

Wildcats lose matches to Baldwin, Spring Hill



Louisburg sophomore Haden Yeager clears the ball out of the back during Monday's match with Baldwin in Louisburg. The Wildcats lost back to back matches to Spring Hill and Baldwin.

The Louisburg High School boys soccer team had gotten off to a hot start to its season by winning four of its first five matches.

Those winning ways have recently hit a snag as that streak was snapped last Thursday in a 3-1 loss to Spring Hill and the Wildcats fell again at home Monday in a 3-0 defeat to Baldwin, which is currently undefeated on the season.

"Against both teams I felt we played well at times, but then we were exposed on our mistakes," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "We need to learn from those mistakes and keep improving. Unfortunately, those mistakes are the same mistakes we have been making, but those two teams exposed us."

On the road at Spring Hill, Louisburg found itself down 1-0 at halftime and the Broncos tacked on another goal to put the Wildcats down two midway through the second half.

The Wildcats were able to get back in the match when senior Chris Williams was fouled in the box and Louisburg was awarded a penalty kick. Junior midfielder Ryan Haight converted on the

penalty and the Wildcats were building momentum until the Broncos put the match away late in the second half with another score.

In its match with Baldwin at home Monday, Louisburg didn't have many chances on goal as the Bulldogs dominated possession throughout and kept the Wildcat defense busy.

Louisburg goalie Thomas Arnett made several big saves in the net, but Baldwin put pressure on the Louisburg back line most of the night and were able to put three in the back of the net.



Freshman defender Michael Seuferling makes a pass to a teammate last Thursday in Spring Hill.

Although the Wildcats (4-3) have suffered a couple setbacks, Conley knows his young team will continue grow as the season goes along.

"We are getting back to basics and focusing more on teaching and improving," Conley said. "We are working on our game preparation, being ready to play (showing up on time and with all their equipment), being prepared to play, and playing our game. We will learn and continue to learn.

"We have to remember we only have six kids returning with any previous varsity soccer experience. We will keep getting better and progressing."

The Wildcats will try and bounce back at 6 p.m. tonight when it hosts Ottawa in a Frontier League match.

Back-to-back wins give Wildcats four straight victories



Louisburg senior Eric Vazquez clears the ball away during the Wildcats' 3-1 victory Monday over Lansing in Louisburg. The Wildcats won back-to-back home games with wins over Lansing and Bishop Ward.

In what is one of its busy weeks of the season, the Louisburg High School boys soccer team is two-thirds of the way to

perfection.

The Wildcats had three games scheduled for this week, including a pair of back-to-back contests Monday and Tuesday. Playing two games in a span of 24 hours didn't seem to bother Louisburg as it rolled to two victories by a combined score of 7-2.

On Monday, Louisburg hosted Lansing, a Class 5A program, and the Wildcats used a pair of second half goals to pull away for a 3-1 win. Against Bishop Ward on Tuesday, it was much of the same as Louisburg scored three unanswered goals to start the match, and got a hat trick from senior Brock Bila in the 4-1 victory.

Since the Wildcats' season opening loss to Fort Scott, they have reeled off four straight wins and have got things back on track.

"They just do a good job and keep improving every day and that is all we can ask of them," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "We are going to put kids in and play them in a bunch of different spots and the thing is these guys just have to keep improving. They are working hard and they are accepting the challenge. We have had some hiccups and there are times where we fall asleep a little bit and get complacent, but it is fun watching this group because they compete and they battle."

It didn't take long for Louisburg (4-1) to get going against Lansing as Bila scored his first of two goals in the match 11 minutes in. Bila got a pass from Logan Faulkner and put it in the back of the net to give the Wildcats a 1-0 lead, and it remained that way to halftime.

Ten minutes into the second half, Bila struck again as defender Eli Minster had a long throw in from the side that landed in front of Bila, and he beat the Lansing defense for his second goal.

Faulkner added a goal to go along with his assist a few minutes later as he took a shot in the box that made it past the Lansing goalie and gave Louisburg a 3-0 lead.

Lansing ended Louisburg's hopes of shutout with 46 seconds left when the Lions were awarded a penalty kick and put it in for their first goal.

"We held our own, and they actually started to counter attack us," Conley said. "With our young group in the middle, we were trying to stay disciplined and trying to hold our shape, but we struggled with that at times. The boys still played well though and did what we asked them to do. They followed the scouting report and we were able to take advantage of some things."



Eli Minster (left) battles a Lansing player for a 50-50 ball Monday in Louisburg.

Against Bishop Ward, the Wildcats followed much of the same recipe as they were able to score early and play from in front. Bila, who registered a hat trick, got going with a goal to put Louisburg up 1-0, just four minutes into the contest.

Five minutes later, the Wildcats were fouled in the box and awarded the penalty kick. Junior Ryan Haight took advantage as he found the back of the net on the penalty kick and put his team up two.

Late in the first half, Bila scored again, this time on an assist from senior Eric Vazquez and the Wildcats had a 3-0 lead at halftime.

"I thought the boys executed the game plan pretty well," Conley said. "I felt the past two nights the boys played with a tremendous amount of energy. I love the blue collar attitude we play with. I appreciate that the boys come focused and ready to play each and every night.

"The second half we got out of our shape and comfort zone for a 10 minute stretch or so, but regained quickly and attacked as a unit. The boys are getting better each and every night and I could be prouder of their improvement."

Bishop Ward scored on a penalty kick themselves in the second half to break the shutout, but Bila answered late with his third goal to complete the hat trick.

Louisburg will try for five in a row tonight when it travels to Spring Hill for a Frontier League matchup. Varsity is set to begin at 6 p.m.

Wildcats win in double overtime on goal from Williams



Louisburg midfielder Ryan Haight battles a Bonner Springs opponent for a 50-50 ball Thursday at Bonner Springs High School. The Wildcats won 2-1 in double overtime.

BONNER SPRINGS – With time ticking away at a chance at victory, the Louisburg High School boys soccer team wasn't about to see all its hard work end in a tie.

After the Wildcats rallied to even the score against Bonner Springs in the second half of Thursday's contest at Bonner Springs High School, they went to an extra period and were still unable to find the back of the net.

Then, in the final overtime, Louisburg got the opportunity it was looking for.

Louisburg senior Chris Williams scored the game-winning goal five minutes into the second overtime to give the Wildcats a 2-1 victory, and gave them back-to-back wins after losing their season opener.

"We had a free kick that was played into the 18-yard box and Bonner didn't clear the ball well because of the pressure applied by Ryan Haight," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said.

“Chris attacked it and chipped it over the goalkeeper’s head for the game winner. Chris provided a huge spark for us off of the bench. He played extremely hard the entire game and he gave our team a big lift. It was only fitting that he get the game winner. It was a fantastic moment from that young man.”

To start the match, both teams had their chances on goal before Bonner Springs connected on a shot from 25-yards out to give the Braves a 1-0 lead with seven minutes remaining in the first half.

The match stayed that way until midway through the second half when Brock Bila scored on an assist from Eric Vazquez to tie the match up and eventually send it to overtime.

The Wildcats (2-1) had to make adjustments along the way as they had to get used to playing on a turf surface for the first time this season, which plays much quicker than their home grass field they are used to competing on.

“Playing on turf is always challenging for us because of our practice environment, but we try to make the most of it,” Conley said. “It is nice to have a ball that rolls clean and smooth, but it takes some getting used to it. In the second half, the boys moved the ball and let the ball do the work. We had 6 to 8 really nice opportunities inside 12 yards, but failed to capitalize. Once we started playing our game we started to control the game.”



Louisburg goalie Thomas Arnett skies to knock a shot attempt away on a corner kick Thursday in Bonner Springs.

Despite the lone goal the Wildcats gave up in the first half, the defense held strong as the back line Eli Minster, Haden Yeager, Michael Seuferling and Will Frank turned away the Braves' attack and goalie Thomas Arnett snagged whatever got through.

It was an overall team effort from Louisburg and the Wildcat coach couldn't have been prouder of his team as they picked up their second straight win.

"We played well and did a nice job for the most part in staying organized," Conley said. "We started off poor on the turf and trying to do too much. By the end, we were trying to play the right way and let the ball do the work. It was very

nice getting our first road win, especially to a team that beat us last year.”

It will be a busy week for the Wildcats that begins today when they host Lansing, a Class 5A program, for a 6 p.m. start. Louisburg will then host Bishop Ward on Tuesday before traveling to Spring Hill on Thursday.

“This week is going to be a really good test for us,” Conley said. “We play back to back on Monday and Tuesday and follow that up with powerhouse Spring Hill. I think this week will show our true colors. I like how this team though is focused on getting better. It is fun to watch them grow.”

Bila's hat trick helps Wildcats to first victory



Louisburg senior Brock Bila celebrates a goal during the Wildcats' 4-0 victory over Paola on Thursday at the Wildcat Stadium Complex. Bila recorded a hat trick on the night as the Wildcats picked up their first win of the season.

Last week's season opening loss at Fort Scott didn't sit well with the Louisburg High School boys soccer team.

It was a game they felt they should have won.

Two days later, the Wildcats made sure they didn't make the same mistake again.

Louisburg hosted Paola for its home opener Thursday and the Wildcats used a big second half to snag their first victory of the season. Senior Brock Bila, who missed the team's season opener, responded in a big way as he scored three second half goals to help give Louisburg a 4-0 win over the Panthers.

"It was definitely a good win," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "I think Paola had a lot of the play, but the way our team is set up is we are geared for counter attack and geared for transition and we did a really good job of cutting them when we could. We did a really good job of weathering the storm for the first 20 minutes. Thomas (Arnett) did a good job back there in goal and made some really big saves for us. So, it was definitely better than our opener."

Paola and Louisburg each had their chances on goal in the first half and the Panthers controlled possession through much of the first half before the Wildcats started to turn the tide in the final 10 minutes.

Senior Chris Williams, Bila and junior Ryan Haight all had good looks at the net at different times, while Williams made several hard runs at the goal – only to see their shots go just wide or get saved. The teams went into halftime in a scoreless contest.



Junior defender Will Frank (24) heads the ball away from the goal Thursday during Louisburg's win over Paola.

Bila made his chances count in the second half. His first one came in the opening minute of the second half as he beat the Paola goalie on a 1-on-1 opportunity to score the game's first goal.

About 12 minutes later Bila struck again, and much like the first score, he beat the Panther goalkeeper in the box to put the Wildcats up 2-0.

Louisburg made it a three-goal lead when Williams was fouled in the box and the Wildcats were awarded a penalty kick with 21 minutes remaining. Haight made the PK and it was smooth sailing from there.

Bila completed the hat trick with five minutes left in the match on another shot in the box and gave the Wildcats their

first victory of the season.

“It was good to see some passion and some emotion from him,” Conley said of Bila. “The first 10 minutes I was a little worried, but then he started to figure it out. He played hard and played the right way and that is the stuff that I like to see. He showed positive energy and he just competed.”

The Wildcats (1-1) also had solid play from its defense as goalie Thomas Arnett earned the clean sheet – the first of his varsity career. Seniors Eli Minster, junior Will Frank, sophomore Haden Yeager and freshman Michael Seuferling also helped contribute to the shutout by limiting the Panthers’ chances, including ones from Paola’s all-league player in Ryan Wokutch.

“Paola clogs the middle like crazy and we made some adjustments to take away some players that they had to make sure they couldn’t get at us, and I think that was the key,” Conley said. “Wokutch had one chance at the end and Thomas made a big save on it.



Sophomore Haden Yeager steps in to knock the ball away from a Paola player Thursday at home.

“(Wokutch) is a talented kid. He doesn’t like to be chased or bumped too much, but I thought we played hard and we didn’t play dirty. We obviously frustrated them a little bit and it was good for us.”

Not only was it their first win of the season, but for the Wildcats, it couldn’t come at a better time as they prepare for back-to-back matches with Basehor-Linwood and Bonner Springs. Louisburg will host Basehor-Linwood on Wednesday.

“It was good to see that we are not distracted,” Conley said. “We got our stuff squared away, we started acting right and we played together. We were organized, and I was very excited with how organized we stayed because there was a good chance that we could have gotten run on. The boys held their ground, stayed structured and that is really good for a young team.

"We are not built for back to back, but we will have to suck it up and do our job. Basehor is pretty good. They have a new coach, a new style and we will be ready for them."

Wildcats fall in season opener to Fort Scott



Louisburg freshman Will Finestead leaps in the air to win a ball Tuesday in Fort Scott. Finestead assisted on one of the Wildcats' two goals, but Louisburg came up short in a 3-2 loss.

FORT SCOTT – The first minute of the match provided an ominous feeling for the Louisburg High School boys soccer team Tuesday in its season opener at Fort Scott.

Fort Scott scored a goal in the opening minute on a scrum in front of the goal as a header squeaked its way into the back of the net. For the next 79 minutes, the Wildcats found themselves playing catch-up.

Although Louisburg was able to score a goal in each half, the Wildcats couldn't overcome a three-score first half from Fort Scott as it handed Louisburg a 3-2 loss.

"The boys didn't come ready to play and struggled giving up a goal in the first minute of the game," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "For a lot of these young men, it was their first ever high school game. I figured they would be nervous, but not that bad. We had a lot of distractions yesterday, but I loved how the boys kept fighting and wouldn't give up."

After the first minute goal from Fort Scott, the Wildcats started to settle down and possess the ball and eventually got some shots on goal.

Midway through the first half, Louisburg found the back of the net when sophomore Luke Faulkner scored his first-ever goal to tie the match on an assist from freshman Will Finestead.



Senior forward Chris Williams fakes out a Fort Scott defender Tuesday.

The final three minutes of the first half proved to be the

difference in the game as Fort Scott scored twice during that span to take a 3-1 halftime advantage. The Wildcats were called for a handball just outside the box that resulted in a direct kick score for the Tigers, then a misplay in the box by the Wildcats with a minute left accounted for the other.

Down two goals didn't seem to bother the Wildcats, however. They continued to put pressure on the Tigers.

Junior Ryan Haight cut the Fort Scott lead in half as he found the back of the net with 20 minutes left in the match, but Louisburg could get no closer.

Louisburg (0-1) will try and bounce back Thursday when it will host Paola in its home opener. The match is set to begin at 6 p.m. at the Wildcat Stadium Complex.

"Our goal is to get better each and every day and I think we were better than we were in our Gatorade scrimmage," Conley said. "This team will continue grow and we will be pretty solid at the end of the year."

Young Wildcats look to rebuild after special season



Louisburg senior Brock Bila (1), who was a first team All-Frontier League player last season, is one of five returning

starters for the Wildcats as they open their season Tuesday in Fort Scott.

It was a memorable ride for the Louisburg High School boys soccer team last season that ended with its third consecutive regional title and a spot in the state quarterfinals.

Expectations are always high with the Louisburg program, but the Wildcats have some reshuffling to do for this season as they have to replace 10 seniors off of last year's team – many of whom played key roles during their run.

The Wildcats return just five starters from a year ago and have 16 new faces to the program as they try to build chemistry for the 2018 season.

"This team is going to be vastly different than my previous two years," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "We are very young. We have been doing a lot more teaching and explaining to make sure everyone is on the same page. It is a lot of fun watching these young men grow and get better. We will take our lumps I am sure, but this team has a very nice core of players that want to get better."

Louisburg returns four seniors – Brock Bila, Eric Vazquez, Chris Williams and Eli Minster – but all four players saw a lot of varsity time a season ago.

Bila, who was a forward last season, was a first team All-Frontier League selection as he finished the year with 20 goals and five assists. He will see a lot of time at forward with Williams along with some midfield play as well.

Vazquez, along with Ryan Haight, Luke Faulkner, Logan Faulkner, Colin Cook, Benjamin Ratliff-Becher, David Perentis and Ethan Showalter will all see time in the midfield. Haight was a big part of the Wildcats' midfield last season and ended

the year with honorable mention all-league honors.

One piece missing from that group is junior Landon Johnson, who suffered a leg injury in the offseason, and is expected to miss a lot of time this season. Johnson, who earned first-team all-league honors last season, led Louisburg with 15 assists last year to go along with six goals.

"The midfield will have a lot of options for us, which is great because it creates a lot of competition," Conley said. "All of those guys will be fighting for a starting spot. The team is going to be wide open in regards to opportunity and winning and a spot. Landon will be very tough to replace, but he is improving each and every day."



Senior Eli Minster (23) is a returning starter for the Wildcats on defense after also seeing time at the forward spot last season.

Defensively, the Wildcats are returning a pair of starters in Minster and junior William Frank. Sophomore Haden Yeager and freshman Michael Seuferling will complete the Wildcat back line.

Louisburg will also have a new goalie this season in junior Thomas Arnett, but fellow junior Garrett Rolofson is providing plenty of competition in practice as the team's backup according to Conley.

The Wildcats will try and get their season started on the right foot this week. Louisburg will travel to Fort Scott on Tuesday for a 4:30 p.m. matchup in their season opener and will host rival Paola on Thursday in its home debut.

Despite the lack of experience on the varsity level for many of the Wildcats, Conley believes this team can come into their own as the season goes along.

"This group will be held to the same standard that our previous team have been," Conley said. "It will be difficult and hard, but this group of young men are capable to doing great things. As for being their coaches, we have been more patient and teaching a lot more. It is imperative to get all of our players on the same page.

"The boys need to work on their confidence and believe in one another. This team will be a team that grows throughout the year and gets better each and every time they play. We will be looking to shock some people."

New rules create different vibe for first day of fall practice



The Louisburg High School football team opened the 2018 season with its first day of practice Monday and did so under different guidelines. Despite that, the Wildcats are excited for the start of the season.

On the horizon, it looked like a normal first day of practice.

More than 150 athletes took to their respective field, court or course to begin their journey to greatness Monday for the 2018 fall sports season. Excitement was abound and coaches were happy to be back with their players.

However, the first day of practice was a little bit different this year as the Kansas High School Activities Association implemented new fall heat acclimation rules in late July. The rules, applied to all sports, includes:

- Only one practice per day is permitted during the first five days of practice. All individuals shall only practice once per day for the first five days the individual practices, no matter when the person joins the team or if the person misses days due to injury/illness.
- No single practice may last longer than three hours. All

warm-up, stretching, conditioning and weight lifting is included as part of the three-hour limit.

- A separate walkthrough is permitted in addition to the single practice. The walkthrough cannot be longer than one hour and must be separated from practice by at least three hours of rest. A walkthrough is defined as a teaching opportunity with the athletes in which no protective equipment is worn. No physically exerting activity, including any conditioning or weight lifting, may take place during the walkthrough.
- Beginning on practice day six, double practice sessions are permitted for any individual who has completed five days of single practices. Double practice sessions cannot be held on consecutive days. The day following a double practice day would be either a single practice day or a rest/recovery day.
- On days of multiple practices, no single practice may last longer than 3 hours and total practice time combined shall not exceed five hours.
- To be deemed a practice, a majority of the squad members must participate in the organized team training session.

Those rules left most of the coaches at Louisburg High School having to readjust how they run their practices or tryouts.

The Wildcat boys soccer team, which normally conditioned in the morning and worked on skills in the afternoon, were forced to cram everything into one practice.

"I am extremely frustrated with the new KSHSAA rule," Louisburg soccer coach Kyle Conley said. "Before to protect the student athletes, we ran in the morning before the sun was up and when it was cooler out. Now we have to practice and condition in the afternoon in the heat of the day. Personally, I fill this will lead to more issues. It would be interesting to see who all was included in this decision and what the data said."



Eli Minster passes a ball to a teammate during a drill Monday during the first official day of practice.

Louisburg volleyball, which also holds tryouts, had to split up the grade levels during the process. Senior and juniors had tryouts in the morning as a group, while sophomores and freshman practiced in the afternoon.

“In the past, we were able to put every athlete, freshman through senior, on the court at the same time and separate out the tested areas,” Louisburg volleyball coach Jessica Compliment said. “Physical testing had been in the morning with volleyball skill testing in the afternoon. Due to the change in the rule, we could no longer use that set up.

“It has forced a ‘split’ in the athletes because they can’t all work out together like they have been all summer long. Because of our numbers, and the tests we feel are necessary in order to make cuts and squad roster decisions, we need to run

the athletes through each test. We would not have enough time to do that if we had kept them all together and brought them in for only one session. Which means the athletes are that more anxious and excited to finish tryouts and start the season with their teammates.”

There were also specific rule changes in regards to football, which forced Wildcat coach Robert Ebenstein to adjust his practice schedule as well, including the removal of two-a-days for the first week practice. Other changes include:

- Players must have a minimum of one day of rest/recovery during any week (Sunday- Saturday). Only injury treatments are permitted on a rest/recovery day.
- Days No. 1 and 2 of practice: Helmets only (air and bags only are permitted.)
- Days No. 3 and 4: Helmets and shoulder pads are permitted (Day 3: control permitted; Day 4: thud permitted.)
- Days 5 through Saturday of third week of practice: Full contact (air, bags, control, thud and live action permitted) may begin with exceptions that on any day involving multiple practices, only one practice may involve thud and/or live action.

“The changes with KSHSAA policies are what they are,” Ebenstein said. “I think they were created with good intentions. Personally I feel that our practice tendencies over the last few years have put player safety as the No. 1 priority always, so in that regard not a whole lot will change for us. You are allowed to do a separate ‘walk-through” other than practice which we will still do every morning at 6 a.m., so we still have that old school two-a-day feeling just the approach of what we do and how we will do it has changed.

“The only thing that confused me is the purpose of the change is for heat acclimation, but the wording of it will force us to condition our players in the afternoon when it is hot

instead of in the morning when it is typically cooler. But most all of our players have been working their tails off all summer and are already in pretty good shape.”

Despite the changes in practice, all four Wildcat programs are excited for what their season has in store. LHS had a large number of participants for the first day of fall practice as 163 athletes participated.

Ebenstein had 70 players attend the first day of practice, which is the highest number the Wildcats have had since he joined the staff in 2012. Louisburg also hopes to improve off its 6-3 record last season as they return 18 seniors, including several starters on both sides of the ball.

“Practice went well and it was good to finally get back on the field with the guys,” Ebenstein said. “We are very excited for this season, as in every team in the state. The thing that separates us is how players, managers and coaches alike all really enjoy our time together. I am excited to coach, but I’m honestly excited to be around these coaches and kids again and give this season the best run we can.”



LHS freshmen and sophomore volleyball players gather at center court during tryouts Monday.

On the volleyball side, the Lady Cats had 34 athletes show up for the first day of tryouts, which will end on Wednesday as Louisburg begins its quest to get back to the state tournament after finishing second a year ago.

“The first couple days are focused on running each athlete through a set of volleyball skills and physical skills tests,” Compliment said. “The athletes did a good job for the first day, and we are looking forward to the next couple of days.

“Over the course of the summer, we had a lot of athletes participate in summer league matches, summer camps, team camps, open gym and weights. They are ready to get the season going. There is a lot of excitement among the athletes and a lot of anticipation for the season.”

Coming off a spot in the state quarterfinals, the Wildcat boys soccer team had 38 athletes compete for a spot on the team as they try to make another run in the playoffs.

“It was nice to see so many kids out for the team,” Conley said. “The boys work incredibly hard and we very supportive of each other. With having so many new players coming out for the team, we did a lot of teaching and developing expectations for the drills and why we do things. It was actually the first time in three years the majority of the team completed the mile under six minutes, which was fantastic.

“It is a great time of the year with a lot of optimism. The boys were very upbeat and very focused on getting better. With only four seniors, we are extremely young and we will need to do a lot of teaching.”



Trinity Moore (center) leads a pack of runners during the first day of practice Monday at LHS.

As for cross country, numbers have dwindled a little for head coach John Reece as he has close to 25 runners out this season, but he has a good group of runners coming back, including state medalist Trinity Moore.

The girls team is also hoping to make a return trip to state this season after qualifying for the first time in school history last year.

“The first practice was great,” Reece said. “We are going to have more girls than boys, but it seems like they are in shape and ready to start training for our first race.

“The kids are jazzed about the season and the girls are wanting to do even better than last year. I believe success builds the team numbers.”

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.”

Wildcat boys soccer uses summer to ease new faces into program



Louisburg's Eli Minster settles a ball in a passing drill during the Wildcats' team camp on July 10. The Wildcats introduced a lot of fresh faces to the program this summer after losing more than 10 players off of last season's team.

This summer has been a little different than Louisburg High School boys soccer coach Kyle Conley has been used to.

In recent years, Conley has seen waves of experienced upperclassmen come through his program, which has led to back-to-back regional titles and a fourth place finish at state.

However, this time around Conley noticed those waves aren't as high as in year's past when he started his summer conditioning program with his team. When he began his team camp on July 9, he had 37 players sign up – which nearly half of those were either freshmen or new players to the program.

After graduating 10 players from last season's regional championship team, Conley realizes this summer is important to this year's squad and he has liked what he has seen thus far.

"I felt each day of camp we improved and got better," Conley said. "The boys had positive attitudes and were very coachable. Because of so many new kids to our program, we went about to square one and worked on technique. We spent a lot of time teaching the boys our way of doing things."

Fundamentals was a starting point for Conley this summer as he tried to get the players accustomed to playing at a high level in high school. The Wildcats spent the week-long camp going over several different aspects in order to get ready for their season, which will begin in late August.



Louisburg head coach Kyle Conley goes over a drill during the Wildcats' team camp last week.

"We spent a massive amount of time working on our technique and our speed of play," Conley said. "This season will require a lot of teaching so we started with phase one. The boys did a great job of progressing and improving. It will be fun to watch this team grow throughout the season."

As if introducing a number of new players to the varsity level this season wasn't going to be difficult enough, the Wildcats lost one of their top returning players before the season even started.

Junior midfielder Landon Johnson sustained a severe leg injury a couple months ago and will miss at least half, if not the entire season for Louisburg. Johnson was going to be a focal point in the midfield for the Wildcats as he is a two-year starter that earned first team All-Frontier League and second

team all-state honors last season.

“Losing Landon is a big blow, but we will play with the next man up mentality,” Conley said, “We have some quality players and returners and they will rise to the occasion and fill the void. Landon is a tremendous player and will be very difficult to replace.”

Although Conley’s work with them is all but complete until the first day of practice next month, the Wildcats will still continue to work in the weight room and go through individual sessions on their own as they prepare for what will be a difficult schedule with the new additions of Frontier League members Piper, Tonganoxie and Bonner Springs.

Despite the obstacles that are in store for the Wildcats this upcoming season, Conley is looking forward to what he has returning.

“This team is going to be extremely young, but these boys have that blue collar work ethic and mentality,” he said. “They are coachable and always work hard. I am excited to see how these boys progress.”

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 be subjective, so I asked the head coaches at LHS to help me out. I asked each coach to send me nominations of who they thought exemplified the Athlete of the Year honor. They 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's 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 4×400-meter relay team that finished seventh in the state in Class

4A, and also ran on the 4×100-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.