

Paola AD proposes bill to help classification issue



Last October, Paola activities director Jeff Hines went to a Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) regional meeting to get updates on classification issues.

Six months later, Hines found himself in Topeka, in front of the Kansas Senate Education Committee to talk about a bill that could change the way schools are classified.

On Thursday, Hines sat in front of the committee to discuss Senate Bill 464 – a bill that he proposed with guidance of Sen. Caryn Tyson.

Statute 72-130 establishes specific guidelines pertaining to the organizational structure and functions of KSHSAA. Senate Bill 464 would change one part of the statute and strike the line which allows schools to be classified only by student enrollment.

"The total number of students in schools is a great starting point for classifying them," Hines said. "It makes sense that the largest schools should play the largest schools and the smallest schools should play the smallest schools, but there are other things that need to be considered."

For several months, KSHSAA has had a classification committee discuss different ways to have a competitive balance with its member schools. They came up with ideas of reducing the number of classifications or changing the number of schools in a

division.

"There were no other factors being considered and that bothered me," Hines said, "All that would do was reshuffle the schools just a little bit but we would have the same problem."

The problem for the committee was its hands were tied thanks to the wording in Statute 72-130 that specifically states schools can only be classified by enrollment numbers and nothing else.

So Hines went to work and helped create Senate Bill 464, which does not give a specific solution to the problem, but rather would take wording out of the statute to allow KSHSAA to figure out how to classify schools on its own.

Hines gave a 15 minute testimony in front of the committee and then answered questions from the committee members for more than 30 minutes afterward. Before the hearing, Hines received support from every member in the Frontier League, Pioneer League and all but two schools in the Kaw Valley League, as those two didn't respond before the hearing.

Following Hines' testimony, Sen. Vicki Schmidt, R-Topeka, had concerns as to why KSHSAA did not come in front of the committee itself to ask for changes.

Hines informed the committee that it would be redundant for KSHSAA to endorse the plan, because if approved, member schools would still have to vote on it. He believes Bill 464 would let KSHSAA come up with a system and let schools improve it, instead of the legislature.

"KSHSAA wants to be neutral because this proposal would affect different schools in different ways," Hines said. "It could be very beneficial to some schools and others may not like it because they might have to move up a class. So, why should KSHSAA have to pick sides in it and pit member against member? It doesn't have to be that way in my opinion."

"Yes, a school that has to move up a classification might not like it, but is it the best thing overall for the association? They can't look themselves in the mirror and say 'No, this isn't the right thing to do?'

A major problem for some member schools in KSHSAA is they do not believe it is competitively equal the way it is currently structured.

"I am not a believer in participation medals," Hines said. "If they are kindergartners, sure, but when you start playing, part of being successful later in life is learning how to compete. We all competed for a job when you have gone in for an interview and that is good. You need to have that skillset and I am not saying that we need to give more trophies out and give everyone a shot, but I just want a system in place that is equitable for all so that some don't have an unfair advantage at the expense of the rest and I think that is what is happening."

One of the problems is the lack of balance between championships won between public and private high schools. Hines did research and presented numbers at the hearing at the number of state championships won between private and public schools from 2004 to 2014.

Here is what he found.

- Private schools make up slightly less than 8 percent of the KSHSAA membership.
- Private schools have won slightly less than 32 percent of the state championships.
- Based on membership percentage, private schools should only win approximately 8 percent of the titles, not nearly 32 percent.
- Private schools are winning four times more state titles than should be expected based on their memberships.
- Private schools are nine times more likely to win five

or more state titles than their public school peers.

"In that period of time, I looked for who has won five or more state titles," Hines said. "That is a difficult feat. You look at Paola's history and we have won like seven and Louisburg has won three in 100-plus years. During those 10 years, 37 percent of those private schools won five or more during that time and public schools had 4 percent win five or more. Private schools are nine times more likely to become a dynasty or a successful program with strong tradition. You tell me how we are all the same?"

Another problem they are facing is schools with a high percentage of low socioeconomic status (SCS) students, cannot compete against fellow schools in their own classification in many activities, including football.

"There is a whole bunch of schools in the Kansas City, Kansas school district that are 6A or 5A that have no business competing against those really hard schools," Hines said. "They don't have resources, they don't have the students, there is no interest and they have all those things working against them and I feel bad for those kids. Who wants to trot out against some of those bigger schools and know you are going to get your ears boxed in? That is not fun. Moreover, it is not challenging for the kids those schools are playing against."

Hines believes competition is important when it comes to the growth of the student athlete and it is beneficial for the school and its community.

"Not only what it does for grades, but for what it does for the human spirit," Hines said.

"When I was the FFA advisor in Paola, we won 10 state championships in nine years and you could tell the interest by the students and the community went through the roof. You can say the same thing about Louisburg and what Jim Morgan does

with his FFA kids. People flock to success.

"Naturally, when they are there they feel better about themselves, they want to work harder in the classroom to stay eligible and kids that want to stay involved are going to be more successful in life. It is all about having the chance to be successful."

During Hines' testimony in front of the Senate Education Committee, not all of the legislatures seemed open to the idea. Molly Baumgardner, R-Louisburg, asked Hines if he would be willing to relinquish state funding if the legislature agrees to release oversight of how KSHSAA classifies schools.

"If we relinquished the funding behind it, (high school activities) would disappear," Hines said at the hearing.

No action was taken following the hearing, but the committee chairman spent 15 minutes with him and Tyson to help them strategize on what to do next.

One option is to amend the bill to include more specifics that could include a multiplier or a separate division for private schools and a low SCS school de-multiplier.

Another option, Hines said, would be to have the classification committee draft a letter to the Senate Education Committee that states they would like to study these other factors as part of a proposal for revamping the classification system, but not until they feel the legislature is open to changing the law.

Whatever decision comes next, however, Hines wants it to be decided by multiple people within KSHSAA on how to proceed.

"I don't feel comfortable making that change because I feel a committee needs to do the work," Hines said. "I shouldn't be doing it, nor should 11 legislators, you need more. We should let the classification committee work on it and hopefully we

can get some things accomplished.

"The only way to allow this to happen is to remove the barrier in place that exists due to the state statute."

Top 10 stories of 2015



Here are the Louisburg Sports Zone Top 10 Stories of the Year. In each brief explanation of the story, there will be a link to the full story of when the event actually happened. Thanks again for a successful 2015 and I am already looking forward to 2016.



Hogan Welch (left) and Wyatt Reece each qualified for state in their respective sports.

10. Welch and Reece qualify for state

LHS students Hogan Welch and Wyatt Reece each put together strong seasons in their respective sports.

In May, Welch qualified for the Class 4A state golf tournament after he shot an 85 at the Osawatomie Golf Course to become one of five individual qualifiers for state. It was the first time Welch had qualified for the state tournament and would shoot a 79 a week later in McPherson to finish 40th overall.

As for Reece, he qualified for the state cross country meet for the first time in his career in October. The Louisburg sophomore came in 13th overall and was also one of five individual qualifiers. A week later Reece traveled to Wamego to compete at the state meet and ran a 18:43 to come in 71st.



Louisburg's Jimmy Dolan (left) and Mya Diacono each suffered major head injuries from an accident just days apart. The Louisburg community rallied together to help the two families.

9. Accidents bring Louisburg community together

Jimmy Dolan and Mya Diacono live in the same community but were worlds apart from each other.

Jimmy, a junior at Louisburg High School, loves to wrestle, hang out with friends and live the life of a teenager.

It was a far cry from 9-year-old Mya who loves soccer, horses and spending time with her fourth-grade friends at Broadmoor Elementary. In a town of less than 5,000 people, the two had never met.

Two tragic accidents changed all of that.

On Jan. 12, Jimmy lost control of his vehicle while driving to school and suffered a major brain injury. Just 42 days later, Mya was involved in an automobile accident just outside the Louisburg city limits that left her with the same severe brain trauma.

That was when the Louisburg community came together to help the two families cope with a burden no family should have to bear. Since then, both Jimmy and Mya are on the road to recovery thanks to the help of a lot of people.



Louisburg Soccer Club president Karin Olson (second from left), Louisburg High School junior Maddie McDaniel (middle) and fundraising organizer Diana Moore (right) receive the WIN for KC Sprint Teamwork Award on Feb. 13 in Kansas City, Mo.

8. Girls soccer raises funds to start program, wins award

A fundraising committee made a big push to make sure there was a girls soccer program at Louisburg High School.

The committee raised \$39,000 in almost a year's time to fund the program for three years. Thanks to all the hard work, the group was also recognized by the WIN for KC organization. The Lady Cats' soccer season will kickoff in late March.



Louisburg graduates Kody Cook (left) and Garrett Griffin are each winding down their careers with their respective Division I football programs.

7. Griffin, Cook wrap up college careers

Louisburg High School graduates Kody Cook and Garrett Griffin have lived the lives a lot of football fans could only hope for.

Both are wrapping up their Division I collegiate football careers and are doing it with a lot of success. Cook is living his dream with the Kansas State football team as he has made contributions at both the wide receiver and quarterback positions to help the Wildcats to the Liberty Bowl.

Griffin, on the other hand, battled through an injury-plagued senior season to help Air Force reach the Armed Forces Bowl and made several big plays at the tight end spot.



Louisburg quarterback Austin Terry was one of several players responsible for the Wildcats' turnaround this season.

6. Wildcat football has big turnaround

After finishing with just three wins a year ago, the Louisburg High School football team put together a strong season in 2015 as they finished with seven wins.

Those seven victories put the Wildcats within a game of Paola for the Frontier League title and Louisburg also earned a spot in the regional playoffs before falling to Basehor-Linwood in a tight contest.



The Louisburg High School soccer team captured its first regional crown since 2010 after a 2-0 win over Coffeyville.

5. Louisburg soccer wins regional crown

Through much of the regular season, the Louisburg High School soccer team didn't have much to cheer about.

The Wildcats had just four wins during the regular season, but they seemed to find the right chemistry in the postseason. Louisburg rattled off three consecutive wins in the postseason, including a 2-0 victory over Coffeyville-Field Kindley in the regional championship.

It was the Wildcats' first regional title since 2010 and their sixth in the last 10 years.



Anders Vance won a regional title in the 285-pound weight class last February as he was one of five Wildcats to earn state bids.

4. Louisburg wrestling qualifies five for state

The Louisburg wrestling team hadn't been a part of the state tournament since 2012 – that is before last season.

The Wildcats put together a breakout season as they qualified five for the state tournament, while Anders Vance won the regional crown at 285 pounds. Brenton Wrigley (195 pounds), Mason Koechner (220), Nathan Keegan (113) and Ryan Adams (138) all made the trip to Salina for the Class 4A state tourney.



Jeff Lohse (left) and Ben York each stepped away from their head coaching posts in 2015.

3. Long-time coaches resign from post

Jeff Lohse and Ben York had been fixtures in their respective sports for Louisburg High School, but both decided to call it quits this year.

Lohse, who spent the last 17 years as the head coach for the LHS baseball team, stepped down from his spot in May, citing personal reasons. Lohse led the Wildcats to two state tournament appearances.

York, who was the head coach when the boys soccer program started, also cited personal reasons for leaving the Wildcat soccer program after 13 years. York helped the Wildcats to six regional titles in the last 10 years.



Connor McMullen won the state title in the discus back in May and became Louisburg's first track state champion since 2011.

2. McMullen wins state title in discus, Dennis medals in hurdles

Louisburg High School senior Connor McMullen finally got the state title in the discus he had been searching for.

McMullen recorded a throw of 173 feet, 1 inch on his final attempt to win the Class 4A state discus title in Wichita back in May. He would also medal eighth in the javelin with a toss of 164-02.

Fellow senior Sean Dennis also garnered a state medal as he took fourth in the 110-meter hurdles. The boys and girls team combined sent a total of 11 athletes to the state meet.



The Louisburg High School volleyball team finished third overall in 2015 after making it to state for the fifth time in the last six seasons.

1. Lady Cat volleyball takes third at state

The Louisburg High School volleyball team has made a habit of making the trip to Salina in recent years and this season was no exception.

This time, however, the Lady Cats finished with a victory.

After ending their season with a runner-up performance and two fourth-place finishes at state the last three years, Louisburg won its final match of the season in 2015 as it defeated Tonganoxie in the third-place match.

The Lady Cats qualified for the state tournament for the fifth time in the last six years.

Schneider, Juarez named to all-state team



Louisburg High School junior (left) Noah Juarez and senior Cale Schneider were recently selected to the Class 4-3-2-1A all-state second team by the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association. Juarez was selected as a midfielder and Schneider as a defender.

Two members of the Louisburg High School boys soccer team were recently selected among the top players in the state.

Senior Cale Schneider and junior Noah Juarez were recently selected to the Class 4-3-2-1A all-state second team by the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association. This was the third time Juarez has been named to the all-state team and it was the first selection for Schneider.

“I am extremely happy and proud that two of our boys made second team all-state,” former Louisburg coach Ben York said. “For Cale this was his first year on the all-state team and a very well deserved one.

“For Noah, I was hoping that he would have been selected to

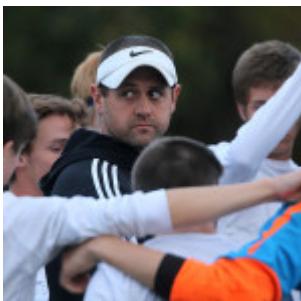
the first team and I definitely believe that he was right there with the caliber of athletes picked for first team. Nevertheless it's a great honor to make either team. Noah is an exceptional athlete and a top level soccer player in the state. I see great things in his future. I really enjoyed coaching both of them in my final year."

Schneider was recognized for his work on the defensive end, even though his season started out as a forward. He opened the year with a hat trick (three goals) against Fort Scott, but the team needed help more on the defensive side.

York moved him to the sweeper spot and he became a vital part of the defense for the remainder of the year.

As for Juarez, a midfielder, this was his second time he earned second team all-state honors and was an honorable mention selection his freshman year. Juarez finished with a team-high 11 goals to along with nine assists.

York steps down after 13 years



Louisburg High School boys soccer coach Ben York recently announced his resignation from the program after 13 years with the Wildcats. York has been the team's head coach since the program's inception in 2003.

For 13 years, Ben York immersed himself into Louisburg High School boys soccer.

York was named the team's head coach when the program started in 2003 and every season since he could be found roaming the Wildcat sideline.

Next season, will be a different story.

York recently informed his team and the high school administration that he will not be returning for another season and is stepping down as the team's head coach. As much as he loved the program and his players, he had a bigger reason for saying goodbye.

"I probably have about five solid reasons I am doing it, but chief among all the reasons, and the only one that is important that anyone else knows is I have not gotten to the point in my life where my wife and kids have said, 'Hey, you have missed this or that,'" York said. "Realizing it now before it happens, knowing if I continue down this path, then it is eventually going to happen. I am choosing them in that scenario.

"If I blink it is going to be gone and I am never going to get that back. I can be the soccer coach the rest of my life after my kids are older. I was fortunate that I was given this opportunity so early. I was only three-and-a-half years older than the senior class in my first year of coaching. My wife has done a great job of taking care of everything while I was gone. Now I just want simple and I want time. I just need some time with family or just with me."

The Louisburg coach informed his team that he would be stepping down shortly before the playoffs began in late

October. It was a time York had dreaded for weeks.

As he wrestled with his decision, he watched his team struggle during the same time as they finished the regular season with just four wins.

"We were in a spot where we weren't having a whole lot of success. I know it is there and I am trying to deal emotionally with not coaching anymore and when to tell my players and administration. When you come to the end as a coach, you are just overwhelmed with all the memories, whether it is happy or sad. It was hard to concentrate. After I told the kids, which was terrible, and I got past that day, it was a lot easier for me."

The Wildcats seemed to turn the corner after that as they rattled off three straight victories in the playoffs to capture a regional title.

"I couldn't have had a better end to the season," York said. "Losing the last three or four games of the year would have been pretty bad, but we started playing better. Once I told them what was really happening, it seemed like the players' attitudes changed and they were just like 'Let's go. Let's see how far we can go.' I think it was really neat to see and I think maybe they had a little more reason to be focused and they got after it."

York put together a program that encountered a lot of success in his 13 years. During his tenure, the Wildcats won six Frontier League championships and six regional playoff titles.

In all, York put together a 131-80-12 record – but maybe more importantly – he had the opportunity to build Louisburg soccer from the ground up.

"It was the hardest thing I have done," York said. "The hardest thing anyone can ever do is take something that doesn't exist, and not just manage it, but I have a lifetime

full of memories."

York, a Louisburg High School graduate himself, started those memories from day one when Chad Wagner scored the program's first goal on a Saturday afternoon against Eudora. Or maybe it was when Zac Messmer's free kick in overtime against Ottawa gave the Wildcats their first regional title.

He couldn't forget the countless breakfasts at Miss B's with long-time assistant Tony Juarez to talk about game plans. Even recently, York couldn't help but smile when talking about the memories from this season's group.

Whether it was welcoming former player Tanner O'Hara as an assistant coach or watching this year's team rally to win the program's sixth regional title after winning only four games during the regular season, they all hold a special place for him.

"I remember all the road trips," York said. "I remember standing in the middle of the huddle every game and looking in their eyes knowing that they trust me. Then there are a billion more memories that are just for me."

York hopes that the returning group of players can continue what he helped start and build on what is already a strong tradition.

"It is not going to end," he said. "I told the guys that my part might be done, but it is not over. It is their responsibility now to carry things on and not let it fall apart. I can sit back and think of a billion things that bring a smile to my face about coaching here, but not a lot of things that make me sad. There have been some life changing things happen in this program and I was glad that I was here for those."

"I went to school here and to be able to give back was my primary goal. It wasn't to win state or regional

championships, I just wanted to allow these kids a chance to play some good soccer and I think I succeeded in that. Maybe if there is a next time I will do even better, or I will try to anyway."

Wildcat soccer puts three on all-league



Louisburg junior Noah Juarez earned a spot on the all-Frontier League boys soccer team for the third consecutive year as he was one of three Wildcats to earn spots on the all-league squad.

The season may not have started out as well as the Louisburg High School boys soccer team had hoped, but it ended on a positive note with a regional championship.

Louisburg started playing better toward the end of the regular season and the Frontier League coaches took notice. The Wildcats, who finished with 7-11-2 overall record and a 1-9-2 mark in league play, garnered three spots on the all-league team that was recently released.

Junior midfielder Noah Juarez was the Wildcats' lone first-team selection. Senior defender Cale Schneider earned a second team honor and senior forward Parker Cates was named as an honorable mention.

De Soto led the league with seven spots on the team and Spring Hill was next with six selections. De Soto was second in the state this past season and Spring Hill came in fourth overall.

"I think we were well represented," Louisburg coach Ben York said. "Would I have liked to see a couple other of my players who I felt deserved a little more credit? Yes, but it was a great league this year. With Ottawa, Baldwin, De Soto and Spring Hill, that is 90 percent of everyone on the league team. They probably had a combined (49) wins.



Senior Cale Schneider (right) was named to the all-league second team as a defender.

"You are going to have that and we have had years like that ourselves where Louisburg has brought six or seven of the top nominations. It was a fun meeting to be at because I knew our team was good and the other coaches respected the progress we made."

Juarez is no stranger to the all-league list. The Wildcat

midfielder earned first team honors for the third straight season and was also a returning all-state player.

He finished with a team high 11 goals to go along with nine assists and was the focal point of the Louisburg offense.

"It has been fun watching him and it was good to see him mature as a leader in the second half of the season," York said of Juarez. "He, Cale, Parker and the other seniors really took their roles seriously. He has a chance to be a first team all-state player this year and hopefully he can get that honor because he had a good year."

Schneider was recognized for his work on the defensive end, even though his season started out as a forward. He opened the year with a hat trick (three goals) against Fort Scott, but the team needed help more on the defensive side.



Senior Parker Cates finished out the season strong and was recognized for it as he was named as an honorable mention.

York moved him to the sweeper spot and he became a vital part

of the defense for the remainder of the year.

"Cale was the main reason why we turned our season from one that was mediocre at best to a season where we did something good," York said "It was the type of year where if we didn't have a guy show up, we would just be OK. We were not a deep team and it showed how important Cale was to our team when he had to sit in the Spring Hill game because we got it handed to us.

"He is a good field player wherever you put him, but I think his niche was found this year as a sweeper. It worked really well for us and he is a great kid."

As for Cates, he saved his best performance for last. The Louisburg forward, who finished the year with seven goals, scored six of those in three of the last four games of the season.

"It is hard to tell someone like Parker that his goals are going to come for a long period of time," York said. "He knew they would come, he just wanted them to come before he graduated. His patience paid off, and once he put one in the back of the net, that confidence started breeding more confidence and he had a great last three or four games of the season. For him to overcome his struggles was great for the underclassmen to see because it shows them if you keep working at something that it will come."

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE BOYS SOCCER

FIRST TEAM

Forward: Noah Lamar, De Soto, senior; Michael Werlein, Spring Hill, senior

Midfielder: Austin Culver, De Soto, senior; Noah Juarez, Louisburg, junior; Lucas Zoller, De Soto, senior; Lucas Moore,

Spring Hill, junior; Stefan Foulke, Ottawa, senior; Brendan Owings, Baldwin, senior; Andrew Dowdy, De Soto, junior

Defender: Kyle Moose, De Soto, senior

Goalkeeper: Patrick Conroy, Ottawa, senior

SECOND TEAM

Forward: Carver Gerstberger, Spring Hill, senior

Midfielder: Keegan Finch, Ottawa, junior; Niklas Kramer, Paola, junior; Jacob Bailey, Baldwin, freshman; Justin Toumberlin, Eudora, senior

Defender: Jonny Wagner, Spring Hill, senior; Kyle Wokutch, Paola, senior; Logan Phillips, Baldwin, senior; Cale Schneider, Louisburg, senior; Keenan Powell, Spring Hill, senior

Goalkeeper: Bret Folks, Eudora, junior

HONORABLE MENTION

Forward: Ethan Rodriguez, De Soto, sophomore; Noah Buckley, Baldwin, junior; Javon Williams, Ottawa, senior; Parker Cates, Louisburg, senior

Midfield: Sam Campbell, Eudora, junior; Joey Bernhardt, Eudora, senior

Defender: Travis Hodge, De Soto, senior; Byron Fangman, Ottawa, junior

Goalkeeper: Killian Beck, Spring Hill, junior

Wildcats fall to No. 1 ranked Rose Hill



Louisburg senior T.J. Svoboda battles a Fort Scott player for a 50-50 ball during the Wildcats first postseason game in Louisburg. The Wildcats traveled to Rose Hill for the state quarterfinals Tuesday, but saw their season come to an end in a 5-1 loss.

ROSE HILL – The Louisburg boys soccer team knew it was heading into its most difficult situation of the season – on the road against the No. 1 team in the state with its season on the line.

No pressure, right?

The Wildcats didn't feel the pressure, in fact, they hung with defending state champion Rose Hill for much of the Class 4-3-2-1A state quarterfinal match Tuesday at Rose Hill High School. The match did get away from the Wildcats midway through the second half in their 5-1 loss, but coach Ben York saw some good things out of his team.

"Rose Hill was definitely as advertised," York said. "They are a great team and they won state last season for a reason. They probably have 10-11 seniors on their team this year and all of those guys were a part of their state championship last

season.

"I am just proud of the way our guys didn't back down and that we were able to put pressure on them and be physical. I think that caught them a little off-guard at first because I don't think they expected a team with a losing record to come at them like we did."

Louisburg didn't have a shot on goal in the first half, but it made it difficult on Rose Hill defensively as it gave up two goals that took unfortunate bounces for the Wildcats.

Rose Hill scored its first goal early in the first half on a misplay by the Wildcat defense and the Rockets scored their second goal on a free kick that deflected off of a player and in the net to take a 2-0 halftime lead.

"The guys were feeling pretty good at halftime and there a lot of positives coming from the huddle," York said. "We gave up two goals that we probably shouldn't have and those were the only two they scored so we were still in the game."

The Rockets took charge to start the second half and grabbed another goal to take a 3-0 lead, but the Wildcats didn't go away.

Junior Noah Juarez got the ball at the top of the box, dribbled past a Rose Hill defender and hit a shot past the goalie to give the Wildcats some life.

It didn't last long as Rose Hill answered with a goal in the next minute to all but seal the win and end the Wildcats' season.

"That goal took the wind out of our sails for sure," York said. "Noah just put in a great goal and we seemed to have some momentum and they came right back and scored. That is a tough thing to overcome at that point in the game."

"We left it all out on the field and our boys tried their best

and that is all a coach can ask for in these types of games. Other than maybe two positions, Rose Hill was more athletic and skilled than we were and that is tough to overcome sometimes."

The Wildcats finished their season with a 7-11-2 record on the season that included three postseason victories and a regional championship. It also marked the final game for Louisburg seniors Cale Schneider, Jairus Brown, Hunter Mitchell, Parker Cates, Michael Minster and T.J. Svoboda.

"I am just so glad these boys got to experience a postseason run like we went on," York said. "It had been awhile since we have gotten this far, but I always said that this team was better than our record showed. I didn't care about wins and losses as much as playing well at the end of the season when it mattered most and I thought that we did that. This was a fun group to coach."

Louisburg soccer claims regional crown



The Louisburg boys soccer team poses with its regional championship trophy following the Wildcats' 2-0 victory over Coffeyville-Field Kindley on Thursday in Coffeyville. The Wildcats advance to the state quarterfinals where they will

meet No. 1 Rose Hill on Tuesday in Rose Hill.

Photo courtesy of Christy Svoboda

COFFEYVILLE – The Louisburg boys soccer team didn't strike fear in any one team during the start of the Class 4-3-2-1A playoffs.

The Wildcats entered the playoffs with only four wins and didn't win a match in their last five opportunities. It isn't exactly a recipe for postseason success.

Despite that, the Wildcats can now call themselves regional champion.

For the first time since 2010, Louisburg won the regional championship game with a 2-0 victory over Coffeyville-Field Kindley on Thursday in Coffeyville and advanced to the state quarterfinals. The Wildcats also had victories against Fort Scott and Independence earlier in the week that helped them advance to the title match.

"To be honest I am not that surprised," Louisburg coach Ben York said. "Some people might be if they look at our record, but I know what our team is capable of. I am just so ecstatic for our guys because I know how hard they have worked to get to this point. We didn't have a great start to our season, and there were times where things haven't gone right for one reason or another, but they have stuck with it and now we are playing pretty well. It is a great feeling."

Along with the Wildcats, senior Parker Cates seemed to catch fire at just the right time.

The Wildcat forward accounted for both Wildcat goals in Thursday's regional title match and he finished with six goals

over the three-game span.

"I am very happy for Parker because he, like a lot of other players, have had a rough year at times especially offensively," York said. "But he has put in a lot of work over the four years and has made a commitment to get better. It is just good to see him have success. He, and the rest of the team, have had a good week-and-a-half of soccer."

It didn't take long for the Wildcats to get on the board as Cates scored the first goal two minutes into the contest and from there Louisburg (7-10-2) was able to take control of the possession.

The Wildcats put up 15 shots on goal for the match and held Coffeyville to just six attempts as Louisburg played solid defense thanks to senior goalie Michael Minster along with the defensive front of Jairus Brown, Hunter Mitchell, Cale Schneider and Scott Murphy.

"Coffeyville really didn't have too many good looks at the goal and their shots came from pretty far out," York said. "Still I thought that Michael made some good saves back there and our defense played well, too."

Later in the first half, the Wildcats doubled their lead when sophomore Raistlin Brewer took a shot that bounced around near the goal and Cates was there to knock it in.

Louisburg's defense didn't allow many Coffeyville opportunities in the second half and the Wildcats left with their sixth regional title in the last 10 years.

"It was great to see the kids knock down that wall and get that big win that we have been looking for," York said. "Now they know what it feels like to win something big like this and it only helps us for later in the playoffs and also into next season."

It will get a lot more difficult for the Wildcats in their state quarterfinal match Tuesday. Louisburg will square off with Rose Hill, the No. 1 ranked team in the state and defending state champion. The match is set to begin at 7 p.m. at Rose Hill High School.

"They are a very good team and they are the No. 1 team in the state for a reason," York said. "They are a very experienced group with a lot of seniors that have played in a lot of big games. We are going to have our hands full, but I am excited about the opportunity and to see what our guys can do."

Wildcats one win away from regional title



Louisburg senior Parker Cates tries to beat a Fort Scott player to a 50-50 ball Monday during the first round of the regional playoffs in Louisburg. The Wildcats knocked off No. 2 seed Independence on Tuesday and will play for the regional title Thursday in Coffeyville.

INDEPENDENCE, Kan. – The Louisburg High School boys soccer team is one step closer its goal of a regional championship.

The Wildcats, the No. 7 seed in the regional tournament, pulled off a big upset Tuesday when it ousted No. 2 Independence with a 3-1 victory at Independence High School.

With the win, the Wildcats are now in the regional championship game against No. 3 seed Coffeyville-Field Kindley. Coffeyville defeated No. 6 Paola in double overtime. Louisburg will travel to Coffeyville for a 4:30 p.m. start Thursday.

“Independence is a very skilled team and they played well, but this was a great win for us obviously,” Louisburg coach Ben York said. “It puts us in the regional title game and we are playing well right now. We are not the team that entered the tournament with a 4-10-2 record. We are a better team than that now. We just had a rough start to our season. I have always felt that we could play with anybody.”

The Wildcats (6-10-2) wasted no time proving that as they got on the board 20 minutes into the match. Senior T.J. Svoboda passed to fellow senior Parker Cates, who scored his first of two goals in the contest.



Defender Hunter Mitchell knocks the ball away from a Fort Scott player Monday in Louisburg.

A few minutes later, Independence tied the match on a lapse in the Wildcat defense, but Louisburg would respond.

Late in the first half, Louisburg scored on another give-and-go as Svoboda found junior Noah Juarez who struck the ball at the top of the box passed the Independence goalie. The Wildcats had a 2-1 lead at halftime.

"We did a lot better job of moving the ball around and we did a good job of getting good shots," York said. "It was definitely one of our better games of the year. These guys know that it is win or go home and it is also nice to have everyone healthy and have our full lineup out there."

Louisburg put the game away in the second half when sophomore Christian Scholtz took a shot on goal. The shot was saved, but Cates got the rebound and put the ball in the back of the net.

"It was great to see Parker get those two goals, and he also got two goals in the game against Fort Scott, so I am sure that is giving him some confidence right now," York said. "He, and a lot of other guys were struggling to convert those opportunities but we have gotten a little better as of late."

The Wildcats defense also picked up the slack as they allowed just the one shot on goal. Defenders Scott Murphy and Jairus Brown helped mark up on the Independence scoring threats and senior sweeper Cale Schneider also provided solid play as well.

Now, the Wildcats are hoping they can get that one more win when they get to Coffeyville Thursday that will put them into the state quarterfinals

"After doing a little bit of research, I think Coffeyville is pretty comparable team to Paola and a few other teams we have played," York said. "We have every opportunity to go down there and get a win but we have to play well and I know the guys are excited about the opportunity."

Wildcats roll Fort Scott

Just like in its season opener against Fort Scott, the Louisburg boys soccer team made quick work of the Tigers.

The Wildcats scored five goals in each half on their way to 10-0 victory in the first round of the regional playoffs Monday in Louisburg. The match was ended with six minutes left due to the 10-goal mercy rule.

It was a sluggish start, but once the Wildcats scored their first goal in the 27th minute, the flood gates opened. Seniors Parker Cates and T.J. Svoboda, along with junior Noah Juarez, each scored two goals in the contest.

“The environment to this game was all about the first time we played them,” Louisburg coach Ben York said. “I think the guys had that in the back of their minds and that is why we got off to a little bit of a rough start. They were a little uptight to start, but I just let them figure it out and they were finally able to get going and we did a good job at putting some shots away.”

Cates put the Wildcats on the board first when Juarez put a shot on goal, it was saved, but Cates was there to put in the rebound. Sophomore Christian Schultz and Svoboda scored goals in the next two minutes to make it 3-0.

Raistlin Brewer and Juarez scored goals of their own to make it 5-0 at half. Five minutes into the second half, Cates found the back of the net for his second goal to continue the onslaught.

In the 45th minute, Juarez had a ball come sharply back to him 40 yards away, and with the Fort Scott goalie away from the net, struck the ball to the empty goal for a 7-0 advantage.

The Wildcats had another nice goal in the 49th minute when Brewer hit a cross into the box and Svoboda slid in between two Fort Scott defenders to get his second tally.

Louisburg sealed the win when Curran Conklin and Cale Schneider each scored to give the Wildcats 10 goals.

Wildcats fight hard on senior night



Louisburg's Noah Juarez goes up for the bicycle kick in the box during the Wildcats' final home contest Thursday against Ottawa. The shot found the back of the net for the Wildcats' first goal, but Louisburg fell 3-2. The Wildcats also honored their seven seniors during the senior night ceremony following the game.

As Louisburg High soccer coach Ben York looked onto the field in the waning seconds of his team's final regular season contest, he saw one thing.

York saw a never-give-up attitude – especially from his seniors.

It was fitting that his seniors left it all out on the pitch in the Wildcats' 3-2 loss on senior night to Ottawa on Thursday in Louisburg. It was a night filled with mixed emotions as Jairus Brown, Parker Cates, Hunter Mitchell, Michael Minster, Cale Schneider and T.J. Svoboda were recognized following the contest.

"Most of these guys have been varsity from the very first second that they came into the program," York said. "It has been fun to watch them progress. Our whole team progression goes as our seniors go. When they play well, we play well."

For the most part, the Wildcats played strong, considering Ottawa blanked Louisburg back in early September. Playing without sophomore midfielder Grant Ryals who was out with an illness, Louisburg was forced to reshuffle their lineup again.

The injury moved Brown to midfielder and brought Curran Conklin off the bench to start on defense. Despite that, the Wildcats were ready to go from the start.

Cates, Brown and Mitchell all had shots on goal in the first two minutes of the contest, but the Wildcats didn't let up on their shots on goal.

Junior Noah Juarez received a cross into the box when he decided to go up into the air in a group of Ottawa defenders for a bicycle kick. The move worked as he fired the goal into the right corner and gave the Wildcats a 1-0 in the 11th minute.

"That was the best goal I have seen here in probably seven or eight years," York said. "That is something that he practices all the time. He got a great cross and he got on the end of it. I was fortunate that I was at the right angle where I was able to see it, because if I would have missed it then it would have been a real bummer. It was fantastic and the goalie didn't have a chance to stop it."



Louisburg High School soccer seniors were honored on senior night Thursday. The LHS seniors (from left) are Michael Minster, T.J. Svobda, manager Lilly Scott, Cale Schneider, head coach Ben York, Jairus Brown, Parker Cates and Hunter Mitchell.

Ottawa went on the attack in the 27th minute when the Cyclones struck a shot on goal, but was saved by Minster as he came out of the goal. The shot rebounded back to an Ottawa player who had an empty net, but his shot was knocked away by Schneider.

The scrum around the goal continued as Minster saved another shot, but this time the Cyclones were there for the rebound again and tied it up.

Sophomore Christian Scholtz had the best chance to give the Wildcats the lead back in the 36th minute, but his shot from the left shot rolled across the top of the post and rolled out. The game stayed tied 1-1 at halftime.

Ottawa scored two goals within minutes of each other, with the final one coming in the 58th minute to put the Cyclones up 3-1.

The Wildcats (4-10-2) didn't give up as Juarez had a shot in the box that was deflected by Ottawa, but sophomore Raistlin

Brewer was right there for the rebound and found the back of the net in the 63rd minute to make it 3-2.

"We conceded some silly goals," York said. "It hurts not playing with your starting midfielder in Grant, and we are not a team that does well when we are not our full unit. We don't have a whole lot of depth in our group. Our seniors did a good job to carry us to the result we had, which was a more reasonable result than 3-1 would have been.

"We had a lot more possession of the ball and we did a lot more with it than we did the last time we played. We have progressed a lot since the beginning of the season."

Despite the loss, the six Wildcat seniors will have at least one more home game. Louisburg begins the regional playoffs at 4:30 p.m. today as the No. 7 seed Wildcats host No. 10 Fort Scott (2-14) in the East Regional. The Wildcats defeated Fort Scott 10-0 earlier in the season.

Should the Wildcats advance, they will travel to No. 2 Independence (9-7) for a 4 p.m. start Tuesday with the regional championship set for Thursday.

"We have the type of team that can surprise some people in the playoffs," York said. "We can play with any team in our region. We have played two of the top teams in our region and we have played them pretty tough. We have to get this first game out of the way, but I feel like we are an uptick and we can play well. If we can win two games then we are in the regional championship, and that is what we want."

Wildcats hang with state-ranked De Soto



Louisburg's Christian Scholtz makes a move past a Baldwin defender during Monday's contest in Louisburg. The Wildcats lost the contest 2-0 and also fell to De Soto on Tuesday, 2-0.

If facing the No. 2 team in Class 4A on the road wasn't hard enough, the Louisburg High School boys' soccer team had to do it down a goal.

The Wildcats made their way back to De Soto on Tuesday after the game was postponed on Oct. 8 due to bad weather. De Soto managed to score a goal in the first five minutes before the game was called.

When it was finally over, the Wildcats still fell 2-0 to De Soto, but Louisburg coach Ben York couldn't have left more encouraged from what he saw.

"To be honest, that might have been one of the better games we have played all season," York said. "I thought it was the best we have played as a group this season and we played hard. Sure we came in down 1-0, and we could have easily just let it played out, but when we started back up we played like it was 0-0 again and that was good to see. They didn't back down and we had our chances to score."

Louisburg (4-9-1) did have its opportunities to find the back of the net. The Wildcats had eight shots on goal, including three chances that were close to the 6-yard box.

Senior T.J. Svoboda got past the De Soto defender for a 1-on-1 with the goalie near the box, but the shot sailed just wide of the goal.



Junior Noah Juarez slides to knock the ball away from a Baldwin player Monday in Louisburg.

Junior Noah Juarez also had a couple different opportunities on deflections near the goal, but his shot either hit off a De Soto defender or was saved by the goalie. Cale Schneider, Herman Knipp and Christian Scholtz also had shots on goal.

“It seems like have been saying this all season, but we are getting plenty of chances to score, we just need to get better at finding the back of the net,” York said. “It will come and then I think it will just open up for these guys. We are really close, but haven’t turned the corner yet. It will happen though.”

The Wildcats also limited De Soto to just five shots on goal and had one of their better games defensively, according to York.

"I thought Michael (Minster) really made some nice saves in goal for us," York said. "I thought defensively we played pretty well and I thought it was our best overall game as far as our ability to defend and then attack. We did both things well and hopefully we can turn things around in our next two games. We are probably the best 4-9-1 team out there and I know we are better than our record shows. We just have to put it together."

Louisburg will try and snap its 3-game losing skid today when it travels to Eudora. The Wildcats will return home one final time Tuesday when it hosts Ottawa on senior night.

Wildcats fall to Baldwin

Louisburg had a chance to avenge a loss from earlier in the season Monday when it hosted Baldwin, but the Wildcats couldn't muster the offense.

Baldwin scored a goal in each half to pull away for a 2-0 victory over Louisburg. The Wildcats had their chances, especially in the second half.

After Baldwin scored a goal in the 15th minute to take a 1-0 lead into halftime, the Wildcats put together several shots on goal in the second half. Their best chance came early on when the Baldwin goalie was called for a penalty after picking up the ball in the box after it was passed to him by his own teammate.

Louisburg had an opportunity just inside the 18-yard box, but the kick was knocked away by the De Soto defense. With 28 minutes left in the game, T.J. Svoboda blew past his defender for a shot in the box, but went wide left.

Just three minutes later, midfielder Grant Ryals sent a pass up to teammate Christian Scholtz, whose shot sailed just over

the post.

Baldwin put the game away later in the second half when Noah Buckley scored his second goal of the game on a 1-on-1 opportunity with the goalie.

Louisburg comes up short against Spring Hill

Louisburg had another shot at revenge from a loss earlier in the year when the Wildcats hosted Spring Hill on Oct. 6.

It didn't work out the way the Wildcats had hoped.

Spring Hill put the game away with two second half goals in the 4-1 victory over Louisburg. The Broncos jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the first half and never looked back.

Louisburg did cut Spring Hill's lead in half when Grant Ryals' shot hit off the right post and into the net in the 37th minute.

Four minutes into the second half, Spring Hill scored after the Wildcat defense misplayed a ball and then scored again a few minutes later on a cross into the box.