."

Like most seasons, Louisburg will be competing in a difficult Frontier League as it will face off with state-ranked teams such as Paola (Class 4A-DI, No. 5), Baldwin (4A-D2, No. 10) and De Soto (5A, No. 9). The Lady Cats will also see Burlington (4A-D2, No. 6) early in the year.

"The Frontier League will again have some of the very best teams in the state," Lowry said. "In addition to a very strong league, we will have the opportunity to play some very good and ranked teams in our non-conference and tournament schedule. With all this said, I trust in our players to compete with great effort and pride every time we take the floor."

Louisburg will open its season at home Friday when it hosts Pittsburg. Tipoff is set for approximately 6 p.m., and the Lady Cats are ready to get the game started.

"The girls have worked hard in preparing for the upcoming season," Lowry said. "Our upperclassmen have helped foster an environment that is competitive and positive with their work ethic and attitudes.

"The girls are always anxious to start playing games after the preseason conditioning work and three weeks of practice."

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.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The 2017-18 KSHSAA senior high membership is 354 schools. Wichita-Northwest Magnet school is an unclassified member school.

School classification changes with enrollment ranges are as follows:

(Last year's (2016-2017) classification is shown in parentheses.)

Class	Number of Schools	Range	Schools Changing Class
5A	32	2451 - 1886	Kansas City-J.C. Harmon (5A) Wichita East
5A	32	1803 - 812	Wichita South Wichita West (5A)
4A	46	794 - 287	Arkansas City (5A) Galena (5A) Hesston (5A) Kansas City-Burner Academy (5A) Marysville (5A)
3A	64	286 - 156	Cobey (A) Garden City (A) Hesston (A) Mulvane (2A) Rush City (A)
2A	94	156 - 92	Arkansas City (A) Belton (A) Cessna (A) Jefferson-Holmes County (A) Leavenworth (A) Marion (5A) Olathe (A) Salina-St. John's Military Academy (A) St. Francis (A) Sykesville (A)
1A	87	82 - 20	Anderson County (A) Coliformed Falls-Cloud County (A) Marion-Marmaton Valley (2A) Rush City (A) St. John-Holmes (2A) Tabor (A) Valley Falls (A) Washington County (2A)

Kansas State High School Activities Association 2017-2018 Classifications and Enrollments

*Enrollment figures as of September 26, 2017
based on ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades.*

Note: Schools are listed in descending order.

Schools changing with enrollment ranges are as follows:

(Last year's (2016-2017) classification is shown in parentheses.)

Class 6A

Class 5A

Class 4A

Class 3A

Class 2A

Class 1A



** Note: Per classification Rule 5-2-2, enrollment lists are broken by using the previous classification cycle count.*

** Note: Classes 4A and 3A are divided into two groups. For more information, see the specific activity pages on the website for more information.*

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.

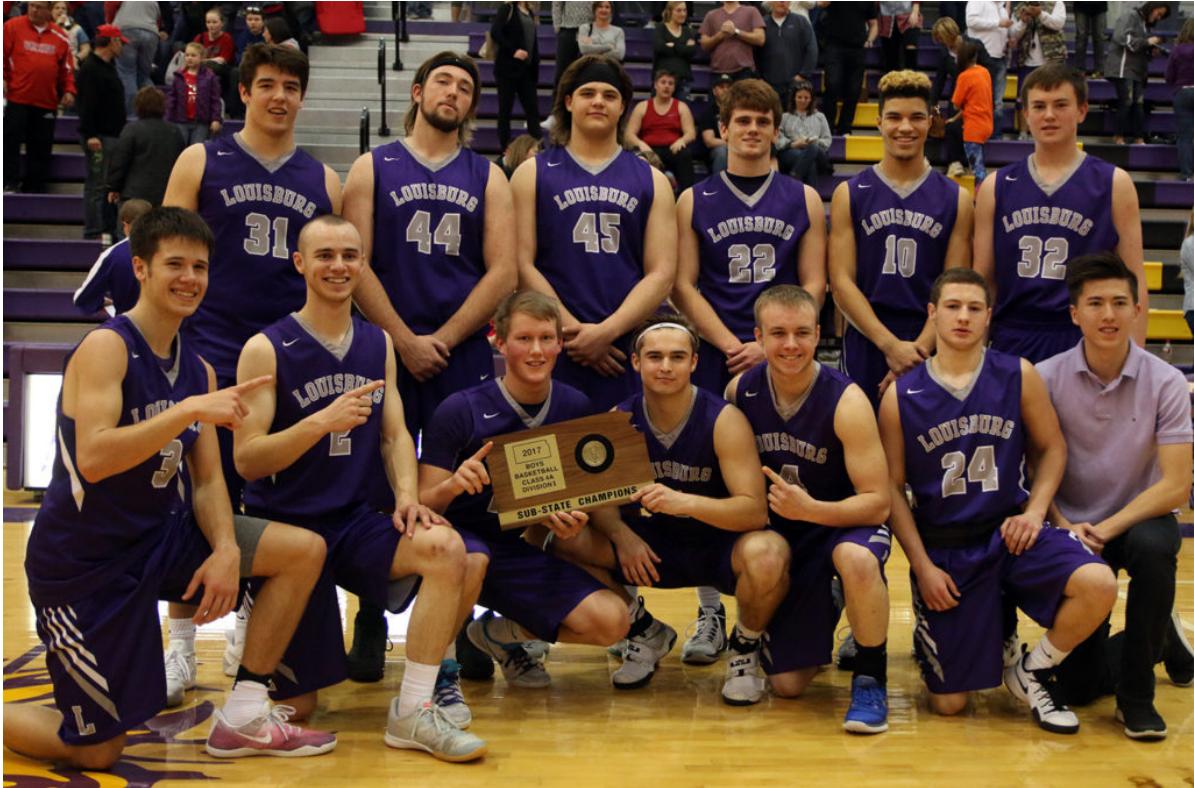
The Wildcats had a special year in several sports, and before we focus on the 2017-18 campaign, we should look back at what the 16-17 season brought us. Just take a look at what these Wildcats accomplished.

- 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 in 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.