

Klugman looking forward to joining Barton Community College soccer



Louisburg's Brecon Klugman will look to improve in goal this upcoming season with the Barton Community College soccer program. Klugman is coming off a senior season where he helped the Wildcats to the regional title game.

Brecon Klugman didn't grow up wanting to play soccer in college, and it wasn't until his junior year of high school that he even knew much about the goalie position.

However, after a successful senior season in goal with the Louisburg High School program, Klugman has gotten the chance to take his talent to the collegiate level.

A series of events led him to Barton Community College, where he will join the Cougars next fall in hopes of growing even more in the sport. Klugman signed his letter of intent with the school late last spring.

"I am very blessed and honored to play at this high of a level coming from Louisburg," Klugman said. "Right after junior year, I felt like if I wanted to play college soccer I had to put in a lot of work in the off season and my teammates are part of the reason why I have gotten better. During that off-season we would go to the field every other day kicking the ball around. It just built such a special bond between all of us."

Klugman had never played in goal at the high school level prior to his junior season and didn't come with much knowledge of the position. After serving as the JV goalie as a junior, a starting spot opened up for his senior season and the rest is history.

He helped the Wildcats to the regional championship game and caught the eyes of a lot of coaches around the Frontier League.



Brecon Klugman signed his letter of intent to play at Barton late last spring. Seated next to Brecon are his parents Joanna and Kory Klugman. Standing (from left) is Louisburg head coach Bobby Bovaird and assistant Ben York.

In his first year as a varsity goalie, Klugman thrived for the Wildcats as he finished with 113 saves and finished with six shutouts on the season. His save number was the second highest total in program history for a season.

That earned him second team All-Frontier League honors and was also named honorable mention all-state.

"Playing goalie is one of the best decisions I've ever made," Klugman said. "In high school there were always ups and downs,

but I learned a lot and still need improvement. The Barton goalkeepers that were there last year are back and they will help me get better.”

Klugman will join a very successful Barton program as the Cougars finished as the No. 11 team in the nation and were the Jayhawk West Conference Champions.

With all that success, Klugman is excited to get going with his new team.

“The people at Barton just welcomed me in such a nice way and the coach is a very cool guy to be around,” Klugman said. “Also, being able to play for one of the best JUCO soccer teams is just special and cannot wait for the season to start.”

Klugman knows he will have to pay his dues to get the playing time he is hoping for, but he is looking forward to the journey that lies ahead.

“For right now I expect myself to get some playing time in the spring in exhibition matches and then hope to start by my sophomore year,” he said. “I’m super excited to meet so many new people, teammates and getting on the campus.”

As exciting as his future is, Klugman relishes his time with the Wildcat program as it put him on his current trajectory.

“I will never forget when I asked my teammates on the last day of tryouts my junior year if I should tryout for goalie and it was a now or never situation,” Klugman said. “They encouraged me at the last second to do so. I am very grateful for all my teammates, coach (Bobby) Bovaird and coach (Ben) York. I have gotten to learn so much from them and they have put me on this path to getting better at the sport I love most.”

Espina-Roca excited to join MidAmerica Nazarene soccer



Toby Espina-Roca played a big role for the Louisburg boys soccer team the last few years and he is hoping to do the same at MidAmerica Nazarene.

Toby Espina-Roca has had a ball at his feet ever since he was five years old.

Growing up in Argentina, soccer – or futbol – was something that became a passion of his and it was easy to see why. Soccer is probably the most popular sport in many countries outside the United States, including Argentina.

After moving to the United States later in life, the love for the sport continued to grow. Espina-Roca always wanted the opportunity to play past high school level.

With four years of the Louisburg High School program under his belt, Espina-Roca caught the eyes of a few coaches, including those at MidAmerica Nazarene University.

So much so that they offered him spot with the Pioneers and the rest is history. Espina-Roca signed with MidAmerica Nazarene last spring and is gearing up to join the program this upcoming season.

“For me to sign at the college level was a huge accomplishment and it was one of my main goals ever since I came to the U.S.,” Espina-Roca said. “I think the coaches and players at MidAmerica see me as a good fit. When I practiced with them, everyone seemed to enjoy being there and also how how successfully they are by just wanting it more than others.”

The Pioneers were one of the top teams in the Heart of America Conference last season as they finished with a 14-4-3 record and earned a spot in the national tournament.



Louisburg's Toby Espina-Roca signed his letter of intent last spring to play soccer at MidAmerica Nazarene University. Seated next to Toby are his parents Valeria Roca and Marcelo Espina. Standing (from left) is Louisburg head coach Bobby Bovaird, Toby's grandmother Gladys Lambertucci and Louisburg assistant coach Ben York.

MidAmerica is hoping Espina-Roca can fit right in to their winning culture and he will look to play on the defensive side for the Pioneers.

“They see me as a player with good potential and they’ve seen how I fit in with some of the guys already due to a lot being hispanic,” Espina-Roca said. “As of now I will be in my natural position, which is right-back, but in the future that might change.”

Espina-Roca was a big part of the Wildcat soccer program for the last three seasons. He started as a defender his sophomore and junior seasons, before switching to the midfield this past year.

In his senior campaign, he earned second team All-Frontier League and all-state honors as he tallied six goals and five assists for the Wildcats.

“Louisburg has helped me become the person I am today,” Espina-Roca said. “Looking back at those summer training sessions and conditioning nights, everything was worth it. I’m forever thankful for all the memories that were made with past teammates and coaches. I’ve had two great head coaches and amazing assistant coaches who helped me become the player and person I am today, and that will always be in my heart.”

Now he is ready to see what he can accomplish with the Pioneers and he is looking forward to the challenge of playing at the college level.

“My goals for my first year is mainly to put the hard work in,” Espina-Roca said. “I really wanna get varsity minutes and I’ve been preparing myself for that, but to also enjoy the first year and make great memories out of it. I can’t wait until the first practices start. It’s something I’m really looking forward to.”

2023 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year

Nominees



For the sixth consecutive year, Louisburg Sports Zone will be handing out an Athlete of the Year honor to a male and female athlete at Louisburg High School. I wanted the opportunity to recognize those who exemplify what it means to be an “athlete.”

Although I am giving out the award, I wanted the process to be subjective, so I asked the head coaches at LHS to help me out. I asked each coach to send me nominations of who they thought exemplified the Athlete of the Year honor. They will then vote for their top 3 male and female athletes and then I will tabulate the results and determine the winner. The winner will be announced in the coming days.

Below are the nominees for the Male Athlete of the Year award in alphabetical order by last name. Congrats to all those who were nominated and best of luck!



Kaven Bartlett – Senior – Wrestling and Soccer

Kaven Bartlett competed on the Louisburg wrestling and boys soccer team, but Bartlett was a fixture on the mat for the Wildcat wrestling program.

Bartlett qualified for state at 138 pounds and became a 3-time state qualifier for Louisburg and was a state medalist in 2022. He finished with a 119-45 career record and was a two-time team captain and four-year letter winner. Those 119 wins are fifth in program history and he has 158 career takedowns and 726.5 career points, which is both third in team history. He was named the 2023 LHS Wrestler of the Year.

Bartlett was also a defender on the Wildcat soccer team his past season. The Wildcats advanced to the regional championship game.



Declan Battle – Junior – Football and Baseball

Declan Battle had big seasons for both the Wildcat football and baseball programs.

Under the lights on the football field, Battle was the Wildcat starting quarterback as he led his team to an undefeated Frontier League championship. The dual-threat quarterback scored 23 total touchdowns and totaled more than 1,700 yards. That performance led him to a first-team All-Frontier League, along with all-state honors.

On the diamond, Battle was the Wildcats' starting centerfielder and leadoff hitter. He scored 32 runs on the year, which is a Wildcat program record. Battle also recorded a .429 average to go along with five doubles and three triples. He also stole 17 bases. His performance also earned him second team All-Frontier League and all-state honors.



Mason Dobbins – Senior – Football, Basketball and Track and Field

Louisburg senior Mason Dobbins was a fixture for three Wildcat programs this past season. Dobbins was the starting wide receiver on the football field, starting forward on the basketball team and a state medalist for the track program.

Dobbins stood out the most in the track and field arena. He qualified for state in four events and medaled in all four as he helped the Wildcats to a state runner-up finish this past May.

Dobbins won the state championship in the high jump, and earlier in the year, broke the school record with a jump of 6 feet, 7 inches. He was a state runner-up in the 110-meter hurdles and also took third in the 200-meter dash. He was also a part of the 4×100-meter relay that also medaled third and set a new school record earlier in the year. In all, Dobbins has won nine state medals in his Wildcat career.

On the football field, Dobbins earned first team All-Frontier

League honors at wide receiver with 25 catches, 382 yards and four touchdowns. He also earned honorable mention all-state honors.

On the basketball court, Dobbins was named to the All-Frontier League defensive team. He led the Wildcats with 7.6 rebounds a game to go along with 1.5 steals and 1 block per contest.



Cade Gassman – Senior – Soccer, Basketball and Track and Field

Cade Gassman was a starter, or key contributor, for three Wildcat programs during 2022-23 school year. Gassman was the starting midfielder and captain for the soccer team, starting guard on the basketball court and a jumper for the track and field program.

Gassman made his biggest impact on the pitch for Louisville. As a midfielder, Gassman drew a lot of attention from the opposition as he finished with five goals and four assists on

the season to lead the Wildcats to the regional title match. In his career, he is one of the more prolific scorers in school history.

The Louisburg senior finished with 47 career goals, which is second in program history and was third in school history with 26 career assists. His 120 career points is also second in Wildcat history. He is a four-time all-state and all-Frontier League first team selection.

On the hardwood, Gassman was the starting guard for the Wildcats and he recorded 39 rebounds and had 22 assists to go along with 14 steals. On the track, Gassman was a state qualifier in the high jump for Louisburg and finished 11th overall at state.



Nathan Vincent, Senior, Football and Track and Field

Louisburg senior Nathan Vincent played big roles for both the

Wildcat football team and track and field program. Vincent was a starting lineman for the Wildcat football team and a state medalist in track.

On the football field, Vincent started on both sides of the ball as he earned all-state and all league honors. He finished with 80 tackles as a defensive end to go along with 6.5 sacks and 8.5 tackles for a loss. Vincent was a key member of the offensive line as he helped the Wildcats to more than 33 points per game. He earned first team all-league offensive league honors and second team-defense. He also recorded first team all-state honors and was selected to play in the Kansas Shrine Bowl.

Vincent was the Wildcats' top thrower for the track and field program. Vincent recorded three state medals as he helped Louisburg to a state runner-up team finish. At state, Vincent medaled third in the shot put, fifth in the discus and sixth in the javelin. In all, Vincent has won five career state medals, with three coming in the javelin.



Colyer Wingfield, Senior, Basketball, Track and Field

Louisburg senior Colyer Wingfield had a big season for both the Wildcat basketball team and track program. Wingfield was the leading scorer for the Wildcat basketball program, and was a part of two state relays in track.

Wingfield earned a lot of success on the hardwood as he was named to the All-Frontier League second team. He led the Wildcats in scoring at 17.4 points per game and pulled down nearly six rebounds a contest.

On the track, Wingfield helped the 4×100 relay and 4×400 relay to state medals as both finished third at the state meet last month. The 4×100 relay set a new school record in the process. He also did the long and triple jumps for the Wildcats.

Pfannenstiel named new LHS AD; resigns boys basketball post



Louisburg boys basketball coach Ty Pfannenstiel will take over the school's activities director role next school year. He also resigned his basketball position after coaching the

Wildcats for the last six years.

Beginning next school year, Louisburg High School activities will have a little different look to it – especially at the top.

Ty Pfannenstiel will serve as the school's new activities director and will take over for current AD, Michael Pickman, who will focus on his assistant principal duties and curriculum.

Pfannenstiel, who has been the boys basketball coach for the last six years, resigned his post to take on the activities director position. He also stepped down as an assistant football coach.

Currently the weight room instructor, Pfannenstiel will spend half his day teaching and the other half in the AD role.

All of the moves were approved during Monday's meeting of the USD 416 Board of Education.

"This is very exciting for me," Pfannenstiel said. "It's definitely going to be a change. I have been a teacher and a coach for 18 years. I still get to be a teacher half-time, and now I get to step into a new role as an administrator. It is going to be all sports and activities and I am looking forward to the new direction."

As for Pickman, he gets the opportunity to focus more on the academic side as a full-time assistant principal. He was hired as an assistant principal/ activities director in April of 2020.

"I am very excited to commit more fully to the assistant principal role as education and curriculum have always been my true passion," Pickman said. "Being able to support the teachers, students, and administrative staff by providing data, feedback, and assessing teaching and learning goals and

initiatives in the building and district aligns with that passion and the opportunity arose to allow for that. I hope to enable and promote continued growth in the various curriculums and initiatives and structures that make Louisburg a fantastic district in a supportive community.

“Ty has experience and is passionate about athletics and activities. As it is where his passion is, I have every confidence he will do a fantastic job in his new role and look forward to witnessing where he takes our programs moving forward.”

Pickman took over LHS activities at a difficult time as the school was coming back from COVID-19 and the all challenges it presented. As tough as that situation was, he appreciated the relationships he built.

“I have thoroughly enjoyed my role as activities director and was presented a fantastic growth opportunity and am grateful for being given it,” Pickman said. “I had a goal of being present for athletes and coaches and for the patrons, so I hope people saw that presence. I was blessed to have great leadership in place in our coaches and sponsors, and tried to support them best by advocating for their needs and supporting them to do their job of being great role models and passing on their passion and knowledge to students.

“Ultimately, I am most proud of our student athletes and activity participants and being part of their journey. I believe that sports are an extension of the classroom and I wanted to help ensure that character and sportsmanship were just as important and success, and I am overjoyed to have a wealth of memories where our fans, students, participants, and coaches and sponsors proved that to be true of LHS.”

While taking on the challenge of being a new administrator is one he is looking forward to, leaving his coaching roots behind was a difficult decision for Pfannenstiel.

In 2021, Pfannenstiel led the Wildcat boys basketball team to the Class 4A state championship game and finished as the state runner-up.

“That was definitely the biggest thing that was holding me back,” Pfannenstiel said. “I love basketball and the kids that I have worked with. There is a group coming up that I really enjoy coaching, and leaving that behind was one of the biggest challenges for me. Whoever takes over the program, I think it will be good transition for them because they will have a great group of kids to work with.

“Originally, I was going to be allowed to coach a sport and they didn’t want to take coaching away from me. The more I thought about it, if I want to do a good job at this, I need to focus on being the AD and that will be something that will benefit me and all the other activities.”

Pfannenstiel believes the move is a good one for the school in general as it will allow Pickman and principal Amy VanRheen to focus more on the academic side of things.

“This is something that is definitely needed,” Pfannenstiel said. “Our administrators are so busy with all the stuff they do during the school day, but they are also going to all the activities as well. Hopefully this will be a big help for Mrs. VanRheen and Mr. Pickman.”

Although he won’t official start his new position till next school year, Pfannenstiel is already starting to transition into his new role – one that is looking forward to.

“My job in the weight room and coaching has all been about sports,” he said. “That is what entices me about this job is that I am still going to be all about sports and activities. I just want to be a support for our coaches and our athletes and be advocate for our students.”

Gassman ready to take next step with JCCC soccer program



Louisburg senior Cade Gassman recently signed his letter of intent to play for the Johnson County Community College men's soccer program.

Ever since Cade Gassman walked onto the pitch for the Louisburg soccer team as a freshman, he has made a huge impact for the Wildcats.

Whether it was helping Louisburg to its best finish in program history, or earning countless postseason honors, Gassman certainly left his mark on the Wildcat program.

Starting next fall, the Louisburg senior hopes to do the same at the collegiate level.

Earlier this year, Gassman signed his letter of intent to join the Johnson County Community College men's soccer program and will go from being a Wildcat to a Cavalier.

"I've always wanted to play soccer as long as I can and I realized It was possible to get to the next level my freshman year of high school," Gassman said. "It meant a lot to me and my family when we signed and saw that dream come true."

Gassman has played the sport since he was 5-years-old and has

slowly seen him develop into an all-state player for Louisburg. He hopes to take that next step at JCCC.

Before he committed, however, Gassman already had an inside knowledge of the Cavalier soccer program. His older sister, Carlee, played there so Cade had a chance to get to know the school first-hand.

So when JCCC coach Jeff Cole made Cade an offer, it was hard for him to pass it up.



Louisburg senior Cade Gassman signed to play with the JCCC men's soccer program. Sitting next to Cade are his parents Tara and Brent Gassman. Standing (from left) is his sister Carlee, head coach Bobby Bovaird and sister Bree.

"Going to her games, the facilities were brand new and nice and after (Cole) reached out and gave me an offer, it was the best fit for me," Cade said. "I had many of my club teammates playing at JCCC and friends I've made over time. I heard lots of great things."

During his time with the Louisburg program, Gassman finished his Wildcat career with 47 goals and 26 assists. He was also a

four-time first team All-Frontier League and all-state player.

A season ago, he also helped the Wildcats to a third place finish in the Class 4-1A state tournament – the best finish in school history.

“I’m so excited to see what Cade is able to accomplish at the next level,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “He’s been such an incredible leader on the field – at many times, he’s been like a third coach with how he works with his teammates. His positivity is infectious and he’s got such an uncanny work ethic. Combine those two traits with his natural talent, and you get a kid like Cade.

“JCCC is picking up a pretty special player with him, that’s for sure. Not only is he a very talented player, but he’s extremely coachable and was always willing to listen to suggestions I might have had. With a growth mindset like Cade has, he will definitely find even more success at the college level.”

Gassman has high hopes for what he can accomplish with the Cavalier program and is excited to work under head coach Jeff Cole.

“The JCCC program, as far as culture, is good and went very far in the playoffs last season,” Cade said “As far as playing style, I will have to see when I get there but I know coach Cole with his previous experience at UMKC will have a high level approach to how we play. My goal is to work my way to the starting 11 and win the NJCAA national championship.”

As for his time in Louisburg, Gassman is grateful for everything the program did for him and for all the experiences he leaves with.

“The soccer program means a lot to me,” he said. “It has given me a great work ethic and allowed me to be a better leader and teammate. It has definitely bettered me as a player and a

teammate.”

Top 10 Louisburg Sports Stories of 2022



It was a successful, and eventful, 2022 for Louisburg High School athletics and for those who are connected to the Wildcat program.

This past year created a lot of school history for LHS and a few programs brought back state hardware.

Below are the top stories from 2022, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the writeup is the link to the actual story from the event.

When putting the list together, I took a lot of things into account – whether it was team vs. individual, popularity of the sport, historical achievements and the interest it drew on the web site.

This year was a blast to cover and I am looking forward to seeing what 2023 will bring. Thank you to everyone for their support and can't wait for it all to begin again.



10. Louisburg golf qualifies for state

FORT SCOTT – As the scores were rolling in, the Louisburg golf team was a little worried.

The Wildcats were in jeopardy of not qualifying for state after a few of the golfers didn't have the scores they were hoping for in the Class 4A regional tournament in Fort Scott.

Chanute and Independence had already assured themselves of a spot, but the third place team was up in the air as the top three teams automatically qualify for state.

As it turned out, the Wildcats had nothing to worry about as they edged Paola by four strokes to finish in third with a 357 to secure their third consecutive spot in the 4A state tournament.

Seniors A.J. Arriola, Sam Wheeler, Ian Kirkpatrick, Johnny Thompson, along with juniors Jackson Olson and Nick Lancaster, advanced to the state tournament.

Arriola carded a 78 and finished as a regional runner-up, as he was just two strokes behind regional champion Drayton Cleaver of Chanute.

As for Olson, the Louisburg junior set a personal record by six strokes to shoot an 81 and took fourth overall. Those personal bests were enough to get the Wildcats into that third place spot.

At state, Arriola and Wheeler finished as the team's top two golfers. Arriola carded a 97 to take 59th overall, while Wheeler finished with a 98 and came in 66th.



9. Brueggen's earns school's first state swim medal

LENEXA – Even though she is just a freshman, Sabra Brueggen is already putting a stamp on her high school swim career at Louisburg High School.

It all came to a rousing end on May 21 as Brueggen earned her first state medal at the Class 5-1A Kansas State Swim and

Diving Championships at the Shawnee Mission School District Aquatic Center.

Brueggen became the first swimmer in school history to earn a state medal as she finished fifth in the 100-yard backstroke in 1:00.58.

On the day before in the preliminaries, Brueggen also took fifth in a season-best time of 1:00.15.

“Medaling as freshman means the world to me, and it proves to me that all of my hard work for all of these years, has paid off,” Brueggen said. “I feel like I performed my absolute best at state, and I was very happy with the results. It gives me confidence that I will have a bright future representing OzPaLou at the state swim meets.”

She nearly had a second medal in the 50 freestyle. Brueggen put together a season-best time of 25.26 seconds, but finished ninth overall. It was the same finish she had the in the preliminaries.

The top eight in each event earn a state medal as she was just .06 away from earning another spot on the medal stand.



8. Harding takes over as Wildcat football coach

The Louisburg football program had a different leader on the sidelines this past season.

The USD 416 Board of Education approved the hire of LHS assistant coach Drew Harding to be the team's new head coach in January after the district decided not to renew the contract of former coach Robert Ebenstein.

Harding spent the last five seasons as a Wildcat assistant coach, including time as a defensive coordinator. He is a 2010 Louisburg graduate and was a big part of the Wildcat program during his time as a student-athlete at Louisburg High School.

However, Harding didn't see himself be a head coach of any sport coming out of college.

"It means a lot," Harding said. "When I got out of school, I didn't get into education right away and started somewhere else. I decided to get into education because of the impact my former coaches at Louisburg had on me. To come full circle and to be in the position that I am in now, is pretty surreal. I am really excited for the opportunity and hopefully I can have the same type of impact on student athletes as they come through the program."

Ebenstein has been the head coach the last five seasons and helped the Wildcats to a 30-18 record during that time, including a Frontier League and regional title in 2018. He had a winning record three of those five seasons.

He was also named the KFCA Coach of the Year during that season and was selected to be an assistant coach for the Kansas Shrine Bowl. He was an assistant coach for the Wildcat program for five years before earning the head coaching job.



7. Conley resigns a Louisburg head boys and girls soccer coach

Louisburg High School head boys and girls soccer coach Kyle Conley stepped down from his position after seven years.

He was recently hired to lead the boys and girls soccer programs at Blue Valley West, where he will serve as the head coach of both teams.

Conley, who also taught social studies at LHS, informed the players and parents of his decision on May 4. The Blue Valley Board of Education approved his hire on May 9.

“Making the decision to leave Louisburg was extremely difficult,” Conley said. “The players and parents, both past and present, made this decision tough. No parents or players caused this decision. I am very thankful to Mr. (Dave) Tappan and Mr. (Darin) Gagnebin for giving me this opportunity to coach and teach at Louisburg. The amount of support that my

teams, my family and I received from Louisburg soccer parents and the community was incredible.”

Bobby Bovaird was hired as the new boys head coach, while Ben York returned to the program as the new assistant. York was also named the girls head coach after serving 13 years as the boys head coach previous to Conley.

Conley has the been head girls coach at Louisburg since its inception in 2016 and has led that program to four consecutive state final fours.

Twice, the Wildcats made the state championship game and finished runner-up on both occasions. He has guided the program to an 82-34-3 record.

Conley took over the boys program in 2016 and finished with a 77-32-3 record. He led the Wildcats to two state final fours during that span, including a third place finish in 2020.

“I am so proud of the things that our student athletes in the soccer programs have accomplished both on and off the soccer field,” Conley said. “I will always cherish the memories that we have made here with the Louisburg soccer programs.”



6. Girls cross country qualifies for state, Vohs earns state medal

WAMEGO – For the second consecutive season, Emma Vohs left the Class 4A state cross country meet with more than was she arrived with.

Vohs earned her second state medal at Wamego Country Club as she finished 10th overall with a time of 20 minutes and 51 seconds. The Louisburg junior did what she set out to accomplish.

“I was so excited to win another state medal this season and couldn’t be happier that I reached my goal for that race, which was placing top 10,” Vohs said. “The race was a tougher course, as was the competition this year, but I am blessed to run with such talented girls that push me to do better each race.”

Vohs led the Lady Cat team that qualified for state for the sixth consecutive season. As a team, Louisburg finished eighth overall with 208 points.

A week earlier at regionals, the team of Vohs, Maddy Rhamy, Lola Edwards, Nova Ptacek, Bree Gassman, Erin Apple and Madison Huggins finished third to punch their ticket to state

“It never gets old seeing the joy in the team’s eyes when they hear they qualified for state,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “The girls work hard to accomplish this goal each year, and because of their dedication to their sport, they achieve great things even if they might not make it, but they did.

“The program has built itself and I’m just glad to be a part of it. Yes, we put together a training plan to accomplish great things at the end of the season, but the runners do the work to get there. It takes self discipline, motivation and

guts to be there at the end of the season.”



5. Wildcat wrestling medals 3 at state

Louisburg wrestling has had its fair share of state medalists in its long history, but what the Wildcats accomplished in February at the Tony's Pizza Events Center in Salina was something the program had never seen before.

The Wildcats left the Class 4A state tournament with three state medalists, the most for one year in program history.

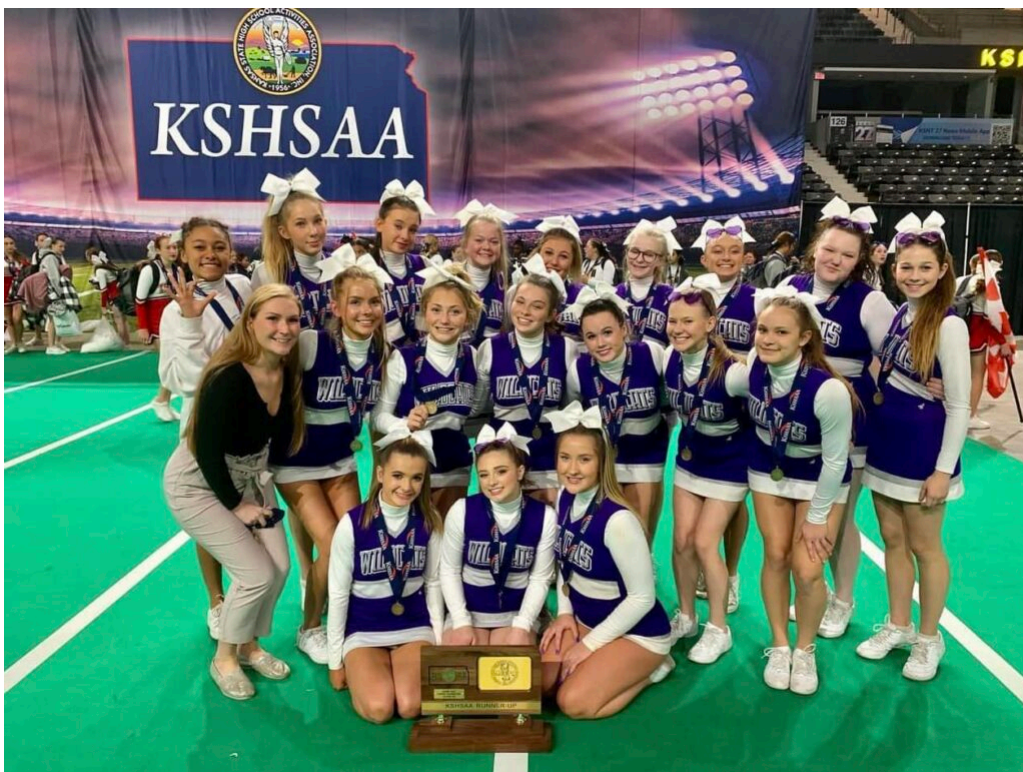
Aiden Barker (195 pounds), Kaven Bartlett (126) and Elijah Eslinger (285) each finished in the top six in their respective weight classes and put together their best performances of the season. It was also the first time each of them earned a state medal.

“This season was the most state placers we’ve had in a single year in program history,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Prior to 1992, KSHSAA only medaled the top 4 in each weight. In both 1988 and 1989, we had two top-4 placers and one top-6 placer, but this really shows how the program is progressing

and developing. We nearly had four medalists, too.”

Barker, a senior, was a favorite for a medal heading into Salina and finished fifth overall with a 13-1 major decision over Ottawa’s Jared Ferguson in the fifth-place match.

Bartlett and Eslinger also left lasting impressions on the Wildcat program as each medaled sixth overall after both nearly turned their brackets upside down as they advanced to the semifinals on Friday. They both guaranteed themselves a medal on the first day.



4. Louisburg cheer earns state runner-up performance

TOPEKA – It has almost become commonplace to see the Louisburg High School cheer squad in the finals of the Class 4A Gameday Spirit Showcase.

However, that doesn’t mean the cheerleaders are any less excited about it.

For the second straight season, the Wildcats finished as the state runner-up in the Class 4A competition at the Stormont-Vail Events Center. They finished with a score of 79.45 and were one point behind champion Paola.

It is the fourth straight season that the Wildcats have finished in the top three, which included a state championship in 2019.

"I am so unbelievably and incredibly proud of this team," Louisburg coach Marissa Morrow said. "This positivity and attitude that these girls have shown this year have been the key to our success. I had no doubt that the material and performances we brought on Saturday had the potential to do well, but it was the girls who made it possible to pull it together. They were all such competitors and left it all out on the mat, and I couldn't ask for more. We also could not have done it without the support of our amazing cheer families."

Members of the team are Sydney Dudzik, Bella Feikert, Zoe Cutshaw, Caroline Dugger, Elizabeth George, Addison Drake, Brooklyn Harmon, Adison Vargo, Maddy Carpenter-Ross, Sienna Finch, Alayna Stohs, Alaina Dudzik, Maddie O'Keefe, Liz Willming, Kayleigh Ramsey, Taryn Osborn, Anna Brizendine and Jocelyn Burk.



3. LHS football secures Frontier League title

With just over a minute left in regulation, Louisburg was staring at the possibility of their first league loss and was watching an outright Frontier League title slip away.

Spring Hill scored a touchdown and took a four-point lead with 1 minute and 12 seconds left. Things were looking bleak for the Wildcats.

As it turned out, 52 seconds was all the Wildcats needed to pull off one of the season's most memorable moments. Louisburg quarterback Declan Battle found junior Caden Caplinger in the endzone on an 18-yard touchdown pass with 20 seconds remaining to give the Wildcats a 20-17 victory.

The win was the Wildcats' seventh straight on the season and clinched the team's first Frontier League championship since 2018.

“There weren’t a lot of people who thought we could be league champions,” Louisburg coach Drew Harding said. “I don’t think it was anything that people expected out of us, and the Frontier League is really good. For this group to come to work, get better every day and to see success is pretty sweet.”

The win was extra special for 16 Louisburg seniors as they were also able to celebrate that league title on Senior Night.

Jackson Kush, Nathan Apple, Carson Wade, Isaiah Whitley, Riley Van Eaton, J.R. Rooney, Will Hutsell, Brayton Brueggen, Christian Golladay, Nathan Vincent, Jase Hovey, Mack Newell, Hunter Moore, Mason Dobbins, Corbin Hamman and Layne Ryals all got to end their final regular season home game with a win.

“The Frontier League title means so much to me and this team,” Rooney said. “As a team before the season, the seniors wrote down our goals, and league champs was on everyone’s list. To clinch it on senior night was amazing. Going undefeated at home, to win it on our field in front of our town – it was an indescribable feeling.”



2. Wildcat volleyball finishes fourth at state

HUTCHINSON – The state tournament ended the way it started for the Louisburg volleyball team – with a loss to Towanda-Circle.

Still, it was everything that happened in between that made for a lot of lasting memories for the Wildcat players.

Louisburg went 2-1 in pool play at the Hutchinson Sports Arena, which included a revenge win over Tonganoxie in the final match of the day. That gave the Lady Cats a spot in the state semifinals Saturday, where they finished fourth in Class 4A.

The Wildcats suffered a 2-0 loss to both Bishop Miege and Circle, but they still ended their season as one of the state's top teams.

"I am extremely proud of this team," Louisburg coach Leanna Willer said. "Looking at how we started this season, and our ups and downs along the way, it is a huge accomplishment for them to have come together as a team at the end of the season and play our best volleyball yet. It was apparent in the last couple of weeks that they really started playing for each other and capitalizing on the strong team bonds they built throughout the year."

It was all thanks to an upset the previous week. Louisburg defeated the state's No. 1 seed, Baldwin, in the sub-state championship match to earn the state berth.

The Wildcats, the No. 9 seed, knocked off No. 1 seed Baldwin, 25-18 and 25-19, at Baldwin High School in the finals of the Class 4A sub-state tournament. That win puts Louisburg in the state tournament for the first time since 2019.

Members of the team are Emma Prettyman, Adyson Ross, Claire

Brown, Allie Kennedy, Ashlyn Berck, Delaney Nelson, Izzy Moreland, Bronwynn Williams, Caileigh Kilgore, Megan Quinn, Hailey Sword and Madelyn Williams.



1. Wildcat boys take third at state track; Koontz, Caplinger win state titles; Lady Cats medal nine

WICHITA – For the second consecutive season, the Louisburg boys track and field team brought home hardware from the Class 4A state meet.

After winning the state championship in 2021, the Wildcats once again found their way to the podium in Wichita as they finished third overall with 67 points.

Andale won the state championship with 101 points and Chanute was the state runner-up with 71.

Louisburg got points from a lot of different areas as the Wildcats medaled in 10 events and had 12 medalists overall, including all three of their relays.

Louisburg senior Tom Koontz won a pair of state titles in the hurdles, while sophomore Caden Caplinger captured the gold medal in the pole vault.



“I am not going to complain at all,” Koontz said. “I believe we came here with less people than we did last year and everyone did their best. Even though we didn’t get exactly what we wanted, third place is still a great achievement.”

What he couldn’t believe was he had just won his first state title in the 300 hurdles and Koontz did so by breaking a 14-year-old school record. Koontz ran a time of 38.98 seconds to break R.J. Saunders’ record of 39.16 set in 2008 to earn the gold.

It turned out to be his second state title of the day as he also earned the gold medal in the 110-meter high hurdles with a time of 14.61 seconds. Koontz won the state in that event last season as well.

Caplinger cleared a lot of his marks in the pole vault and did so in convincing fashion as he was able to win a state title in just his second year with the program.



Last season at state, Caplinger medaled eighth after he cleared 12-6. A year later, the Louisburg sophomore improved his mark by two feet and is a state champion.

It was an impressive showing from Caplinger as he didn't miss an attempt until he tried for 15 feet at the end. He entered the competition at 12-6 and had five straight successful clearances.

"At first I was really nervous, but then it just kind of turned into a routine thing," Caplinger said. "I started going over heights consistently and the rest just kind of fell into place. I cleared 14-6 earlier this week twice in a row, so I knew I could do it. I was still a little nervous though."

As for the Lady Cats, Delaney Wright left the state meet with three medals. Wright, who has been coming back from a severe injury for most of the season, finished as the state runner-up

in the 400-meter dash, third place in the 200 dash and fifth in the long jump.

A season ago, Wright was the state champion in all three events, but couldn't get the repeat she was hoping for.



"Going into state I knew I still wasn't where I want to be due to my injury a couple months ago," Wright said. "But I wanted to attack it still and give it all I had. I am blessed I was there to compete and earn three medals cause in the beginning I didn't even know if I was going to compete my senior year."

In all, the Lady Cats put together a strong state performance as they medaled in nine events and finished with 40 team points and took sixth overall. They were just eight points away from the third place spot, and a plaque.

"Once again the state qualifiers did an amazing job," Louisburg girls coach John Reece said. "They all performed well and most beyond expectations. To leave the meet finishing in sixth place was outstanding. We left with lots of medals and great memories."

Six Wildcats named to all-state team; McManigal, Gassman selected first team



Louisburg seniors Cade Gassman, Colin McManigal, Toby Espina-Roca, Brecon Klugman, Matthew Sword and Gavin York were all named to the KHSSCA all-state team.

The season may be over, but members of the Louisburg boys soccer team are still getting recognized for a strong 2022 campaign.

Six Wildcats were named to the Class 4-1A All-State team by the Kansas High School Soccer Coaches Association on Nov. 18.

A pair of Wildcats were recognized among the best as seniors Colin McManigal and Cade Gassman were selected to the all-state first team. Senior Toby Espina-Roca was a second team honoree, while Brecon Klugman, Matthew Sword and Gavin York were named as honorable mentions.

The same six players were also given All-Frontier League honors earlier this month.

Gassman earned first team honors for the fourth time in his high school career and has been a fixture on the Wildcat team since his freshman season.

This season, Gassman finished with five goals and four assists, but he was a valuable piece to the team at controlling play in the midfield and starting attacks.

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Espina-Roca moved to the midfield this season for Louisburg after spending the last three years on the defensive side. He was also an integral part of the Wildcat team as he finished with six goals and five assists.

In his first year as a varsity goalie, Klugman thrived for the Wildcats as he finished with 113 saves and finished with six shutouts on the season. His save number was the second highest total in program history for a season.

Sword and York were key pieces on the Wildcat back line as they turned away several attacks and helped keep games close. York made the move to defense halfway through the season after seeing time at forward to start the year.

The two players led the Wildcat defense against some difficult opponents and were big in helping Klugman throughout the season.

Six Wildcats earn spot on all-league soccer; Gassman, McManigal named first team



Cade Gassman, Colin McManigal, Toby Espina-Roca, Brecon Klugman, Matthew Sword and Gavin York were all recently named to the All-Frontier League Soccer Team.

It was an up and down year for the Louisburg boys soccer team, especially when it came down to Frontier League action.

After a slow start, the Wildcats found their footing and finished with a 9-7-2 record that earned them a spot in the regional championship match. In what was a difficult league slate, Louisburg had its fair share of bright spots, including a win over league champion Spring Hill.

Louisburg also had plenty of talent on its roster and the rest of the league coaches took notice. The Wildcats were awarded six spots on the all-league team that was announced earlier this week.

Senior forwards Cade Gassman and Colin McManigal earned first team honors, while senior midfielder Toby Espina-Roca and senior goalie Brecon Klugman were named to the second team. Senior defenders Matthew Sword and Gavin York were honorable mention selections.

"The last few years, I learned quickly that the Frontier League is legit in Kansas soccer," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "With the top teams in the league, it was pretty clear that Spring Hill had the dominant season, even though we were one of their five losses this season, and they had eight kids earn all-league honors. We had two at each level and I feel like we could have placed a few others on that list as well."



Gassman earned first team honors for the fourth time in his high school career and has been a fixture on the Wildcat team since his freshman season.

This season, Gassman finished with five goals and four assists, but he was a valuable piece to the team at controlling play in the midfield.

McManigal led the team in scoring with 12 goals on the year to go along with three assists. It was a 1-2 combo that was big for the Wildcats this season.



“Cade and Colin have made such an impact on our program over the last four years,” Bovaird said. “Many times this season, officials and opposing coaches have mentioned how fun Cade is to watch and several have said that he’s a special kid. He

truly is an amazing and skilled player, but the thing is when you look at his stats for this year, you can tell that he was 100 percent about the Wildcat team. That's one of the most commendable things about him, and that's what I hope college coaches notice the most about him. Sure he's got crazy skills, but he's a player who will bring so much more to the team.

"This season, Colin was the epitome of overcoming adversity. You'd watch the kid get the ball at his feet and power through 2, 3, sometimes 4 defenders and get a shot off. He knows how to use his stature and determination to go to goal, and you won't see him hit a ton of fancy and flashy moves; you just see him drop his shoulder and take kids on."



Espina-Roca moved to the midfield this season for Louisburg after spending the last three years on the defensive side. He was also an integral part of the Wildcat team as he finished with six goals and five assists.

"This season, Toby was our soccer guy," Bovaird said. "I mean, he lives and breathes soccer, and at halftime of nearly every game, he gave some great insight to what was happening on the field."



In his first year as a varsity goalie, Klugman thrived for the Wildcats as he finished with 113 saves and finished with six shutouts on the season. His save number was the second highest total in program history for a season.

“Brecon did amazing this year, and his skills in goal really kept us in quite a few of our game,” Bovaird said. “All this considering the fact that his junior year was his first time playing high school soccer, and he split time in goal at the JV level. This year, he jumped into the role of varsity goalie and was incredible.”



Sword and York were key pieces on the Wildcat back line as they turned away several attacks and helped keep games close. York made the move to defense halfway through the season after seeing time at forward to start the year.

The two players led the Wildcat defense against some difficult opponents and were big in helping Klugman throughout the season.



“Matthew’s presence on the back line was incredible this season,” Bovaird said. “He was calm and collected when under pressure, and he was a vocal leader to the guys on the field, as well as a huge mentor to Brecon in goal. Matthew was an outstanding leader for us on and off the field.

“Gavin started out great at forward, getting three goals and having one assist, but once he moved back to defense, it was a very effective change for the team. He worked with Matthew and Brecon so well at defense, and I find myself wondering what if we had made that adjustment sooner in the season.”

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE SOCCER

First Team

Gustavo Pinto, Bonner Springs, junior

Timmy Shockey, Bonner Springs, junior

Brenan Kuzmic, Tonganoxie, senior

Parker Hurla, Eudora, senior

Caleb Brueckner, Spring Hill, senior

Jacob Brueckner, Spring Hill, senior

Caleb Carr, Baldwin, senior

Jesse Hopper, Baldwin, senior

Cade Gassman, Louisburg, senior

Colin McManigal, Louisburg, senior

Goalie: Jackson McWilliams, Tonganoxie, junior

Second Team

Tavian Cruse, Bonner Springs, senior

Trent Barnes, Tonganoxie, senior

Iker Ragues Romas, Tonganoxie, junior

Joel Brown, Ottawa, senior

Jonathan VanStaden, Ottawa, senior

Josue Navarro, Ottawa, junior

Carden Escobar, Paola, senior

Jaycob Campos, Spring Hill, senior

Cooper Carr, Baldwin, freshman

Toby Espina-Roca, Louisburg, senior

GOALIE: Brecon Klugman, Louisburg, senior

Honorable Mention

Logan Jackson, Bonner Springs, senior

Anthony Shermerhorn, Bonner Springs, senior

Gavin Shupe, Tonganoxie, junior

Andrew Gomez, Eudora, senior

Christian Koehn, Eudora, junior

Derek Lehmann, Eudora, junior

Hayden Worden, Paola, senior

Jake Rainforth, Spring Hill, sophomore

Zack Brueckner, Spring Hill, sophomore

Denis Martinez, Spring Hill, junior

Seth Oberkrom, Spring Hill, sophomore

Parker Simon, Spring Hill, sophomore

Eli Dick, Baldwin, senior

Ian Rimmer, Baldwin, junior

Gavin York, Louisburg, senior

Matthew Sword, Louisburg, senior

GOALIE: Caden Englert, Baldwin, junior; Nate Steinlage, Eudora, sophomore; Blake Ramsey, Paola, senior

Week 9 Athlete of the Week: Cade Gassman



Here is the Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Week for week nine of the fall sports season, sponsored by Edward Jones-Craig Holtzen.

CADE GASSMAN, SENIOR, BOYS SOCCER

Louisburg senior Cade Gassman has been the glue that held the Wildcat boys soccer team together throughout the season. He came up big for the Wildcats last Thursday during the team's regional championship match at Bishop Ward. Gassman scored the game tying goal in the second half that eventually forced overtime.

Although the Wildcats eventually fell in three overtimes, 2-1, Gassman was a key cog in the Wildcats' attack. In his career as a four-year starter for Louisburg, he is second in program history with 47 goals and third with 26 assists.

"He has been an integral part of the team," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "He's like a coach on the field – the guys look up to him, they follow his lead, and they play more cohesively because of him."

The athlete of the week award is announced every Wednesday morning during the fall season and the winner is selected by Louisburg Sports Zone with the help of nominations from coaches.

Previous winners:

Week 1: Layne Ryals

Week 2: Nathan Vincent

Week 3: Emma Vohs

Week 4: Claire Brown

Week 5: Ashton Moore

Week 6: Colin McManigal

Week 7: Allie Kennedy

Week 8: Declan Battle



Wildcats suffer heartbreak in triple-overtime loss to Bishop Ward



Louisburg head coach Bobby Bovaird consoles Wildcat goalie Brecon Klugman shortly after the Wildcats' 2-1 loss to Bishop Ward on Thursday in the regional championship game at Bishop Ward High School. The Wildcats lost in three overtimes, with the deciding goal coming on a penalty kick late in the third OT.

KANSAS CITY, Kan. – With the right to advance to the state quarterfinals on the line, Louisburg and Bishop Ward did everything possible for their respective teams to keep their

season alive.

In the end, two penalty kicks decided the winner of the Class 4-1A regional championship match.

Bishop Ward converted a penalty kick in the first half to take the lead, then after Louisburg tied it in the second half, the match went into extra time.

In the third overtime, Louisburg was called for a foul in the box and the Cyclones were awarded their second penalty kick and converted to hand the Wildcats a 2-1 defeat.

It was a crushing end to the Wildcats' season in what was an evenly played match throughout.

"I don't think I've ever seen so many tears flowing after a game as I did Thursday night," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "The talent of this group, combined with their work ethic, coachability, desire, and unity, was something amazing to be a part of. They definitely played very well toward the end of the season, and they bought into the program this year. They overcame a rough start and started to peak at just the right time to make a run in the postseason. None of them wanted it to end so soon, but they did everything they possibly could to keep it going."



Louisburg senior Cade Gassman tries to settle the ball Thursday at Bishop Ward.

The loss enough was difficult to stomach, but the fact the difference the match was a pair of penalty kicks, made it even tougher on the Wildcat players.

“The frustrating thing about that game was that we played so well considering the circumstances and adversities we faced,” Bovaird said. “We controlled possession of the ball for most of the game, and we had them on the ropes many times. I mean, we had 8 corners to their 2, and we had 13 crosses to their 9. We played tough defense, but it’s frustrating that two subjective calls decided the outcome of the game.”

Louisburg faced adversity from the start as the Wildcats had to play without two of their starters – Matthew Sword and Jackson Olson – who were out of town competing at FFA nationals and the Wildcats relied on their bench to help pick up the slack.



Senior Gavin York heads the ball out of the back for Louisburg.

The Wildcats did more than that. Seniors Andrew Brown and Brock Varns helped fill the void at Olson's outside-mid spot, while senior Gavin York moved over to Sword's sweeper spot. Another senior, Caden French, filled in as an outside back.

"At the end of the day, a game like Thursday's regional championship is a testament to a team's character," Bovaird said. "The fact that we were missing two starters, one of whom being our defensive leader (Sword), and we were on a field that really didn't seem to fit game standards and we still took it to the wire shows the grit that our guys have.

"They entered that match as the underdogs, but they battled every minute of the game. My hats off to Gavin for transitioning to sweeper and playing a great game, Caden for stepping in and marking some of their fastest players, and Andrew for sliding to the opposite side and giving us some offensive presence. Those three were ready to do their part for the team, and I think they made a phenomenal impact in the absence of Jackson and Matthew."



Louisburg senior Caden French clears the ball away for the Wildcat defense Thursday against Bishop Ward.

Bishop Ward opened the scoring in the first half as the Wildcats were called for a foul in the box on a breakaway attempt by Ward. The Cyclones converted the penalty kick and took a 1-0 lead at halftime.

It stayed that way till midway through the second half. Louisburg senior Colin McManigal took the corner kick and senior Cade Gassman headed the ball in for the equalizer.

“That was the boost we needed,” Bovaird said. “At that point in the game, we were trailing and the game was three-fourths of the way finished. In soccer, if you’re not scoring goals by that point, things start changing. Players get desperate, they lose focus on the game plan, and they start questioning if they have what it takes to pull out a win. Cade’s goal gave our guys the extra wind they needed to push through the end of regular time.”

The Wildcats took 17 shots for the match, including seven by Gassman to lead the Louisburg attack. Senior Toby Espina-Roca

and sophomore Emmett White had three and two shots, respectively.



Louisburg goalie Brecon Klugman jumps up for a save in the first half of Thursday's regional championship game at Bishop Ward.

Louisburg senior goalie Brecon Klugman made sure it stayed tied throughout the overtime periods. Klugman finished with three saves and five blocked shots.

Klugman really stepped up in the second overtime period with a save and three blocked shots, including one where he used his body deflect a Cyclone shot on a breakaway attempt.

"What a phenomenal season Brecon's had," Bovaird said. "Brecon came out for the first time last year and only played half the time in goal on junior varsity, and the other time he spent on the field in defense. This year, he slid right into the starting goalie position, and he made some incredible saves that night. If it hadn't been for his athleticism and growth over the season, we wouldn't have been in the position we were in at the end of the season."

With 27 seconds left in the third overtime, Bishop Ward went on the attack and had several scrums in front of the goal. All that led to a Wildcat foul in the box when a player slid to make a play on the loose ball as the Ward player was going for it.



Louisburg senior Toby Espina-Roca flies through the air to knock the ball away Thursday.

The official awarded the Cyclones the penalty kick and they converted to take the regional championship – and at the same time – 15 Wildcat seniors saw their high school careers come to an end.

Gassman, McManigal, Brecon Klugman, Varns, Andrew Brown, Jordan Brown, Ayden Deterding, French, Owen Barber, York, Sword, Olson, Dagon Klugman, Espina-Roca and Kaven Bartlett all suited up for Louisburg for the final time.

“My heart is broken for the team, especially the seniors,” Bovaird said. “I really don’t like speaking negatively of game officials, but I strongly feel that you either need to take control of that style of play early in the game and call it consistently, or you need to allow the players to decide the game and avoid making those powerfully impacting subjective

calls.”

The Wildcats finished their season with a 9-7-2 record, including wins in three of their last four matches.

“The last few years, we’ve talked about the program being a family, and every year I see more and more what that means,” Bovaird said. “We had the motto ‘United’ this year, and that’s what we were. In the face of adversity, we stepped up and were ready for the challenge. I’m nothing but proud of these guys, and I’m truly going to miss this senior class.”