

Returning starters to lead Wildcat soccer



Louisburg senior Cale Schneider (left) goes through some drills with teammates Noah Juarez (right) and Parker Cates during a team practice last week. The Wildcats return several starters from last season's team and will try and get off to a good start today when they host Fort Scott.

While most of the Frontier League is having to reshape their rosters thanks to losing big senior classes, the Louisburg boys soccer team hasn't had to do much – which might be a good thing.

The Wildcats return a large group of starters from a year ago and have added a little depth to go along with it. It is the sort of recipe that could lead to a big season for the Wildcats.

"You look at the top teams from a year ago like Ottawa that just had a huge senior class and they lost a lot of players," Louisburg coach Ben York said. "Then you see other teams like Baldwin that has already lost a game this year, lose a lot of talent. De Soto is kind of the same way and they have a new coach, so you don't really know what to expect for them. You know they are going to be good teams, you just don't know how good."

York is optimistic about his team's chances for 2015 as he has six seniors that return to lead this group, and all six started a year ago. Throw in an all-state player in Noah Juarez and the Wildcats return a strong core from their 8-win team last season.

With all that, York knows the potential is there for his team to have a successful season, but he realizes the players have to do it on the field and not on paper.

"I really like the group of guys that we have coming back," York said. "We have quite a bit of experience and you would like to think that translates into more wins, but you have to go out there and play well first.

"I think it is really important to start off strong, because it would really benefit this team to get some confidence going early. If we can get a signature win early in the year and maybe start the season 3-1 or 4-0 – that could really be huge for us."

Juarez, a junior midfielder, will be the focus of a lot of teams this season as he looks to try and run the offense. Juarez led the team in goals scored last season, but it could be getting others involved that can spark the Wildcats.

With a lineup that is senior heavy, York is looking to Juarez to keep the Wildcats focused on both sides of the ball.

"With the last two seasons Noah has had, he is even going to have a bigger target on his back this year," York said. "I am really looking to him to become a more emotional and vocal leader out there. I want him to do more facilitating and moving the ball around and I think that we have the talent to be able to do that this year.

"We have some good speed and talented players up top so if he can get them and the other midfielders involved more, I think we can be a better team. Don't get me wrong, he is still going

to get his goals, but if he can do a little more distributing, I think that will free him up a little bit and force the other teams to just not be focused on him.”

Those options for Juarez will be pair of seniors in Cale Schneider and T.J. Svoboda. Both players are moving to the forward spot this season as Schneider will move from his spot on defense to a more attacking opportunity up top.

Grant Ryals, Christian Scholtz and Herman Knipp will join Juarez in the midfield. Senior Jairus Brown will play both the midfield and forward spots, but will play mainly as a substitute for the first few games as he is slowly recovering from an injury. Raistlin Brewer will also see some time in the midfield.

Seniors Hunter Mitchell and Parker Cates will play in the back on defense and will be joined by underclassmen Curran Conklin and Scott Murphy.

Senior goalie Michael Minster will return as the team’s starting goalkeeper, but underclassman Ambrose Stefan will also see some time.

“Michael had a good year last year and I expect him to do well this year,” York said. “At the same time, I want to get Ambrose a little bit of work as well in certain spots.”

Louisburg gets its season started today when it hosts Fort Scott for a 4 p.m. start. The Wildcats return to action Thursday when they travel to Ottawa

2015 LOUISBURG HIGH SCHOOL BOYS SOCCER SCHEDULE

Sept. 1

Fort

Scott		4 p.m.	
Sept. 3			@
Ottawa		6 p.m.	
Sept. 8			
Paola		4 p.m.	
Sept. 10			@ Spring
Hill		6 p.m.	
Sept. 15			De
Soto		4 p.m.	
Sept. 17			@
Baldwin		4 p.m.	
Sept. 21			
Piper		4 p.m.	
Sept. 22			
Eudora		4 p.m.	
Sept. 24			@Bonner
Springs		5:30 p.m.	
Sept. 28			
	5 p.m.	Heritage Christian	
Oct. 1			@
Paola		6 p.m.	
Oct. 6			Spring
Hill		4 p.m.	
Oct. 8			@ De
Soto		6 p.m.	
Oct. 12			
Baldwin		4 p.m.	

Oct. 15

Eudora

@

6 p.m.

Oct. 22

Ottawa

4 p.m.

Opinion: Rough patch leads to new beginning



I am just going to come right out and say it, “I’m scared.”

Yeah, it is an unusual way to start out an opinion piece, but there is no two ways around it – I am petrified. But believe it or not, it is what keeps me going.

We have all had at least one point in our existence where our lives changed for better or worse. I have had more than a few of those in my life, but the latest one came on Jan. 9.

It started out like all the other Fridays over the last seven years. I reported to work, spent a few hours in the office getting ready for what was a busy weekend of prep coverage ahead. It was the first action after Christmas break and I was ready to get back into the swing of things.

That never took place.

My bosses came into my office early that afternoon to inform

me I was being let go. The job of covering Louisburg athletics was no longer mine. I packed up my things, turned in my key, went home, punched the wall a couple times and cried.

I was scared.

After all the tears came the questions. How was I going to support my family? What am I going to do for a job? The list went on and on and I couldn't come up with many answers.

As it turned out, one of the worst experiences of my life turned into one of the best.

Thanks to a lot of prayers, and support from family and friends, I decided to start Louisburg Sports Zone. Yep, that's right, I went from being unemployed to starting my own business for the first time in my life.

Not exactly the best way to alleviate fears.

However, when I kicked off the site just a month later, I was overwhelmed with the amount of support from students at Louisburg High School, employees throughout the district, parents and several others who offered encouragement and supported my new venture.

I finished the last half of the winter season and all of the spring doing what I took for granted the previous seven years. I got the chance to cover Louisburg athletics again.

You know, this whole starting your own business thing might not have been a bad idea after all. I would have never had the courage to go out on my own had I not been pushed in that direction.

Fast forward to the present and I am still alive and kicking, ready to start my eighth season of roaming the Wildcat sidelines with camera in hand, waiting to tell that next story.

This fall brings a lot of story lines to the Wildcat programs. The football team is looking to improve off its 3-win season a year ago and find its way back to the playoffs with a veteran group returning.

Volleyball is primed and ready to make its fourth consecutive state tournament this year after placing in the top four in the last three years. The Lady Cats return five seniors that have a lot of state experience and that bodes well for another trip to Salina.

The Wildcat soccer team returns an experienced group from a year ago as they try to crack the top of the Frontier League standings. The cross country team also has several returning runners who will try and qualify for the state meet.

There is a lot to be excited about when it comes to Louisburg sports, but for me personally, I am just fortunate enough to still be a part of it in a small way.

I take a lot of pride in what I do and I hope that it shows when you read stories or look at pictures on this site. I started this business knowing that I will never be rich, but it gives me an opportunity to continue to do what I love.

Thanks to all those who have supported me and for the more than 23,000 views on the site in the last six months. I have said it before, but I am extremely blessed to live in a community that supports each other through good times and bad.

Every day I am fortunate enough to be able to go to work and support my family doing what I know how to do. That is all I have ever wanted, so thank you Louisburg for allowing me to do it.

I am still scared, though.

It is that fear that drives me to do the best I can in what I do in my job and in life. I don't want what happened on that

day in January to happen again and I will do everything to make sure it doesn't.

Right now I am living the good life. I have the opportunity to work for myself, support my family and do what I enjoy. I can't ask for any more.

I am living the American dream.

I just don't want to wake up.

Wildcat boys soccer building chemistry



Louisburg's Herman Knipp takes a shot on goal during the Wildcats' team camp Thursday at Louisburg High School. The Wildcats have been busy this summer with workouts twice-a-week to go along with the week-long camp.

When it comes to getting better in the offseason, working on fundamentals, conditioning and getting stronger are always at the top of several coach's checklists.

Ben York's list is much of the same, but there is one thing he

is trying to check off before the season officially begins in August.

“What I really wanted to see was for the guys to spend time together and really build that chemistry,” York said. “I thought we had a really nice week at camp and I saw that chemistry grow a little bit. Our chemistry hasn’t been the best in the past and I think that is important to having a successful season.”

York and his Wildcat soccer team completed their five-day camp last week that ended with a scrimmage Friday, and he saw some growth from his players. The Wildcats are coming off an 8-9 season that saw them fall in the first round of the playoffs in a tough loss to Ottawa.

The Louisburg coach came into this year knowing he was going to have to fill some spots from some departing seniors and he feels things are starting to work their way out.

“Coming in I knew we had to fill about four holes from kids that graduated and I have seen things during workouts and during camp that really have me encouraged,” York said. “We have some young kids stepping up and I am starting to get a feel for what our lineup is going to look like. We had a lot of kids play varsity last year that might not have been quite ready at the time, but I really think that is going to help them and the team this year to have that varsity experience.”

Along with the camp, the Wildcat players have also worked out two days a week over the summer improving their conditioning and fundamentals.

Experience isn’t something the Wildcats will lack this season as they return several players that will play in the midfield and up top. York thinks he will have at least three seniors at the midfield or forward spot.



Louisburg senior goalie Michael Minster dives to block a shot Thursday during the Wildcats' team camp.

However, it will be junior Noah Juarez that many of the team will look to. Juarez, an all-state player, will lead the attack in the midfield and will start for the third straight season. So far York has seen him blossom on and off the field.

"Absolutely he has become a better leader for us," York said. "He has become more vocal and he also leads by example on the field along with (senior) Cale (Schneider). Both of those guys do a great job for us and work well on the field together. We also have a couple other seniors that do a great job for us like Michael Minster who really ended last season well in goal."

Louisburg will sport a different look on the sideline as it will have a new assistant coach. Tanner O'Hara replaced long-time assistant Tony Juarez, who resigned his spot.

O'Hara is a 2011 Louisburg High School graduate and played under York all four years in the program and was a part of several regional championship teams.

"I will definitely miss having Tony on the sidelines with me," York said. "He is a great coach and I thought we worked very well together. Not having him there will be different, but at

the same time I feel very fortunate to have Tanner as my assistant coach. Being a part of the program for several years, he knows what to expect from me and what I am looking for, so that is very nice to have.

“Tanner really relates well to the kids and that really is another plus. He still has a lot to learn about coaching, game management and stuff like that, but I think he will pick that up just fine. I am really happy to have him as my assistant.”

As far as what the season holds, York knows it is going to be tough with many stiff tests on the schedule, but he knows his team is capable of doing a lot of good things this year.

“Our league is so tough,” York said. “Three of the top five teams in the state were in the Frontier League last year so we had some really tough games. We played really well at times, but we just couldn’t get that big signature win that would give these guys confidence moving forward.

“A year ago we just lacked that killer instinct and we didn’t put teams away when we were ahead or we didn’t have the confidence that we could beat a De Soto or a Baldwin. Once we get that win, I think it will be a big boost for these guys and hopefully we can get off to a good start this season and gain some confidence because that would be huge for us.”