

Numbers up for all LHS fall programs as athletes battle through heat



Last fall, each of the four Louisburg High School athletic programs had something to brag about.

Whether it was football's 10-1 season that ended with a regional championship, volleyball's state runner-up finish, cross country's two state medalists and state qualifying girls team or the boys' soccer regional championship appearance – the Wildcats had plenty to cheer about and several athletes took notice.

Numbers are up for all four programs following the first day of practice Monday and the coaches and athletes are excited to get the season started after last year's successes.

The Wildcat football team saw a big jump in numbers as they have 70 students out this season and football coach Robert Ebenstein and has liked what he seen through the first couple days of workouts.

“Our numbers are up and based on the numbers at the middle school and youth programs and I expect them to keep growing,” Ebenstein said. “I am very excited for practice to get going. When you finish the season off with a loss in the playoffs it

sticks with you and the opportunity to go play another game creates that energy and that eager feeling to get going. So far I am very pleased with our kids' focus and effort. We need to continue to get better every day."

Louisburg volleyball has also seen a spike in its numbers as 40 athletes have attended tryouts. Those tryouts will go through Wednesday and head coach Jessica Compliment believes those high numbers will be beneficial down the road.

"The players are excited, but I think some are nervous as well with tryouts and cuts these first few days," Compliment said. "Forty is the most we've had tryout for quite some time. Generally we have around 35. The higher numbers leads to more competition for uniforms and playing time."

Cross country head coach John Reece is pulling double duty this season as he, and assistant coach Paul Restivo, will also be leading the new Louisburg Middle School program. The Wildcats have a combined 59 runners out between the two programs, including 37 on the high school side.

Louisburg returns a majority of its girls team that qualified for state a year ago, including its two state medalists in senior Trinity Moore and sophomore Reese Johnson.

Despite a little hiccup with the heat during the first two days of workouts, coach Reece likes what he sees from both teams.

“It was great to get started, and yes the heat caused us to change our workout a little bit, but we still got in our miles,” Reece said. “We had a good turnout during summer running, so as a whole they are ready to get to the good stuff and go compete.”

“There is definitely a huge difference with LMS joining the crew. Two coaches managing 59 kids is a lot, and we might need more help for supervision as we get more personalized with workouts for different levels of runners, but this is a good thing for Louisburg’s cross country program. It is going to be a fun year.”

Soccer also saw a big increase in interest as the Wildcats have 44 athletes trying out this season and they will continue the tryout process through Thursday. It is a good problem to have for head coach Kyle Conley and he has liked what he has seen so far as the Wildcats look to take another step forward this year.

“The kids worked hard, but showed we have a lot of work to do,” Conley said. “We had a really, really good summer, but we got a little rusty with the month off. This year we are getting back to focus on our culture and getting back to playing for each other. The boys have been focused and determined to improve this season.”

However, the first two day of practices weren’t without their challenges as intense heat and humidity caused some of the programs to change their schedules, including soccer, which moved its practice to the evening on Tuesday and spent some

time indoors Monday.

“The heat was an interesting factor to go along with the late start due to the KSHSAA schedule,” Conley said. “We started in the AUX gym for the first hour and 15 minutes then transitioned outside for an hour. It was frustrating but the boys handled it very well.”

With the heat advisories, teams had to take precautions with their athletes and everything seemed to go smoothly with the hot weather.

“There is nothing you can do about the heat, and it is not centralized to Louisburg, so everybody has to deal with it,” Ebenstein said. “So you just do what you have to do when it comes to moving practice to the evening or whatever. I do not mind these hot early practices as it sets the tone that athletes need to take care of their bodies, and the acclimatization process gets going from the beginning. I would much rather have it this way instead of it being cool and the first hot week comes on a game week.”

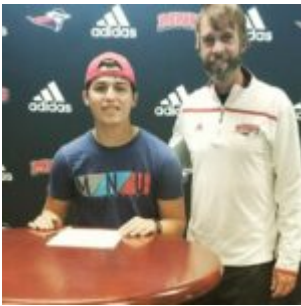
With the first day of practice starting later than normal, the start of competition will also be pushed back. Team scrimmages will be the Friday before Labor Day and actual competition won't start until Sept. 3.

Soccer will host Fort Scott in its season opener on Sept. 3 and volleyball will travel to Paola for dual on the same day.

Cross country opens its season on Sept. 5 at the Anderson County Invitational

and football will travel to Spring Hill on Sept. 6.

Juarez excited for new beginning with MidAmerica Nazarene



Noah Juarez signed his letter of intent to play soccer for MidAmerica Nazarene University last May alongside Pioneer coach Kevin Wardlaw.

Noah Juarez has always wanted to play collegiate soccer and he wasn't ready to give up the sport after playing two years at Johnson County Community College.

Juarez, who is a 2016 Louisburg High School graduate, was looking for a new landing spot when his time with JCCC was up. He found the perfect spot not too far from home.

Early in the summer, Juarez signed his letter of intent to play for MidAmerica Nazarene University and he is excited to join the Pioneer program.

"I'm so thrilled to be playing for such a great school," Juarez said.

“The academic side and soccer is at a very high level and I’m blessed to have the opportunity.”

Juarez will be joining a very competitive MidAmerica Nazarene program that finishes toward the top of the Heart of America Conference each year and he will see playing time in the midfield. He will play under coach Kevin Wardlaw, who has led the Pioneers to the national semifinals twice, including a runner-up finish in 2015.

Last season, the Pioneers finished with a 12-7 record and lost in the conference semifinals, but Juarez believes his new team can accomplish big things this year.

“We have very high expectations in our league,” Juarez said. “We plan to finish first in our league, but if not that, then definitely in the top 3. We have one of the most competitive leagues in the nation, so it will be a tough test.

“Individually, my role isn’t to score the most goals or be the main man. I just want to be someone who can control the midfield and control the tempo of the game. As long as I stay disciplined, focused, and have a high work rate, things will fall into place.”

After

finishing his two years at JCCC, Juarez found out he had to have surgery on his foot and he knew the process back from that was going to be a difficult one.

“I was a little worried the beginning of the season because I had foot surgery in May and had to place a screw in my 5th metatarsal bone,” Juarez said. “It was a long and tedious process but I was just about at 100 percent by the beginning of preseason. It has definitely been something to get used to, and I’ve had to adjust how I play a tad, but I am still looking to be a vital piece to the MNU program.”



Noah Juarez scores a goal on a bicycle kick his senior year for the Wildcats.

Juarez,

who is majoring in business management and leadership, almost didn't commit to MidAmerica as he had an opportunity to play somewhere else last spring but a last-minute surprise kept him closer to home.

"I was about to commit to North Park University (Chicago) all throughout the spring semester and had a Division 2 school in Miami, Berry University, who had just won the National Championship last season in contention as well. It wasn't until May when I found myself in contention with MNU.

"I had a teammate from JCCC who had committed to MNU the year before me, and after talking to him and the help from my club coach, Daouda Kante, things started to develop a little more at MNU. After a couple of meetings with Coach Wardlaw, I found where I belonged."

Juarez was a big part of the Wildcat soccer program in his four seasons. Not only did he start all four years of high school, he earned all-Frontier League and all-state honors each season.

In his senior year, Juarez led the Wildcats with 18 goals and had seven assists as he was one of several players to help Louisburg to a fourth-place finish at state – the best finish in program history.

After finding some success at JCCC, fitting into the Pioneer team hasn't been a problem for Juarez and his transition has been seamless thanks to his new coach.

"I have been fortunate to start my first few scrimmages, although, it

hasn't been easy," he said. "There are only 10 local kids on the team where the rest are internationals. The competition is very high. I have been starting in the center defensive midfield, but I have also been utilized as an attacking mid as well.

"The coaching at MNU has been a very good change for me. MNU plays a very possessive style of soccer where I can flourish. I have learned a lot already and pushed to new limits. Coach Wardlaw is a very intense, analytical person and only wants success for the team and us individually in the classroom."

Top 10 Stories of 2018



It was a successful, and eventful, 2018 for Louisburg High School athletics and for those who are connected to the Wildcat program. This past year created a lot of school history for LHS and several programs brought back state hardware to Louisburg.

Below are the Top 10 stories from 2018, along with a brief

explanation of each. Included in the explanation is the link to the actual story from the event.

This year was a blast to cover and I was blessed to have the opportunity to go along for the ride with many of these. As much fun as it was, I can't wait for 2019 to begin. Looking forward to it!



10. Dillon medals at state golf for second straight year

EMPORIA – All season, Calvin Dillon had been atop or near the front of leaderboard and that didn't change in what was his biggest tournament of the season.

The Louisburg High School sophomore went up against the state's best during the Class 4A state golf tournament on May 19 at the Emporia Municipal Course and did more than old his own. Dillon earned a state medal as he finished 11th overall with a 3-over par 74.

It was the second consecutive state medal for Dillon after he finished 10th overall last season at Wamego as a freshman.

“It is a real honor to earn another state medal, especially with the quality players that were at the state tournament,” Dillon said. “There were lots of good players and lots of good teams.”

It was another notch on Dillon’s list of accomplishments that included a Frontier League title and six straight tournament victories during the 2018 season.



Louisburg football coach Robert Ebenstein



Louisburg girls soccer coach Kyle Conley

9. Conley, Ebenstein named Class 4A Coach of the Year

Louisburg girls soccer coach Kyle Conley and Wildcat football coach Robert Ebenstein both led their respective teams to special seasons.

Those seasons were special enough for both coaches to earn two big awards.

Conley was rewarded for all his hard work in June when it was announced that he was named as the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association's Girls Coach of the Year for Class 4-1A.

He guided the Wildcats to a 14-7 record and a spot in the state championship match, where the Lady Cats finished second overall. The

finish was something to remember for Wildcat fans as that was accomplished in just the program's third year of existence.

He has posted a 41-18-2 record during his time as the Wildcat girls head coach and also guided the Louisburg boys soccer team to its best finish in program history in 2017 with a fourth place finish at state.

As for Ebenstein, he guided the Wildcats to 10 straight victories and a regional championship to start the 2018 season, before getting knocked out in the sectional round against eventual state champion, Bishop Miege.

Following the season, the Kansas Football Coaches Association named Ebenstein as the Class 4A Coach of the Year. Ebenstein, who is just in his second season as head coach, has a 16-4 record with the Wildcats as he guided his team to a Frontier League championship this year.



8. Holtzen finishes Louisburg career with 12 varsity letters

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. She competed in cross country, basketball and track and field

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.”

Holtzen is currently at Northern Iowa, where she received a scholarship to pole vault for the Panther Track and Field Team.



7.

Dixon earns All-American, Player of the Year honors, signs with Kansas State

Louisburg

senior Anna Dixon led the Lady Cat volleyball program all season and she was recognized for her play on the court.

Dixon was named to the Under Armour Volleyball All-American team as she received a spot on the honorable mention squad when the list was released in November.

Dixon, the 6-foot-3 outside hitter, was recently named the Class 4A Player of the Year by the Kansas Volleyball Association, and along with that was also selected to the all-state first team.

It was the second year in a row Dixon was named player of the year, as she had to share the honor last season with Rose Hill's Gracie Van

Driel.

The honors certainly didn't stop there as Dixon was all named to the All-Frontier League first team as she helped guide the Lady Cats to an undefeated league season.

Dixon led the Lady Cats in kills with 584 in 105 sets played. She also finished with 325 digs, as she played all six rotations and also had 50 aces and 42 blocks.

In her four years with the program, Dixon finished with 2,003 kills, which would place that total among the best the school has ever seen.

All that success resulted in a dream come true for Dixon as she made it official last November when she signed to play volleyball at Kansas State.

"I have always known Kansas State was going to be my home," Dixon said. "Even since I committed as a sophomore, I always wanted to go up to Manhattan and see the girls and spend time with the team. K-State is where I need to be."



6. Louisburg wrestling sends six to state, Holtzen earns first state medal

SALINA – As the final whistle sounded in his blood round match, Cade Holtzen looked up into the rafters of the Tony’s Pizza Events Center and smiled.

He had finally reached his goal.

Holtzen defeated Columbus’ Gabe Porter by a 6-0 decision Saturday during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in Salina and secured his state medal.

“It is one of the best feelings that I have had in my life,” Holtzen said. “Just knowing that I’m going to place – you just can’t match that with anything else.”

It certainly wasn’t

easy for the Louisburg freshman as he faced a win or go home with nothing scenario heading into his match with Porter. Holtzen pulled out the victory and eventually finished sixth overall at 113 pounds to give Louisburg a state medalist for the third consecutive season.

“It is pretty cool,” he said. “I have been working for this all season, so to get a state medal is great. It may not have been as high as I wanted, but any state medal is pretty amazing.”

Holtzen had a special year for the Wildcats as he finished with a 45-6 record and broke the school record for most wins in a single season. He won four different tournaments and was a Frontier League and regional tournament runner-up.

To add to his resume, he became only the second freshman in school history to earn state medal – second to only Austin Hood, who would go on to win three state titles.

Austin Moore finished one victory shy of earning his first state medal, while Ryan Adams, Thad Hendrix and Blue Caplinger also picked up wins at the state tournament.



5. Moore, Johnson finished in top 10 at state cross country, girls qualify for second straight year

WAMEGO – It was going to be hard for the Louisburg High School girls cross country team to duplicate its magical season of 2017.

Not only did the Lady Cats qualify their team for state for the first time in program history, but they also had a top five finisher in Trinity Moore.

Fast forward to 2018, Louisburg wasn't able to match that successful run – the Lady Cats took it a step further.

Moore, along with freshman Reese Johnson, each had a top 10 finish during the Class 4A Kansas State Cross Country Championships at Wamego Country Club, and it is the first time

in school history that two female runners had medaled at a state meet. Louisburg added on to that as the girls finished fifth in the team standings with 154 points, which is also the highest finish in school history.

Moore, who finished fifth at state a year ago, bested her performance by one place as she took fourth with one of her better performances of the season. Johnson was right behind her as she crossed the finish line in sixth.

Shaylor Whitham, Carlee Gassman, Kaitlyn Lewer, Delaney Wright and Kennady Wilkerson were also members of the Lady Cats' team to run at state. Emily Williams was a member of the regional team that finished second overall.



4. Louisburg track earns six state medals, Gassman state runner-up in

300 hurdles

WICHITA – Carlee Gassman had broken the Louisburg High School 300-meter hurdle record three different times in 2018 prior to the state track meet.

She picked the perfect time to make it a fourth.

Gassman broke her own school record in the 300 hurdles in May at the Class 4A Kansas State Track and Field Championships in Wichita as she ran a time of 45.68 seconds to earn a silver medal as she was the Wildcats' top performer on the weekend. Andale's Abby Smarsh, who is a senior, won the event in 44.73.

It was the Louisburg sophomore's first time competing at the Kansas meet as she transferred in from Iowa last year, where she qualified for the state meet there in the 400 hurdles.

Gassman's medal in the 300 hurdles was just one of six the Wildcats were able to bring home following the two-day meet. Those six medals were the most Louisburg has earned since 2011, when the Wildcats combined to medal in 10 events and the boys won their first team state title.

The 300 hurdles wasn't the only event Gassman found success in as she also medaled in the long jump. Gassman, who hadn't competed in the event prior to this year, finished fifth with a mark of 17 feet, 0.25 inches.

Isabelle Holtzen would go on to finish sixth in the pole vault, the boys 4x400 team of Chris Williams, Blue Caplinger, Ben Wiedenmann and Justin Collins went on to take seventh. Williams finished eighth in the 400-meter run and

Trent Martin medaled eighth in the boys pole vault.



3. Louisburg volleyball takes runner-up at state for second straight season

HUTCHINSON – The feeling was much of the same.

The pride of finishing as a state-runner up was a popular one among the members of the Louisburg volleyball team. At the same time, the frustration of taking second in state in back-to-back seasons was just as prevalent.

Louisburg wasn't quite sure what to feel following its 25-13 and 25-14 loss to Bishop Miege in the championship game of the Class 4A state tournament Saturday at Hutchinson Sports Arena.

In 2017, the Lady Cats fell to Rose Hill by two points in the championship

match, and fast forward to the present, they were in the same spot – holding the state runner-up trophy. It was the 15th time in program history that Louisburg finished in the top four at state.

The Lady Cats rattled off four straight wins to start the tournament, including knocking off No. 1 seed Independence, and defending state champions Rose Hill and Topeka Hayden. Louisburg then battled back to defeat Andale in the state semifinals.

“The loss was tough,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “To come so close to a state title two years in a row, only to come up short is tough. But with that being said, it is a huge accomplishment for this team to get back to the state championship and make it two years in a row. Finishing second is nothing to hang our heads on. Last year’s finish fueled the fire for the team this year, and I challenged the returning players to use this loss and feeling to fuel them for next year.”

Louisburg has been one of the more dominant teams in Class 4A in the last decade as the Lady Cats have made the state tournament seven out of the last nine years and have finished as a state runner-up on three different occasions, along with several third and fourth place finishes. They finished 2018 with a 36-9 record.



2. Louisburg girls soccer advances to title game, has best finish in program history

NORTH NEWTON – The obstacle seemed insurmountable – and it was.

The Louisburg High School girls soccer team found itself in the Class 4-1A state championship match in the program's third year of existence, but if they wanted to take it another step further, the Wildcats were going to have to knock the defending state champion of its perch.

Unfortunately, Bishop Miege wasn't about to be moved.

In a state title game that was played in the sweltering heat in late May at Bethel College, the Wildcats couldn't stay with the Stags in a 5-0 defeat. It was the third consecutive title for Bishop Miege, while Louisburg earned a state plaque for the first time in its short history.

It was special season for the Wildcats as the night before they knocked off Topeka Hayden, 1-0, in the state semifinals to secure the program's first state plaque. In 2017, Louisburg

both games in its state tournament appearance and finished fourth.

The road to this state championship appearance has been an interesting one for the Wildcats. More than three years ago, a group of Louisburg parents and citizens raised enough money to begin the girls soccer program and fund it for three years.

Louisburg was in the final year of that funding, and while the program isn't going away, the team realized they needed to play for more than themselves.

"We played for the community tonight," Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher said after the Hayden win. "We have to remember that when they raised money for this program, it was just through this year, so I think we owed it to them to play well. I really think it might have helped with how we played and I think it was one of the best games we played all season."

"It is a third-year program with 41 wins, three regional championships, two state final fours and now a state runner-up," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said after the title game. "We just have kids who come in and work their butt off. They are not soft, they aren't weak and from top to bottom they are going to work hard."

"We worked hard, but we just played Miego. That is one of the best teams in the state, and that stinks, but our kids played hard, worked

their tail off and it was a great year. We had people criticize us for how we got there, but we won games and that really motivated the kids. It got them fired up to go do something bigger than themselves. I couldn't be more proud of they stuck together and what they accomplished."



1. Football wins 10 straight, takes Frontier League title and regional championship

It had been almost two months since Louisburg and Piper squared off on the football field in what was one of the more entertaining games on the Wildcats' schedule.

Back in early September, Louisburg left Piper High School with a seven-point win – a victory that would help propel them to a Frontier League championship and a perfect regular season.

The two teams squared off again and the stakes were a bit higher. The game, at least for Louisburg anyway, was even more exciting.

The Wildcats dominated action from the opening kickoff and never looked back in a 48-0 win over the Pirates. In the process, Louisburg won the school's first regional championship since 2016 and are off to a 10-0 start for the first time since 2010.

Louisburg advanced to the sectional round where it fell to eventual state champion Bishop Miege, 55-21, and finished its season with a 10-1 record.

It was as season marked with special moments, including a 28-7 victory over then-undefeated Paola late in the year to secure a league title.

"Being 10-0 and then having that first loss of the season was very disappointing," Louisburg coach Robert Ebenstein said. "Losing always sucks, but losing in the playoffs and having to wait until next August is the worst. At the end of the day, Miege is a very good team and we did some good things. We got them to fourth down on multiple drives in the first quarter, we just couldn't make the plays on those big downs. Then we got behind a little and started pressing.

"Overall it was a great year. I am very proud of our guys and excited for them that they were able to get double digit wins for only the third time since 2000, and

there was a lot of really good football played during that time period. It was a lot fun to be a part of.”



Austin Moore was named to the Kansas Shrine Bowl and was a first-team all-state player for the Wildcats. Moore was also named as the Kansas Small-Class Player of the Year by 810 Varsity.

With all that success, honors started to roll in for its players as running backs Austin Moore and Blue Caplinger, along with linemen Brayden White and Kiefer Tucker all earned all-state honors.

Moore and White went on to be semifinalists for the Simone Awards and Moore was also selected to participate in the Kansas Shrine Bowl in the summer of 2019. Ebenstein was also named as coach of the year by the football coaches association.

Most recently, Moore was named the Kansas Small-Class Player of the Year and Running Back of the Year by 810varsity.com, while White was named the Small-Class Lineman of the Year. Ebenstein was also named Kansas Small-Class Coach of the Year by 810 Varsity.

Haight leads Wildcat soccer with first team all-league honor



Louisburg junior Ryan Haight earned first team All-Frontier League honors when the team was announced last week. Haight was one of four Wildcats to be selected to the all-league squad.

With three new schools entering the Frontier League this season, it created even more competition to receive an all-league honor.

For boys soccer, the competition was tough, but Louisburg earned four spots on the all-league team following a 6-11 season that ended in a loss to Bishop Miege in the regional

championship game.

Louisburg junior midfielder Ryan Haight was selected to the first team, while senior forward Brock Bila was named to the second team. Senior Eli Minster and junior Will Frank both earned honorable mention honors on defense.

“I think with our league being so competitive, and adding three new schools, we represented well,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “Obviously, I would like a few more players recognized and I felt some kids deserved to be on higher teams. These young man played well this season and these All-Frontier League honors are very deserving.”

Haight, who was named to the first team as a utility player, was a reliable fixture for the Wildcats from his defensive midfield spot. He was only one of four Louisburg players to start every game for the Wildcats this past season.

“Ryan worked his tail off all season,” Conley said. “He was our hardest worker and was voted MVP of our team by a landslide in the player’s voting. He played so hard and always put his teammates first. I felt that all of his hard work and dedication truly paid off this year.”



Senior Brock Bila (1) led Louisburg with 15 goals on the season and earned a spot on the all-league second team.

Bila was the team's leading scorer from the forward position as he scored 15 goals in 15 matches for Louisburg. He was a player that drew a lot of attention from the opposing defense.

"Brock, in my opinion, was the best player on the field every night," Conley said. "He is so skilled and could just find the back of the net. He was our Golden Boot (most goals) and Offensive MVP this season voted by his teammates. He scored some fantastic goals for us."

Minster and Frank were key cogs in the Wildcat defense, and both were reliable players on the back side, which helped earn them honorable mention honors.



Louisburg senior Eli Minster (left) and junior Will Frank were both selected as all-league honorable mentions.

“Eli was a lock down outside back for us this year,” Conley said. “He put the team before himself and played outside back for us. He ended the season with three assists, but more importantly he helped keep us in games. He was a leader for us and played really well this season.

“William Frank did a very nice job running the middle of our defense. He played center back and showed a lot of growth throughout the season. He helped keep us in games, especially since our team played a lot of defense this season. Will started and played in all 17 games for us.”

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE SOCCER

FIRST TEAM

FORWARD – Collin Hanson, Ottawa, senior; Jeffrey Shoenberger, Spring Hill, senior; Ryan Wokutch, Paola, junior

MIDFIELD – Nick Gulley, Spring Hill, senior; Dylan Jamison, Baldwin, senior; Lucas Vanchi De Souza, Paola, junior

DEFENDER – Jacob Bailey, Baldwin, senior; Grant Burnett, Spring Hill, senior; A.J. Montez, Piper, senior

UTILITY – Ryan Haight, Louisburg, junior

GOALIE – Chezney Haney, Spring Hill, sophomore

SECOND TEAM

FORWARD – Brock Bila, Louisburg, senior; Matthew Jackson, Baldwin, senior; Wyatt Oakland, Piper, senior

MIDFIELD – Sammy Gonzalez-Carillo, Bonner Springs, senior; Jonny Moon, Piper, senior; Grady McCune, Baldwin, sophomore

DEFENDER – Ian Heid, Paola, sophomore; Ezra Steinshouer, Baldwin, senior; Trey Trumbo, Piper, senior

UTILITY – Nathan Cessna, Baldwin, senior

GOALIE – Nathaniel Grosdidier, Eudora, senior

HONORABLE MENTION

FORWARD – Keaton Herron, Eudora, sophomore; Josh Santos, Spring Hill, junior; Caden Willits, Eudora, junior

MIDFIELD – Isaac Bones, Ottawa, senior; Michael Powell, Ottawa, junior; Ronin Richardson, Piper, senior; Gage Sommer, Tonganoxie, senior

DEFENDER – Brant Arnold, Eudora, junior; Dylan Fanning, Ottawa, senior; Will Frank, Louisburg, junior; Dylan Meier, Eudora, sophomore; Abel Mendoza, Tonganoxie, sophomore; Eli Minster, Louisburg, senior; Garrett Stephan, Bonner Springs,

senior

UTILITY – Owen Roellchen, Piper, junior

GOALIE – Jamison Foglesong, Piper, senior; Wyatt Martin, Tonganoxie, senior; Tanner O'Connor, Baldwin, sophomore; Austin Weaver, Paola, junior

Wildcats fall in regional title game to defending state champ



Louisburg senior defender Eli Minster tries to send the ball away in the rain Thursday during the Class 4-3-2-1A regional championship game at Bishop Miege High School. The Wildcats fell to Bishop Miege, 8-0.

ROELAND PARK – On a rainy and cool evening, the Louisburg boys soccer team traveled to Bishop Miege High School to try and capture its fourth straight regional title.

Unfortunately, the Wildcats were going to have to go through a two-time defending state champion to do so.

Without a full complement of players due to injuries and other

things, Louisburg just couldn't keep up with Bishop Miege as it saw its season come to an end Thursday in an 8-0 loss.

"We just played the state champion," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "The kids fought the whole game and they never stopped. They kept grinding and kept working. I am just really proud of the kids. Miege is probably one of the best three teams in the state and there is a reason why. They are a really talented team and they play well together and they have a mass amount of depth. They are a really quality side.

"But our kids didn't quit and they played their butts off. I think we did a good job of keeping our composure, playing the game the right way and doing what we asked them to do."

Bishop Miege scored to give the Stags a 1-0 lead with 27 minutes remaining in the first half and it remained that way until the latter part of the half. Miege scored three goals in the final 11 minutes to take a 4-0 advantage at halftime.



Junior Ryan Haight slides in to take the ball away from a Bishop Miego player.

The Wildcats (6-11) didn't give up as they fought through the conditions and battled the Stags, but the defending Class 4-3-2-1A state champions were too much for the young and inexperienced Wildcats.

"We ran out quite a few kids, including several freshmen, who went out and did their thing," Conley said. "It was a good opportunity to get them some minutes and experience and say they got to play in a regional championship game. We will learn from it and I think the boys had a pretty good experience. They understood who they just played and what it was. I couldn't be prouder of the boys and the way they played."

It was a season full of ups and downs for Louisburg as it had to deal with multiple injuries throughout the season and

Conley was forced to shuffle guys around and create different lineups. The Wildcats began with a 4-1 start, but suffered several close losses along the way, and the mounting injuries didn't help them get back on track.



Defender Will Frank heads the ball away from the goal Thursday against Miego.

Louisburg also had to say goodbye to seniors Eli Minster, Chris Williams, Eric Vazquez and Brock Bila, who all played their final game for the Wildcats.

“The season was what it was,” Conley said. “We had some games that we gave away and it kind of stuck us in this situation. It is what it is though. I am just really proud of this group and the way we kept fighting and battling.

“We had a horrific month or so where everything just went bad. We had a lot of injuries and some self-induced problems. We

faced a lot of adversity this year and had to play with a lot of different lineups and different guys had to play a lot of minutes. I think that is great experience for them. It is going to be tough losing the four seniors that we had with Brock, Eli, Eric and Chris. We just have to try to fill the holes that they left.”

Revenge win over Ottawa puts Wildcats in regional title game



Louisburg’s (from left) Ryan Haight, Michael Seuferling, Colin Cook and Haden Yeager celebrate Cook’s goal early in the first half Tuesday in Ottawa. The Wildcats defeated the Cyclones, 3-1, to advance to the regional championship.

OTTAWA – In two previous meetings during the regular season, the Louisburg boys soccer team just couldn’t figure out a way past Ottawa.

The Wildcats seemed to solve the riddle against the Cyclones on Tuesday and they couldn’t have picked a better time to do it.

Louisburg traveled to Ottawa for the Class 4-3-2-1A regional semifinal and the Wildcats got the win they were looking for with a 3-1 victory that sends them to the regional championship for the fourth consecutive season.

“We just had some really bad luck in the first two games with them,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “This was a game where we felt we could win and the kids played that way. The kids played hard, they executed and did their jobs. We showed that we should have beaten them the first two times, but we just had horrific luck and we couldn’t finish and this was vengeance for that. I am very proud of the boys.”

Scoring wasn’t a problem this time around for the Wildcats (6-10) as they had three different players find the back of the net. Junior Colin Cook, along with seniors Chris Williams and Brock Bila, all came up with big goals to go up in front early.

Cook scored his goal nine minutes into the contest when Eli Minster sent the pass to the back side of the goal where Cook was waiting and he was able to tap it in to put Louisburg up, 1-0.

The score would stay that way until early in the second half when Williams collected a rebound off a Bila shot and sent it past the Ottawa goalie for the two-goal lead.



Defender Will Frank heads the ball away Tuesday during the regional semifinal in Ottawa.

Ottawa didn't back down as it scored a goal six minutes later to cut the lead in half. It took Louisburg less than a minute to give them a two-score lead again as Bila finished it off with a goal of his own and the Wildcats were able to hold on.

"We were actually working on that the last few weeks and it worked," Conley said of Cook's goal. "We were able to play that back side ball and he was able to get it in. It was really cool to have three different goal scorers, and all three guys busted their butt and finished well. It was a lot of fun."

The Wildcat defense did its part as the back line of Minster, Will Frank, Michael Seuferling and Haden Yeager, along with help of midfielder Ryan Haight, helped contain the Cyclone

attack. Ottawa turned up the intensity late in the second half as it put three shots on goal, but goalie Thomas Arnett came through with some key saves late.



Junior Ryan Haight holds off an Ottawa player to win a 50-50 ball Tuesday against the Cyclones.

“Thomas made a really great save there on a free kick that just bent around the wall,” Conley said. “Thomas read it well and that was huge. Then they had a header in the box that he was able to save as well, which was fantastic. It was a good all-around effort.”

Louisburg, which is the No. 11 seed, will travel to No. 3 Bishop Miege (10-5-2) tonight for the Class 4-3-2-1A regional championship match. The Stags have won the last two state championships and the Wildcats know they will have tough

challenge ahead of them.

“We are looking at it as it is just another team and it is that simple,” Conley said. “That is why you play the game. We are not looking at paper, and if that was the case, they would have a state championship before the season started. They want to stay in 4A, so we will play them and we will play hard. They are a fantastic team and one of the best in the state of Kansas.”

Piper spoils Wildcats’ senior night with three penalty kicks



Louisburg goalie Thomas Arnett dives to make one of his several saves during the Wildcats’ match with Piper on Thursday in Louisburg. The Wildcats came up short in their regular season finale with a 5-1 loss to the Pirates.

It started out as a Senior Night to remember for Brock Bila, Chris Williams, Eric Vazquez and Eli Minster.

The Louisburg seniors, who were honored prior to the game with managers Hayli Detherage and Camdyn Clark, jumped out to an

early lead against Piper in the Wildcats' last regular season game and the final ever home contest for the Wildcat quartet.

Louisburg had hopes of handing the Pirates, one of the best teams record-wise in Class 4-3-2-1A, a loss to head into the postseason with some momentum.

Piper, unfortunately for the Wildcats, had different plans.

The Pirates were awarded three penalty kicks in the second half, and converted all three, as they went on to down Louisburg, 5-1, and spoiled the Wildcats' celebration.

"Two penalty kicks absolutely kill you, and then you get a third, and it is just frustrating," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "It was just a lot of dumb luck. It just stinks and then we lost our cool little bit there at the end, and that didn't help. In the end, I think this was one of our best games this season and the score is not indicative of how close the game really was. The boys played with a lot of heart and guts, we just didn't have a lot of luck."

The Wildcats (5-10) got out to an early lead as a pair of seniors put Louisburg on top. Williams raced down the sideline and crossed it over to Bila, who found the back of the net, to give Louisburg a 1-0 advantage nine minutes into the match.



Senior Brock Bila celebrates the game's first goal with teammates Landon Johnson (10) and Eric Vazquez.

Five minutes later, Piper scored the equalizer and the two teams went into halftime tied at 1-all. Wildcat goalie Thomas Arnett turned away several Pirate opportunities in the first half to keep the game close.

In the second half, however, Piper broke the game open thanks to the three penalty kicks and another goal that gave the Pirates a lead in which the Wildcats couldn't recover.

"Thomas did his thing," Conley said. "He held his ground and saved everything he should have saved. When you have three penalty kicks it is frustrating, but he is a wall back there. He adjusted and communicated well with his defense. He played fantastic and did a great job in the net for us."

Louisburg's four seniors put together one of their best

showings of the season and Conley was pleased with what he saw out of his team.



The Louisburg seniors (from left) are manager Hayli Detherage, Brock Bila, Eli Minster, Eric Vazquez, Chris Williams and manager Camdyn Clark.

“We played well,” Conley said. “Chris was hustling all over the place and brought a lot of high pressure. I think Brock played fantastic and it was probably his best game this year. He did everything we asked him to do. He attacked and went at people. He played awesome and was our best player.

“Eli did a good job and was fantastic on the back side dealing with their runners all the time. Vazquez worked his butt off and played a lot of good balls down the line. Those four boys left it all out on the field and left nothing back.”

Although the loss ended the Wildcats’ regular season on a sour

note, they have a chance to make amends Tuesday when they travel to Ottawa for the Class 4A regional semifinal.

The Wildcats are the No. 11 seed and will square off with the No. 6 Cyclones (9-7) at 5 p.m. at Ottawa High School. The winner will play Thursday against the winner of Bishop Miege and Bishop Ward for the regional championship.

“The past couple years, we were the guys on the other side that had a big target on our back,” Conley said of his previous regional championship teams. “We are 5-10 and I don’t think anyone will take us seriously, and I think that is to our advantage. We will just see what happens. We have to come out and play hard and I like our chances. It will be difficult to rebound after a tough loss to Piper.”

Late push not enough for Wildcats against Paola



Louisburg sophomore Haden Yeager battles a Paola player for the ball during a match earlier this season. The Wildcats fell to Paola, 3-1, on the road on Oct. 8 at Paola High School.

PAOLA – For the last 15 minutes of its match with Paola, the Louisburg boys soccer team put the Panthers on their heels.

The Wildcats controlled possession and had numerous shots on goal, including one that found the back of the net. Unfortunately for Louisburg, the first 65 minutes didn't look like the final 15.

Paola opened the game with three goals, including two in the second half, and Louisburg couldn't catch up in a 3-1 loss on Oct. 8 at Paola High School. The Wildcats defeated Paola, 4-0, earlier in the season but it was a much different match this time around.

"We really played hard the last 15 minutes or so, and if we played that hard the entire game, I think it is vastly different outcome," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "We gave up a couple of incredibly soft goals and didn't play hard. Then all of a sudden the last 15 minutes we decided to play hard. I don't know why we couldn't get up for a rival game. I thought we were ready to go, but it just didn't work out that way."

One positive to come from the Wildcats' loss was the return of midfielder Landon Johnson. The Louisburg junior suffered a leg injury in the offseason and made his season debut against the Panthers.

Johnson contributed in his first game back as he recorded an assist on the Wildcats' lone goal. He set up senior Brock Bila with 13 minutes left in the match and Bila's goal gave Louisburg a little bit of life.

"I thought he did fine out there," Conley said of Johnson. "His vision helps us a bunch, along with his knowledge of the game. He usually puts the ball right where it needs to be and he did a good job for the time he was out there. Once he gets more comfortable out there, he will help us even more."

Louisburg played without five varsity players again against the Panthers and injuries continue to mount against the Wildcats. They did get some time to heal up as they had a week

off from action before the final week of the regular season.

The Wildcats (5-9) return to action today when they travel to Ottawa. Louisburg will then host Senior Night on Thursday when it faces off with Piper.

Injuries don't slow Wildcats down in win over Eudora



Louisburg goalie Thomas Arnett goes in for a save against Spring Hill last Tuesday in Louisburg. Arnett made a save on a penalty kick Thursday at Eudora to help give the Wildcats a 1-0 victory to snap a six-game losing streak.

EUDORA – The injury bug has bitten the Louisburg High School boys soccer team hard in recent weeks and it has left the Wildcats a little undermanned.

Those injuries have taken their toll on the Wildcats as they entered Thursday's road match against Eudora on a six-game losing streak.

Louisburg was without five varsity players against the Cardinals, and then later lost another to an injury in game. It wasn't the ideal situation for the Wildcats, but they

didn't let those losses get to them as they scored a second half goal and played strong in the back to pull out a 1-0 win against Eudora.

Not only did Louisburg break its losing streak, but also its string of bad luck.

"I felt the boys have been playing good soccer the past couple games, but we weren't having any luck," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "With four to six varsity players out the past couple weeks or so, we have been playing a lot of freshmen and sophomores as the next man up. The experience is paying massive dividends in their growth and development, but we have some growing pains.

"I thought we played well against Eudora, and the boys handled wherever I put them. They had a great mindset and played as a team. Our boys play really hard and we were able to grind out a positive result."



Sophomore Treston Carlson shields a Spring Hill player from the ball last Tuesday at home.

After a scoreless first half, the Wildcats (5-7) found the back of the net early in the second. Senior Brock Bila revived the Louisburg offense with a shot that sailed past the Eudora goalie, on what turned out to be the game-winning goal.

“We have been preaching to our boys to get more shots to put pressure on our opponents,” Conley said. “Brock got a clear look and hit it. I think their goalkeeper wasn’t ready and Brock took advantage.”

Following the goal, the Wildcat defense faced a lot of pressure from the Eudora attack and got their biggest test when Eudora was awarded a penalty kick with 19 minutes left in the match.

Louisburg goalie Thomas Arnett read the Cardinal kick well and

recorded one of his many saves on the night to preserve the lead for the Wildcats.

“Thomas was ready and prepped,” Conley said. “Coach (Michael) Pickman worked on penalty kicks recently with him and the extra training paid off as Thomas made a great save.

“Defensively we played well and kept it together. We defended the last 9-12 minutes like our lives depended on it. They pushed everyone forward and we held our ground.”

The win was a nice pick-me-up for the Wildcats as they lost a tough 1-0 match to Spring Hill last Tuesday at home.

Even with all the setbacks and injuries, the team has kept their head up and are looking forward to a strong finish to the season.

Louisburg will try and make it two straight wins tonight when it travels to Paola for a 5 p.m. matchup. The Wildcats will then host Basehor-Linwood this Tuesday in what is a make-up contest from earlier in the season.

“The boys keep showing up and giving it their all,” Conley said. “I love this team’s blue collar attitude and how they never make excuses. We are about to get healthy and I think we could make some noise in the playoffs.”

Wildcats can't snap losing skid on road at Baldwin



Louisburg's Ethan Showalter blocks off a Baldwin defender to the ball Thursday during the Wildcats' game at Baldwin High School. The Wildcats fell to the Bulldogs, 3-1.

BALDWIN CITY – The Louisburg boys soccer team was able to break one streak Thursday against Baldwin, but unfortunately the Wildcats couldn't put an end to an even peskier one.

Louisburg scored its first goal in three matches right before halftime of its game at Baldwin High School and sent the Wildcats into halftime knotted up at 1-all.

However, Baldwin answered with two second half goals and the Wildcats weren't able to respond in a 3-1 defeat. It was the fifth straight loss for Louisburg as it has tried to break out of its slump since Sept. 13, after falling to Spring Hill.

"I thought we played well at Baldwin," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "The score did not show how close the game really was. We had more dangerous chances than they did, but we had two bad mistakes that led to goals. It's unfortunate, but I thought we played much better and have been playing better. The scores have not shown that, but the boys are figuring it out and piecing it together."

The Wildcats (4-6) found themselves down early in the match after a Baldwin goal, but with three minutes left in the first half, senior Brock Bila attacked the goal and got a shot past the Bulldog goalie to tie it.

It didn't take long for Baldwin to take back control as it

scored the go-ahead goal five minutes into the second half and then again with 19 minutes left in the match.



Louisburg goalie Garrett Rolofson bends down to make save Thursday in Baldwin.

Injuries also hampered the Wildcats as they were missing a few varsity contributors and forced some younger players to step in and fill those roles. Still, the Wildcats had their opportunities on goal, but weren't able to finish.

On Tuesday, it was much of the same for Louisburg as it wasn't able to find the back of the net and lost a tough 1-0 match on the road at Tonganoxie. The Chieftains converted a penalty kick with 17 minutes remaining to come out on top.

Despite the recent struggles, Conley is impressed with how his team has improved throughout the year after having just six players with varsity experiencing entering the season, and

also dealing with injuries.

Louisburg will try to get back on track this Tuesday when it hosts Spring Hill at the Wildcat Sports Complex. The match is set to begin at 6 p.m.

“I am excited to see what happens when we are completely healthy,” Conley said. “We will keep grinding and working to get better every day.”