

New defense helps Lady Cats rout Tongie in opener



Louisburg junior Sydni Keagle rips down a rebound Friday during the Lady Cats' season opener against Tonganoxie at Louisburg High School. The Lady Cats rolled to a 58-26 win.

It was a new season for the Louisburg girls basketball team Friday when it opened at home against Tonganoxie, but the Lady Cats had a little different look to them.

Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry wanted to play to his team's strength and decided to employ a 1-3-1 defense to start the year. It would allow the longer, more athletic Lady Cats to cause more havoc.

It may have been just one game, but the new strategy worked like a charm.

The Lady Cats forced 25 turnovers and recorded 18 steals en route to a 58-26 victory over the Chieftains, in which Louisburg forced a running clock in the fourth quarter. It was the start to the season the Lady Cats were looking for.

"They are jacked up," Lowry said of his team. "After you go through three weeks of practice and the preseason conditioning that we had, just to get on the court and play in a game is great. Then to have a win on your home floor in the season opener is fantastic."

Offensively, Louisburg was able to feed off its defense as it used a 20-point third quarter to pull away from Tonganoxie as it got several baskets in transition. Defensively, the Lady Cats frustrated the Chieftains as they held them to just seven second half points.

"It is something we have worked on from the start of this season, but we did some stuff that I hadn't really done before," Lowry said of his defense. "For our first night out, I thought it went pretty good. There are a lot of things that we need to clean up, some rotation stuff that we need to work on, but all-in-all it was pretty good."

"All year long it is going to have to be that way for us. Our defense is going to have to set the tone every night out. Our effort, our hustle and our toughness is going to have to shine in every game for us to be successful."



Sophomore Alyse Moore goes up for a basket and gets fouled Friday in Louisburg's season opener.

Several players shined for Louisburg on Friday as the Lady Cats had three finish in double figures. Sophomore Madilyn Melton had a strong start to her season as she finished with a game-high 20 points.

Forwards Carson Buffington and Alyse Moore also cracked double figure scoring, and were also problems for Tonganoxie on the defensive end. Buffington, a senior, finished with 13 points and a game-high nine rebounds. She also had six steals and a team-high five assists.

As for Moore, the Louisburg sophomore finished with a team-high seven steals to go along with her 13 points and was 4-for-4 from the field and 5-for-7 from the free-throw line. She also added three assists.

The Lady Cats also got help from players that were new to the varsity lineup, including junior Erin Lemke, who finished with seven points.

"We got a lot of opportunities off our motion stuff and it really got us some cleaner looks at the basket without having to create a lot of things on our own," Lowry said. "The girls did well with it. We do have some girls that are learning new positions, but I am so proud of those kids that have been junior varsity players for us and have developed and grown up. You have girls like Sydni Keagle, Erin Lemke and Alyse Moore who are playing a lot of varsity minutes and they did great."

Both teams struggled to get into a rhythm offensively early in the game, but the Lady Cats did get out to an 8-2 lead in the first quarter and eventually settled in and led 30-19 at halftime.

The second half was all Louisburg as it outscored Tonganoxie

20-6 in the third quarter to pull away, and it was all thanks to the Lady Cats' new defense.

"That is a good team over in that other locker room," Lowry said of Tonganoxie. "They have some really good seniors and some really good post players. In fairness to them, going into the first game of the season and going against a team you haven't seen before, was probably tough and they maybe weren't expecting that defense. If we played them next week and they knew what to expect, who knows what the outcome would be. But I thought our girls did a good job tonight."

Louisburg will try to make it back-to-back wins Tuesday when it hosts Burlington, which is currently ranked No. 3 in Class 3A. Tipoff is set for 6 p.m.

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58				
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LOUISBURG (1-0): Madilyn Melton 8-14 3-7 20; Carson Buffington 4-8 4-8 13; Alyse Moore 4-4 5-7 13; Erin Lemke 3-5 1-2 7; Haley Cain 1-3 0-2 2; Megan Foote 1-4 0-0 2; Aly Traffis 0-0 1-2 1. Totals: 21-42 14-28 58. 3-point field goals: 2, (Melton, Buffington)

Buffington to lead more

experienced Lady Cats



Louisburg senior Carson Buffington returns to lead the Lady Cats after earning All-Frontier League second team honors last year. Buffington and the Lady Cats open their season Friday at home against Tonganoxie.

In what was an eight-win season a year ago, the Louisburg girls basketball team featured a lot of youth and inexperience in its varsity lineup.

It was an up and down season that featured a pair of wins over rival Paola, before falling to the Panthers in the sub-state tournament and watched them advance to state. The Lady Cats also had to say goodbye to two starters from a year ago, including all-league performer Bailey Belcher.

However, the good thing about playing with a young team is that they get older and more experienced and head coach Shawn Lowry hopes that pays off for his group.

"We have been fortunate to have several unselfish players that have embraced the process of their development by playing wherever it was best for their team at the time and in many cases playing up to the six-quarter limit many nights," Lowry said. "As such, several of those girls are now positioned to step in at varsity roles to contribute."

"Last year we talked about having inexperience and a learning curve with new and young players. This year those players are

more experienced, have a better understanding of expectations and have hit the ground running."

One of those players is senior Carson Buffington, who has hit the ground running since her freshman season. The Louisburg forward has led the Frontier League in rebounding the last three years, and is a 3-time all-league player, including a second team selection a year ago.

Buffington was selected team captain, along with junior forward Haley Cain, and both players fixture to be prominent players underneath the basket.

"Carson's leadership has been important for our team since she was a freshman," Lowry said. "At that time, it was more subtle in what she gave in practices and games. Now as a senior, she has really developed into a great leader for us. She's our vocal leader, no one works harder than she works and she is one of the most unselfish players."



Junior forward Haley Cain was named team captain with fellow teammate Carson Buffington.

Three starters return to help lead the Lady Cats this year in Buffington, Cain and sophomore Madilyn Melton, who started several games as a freshman. Juniors Sydni Keagle and Erin Lemke will also crack the starting five after seeing varsity minutes off the bench last season.

Senior Kennia Hankinson, along with sophomores Alyse Moore, Megan Foote, Brooklyn Diederich and freshman Delaney Wright will also be in the varsity rotation this season.

"What has been great coming into this season has been the growth and development of several players from last season," Lowry said. "We have several juniors and sophomores that are much stronger, more confident and improved fundamentally. We have had very good competition in our practices, girls are

really pressing each other and I expect we will have several girls play big roles at various points throughout the season."

The Lady Cats will need that experience as their schedule got tougher this year with the addition of three teams to the Frontier League in Piper, Bonner Springs and Tonganoxie. Add in returning state champion Baldwin to the mix and it will be another tough road through the league.

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

Louisburg will get its first chance to compete Friday when it hosts Tonganoxie in a 6 p.m., tipoff. The Lady Cats have been preparing for this day since offseason workouts began over the summer.

"The girls are working very hard in preparing for the upcoming season," Lowry said. "Our upperclassmen have been great in fostering 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."

Wildcats hope to rebound

after tough 2017-18 season



Louisburg's Brayden Gage will be one of four returning seniors to this season's Wildcat basketball team. The Wildcats will host Tonganoxie on Friday in their season opener.

It was rough season for the Louisburg boys basketball team last year, and one that saw the Wildcats in transition mode.

Ty Pfannenstiel was in his first season as head coach and the Wildcats won just two games a year ago. Several players stepped onto the varsity floor for the first time that season and saw a lot of close games slip away.

Although there will be a little more transition this season, with the loss of five seniors from last year, the Wildcats hope to turn some of those close losses into wins.

"I felt like we were competitive last year in most games, but it's going to take greater effort and execution to turn those efforts into wins," Pfannenstiel said. "Our kids really showed a lot of commitment this off-season and I feel like that will have a big impact this season. Practice has been going great so far and there has been great intensity and focus."

Louisburg returns four seniors that each saw minutes last season on varsity and all are expected to start when the Wildcats open their season Friday against Tonganoxie at home.

Guards Brayden Gage, Kohl Vogel and forwards Dylan DeShazer

and Noah Hill will all lead the Wildcats this season and Pfannenstiel is looking for big things out of those four players.

"All four are expected to be impact players for us this year," Pfannenstiel said. "Brayden will be a great leader for us on both ends of the floor. He's a competitor and I think our team will feed off of his energy. Dylan was a very productive player for us coming off the bench. We will expect him to be a big scorer for us both inside and out.

"Kohl Vogel is going to have to be a good scorer for us this year. He has the potential to be our very best defender as well. Noah is an incredibly competitive and scrappy player. He will have to be a force on the boards and be a great low post defender as well."



Louisburg senior Dylan DeShazer is

one of several Wildcat players returning with varsity experience from last season.

Junior Madden Rutherford, who also saw varsity minutes as a sophomore last season, will join the four seniors in the starting lineup. Junior Michael Waldron and sophomore Weston Guetterman will see significant time off the bench.

Junior Garrett Rolofson and sophomores Ben Guetterman, Connor Koesser, Andy Hupp and Konnor Vohs could all see varsity time as well throughout the year.

In the offseason, Pfannenstiel stressed shooting with his group as the players put up thousands of shots up over the summer to improve in that area. However, as much as his team needs to focus on the offensive end to get better, he knows that defensively is how his team will find success.

"The keys for this team will be to play to our strengths and be ready to compete every game that we step on the court," he said. I think we have a chance to be a very good defensive team that will give teams problems. We will have to play unselfish on the offensive end and we obviously have to shoot the ball better this year. Our kids put in a lot of time this off-season on shooting the ball so I hope that turns into confident shooters on the offensive end."

The Wildcats also realize their schedule got a lot tougher this season with the addition of three new teams to the Frontier League in Tonganoxie, Bonner Springs and Piper.

Louisburg will host Tonganoxie at 7:30 p.m., on Friday in its season opener and Pfannenstiel realizes there will be no easy game throughout the schedule.

"I think the Frontier League will be extremely competitive again this year," he said. "I think Eudora and Bonner Springs return the most. Spring Hill and Ottawa both return a good

core of their team as well. With the addition of Bonner, Tongie and Piper, the league will definitely have a different look. Each night will demand our best effort and execution and we are excited to get things started on Friday."

Hinkle ready to take on role as LHS activities director



Walking into Scott Hinkle's office, it doesn't appear he started a new job two weeks ago.

The moving boxes are mostly gone. His desk is organized with everything in its place, along with a calendar crammed full of upcoming events.

Hinkle is not shy to tell people about his love for the Boston Red Sox. Sitting on one wall are two older chairs from Fenway Park, along other memorabilia.

The one thing that Hinkle hasn't caught up on is his efforts to get some purple gear. An avid Kansas Jayhawk fan, he hasn't had need to purchase any purple flair in the past. Seems like that will change shortly as he was hired as the new activities director and assistant principal at Louisburg High School earlier this summer.

"I have been a Jayhawk fan all my life," Hinkle said. "It will

be a little weird to wear purple that is for sure, but I am sure I will get used to it. Before I left my old job, people found out where I was going so they started giving me little gifts with purple on it, like markers and stuff like that. They definitely got a kick out of that."

Hinkle takes over for Jeremy Holloway, who was promoted to principal at LHS and becomes the third activities director in as many years to take over that spot.

"My wife has family in Kansas City and I have family in Wichita and so we were looking to come this way," Hinkle said. "I had a couple friends that told me that the Louisburg position had opened up. I had heard of Louisburg a long time ago. I actually coached at Ottawa University in the early 90s and was familiar with the area. I came up, interviewed and here I am. It has obviously worked out well.

"Everyone has been so helpful and friendly and it is a good time to be coming to Louisburg. I am excited to be here."

Before taking the job in Louisburg, Hinkle had spent the last 22 years in the Liberal school district in a variety of roles. He served as the boys high school basketball coach, along with nine years as an activities director, a year as the head girls basketball coach at the local community college and last year he served as assistant principal at the high school.

Hinkle graduated from Valley Center High School, and went on from there to earn his bachelor's degree from Friends University, where he played basketball, and his master's from the University of Kansas.

Basketball has always been a passion for Hinkle, but during his time as activities director at Liberal, he had a chance to learn the life of other sports as well.

"Liberal changed a lot from when I first got there in the mid 90s when they were a football and track powerhouse," Hinkle

said. "There were just athletes galore, but the culture kind of changed. We were really good in soccer and decent in track and volleyball. We still had good kids and good athletes, but it was a big transition as far as sports go when I first got there. My kids grew up there and being involved and being able to watch their events was something that has always appealed to me.

"Basketball has always been in my blood. Other than my nine years as athletic director, I have coached in some capacity and I am a big basketball fan. Obviously, being an athletic director I am just a big sports fan in general."

Still new in town, Hinkle is still trying to get to know his coaching staff, but he is excited about the situation he is walking into with the Wildcats finishing as state runner-ups in volleyball and girls soccer last season. Several cross country, golf, wrestling and track athletes also earned state medals.

However, if there is one thing he wanted to relay to everyone is that he wants to give his coaches the freedom to run their programs.

"I want to let the coaches, coach," he said. "I am not going to be the guy that says this is how we did things in Liberal and I am not that type of leader. If it comes to the point where they need some advice, I want to be a resource for them. I don't want to be someone that is looking for something.

"I have met a few of the coaches. I have let them know that I am here if they need anything. I have stopped by the weight room to speak to a few coaches and some have stopped by to introduce themselves. I am still learning names and faces. We have a coaches meeting on the 10th and I will see and learn a lot more about them then."

With all the success the Wildcats had last season in the

sports arena, Hinkle is happy to be a part of the LHS family and is learning new things about the town every day.

"I have heard all types of things," he said. "I have heard they take football pretty seriously here. I know they were state runner-up in volleyball and girls soccer last year and that is an exciting thing to walk into. I think expectations are obviously high in those sports, but I think everyone always has high expectations. I am not going to do anything different than normal and I am just going to sit back and observe for a while and take it all in."

Hinkle will experience some different things along with his new position. This season, the Frontier League will welcome three new teams – Bonner Springs, Piper and Tonganoxie – and will say goodbye to De Soto.

Another big change will be the postseason formats with several sports as the Kansas State High School Activities Association reshuffled their classification system, eliminating Class 4A-Division II.

"With the changes in the league, the classification system and being a new AD, it is probably a good time to be coming on," Hinkle said. "The learning curve is going to be the same for all of us.

"I walked into a good situation for scheduling because (Holloway) already had everything all taken care of," he said. "I think the dynamics of the league are going to change. Liberal's former girls basketball coach is the coach at Piper and I know a little bit about them. As far as the programs and rivalries, that is something that is going to come with time."

Even with all the changes in his life – moving, starting a new job, getting to know new faces – Hinkle is ready for what lies ahead and the staff at Louisburg has helped with that transition.

"It has been a whirlwind and it has been information overload," he said. "It is a lot of the same things I did in Liberal as athletic director, I just haven't done it for the last five years. Being an assistant principal at Liberal last year, I think, helped me prepare for the principal side.

"People have just gone out of their way to be helpful. From the administration to the custodial staff to the secretaries, everyone has been super helpful. When I was out around town, people have welcomed me and it has been a friendly feel everywhere I have been."

Holtzen accomplishes rare feat earning 12 varsity letters



Isabelle Holtzen became the first female athlete in Louisburg High School history to earn 12 varsity athletic letters after finishing out her senior season. Holtzen earned letters in cross country, basketball and track and field in each of her four years of high school.

Once Isabelle Holtzen received her diploma and walked out of Louisburg High School for the last time as a student, she

officially became one of the most decorated female athletes in school history.

No, she doesn't have any individual state championships, or even one as part of a team. Holtzen's decorations aren't ones in the form of trophies or all-state honors, but instead, they can be found on the front of her letter jacket.

Holtzen became the first female athlete in at least 20 years to earn 12 varsity letters, which means she lettered on the varsity level in three sports in each of her four years of high school.

In research done by Louisburg Sports Zone, it was unable to find the last athlete to accomplish the feat, which could mean Holtzen could be the first Lady Cat to do so.

The last athlete to come close was in 2001 when Krystal Bowes earned 10 varsity letters before moving on to a collegiate track career at Wichita State.

"The biggest thing that it means to me is to just have an opportunity to participate in three sports at a school like Louisburg," Holtzen said. "The bigger the school that you go to, the harder it is to play multiple sports at the varsity level and I think Louisburg is unique in that fact. The best part of this whole journey was I think my freshman year because there was no pressure and no one was expecting anything from me. It was surprising and exciting to be able to letter in all three sports."

Thoughts of finding her way onto the varsity team her freshman year was one she couldn't even fathom four years ago. She wasn't experienced in cross country. She enjoyed basketball, but didn't even dream of playing with the school's best.

In track, Holtzen would qualify for state in the pole vault for all four years of high school and earned two state medals. It was that sport where she almost didn't get a letter her

freshman year.

It is the same sport where she earned a Division I scholarship offer to pole vault at Northern Iowa University next season.

"I was not very good my freshman year," Holtzen said. "I wasn't that great in pole vault and I remember throughout the season that I would add up all my points to see if I was going to have to have enough to letter. I actually barely lettered my freshman year. I think you had to get 20 points and I ended up getting 20.5 or something like that.

"In basketball, I was not expecting to letter at all and it didn't even cross my mind that it would. We had some really good seniors that year in Natalie Moore, Kirstin Lowry and Kallie O'Keefe and they were all playing at a high level. I just remember standing next to them and I was about 4-5 inches shorter than they were and I felt like a little freshman. I wasn't expecting to play any varsity at all. I thought freshman and maybe a little JV, so it was surprising when I got a few minutes on the varsity level."

However, it was in cross country where she first realized that she had more to give and it was thanks in part to a special conversation from a senior.

Holtzen found herself holding back in practice and not wanting to pass the team's upperclassmen. She was told that things needed to change.



"My freshman year I had some of the best seniors that I have ever gone through here," Holtzen said. "Mary Kate Roy always pushed me in cross country. One time at practice she pulled me aside and told me that if I want to be faster that you are going to have to push yourself and don't be afraid to go ahead of us.

"Her saying that really impacted me because I was all about running with my friends, but I realized that I needed to push myself for my teammates and have a chance to get team medals and individually get better too. As a scared little freshman, what she said really meant a lot."

Very quickly, Holtzen found her way to the varsity level in cross country and stayed there through her four years. This past season, Holtzen was on the Lady Cat squad that became the first team in school history to qualify for the Class 4A state meet.

"It is a big accomplishment to earn a varsity letter in any sport, but to do that all four years in three sports is amazing," Louisburg cross country coach John Reece said. "Most freshmen find themselves waiting their turn to see varsity time and understand their role. Isabelle was looked to by her coaches to step up and fill voids at the varsity level as a freshman and even be a top performer for the team in some cases.

"She was prepared in her athletic skills to do so and also went through the growing pains of mentally developing at the next level of competition. Because of her never quit attitude, she took coaching criticism, both positive and negative, and used it to get better. In cross country, she ran her way into the top seven and never looked back. She was always a top five runner for the team and was that kid that would run their guts out to support her teammates in front of her."

After seeing a little varsity time her freshman year in basketball, Holtzen eventually worked her way up the ranks to where she found herself as a starting guard and team captain her senior year.

"To accomplish something like this requires such significant commitment and determination," girls basketball coach Shawn Lowry said. "She's such an impressive student-athlete because of the leader she was for multiple teams at Louisburg High, her high level of success in the different programs and her outstanding academic performance."



Earning 12 varsity letters might be impressive enough to some, but it certainly wasn't enough for Holtzen as she also had a lot of success in the classroom.

Holtzen was No. 1 in her class with a 4.0 GPA and was a fixture on the Wildcat debate team. She went on to finish third in the state in the 2-speaker competition for two years and was also a member of the 4-speaker team to take third at state last season.

To find time to participate in three sports, debate and find a way to get her school work done, Holtzen had to become a master planner.

"The biggest thing you have to do, no matter what activity you are doing, is you have to prioritize your time," she said. "You have to choose what is the most important to you and what is going to help you most on the long run."

"For me, it was having good grades. Learning in school is going to transfer in my job later in life and the odds of me actually pole vaulting professionally are really, really slim, so you have prioritize getting your homework done and staying on task in class. A lot what I tried to do was to get as much stuff as I could in class and then after school I could I just go to my sport and finish up the homework later."

In a time where specialization in sports has become the norm, the multi-sport athletes are becoming harder and harder to come by.

At a smaller school like Louisburg, many believe it is important to have athletes out for multiple sports if it wants to compete at a high level and Holtzen enjoyed her time with the different activities. In fact, she believes it helped her in her sport of choice – track.

"On the athletic side, playing multiple sports keeps you from getting injured because you are working different muscles constantly and not overworking the same ones," she said. "Outside of that, I like doing different activities because it is fun and I get bored when I have to do the same thing over and over again. Being active helps keep it more fun and exciting. Each sport taught me something different.

"Cross country teaches you to push through how hard it is because it is a big mental game and the most successful runners may not be the fastest, but they are most mentally strong. In basketball, I think it teaches you a lot of hard work and commitment and you have to work with other people and not just yourself. With doing pole vault, it is just fun for me because you have to learn a lot of different things and it teaches you patience."



However, the drawback of being involved in so many things is that sometimes they will overlap, which has happened the last few winters with basketball and debate. Holtzen has had to miss games to attend state debate competitions.

"Basketball season is when it got the hardest for me because it was the same time as debate," Holtzen said. "Both of those are team activities and I don't get to set my own schedule. It was hard for me to balance the two and I definitely thought about quitting one or the other a few times, but I didn't because I enjoy them way too much."

"It is really hard when I have to tell my coach I am not going to be able to be at the game, because it is going to be hard for the team. Everyone on the team has a role, and whenever I am not there to fill my role, it is hard for them and hard for me. I don't want to miss any games because it is so much fun and you make memories from those."

Despite all the hustle and bustle of being a 3-sport athlete and achieving academic success, Holtzen would do it all over again if she could.

"It will mean more to me later," she said of the 12 letters. "My parents have always told me to do three sports and to be involved in as many things as you can. For me, I was going to do it no matter what. I know not everyone thinks that way or has the opportunity. When I look back at high school knowing that I got everything out of it that I could by being involved in three sports and other activities, I will definitely appreciate it more later on."

"It is awesome to see other people doing multiple sports because it is extremely fun and you get to meet and be involved with different people. You get to have a lot of memories with these girls and I think that is one of the best parts of high school."

Lady Cats ready to put in work during summer workouts



Louisburg sophomore Madilyn Melton works on her dribbling during a drill, while being guarded by junior teammate by Erin Lemke, during the team's camp earlier this month.

In what was a transition year that saw the inclusion of several young underclassmen to its lineup throughout the season, the Louisburg High School girls basketball team is still a little young and inexperienced.

After an 8-13 record a year ago, the Lady Cats had just two seniors – Carson Buffington and Kennia Hankinson – at their week-long team camp that ended on June 7. Despite the small senior class, there was still plenty of leadership to go around.

It was on full display during the team camp, not just at the high school level, but the Lady Cat players also showed it during the elementary and middle school camps as well.

“We had a very good week of camps at all levels,” Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. “Our returning players did a great job of setting the tone for us with great energy, effort and leadership. I thought everyone did a good job of competing for everything and several girls have made big improvements in their development. I was impressed with the incoming freshmen group’s attitudes, athleticism and their willingness to learn and compete.”

Lowry had 28 players attend his high school session, while he had 100 total girls attend the high school, middle school and elementary school camps.

Since they last left each other in early March after a sub-state tournament loss to rival Paola, the Lady Cats came back together in hopes of, not only improving their record, but making a longer run in the postseason tournament.



Louisburg head girls coach Shawn Lowry speaks to his team with new assistant coach Leanna Willer during the Lady Cat team camp earlier this month.

To do that, the players all had to get back on the same page, which is where the team camp comes into play.

"Team camp is primarily about the start of shaping our team's identity through our work and competition during the week," Lowry said. "Throughout the week the girls learn about each other and they start to build trust in and respect for each other. It's also about establishing a mentality within this group to compete and battle for everything."

There will be enough competition to go around through the summer as the Lady Cats will compete in several summer league games and tournaments, not to mention the usual summer workouts.



Louisburg junior Sydni Keagle goes up for a basket during the Lady Cats' team camp.

"The girls have strength training and basketball open gyms three days a week," Lowry said. "The girls understand the importance of their commitment to getting stronger and improving their fundamental skills this offseason.

"We will be participating in several scrimmages with schools we don't have on our schedule along with some of our league schools. In addition, we have or will be participating in several games played at one of the Missouri universities and in a local tournament."

It is that work over the summer, along with what they learned last year, is what Lowry hopes can help his team take another step forward this coming season.

"We have several girls returning that gained some very good experience last season," Lowry said. "As part of that experience they already know what kind of effort they have to give, what kind of teammate they have to be and they have a lot of confidence and trust in each other. We have some great upperclassmen that will provide our team with strong leadership and we really like how the girls are embracing the opportunities and challenges ahead of them."

Shooting a main focus over summer for Wildcat basketball



Louisburg senior Brayden Gage pulls up for a jumper in a drill, while teammate Kohl Vogel looks on during the team camp on June 6 at Louisburg High School. Shooting has been a focus for the Wildcats in their early summer workouts.

It wasn't the year the Louisburg High School boys basketball team was hoping for last season.

The Wildcats finished with just three wins and are now in the process of trying to replace five seniors that saw a majority of the minutes. Although there were areas for the Wildcats to improve, one stood out among the rest.

"Our No. 1 goal going into the off-season is to develop shooters," Louisburg coach Ty Pfannenstiel said. "We really struggled to shoot the ball consistently last season so we knew that we needed to place an emphasis on that this summer. Our kids are going through daily shooting workouts in which they get up 200 shots per day. We do these workouts five days a week, so we are hoping by the end of the summer that each player take 8,000-10,000 shots over the summer.

"The kids have really bought into it. They understand that in order to develop as a shooter that it is going to take quite an investment in time and effort. We consistently have 18 to 20 doing these workouts every day. Our first week, we totaled 18,660 shots as a program."

Shooting is one area of emphasis that Pfannenstiel plans to work on with his players throughout the summer, including during his week-long team camp that concluded on June 7. He held a freshman only session, and then another for sophomore through senior.

Even after a difficult 2017-18 season, the players were ready to see what they could get accomplished to prepare for the upcoming year.

"I thought camp was great," Pfannenstiel said. "There is a lot of excitement with this group and it has shown with the commitment they have shown so far this summer. We had 15 freshmen and 22 to 23 sophomores, juniors and seniors. The numbers were just right. We were able to get a lot done in those four days."



Louisburg coach Ty Pfannenstiel looks on during the Wildcats' team camp on June 6.

Before the camp started, Pfannenstiel also brought in his players for a 2-day shooting clinic that worked with his players on form and the importance of repetition. That clinic also helped set them with workouts to use throughout the summer.

The Wildcats also opened the summer when the varsity and junior varsity teams participated in the Mid-America Nazarene team camp and those same groups will also be traveling to the K-State team camp on June 23.

All three levels of the Wildcat program will also be participating in a Eudora tournament in early July.

"The boys are doing all that, plus doing weights three days a week and our shooting workouts five days a week," Pfannenstiel

said. "We are keeping them busy."



Dane Dixon makes a move to the basket during a drill with assistant coach Drew Harding.

With the departure of five seniors, there will be a lot of voids to fill in the Louisburg lineup and Pfannenstiel is looking forward to watching his players improve and seizing those open spots on the varsity lineup.

"I'm just really excited for how much the kids have bought into the process," he said. "They understand that in order to develop as a player, they are going to have to invest some time and effort. It's not just a couple of players taking advantage of the opportunities, it's the whole team."

"Like I said before, the kids are excited. We are just hoping to build off of this momentum from the summer and keep it going into the school year."

Holtzen earns Louisburg Sports Zone Female Athlete of the Year



Isabelle Holtzen had a senior year to remember when it came to the athletic stage at Louisburg High School.

For starters, Holtzen was a member of the first cross country team in Louisburg history to qualify for the Class 4A state meet. She was also a starting guard and team captain for the Lady Cat girls basketball team.

Holtzen topped it all off this past spring when she medaled sixth in the pole vault at Class 4A state track championships in May.

Those were just one of the many reasons why she was chosen as the 2018 Louisburg Sports Zone Female Athlete of the Year.

The award, which is in its first year, is to recognize an outstanding Louisburg High School student athlete. Louisburg Sports Zone asked the head coaches at LHS to submit nominations and those nominations were then organized and submitted back to the coaches for a vote.

The coaches then submitted their top three choices and the number of votes were added up, which decided the winner.

Holtzen finished her high school career on a high note as she racked up 12 varsity letters during her time as a Wildcat and did all that while earning a 4.0 GPA, which was the top in her class.



Pictured (from left) is Louisburg track coach Andy Wright, cross country and track coach John Reece, Isabelle Holtzen and Lady Cat basketball coach Shawn Lowry.

“Her hard work attitude once again helped her to succeed in all events and rewarded her with a school record in the pole vault and state medals,” Louisburg cross country and track coach John Reece said. “It would be cliche to say she is a hard worker as all of her teammates are hard workers and they really compete to do their best in any sport in Louisburg, but she has been a pleasure to coach.”

She made her biggest impact in track and field as she had a record-breaking year in the pole vault this past season for the Lady Cats. She broke her own school record in the event

with a vault of 11 feet, 6 inches early in the year and went on to earn her second state medal at the Class 4A state track meet with a clearance of 11-0 and took sixth overall.

Holtzen was also a league and regional runner-up in the pole vault, while also running on legs of the 4×100 and 4×400-meter relay teams.

She also spent a lot of time on the Louisburg cross country and basketball teams, where she was a key part in both of their successes.

“From Isabelle’s first day of basketball at LHS she had a great work ethic, competed hard every day and never gave less,” Louisburg girls basketball coach Shawn Lowry said. “She embodies those things that are at the core of our program and leaves it so much better because of her involvement.”

Holtzen, who graduated in May, will continue her pole vault career at the University of Northern Iowa.

2018 Male Athlete of the Year Nominees



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

and highlight them a little bit. So this year, I wanted to take it a step further.

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

Although I am giving out the award, I wanted the process to subjective, so I asked the head coaches at LHS to help me out. I asked each coach to send me nominations of who they thought exemplified the Athlete of the Year honor. They will then vote for their top 3 male and female and then I will tabulate the results and determine the winner. In the next couple of weeks, I will announce this year recipient.

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

2018 LOUISBURG SPORTS ZONE

MALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR NOMINEES



Blue Caplinger – Junior – Football, Wrestling, Track and Field

Caplinger played a big role for the Wildcat football team as he shared quarterback duties to start the year and then moved over to the tight end spot, but his biggest impact came on defense where he earned honorable mention all-Frontier League honors. He finished the season with 32 tackles and two interceptions from his secondary spot.

On the wrestling mat, Caplinger was a state qualifier for the Wildcats at 160 pounds and finished his season with a 34-14 record. He won titles at two different tournaments and holds the team record with most career reversals with 71.

Caplinger also fared well on the track where he ran sprints and relays for Louisburg. Caplinger was a member of the 4x400-meter relay team that finished seventh in the state in Class

4A, and also ran on the 4x100-meter relay team that qualified for the Kansas Relays.



Cade Holtzen – Freshman – Cross Country, Wrestling, Track and Field

Holtzen thrived on the wrestling mat this past season as he earned the Wildcats' lone state medal. He finished sixth overall at 113 pounds and became the second freshman in school history to place at state with a 45-6 record.

He also broke two team records in the process. Holtzen currently holds the mark for most wins in a season (45), most nearfall-2 (23). He also led the Wildcats in five other statistical categories.

Holtzen was a Frontier League and regional runner-up and won tournament titles at four different competitions.

He also ran on the Louisburg varsity cross country team and ran distance races for the Wildcat track team.



Austin Moore – junior – football, wrestling, track and field

On the football team, Moore was named a team captain and had success on both sides of the ball. As a running back, he recorded 1,215 yards and 15 touchdowns. Defensively, he tallied more than 70 tackles from the linebacker spot.

Moore was named to the all-Frontier League first team on both sides of the ball and was an honorable mention all-state selection by the Topeka-Capital Journal and Wichita Eagle. He was also named an all-state, all-purpose player by K-Preps. Moore was also selected as the team's Offensive Player of the Year and recipient of the BAC Award.

On the wrestling mat, he was also a team captain and recorded a 43-7 record. Moore was a state qualifier at 195 pounds and was a regional runner-up. He won the team's Workhorse Award and set a program record with 38 pins. Moore also had the highest GPA on the team.

Moore threw the javelin for the Wildcat track and field team as recorded a season best throw of 151 feet in the regional meet and finished eighth.



John Wyatt Reece – Senior – Cross Country, Track and Field

Reece became the first state cross country medalist in several years for Louisburg High School. He finished 11th overall at the Class 4A meet in Wamego to earn a medal and also earned

all-state honors for his effort.

He also finished runner-up in the Frontier League meet and currently holds the third fastest time in school history. He earned first-team all-league honors. Reece also competed at the CCCNC National Race where he medaled individually and was a part of the second place team.

In track, Reece qualified for state in the 1,600 and 3,200-meter runs and finished ninth at state in the 3,200. He was also a regional runner-up in both events.

Reece was a Kansas Relays qualifier and medalist in the 2,000-meter steeplechase and currently holds the school record.

Reece has signed with Southwest Minnesota State next season and will run for the Mustangs starting next fall.



Madden Rutherford – Sophomore – Football, Basketball, Baseball

Rutherford took over the starting quarterback role as a sophomore for the Wildcat football team and became a dual-threat athlete at that position. He finished with 670 yards through the air and had eight touchdowns. On the ground, he racked up 318 yards and two more touchdowns. His performance helped him to a second-team honor on the all-Frontier League team.

On the baseball diamond, Rutherford was the Wildcats' top pitcher on the season and also did his job out on in the field as he earned second team all-Frontier League honors as an outfielder. Rutherford started six games this season and pitched 28 innings with a 5.12 earned run average and struck out 23 batters. At the plate, he finished the season with a .408 average, three doubles, a triple, a home run and had 10 RBIs. He also ended the year with only three errors in 19 games.

Rutherford also saw a lot of varsity time for the Wildcat basketball team as he played in 17 games.



Grant Ryals – Senior – Soccer, Golf

Ryals led the Louisburg boys soccer team as he garnered first team all-league and all-state honors this past season. He served as team captain the past two seasons and scored seven goals and had 11 assists from the midfield spot.

His 11 assists put him fourth in the all-time Louisburg single season record and his 23 career assists place him second all-time.

Ryals will continue his soccer career at William Jewell College next season.

Ryals was also a member of the Louisburg varsity golf team and was a part of several runner-up team finishes with the Wildcats.

2018 Female Athlete of the Year Nominees



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Although I am giving out the award, I wanted the process to be objective, so I asked the head coaches at LHS to help me out. I asked each coach to send me nominations of who they thought exemplified the Athlete of the Year honor. They will then vote for their top 3 male and female and then I will tabulate the results and determine the winner. In the next couple of weeks, I will announce this year recipient.

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

2018 LOUISBURG SPORTS ZONE

FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR NOMINEES



Bailey Belcher, Senior, Basketball and Girls Soccer

Belcher led the Wildcat girls soccer team to a state runner-up finish this past season as she was among the leading scorers on the team with 28 goals and 14 assists, which included five hat tricks. She is a three-time all-Frontier League and all-state first teamer, and has been a team captain for the last two seasons.

She holds the Louisburg record for most goals in a season with 33 and in a career with 91. She is will continue her soccer career at Missouri Southern next season.

Belcher was also a starter on the Lady Cats' basketball team and earned honorable mention all-league honors after averaging eight points, four rebounds and two steals a game.



Carson Buffington – Junior – Volleyball, Basketball and Girls Soccer

Buffington helped the Louisburg volleyball team to a state runner-up performance in the Class 4A-Division I state tournament as the team's setter. She finished the season with more than 1,100 assists and had 30 aces. She also helped out defensively with 244 digs.

She earned second team all-Frontier League honors and was also placed on the Kansas Volleyball Association's (KVA) all-state second team. Buffington was also selected to the KVA all-state tournament team.

On the basketball court, Buffington earned second team all-Frontier League honors and led the league in rebounding for the third straight season. She averaged 11.6 rebounds a game

to go along with 9.2 points and 2.7 steals from the forward spot.

Buffington also served as the back-up goalie for the Wildcat soccer team and saw action in several varsity games.



Anna Dixon – Junior – Volleyball

Dixon played a big role in the Lady Cats' state runner-up volleyball team this past season. As an all-around player, Dixon led Louisburg with 613 kills and 61 blocks on the season. She was also third on the team with 58 aces and 329 digs.

She earned first team all-Frontier League and all-state honors. Dixon was named as the Kansas Volleyball Association's Class 4A-D1 Co-Player of the Year and was selected to the KVA

all-state tournament team.

Dixon also earned Best of Kansas Preps selection by the Topeka Capital-Journal, which is a new award this season. She has committed to Kansas State University to play volleyball in the fall of 2019.



Carlee Gassman – Sophomore – Cross Country, Basketball, Track and Field

Gassman had a record-breaking season for the Louisburg track team. She broke a 29-year old school record in the 300-meter hurdles in early April and then broke her own school record several more times this season, including at the Class 4A state meet where she ran a time of 45.68 to finish second in the state.

It was her first of two state medals on the season as she also finished fifth in the state in the long jump with a mark of just more than 17 feet. She also won a regional title in the 300-meter hurdles.

Gassman was also a consistent runner on the Wildcat cross country team that qualified for the state meet for the first time in school history. She served as the No. 2 runner for most of the season.

On the basketball court, Gassman saw a lot of varsity time for the Lady Cats as well as one of the team's point guards.



Isabelle Holtzen – Senior – Cross Country, Basketball, Track and Field

Holtzen had a record-breaking season in the pole vault this past season for the Lady Cats' track and field team. She broke her own school in the event with a vault of 11 feet, 6 inches

and went on to finish sixth at the Class 4A state track meet with a clearance of 11-0.

She was also a league and regional runner-up, while also running on legs of the 4x100 and 4x400-meter relay teams.

On the cross country team, Holtzen was a consistent runner on a varsity team that qualified for state for the first time in school history.

On the basketball court, Holtzen served as a team captain and was a full-time starter for the Lady Cats at the guard spot.

At the end of the school year, Holtzen became the first Lady Cat in several decades to earn 12 varsity athletic letters and did so while earning a 4.0 GPA, which is first in her class.



Sophie McMullen – Senior – Volleyball

McMullen was another key piece to the Lady Cats' success this past season on the volleyball court. She made the switch from setter to outside hitter and defensive player to help Louisburg to a state runner-up campaign.

She was first on the team with 114 aces to go along with 437 digs defensively. As an outside hitter, McMullen added 381 kills.

McMullen was selected to the all-Frontier League and all-state first team and was named to the Kansas Volleyball Association all-state tournament team. She was also selected to the Greater Kansas City Coaches Volleyball Association all-star team.

McMullen signed to play volleyball at Northwest Missouri State this coming fall.