Late goals lift Wildcats in overtime



Louisburg sophomore Grant Ryals pumps his fists as teammates (from left) Noah Juarez, Hunter Mitchell, T.J. Svoboda and Cale Schneider mob him after Ryals scored the game-tying goal in the 78th minute in the Wildcats 2-1 overtime victory Monday in Louisburg.

For 78 minutes, the Louisburg boys soccer team was staring at another gut-wrenching defeat.

The Wildcats have been a part of too many of them already this season – six to be exact. Down a goal with two minutes left in Monday's home match with Heritage Christian, the Wildcats were in desperate need of one.

Sophomores Grant Ryals and Christian Scholtz were happy to oblige.

Ryals hit a shot in the 78th minute that found the back of the net to force overtime. In the extra period, Scholtz answered with a goal of his own on a run down the left side of the field that gave the Wildcats a 2-1 victory.

"The kids played hard," Louisburg coach Ben York said. "I kept telling them it was eventually going to come and we will get a

goal. Grant tucked a nice shot away and put it right in the corner.

“We are learning how we work offensively. We are learning where we want to play certain balls and it is just trial by error for these guys. Typically you have those things ironed out before the season, but we will take it now. A few game here in the middle of the season have allowed us to do that.”

The Wildcats (3-6-1) have two victories and a tie in their last three matches and have been struggling to score goals. It was frustrating at times Monday for Louisburg as it peppered the Heritage goalie with nearly 20 shots on goal.



Christian Scholtz sends his game-winning goal into the back of the net Monday in Louisburg.

Seniors T.J. Svoboda, Parker Cates, junior Noah Juarez, along with Ryals and Scholtz, all had shots on goal throughout the game, but came up empty. Heritage Christian scored its lone goal with less than a minute left in the first half when a high-arching free kick from 40 yards out was placed just out of the reach of Louisburg goalie Michael Minster and gave it a

1-0 halftime lead.

The Wildcats had their best chance at a goal late in the second half when Heritage was called for a foul in the box. Juarez was awarded a penalty kick, but the Heritage goalie made the diving save to keep the Wildcats scoreless.

Then came the dramatics.

Ryals struck the ball near the top of the box that snuck past the outstretched hands of the Heritage goalie to tie the match in the 78th minute to force overtime.

Heritage Christian gave the Wildcats a scare on a couple different occasions in overtime. Three minutes into the extra period, Heritage hit a free kick from 35 yards away that was heading for the corner of the net but Minster was able to knock it away.

Minster came up big again just minutes later as another Heritage shot on goal deflected off a player and the ball rolled to the line. The Louisburg goalie dove to make the save just before it reached the line.

Defenders Jairus Brown, Scott Murphy, Cale Schneider and Hunter Mitchell all made big slide tackles at times to relieve some of the Heritage pressure.

“We are still in the game because Michael makes an extremely athletic play that most goalkeepers don’t make,” York said. “The one shot from 35 yards out was heading for the upper 90 and Michael did what Michael does. He saved a goal right there. He really excited the guys through his play. He is one of the more athletic guys on our team and he was able to redeem himself a little bit.”

Nine minutes into overtime, Scholtz added a little flair of his own as he used his left foot to send a rocket shot that found the corner of the net and gave the Wildcats the 2-1

victory.

“Christian had a real good game,” York said. “I put him in a different spot offensively that has allowed him to have more touches on the ball and more freedom to move. He has a wicked left foot and he leads our team with eight goals this year. It was good to see him get a solid shot on goal. That keeper thought he was going far post and he went near post and the keeper couldn’t move.”

The Wildcats will go for their third straight victory Thursday when they travel to Paola and they hope to redeem a loss from earlier in the season.

“We are going into Paola’s game with good confidence and I know that we can win,” York said. “I also know that if we make silly mistakes that we can concede silly goals to Paola as well and that has already happened. So we just need to play smart and finish our shots which I know we can do.”

Louisburg downs Bonner Springs

Louisburg was able to get its first win since the beginning of the season last Thursday when it traveled to Bonner Springs.

The Wildcats were able to get a late first half goal which gave them the momentum they needed to pull away for a 3-1 victory over the Braves.

Raistlin Brewer gave the Wildcats their first goal of the game late in the first half when he headed the ball into the net on a cross and Louisburg took a 1-0 lead into halftime.

Senior T.J. Svoboda came through in the second half for Louisburg. Svoboda scored in the opening minute and tacked on another goal 20 minute later to put the game away.

“The game against Bonner Springs was more of an accurate

representation of what type of team we actually are," York said. "It was more of a normal setting for us because we were able to play under the lights with junior varsity playing first. They were amped up and when it came down to it, we were the better team and we were able to finish. I thought we played very well."

Wildcats end losing streak with tie to Eudora



Louisburg senior Jairus Brown clears the ball away during Tuesday's home match with Eudora. The Wildcats ended their six-game losing streak with a 2-2 tie to the Cardinals.

The Louisburg boys soccer team saw one streak go by the wayside, while another stayed intact following Tuesday's home contest with Eudora.

For the Wildcats, both were positives.

Although it wasn’t a victory, Louisburg ended a six-game losing skid with a 2-2 tie of Eudora after the Wildcats rallied from a two-goal deficit in the first half.

The other streak remained alive as Louisburg has still not lost to Eudora in the 13-year program history. Those were enough to leave some positive vibes around the team despite not getting a victory.

“I would have rather us got the win, but those things mean something about being able to fight back,” Louisburg coach Ben York said. “We are this close, with a little shift in confidence and a couple of things going are way, that we can turn it around. We have the potential to win several games down the stretch.”

Louisburg (1-6-1) possessed the ball for much of the second half and two overtime periods. With that, the Wildcats had plenty of chances to win the game in regulation and several opportunities in overtime.

The Wildcats had 23 shots on goal for the game, with a lot of those in the final part of the match. Whether the ball wasn’t struck just right, or a shot hit off the post or the goalkeeper made the save, they put themselves in a position to win.

“The hardest part about this game is not clearing a ball out of the back, but it is taking a shot and you only have eight feet on one side or the other of the goalie to finish those shots,” York said. “We work on it in practice, but we haven’t had a lot of opportunities in games.



Midfielder Grant Ryals heads the ball away Tuesday during the Wildcats' home match with Eudora.

"We have to find a way to finish those and we will. We haven't been that offensive to have a lot of those opportunities and that is one of the more frustrating things when you are trying to build a team. We could have scored literally eight goals and we just couldn't finish. Eudora played really hard and really tough and that is the best Eudora has looked in a long time, but we need to finish those."

Eudora jumped on Louisburg early as it opened the game with two first half goals, but the Wildcats didn't hang their heads and fought back. Sophomore Christian Scholtz cut the lead in half with the team's first goal, then senior T.J. Svoboda followed that up to tie the game late in the first half.

The Wildcats also made a defensive adjustment late in the first half as they moved senior forward Jairus Brown back on defense to help mark up on Eudora's main offensive threat.

The Cardinals didn't get many chances to score in the second half, while the Wildcats took over and peppered Eudora with shots in the overtime. Svoboda, Scholtz, Herman Knipp, Curran

Conklin, Grant Ryals and Noah Juarez all had shots on goal, but couldn't find the back of the net.

Louisburg, despite playing a close match the day before, had more energy than Eudora toward the end of the match, which kept the Wildcats in it.

"We were tired and we didn't come out strong to start," York said. "However, our conditioning is what kept us in it till the end. You say it and say it to the guys, but our conditioning is the reason we were able to get all those opportunities in the end. You watch their guys come off with cramps, and we had played a game the day before and then went to double overtime in this one, and we were still making runs and getting shots."

Louisburg will try for a win tonight when it travels to Bonner Springs. The Wildcats will then return home Monday to play Heritage Christian.

Wildcats fall to Piper

Louisburg was on the verge of seeing its losing ways come to an end Monday when it hosted Piper.

Instead, the Wildcats watched as the Pirates scored two goals in the final six minutes and fell 3-2. Louisburg had the lead on two occasions, but both times Piper answered the Wildcat score.

In the 23rd minute, junior Noah Juarez gave Louisburg an early lead with a strong shot in the box and the Wildcats held that lead at halftime. To start the second half, Piper scored in the 47th minute to tie the game.

It stayed that way until the 73rd minute when sophomore Christian Scholtz hit a shot that sailed over the goalie's

head. The momentum stayed with the Wildcats for about 30 seconds, which was when Piper tied the game with a quick goal.

In the 89th minute, Piper struck the ball hard and the shot went off the right post and bounced in.

“The most frustrating part about it is we don’t know what it feels like as a team, when we are up late, how to put the opponent away because that is where we had them,” Louisburg coach Ben York said. “It was a step in the right direction though. We were able to score some goals which we hadn’t done in a while. Plus, now these guys know what they have to do to put teams away when we are up late and it is a good learning experience for them.”

Wildcats fall to De Soto but see improvements



Louisburg goalie Michael Minster prepares to stop a shot on goal from a De Soto player during Tuesday’s home contest. Minster finished the game with nine saves but Louisburg fell 2-0.

In the midst of a three-game losing skid, the Louisburg High

School boys' soccer team didn't see much relief in its schedule Tuesday when it hosted Frontier League leader De Soto.

That streak extended to four games in a 2-0 loss, but Wildcat coach Ben York knew what his team was up against and he saw a lot of progress.

"They are a better team than we are," York said. "They are bigger, faster and more experienced. But we fought hard and I am glad to see that because that is a step in the right direction for our guys. We have a pretty good stretch of games that we have a chance to win and that will help us out because we need points to get a better game in the postseason."

Louisburg (1-4) played De Soto to a scoreless draw in the first half and both teams had their chances to score. The Wildcats had six shots on goal in the first half and had some good opportunities to score.

T.J. Svoboda, Raistlin Brewer, Noah Juarez, Kolten Ragan and Christian Scholtz all had shots on goal and they were putting some pressure on the De Soto defense.

De Soto had chances as well as it put eight shots on goal, but senior goalkeeper Michael Minster came away with some big saves to keep the game scoreless. Minster finished the match with nine saves.



Louisburg’s Raistlin Brewer heads the ball away during the Wildcats’ home match Tuesday against De Soto.

“Michael did great,” York said. “He has that ability to play that way every time out. We have been working with Michael on positioning and when to decide to come out. That is a good team to have that happen against because it is a huge confidence booster for him. He had nine saves and that was great for him. It was good for our defense too and we are still learning.”

The Wildcats were also playing a little short-handed as senior defender Hunter Mitchell and senior forward Jairus Brown both missed the game with an illness and the team was forced to move some players around.

One of those moves came at the sweeper spot as York moved senior Cale Schneider from forward to help shore up the defense and he liked what he saw.

“We played good today,” York said. “We tried a little something new and we are moving forward I think. We played against a top 10 team in the state without Hunter and Jairus, who were out sick, and honestly it was good for us. It wasn’t good that they were gone, but I think I found a sweeper for the back.

“I thought Cale did great. I know it is a bite for his pride to go back there, but he led us very well out there today. De Soto has some really talented kids on that team.”

De Soto broke up the scoreless match nine minutes into the second half to take the lead. It answered with another goal with a minute left to seal the win despite strong defensive play from Schneider, Parker Cates, Scott Murphy, Curran Conklin and Jacob Benne.

Despite the loss, York knows his team is moving in the right direction.

“I think people might look at our record and just assume we aren’t playing very well,” he said. “I don’t feel that way yet and I don’t see that coming either. We are still healthy, we are playing well and we are still trying to figure out who goes where the best. If it happens to take us a little longer then I am ok with that. I have never been about how many wins we get in a season. We fought well and played good as a team.”

Louisburg returns to action today when it travels to Baldwin. The varsity is set to begin at 4 p.m.

Wildcats fall to Spring Hill

On Sept. 10, the Louisburg boys soccer team traveled to Spring Hill and went toe-toe with the Broncos, but came up just short in a 2-1 loss.

Down two goals at halftime, senior T.J. Svoboda helped bring the Wildcats back as he scored an unassisted sliding goal midway through the second half.

The Wildcats had another shot at a goal when Noah Juarez received a pass toward the back post, dribbled behind the defender and his shot hit the post and went in. Unfortunately, Juarez was called for offsides and the goal was disallowed.

“We probably should have won that game,” York said. “We just had a couple of calls that didn’t go our way. They guys still worked really hard and did a good job to get back in it.”

Missed chances hurt Cats in loss to Paola



Junior Noah Juarez heads the ball away during Louisburg's home match with Paola on Tuesday. The Wildcats took an early lead, but couldn't hold on in the 2-1 loss to the Panthers and they have now lost two straight.

Less than 15 seconds into the match, the Louisburg soccer team converted on one of its toughest goals in the short season.

Herman Knipp crossed the ball into the box and found the head of Christian Scholtz, who put it in the back of the net to give the Wildcats an early lead over Paola.

It was the easy opportunities that gave the Wildcats problems.

Louisburg had several chances to put some distance between itself and Paola on Tuesday in Louisburg, but the Panthers took advantage of a couple Wildcat mistakes to steal a 2-1 game.

"The frustrating part for me was we were the more talented team and we didn't win, but that will happen from time to time," Louisburg coach Ben York said. "You have to give Paola

credit. They are a better team than they were a year ago and they played hard. We just had so many chances and we just didn't take advantage.

"Right now we are lacking that instinct to put teams away, and the longer you let an opponent hang around the more confidence they get. We just need to put this behind us and figure out how to get better."



Louisburg defender Jacob Benne heads the ball away Tuesday during the Wildcats' home game with Paola.

The Wildcats (1-2) had approximately 20 shots on goal, many of which were either just wide or were stopped on big saves from Paola goalie Alex Slawson.

Following Scholtz's goal to open the match, the game remained at a back-and-forth pace until midway through the first half when Paola's Niklas Kramer scored on a 1-on-1 with Louisburg goalie Michael Minster.

Late in the first half, the Panthers nearly took the lead but Minster knocked away a shot at the top of the net to keep the

game tied. Louisburg junior Noah Juarez found himself in a 1-on-1 situation with Slawson right before halftime, but his shot went wide left.

It was much of the same in the second half. Juarez, Jairus Brown, Scholtz, Cale Schneider and T.J. Svoboda all had shots on goal, but couldn't convert.

The Panthers were able to take advantage of a Wildcat miscue on defense midway through the second half as Paola's Manny Velasquez took a shot that hit the right post and went in.

"We have known since the beginning of the season that weakest part of our team is defense," York said. "We are a little young and inexperienced back there and we made a couple of mistakes. We just have to play better overall as a team. We have to start playing with more confidence."

The Wildcats continued to put pressure on Slawson all the way up to the final seconds. With under 10 seconds left, Louisburg passed the ball up the field to Knipp, who dribbled into the box.

Knipp was taken down and the side official waved his flag to indicate a foul that would have given Louisburg a penalty kick and a chance to tie the game once again.

However, the head official had declared that time already expired before the foul was committed.

"Normally, in situations like that the head referee will go to his AR (assistant referee) and talk with him to see if the right call was made," York said. "But the head referee never went over to talk with him and that is his choice. It was just a big moment in the game that could have given us a penalty kick, and possibly tied the game, so I just figured he would have double checked with his AR."

Louisburg will try and snap its two-game skid today when it

travels to Spring Hill. Varsity action is set to begin at 6 p.m.

Wildcats lose first game of season to Ottawa

Coming off an easy win to start the season, Louisburg ran up against a tough Frontier League opponent in Ottawa on Sept. 3.

Ottawa pulled away in the second half and Louisburg fell 3-0 at Ottawa High School to record its first loss of the season. The Cyclones scored one goal in the first half and the Wildcats had their chances to tie or take the lead, but Ottawa scored two late goals in the second half to seal the win.

“We definitely had our chances in the Ottawa game, we just shot ourselves in the foot a couple different times,” York said. “Ottawa is a good quality team, but what they do best is take advantage of other teams’ mistakes, and we made a couple in the back that hurt us. We just stood around and watched the ball a couple times. Ottawa may have only had like five shots on goal but they made them count.”

Wildcats blank Fort Scott in opener



Louisburg's Grant Ryals pulls back on a ball to try and get past a Fort Scott defender during Tuesday's season opener in Louisburg. The Wildcats ran away with the match to win 10-0 and scored eight first half goals.

Thirty seconds into the match, T.J. Svoboda found himself one-on-one with the Fort Scott goalkeeper.

Svoboda's shot found the back of the net, and in the blink of an eye, Louisburg had its first lead of the season. Three hat tricks, and about 50 minutes later, the Wildcats had their first win.

Louisburg had no problem with the lesser-experienced Fort Scott team Tuesday in its home opener as it rolled to a 10-0 victory. The match was called 12 minutes into the second half once the Wildcats got their 10th goal.

"We trained really hard all summer and these guys were just ready to play against somebody and that was unfortunate for Fort Scott," Louisburg coach Ben York said. "Fort Scott is a young team and I know they will only get better, but we did some good things as well. It was nice to have a game where we can get our feet wet and try some things out."

The Wildcats were definitely able to work on their shooting skills as they peppered the Fort Scott defense with shot after shot from the game's opening seconds. Louisburg was able to take advantage of some Tiger mistakes in the back to take an early lead.

Senior Cale Schneider, junior Noah Juarez and sophomore Christian Scholtz answered for the Wildcats as they scored three goals each to complete the shutout and quickly get their first hat tricks of the season.

"It went well," Schneider said. "We got a lot of time on the

ball, and since the competition wasn't as good, we were able to work it around and get a good feel for how the team looks this year.

"Going into the game, there was a little nerves just because it was the first game, but once T.J. scored that first goal we just got into a rhythm and went on from there."



Defender Scott Murphy heads the ball away from a Fort Scott player Tuesday in the Wildcats' season opener in Louisburg.

Following Svoboda's goal, the Wildcats put the pressure on as they put five shots on goal in the next 10 minutes before Scholtz scored his first goal of the game in the 11th minute. Less than a minute later, Schneider answered as he was able to tap in a goal in a scrum around the net.

Schneider scored again in the 18th minute to make it 4-0 before Fort Scott helped out the Wildcat cause. The Tigers were called for a hand ball in the box, which turned into a penalty kick for Juarez who easily knocked it past the goalie.

Juarez added another goal in the 27th minute and Scholtz added a score two minutes later. Scholtz was the first to record a hat trick when he got a good pass from Curran Conklin in the 32nd minute to make it 8-0 at halftime.

Louisburg started the second half much like they did the first as Svoboda assisted Schneider on his third goal of the game in the 46th minute. Juarez sealed the win in the 52nd minute with the game's final score.

"I felt last year we were put into a corner to play more defensively because of our personnel," York said. "We have had a lot of kids get a lot better. Christian Scholtz is as tall as I am now, Grant (Ryals) has played a full year up in the city and Cale belongs up top or out wide, depending on where we need him. He is fast, big, strong and has a presence. That is where he should have been last year, but we needed him in the back."

Although they didn't score, the Wildcats still had a lot of players on the offensive. Grant Ryals, Raistlin Brewer, Herman Knipp and Jairus Brown all had shots that were just wide of the goals.

As much fun as the offense had, the Wildcat defense didn't do much as Fort Scott managed just one shot on goal and didn't provide much of a test for goalie Michael Minster.

"Michael is going to be called upon to be big time for us this year," York said. "I think both Michael and Ambrose (Stefan) have improved enough that I think we have a formidable team and a solid goalkeeper. Michael really developed last year and over the summer. I want to see him get some more work, but I don't. He is good, and he will do well, but I would like to keep the ball out of his hands for as long as I can."

The Wildcats will encounter a bigger test today when they travel to Ottawa for their first Frontier League matchup. The

varsity match is set for 6 p.m.

“We are a work in progress and (today) is going to be an interesting day to see how we do when we come up against someone who is just as big, fast and strong as we are,” York said. “Ottawa is always a big rivalry for us and they have gotten us the last couple of years. They graduated a lot from last year but I am sure they will be ready to play.”

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 Heritage Christian 5 p.m.

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."