

Wildcats advance to regional title game with win over Maranatha



Louisburg's Colton Blue (right) and Colin McManigal celebrate a goal Tuesday in the Wildcats' 5-2 victory over Maranatha Academy in the Class 4-1A regional semifinal in Louisburg.

The Louisburg boys soccer team did exactly what it wanted to begin the playoffs – continue its hot streak from the regular season.

After getting two wins to end the regular season, the Wildcats put together another positive result – this time in the Class 4-1A regional semifinals. Louisburg hosted Maranatha Academy and came away with a 5-2 victory.

The Wildcats scored four second half goals, despite a muddy and sloppy playing surface, and they are moving onto the regional championship match tonight at Bishop Ward.

“We had a great game overall, despite the conditions,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “These days, so many club teams and high school teams have the luxury of playing on nice turf surfaces, but when it comes down to it, soccer is a sport played on the grass. We have a grass practice field and a grass game field. That’s our home stadium, and we’re very proud of it.”

“Statistically, Tuesday’s game was most likely going to be the

final home game for our seniors, and I wanted them to be able to play one more game on that field. Playing there, especially when it's wet and muddy, creates adversity, but we've shown time and again that it's an advantage for us. On top of all that, the fact that we were able to step up to adversity and unfavorable conditions like the wet field shows that we're capable of handling any adversity thrown at us. You need that preparation for the postseason."



Sophomore Emmett White puts a shot on goal Tuesday against Maranatha.

It didn't take long for the Wildcats to get on the board and they were able to play from in front early.

Senior Gavin York sent a shot into the box and it ricocheted off the Maranatha keeper. The ball bounced to senior Colin McManigal, who put it away in the empty net to give Louisburg a 1-0 advantage three minutes into the contest.

Louisburg (9-6-2) had several good looks at the goal in the first half, but couldn't get it to go in, but still led at halftime.

For the game, the Wildcats outshot Maranatha 42-8 and had 14 corner kicks on the night. Louisburg also had 17 shots on target.

Those opportunities started to go in after halftime. Senior Toby Espina-Roca took a shot near the 18 that flew past the Maranatha keeper, and then sophomore Colton Blue scored to give the Wildcats a 3-0 advantage early in the second half.

Senior Jordan Brown gave the Wildcats their fourth score on a shot near the goal, then after two Maranatha goals, the Wildcats sealed the win with their final tally.



Louisburg senior Cade Gassman wins a ball in the air Tuesday against Maranatha.

Senior Matthew Sword crossed the ball into the box and it found the foot of senior Dagon Klugman, who scored his first varsity goal, and the celebration was on.

"I love how we got organized from the very beginning of the game and were looking to put the ball in the back of the net," Bovaird said. "Getting that first goal so early changed the tone of the game. In the second half, they really stepped things up, and I'm very proud of them for that. One thing I told the guys after the game is that this home field now has special meaning for our seniors. Anyone who was able to score a goal in that game, or any other game, will remember the feeling of seeing the ball hit the net, they'll remember where they were when they scored that goal, and they'll remember what they did to make it happen. That's the incredible thing about this game."

Senior Cade Gassman led the Wildcats in the midfield and was aggressive from the beginning. Gassman led the Wildcats with 10 shots on the night, including five on target.

McManigal had eight shots, with four on target, while Blue finished with five shots and sophomore Emmett White had four. Espina-Roca and York each had three shots.



Wildcat senior Andrew Brown beats a Maranatha player to the

ball Tuesday in Louisburg.

Now the Wildcats are preparing for the Class 4-1A regional championship game tonight at Bishop Ward. Louisburg is hoping to return to the state quarterfinals after falling to Bishop Miege in the same game a year ago.

They will do so without a pair of starters as Sword and Jackson Olson will be gone as they are competing at FFA Nationals. Still, the Wildcats will rally together as they try to keep their season alive.

"We'll be facing adversity again in several ways," Bovaird said. "First, it's an away game on a field that historically has had very poor conditions, but we've shown that we can accommodate that. Second, we'll be without two starters, but we have considerable experience with our senior players and they've shown that they can adapt and overcome.

"Finally, it will be against a fast team with a higher seed, but we've stepped on the field with teams like Spring Hill and Piper and shown the Kansas soccer scene that we can not only compete with them, but also win against them. It'll be a tough game, but we're ready for the challenge."

Wildcats score five second half goals in shutout of Leavenworth



Louisburg senior Toby Espina-Roca celebrates after scoring one of the Wildcats' five second half goals Thursday in Leavenworth. The Wildcats defeated the Pioneers, 5-0.

LEAVENWORTH – The Louisburg boys soccer team closed out the regular season in style as the Wildcats played some of their best soccer of the season at the right time.

Louisburg scored five second half goals and rolled to a 5-0 victory over Leavenworth. The Wildcats recorded back-to-back shutouts to conclude their schedule.

“That’s the thing about our win against Leavenworth – it was a huge confidence booster for a lot of reasons,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “It’s so important to finish on a positive, and ending our regular season with a win is a powerful boost for the guys’ morale.”

After what was a scoreless first half, the match turned into blowout in about 20 minutes time and the Wildcats had some fun doing it.

Senior Colin McManigal scored two of the five Wildcat goals in the second half and put the first one away two minutes after halftime. McManigal dribbled through defense, worked his way to the middle of the box and shot it past the goalie to give the Wildcats the lead.



Louisburg senior Colin McManigal celebrates one of his two goals Thursday at Leavenworth.

About 15 minutes later, the Wildcats (8-6-2) struck again. Senior Toby Espina-Roca received a nice give-and-go pass from senior Cade Gassman. Espina-Roca dribbled into the box and put it past the Leavenworth goalie to put the Wildcats up two.

McManigal struck again in the 68th minute as he got a pass from Jackson Olson and then dribbled in near the goal to put another shot away.

“It’s a lot of fun to watch Colin play up top like that,” Bovaird said. “He gets the ball at his feet and finds a way to keep possession and move it through sometimes two or three defenders. He just keeps his feet moving and uses a low center of gravity to power through the defense. He’s got this non-stop work ethic, and this year he’s been a dominant presence on the field.”

The scoring didn’t stop there as a pair of Wildcat seniors got their first varsity goals just moments later.



Louisburg senior Jordan Brown is surrounded by his teammates following his first varsity goal Thursday at Leavenworth.

Senior forward Jordan Brown went down the middle of the field on a breakaway, his shot bounced off the arm of Leavenworth defender and found the back of the net.

Louisburg did some more celebrating three minutes later. Senior Gavin York sent a free kick into the box and Caden French headed it in for his first varsity goal, which sealed the game for Louisburg.

Those two goals brought the Wildcat bench to their feet as they clinched their second straight win.

“That’s one of the best parts of being a coach – seeing the joy on a kid’s face when he scores his first goal,” Bovaird said. “I feel really fortunate to have been able to witness two guys experience that on Thursday evening. Soccer is one of those sports where sometimes players tend to measure their skill by how many goals they score or how many assists they have, but the truth of the matter is that players have an impact by making things happen on the field. Their movement, their positioning, their passes – they all add up in the bigger picture.

"Caden and Jordan are examples of how kids can contribute to the team, and I was so happy to see them be able to score a goal. It was icing on the cake."



Louisburg senior Caden French (left) celebrates with his teammates after he scored his first varsity goal Thursday.

Gassman had a big day for Louisburg in the middle of the field as he finished with a pair of assists, while York and Olson also had an assist.

The Louisburg defense of York, Matthew Sword, Ayden Deterding, Owen Barber, French, Kaven Bartlett and Olson also had a big game, limiting Leavenworth to just six shots.

Senior goalie Brecon Klugman also had his second straight clean sheet with two saves and a blocked shot.

Now the Wildcats' focus shifts to the postseason. Louisburg is the No. 6 seed in this year's Class 4-1A regional tournament and the Wildcats will host Maranatha Academy at 4:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Should the Wildcats advance, they will play either Bishop Ward or Ottawa on Thursday for the regional championship.

“The postseason is always an exciting time, and I can’t wait to see how our guys respond to the opportunity to be out there in the regional tournament,” Bovaird said. “I think there’s a lot of positive energy with the guys, and that energy is infectious. They’re playing really well, and this is the right time to start peaking.

“I told the guys how much fun this season has been. They’ve already made it such a memorable season, so I want them to be able to see it out the way they always dreamed it would be. I love their focus and competitiveness, and I think it’s going to be an exciting run to the end.”

Wildcats blank Piper on road to get back on winning track



Louisburg senior Matthew Sword slides in for a tackle on a Piper player Thursday at Piper High School. The Wildcats defeated the Pirates, 2-0.

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — In a season filled with ups and downs, the Louisburg boys soccer team wanted to go into the postseason on an up swing.

In their final week of the regular season, the Wildcats are off to a good start.

Louisburg traveled to Piper in its second to last game of the regular season and put together one of its better performances of the season. The Wildcats blanked the Pirates in a 2-0 victory as they got a goal in each half to get the win.

"I'd say this has to be one of our biggest wins this season," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "Piper has beaten several teams we either lost to or tied. The guys seemed to be firing on all cylinders, and I'm pretty happy with that."

Piper, a Class 5A team, entered the match with a 9-5 record, but the Wildcats put together what could have been their best performance outside of their win against Spring Hill earlier in the season.

Louisburg moved the ball around and connected three to four passes together on multiple occasions to get good looks at the goal. For the game, the Wildcats took 13 shots and seven of those were on target.

"That's something we've been working on," Bovaird said. "I love how they're taking the concepts we work on at practice and apply them to the game. We've worked on supporting one another with our movement, communicating, and playing the way we're facing, and with those skills, we were able to make some great attacks against Piper."



Louisburg senior Cade Gassman pushes the ball up the field Tuesday at Piper.

The Wildcats got on the board in the 22nd minute when senior midfielder Toby Espina-Roca scored after a cross from sophomore Jacob Brown hit off a Piper defender and came right to the foot of Espina-Roca. He hit the shot from about 20 yards out and it found the upper-right corner of the net.

Espina-Roca, along with senior Cade Gassman, did a lot of work in the midfield to get the Wildcats multiple looks at the goal. Gassman led the way with three shots on the night, while Espina-Roca, Emmett White, Colin McManigal and Gavin York each had two.

"Toby and Cade have been playing together that way all season," Bovaird said. "They've got a great understanding of one another and when one goes forward, the other hangs back to cover. It takes a huge amount of pressure off our shoulders

when we're not trailing on the scoreboard.

"At halftime, I gave the old 'play like it's still 0-0' talk. I asked the guys to think about the moments leading up to Toby's goal – what they were doing on the field was what enabled that goal to happen. There's no need to change it, there's no need to get desperate. Play solid soccer, go into your tackles hard, and move off the ball to support one another."

The Wildcats (7-6-2) tacked on another goal midway through the second half. McManigal sent a corner kick into the box and it was headed in by a Piper player for an own goal and gave Louisburg the cushion it was looking for.

Defense also proved to be big for the Wildcats as senior goalie Brecon Klugman earned the clean sheet with six saves and a blocked shot. Klugman saved a breakaway opportunity and also another shot close to the goal.



Louisburg senior Gavin York clears a ball out of the back Tuesday against Piper.

The back line was strong for the Wildcats as Matthew Sword, York, Owen Barber, Ayden Deterding, Jackson Olson and Caden French all came up with big plays throughout the match.

“Gavin and Matthew were solid on defense,” Bovaird said. “Both were playing great games. Brecon had some amazing saves, too. We’ve been making our mark as a defensive-minded team lately, but with last night’s game, our guys really figured out some offensive things as well.”

The Wildcats travel to Leavenworth tonight for their regular season finale as they try to improve on their seeding for the postseason.

“It’s hard to predict how regionals will be set up, but with the win, it’s pretty likely that we’ll host our first round regional game,” Bovaird said. “A win against Leavenworth should secure the No. 6 seed for us. There’s a lot of variables and things beyond our control, so the game plan is to worry much less about how the seeds will turn out and focus more on what we’ve been doing to get us to this place.

“A win today will help give us confidence with what we’re doing. I keep telling the guys that the two things we can control are our attitudes and our actions. When we focus on those two things, we get consistency, and consistency is what will get us to our goals.”

Wildcats shutout at Topeka

On what was a rare Saturday game for Louisburg, the Wildcats traveled to Hummer Sports Park in Topeka for a match with Topeka High.



Louisburg senior defender Owen Barber clears the ball away from the goal Saturday in Topeka.

The Wildcats couldn't quite stay with the Class 6A program as they fell 2-0 as the Trojans scored a goal in each half.

Louisburg had three shots on target from senior Andrew Brown to the lead the Wildcats. Toby Espina-Roca, Colin McManigal, Caden French and Cade Gassman also took shots for Louisburg.

Wildcat seniors honored with shutout win over Turner on Senior Night



Louisburg senior Colin McManigal heads the ball away from Turner player Monday at home. The Wildcats got the win, 1-0, over Turner as they honored 15 seniors and a manager on Senior Night.

Monday's match with Turner may have just been a regular match on the schedule when it came to the standings, but for many on the Louisburg soccer team, it meant so much more.

It was Senior Night for the Wildcats that featured the largest senior class the Louisburg program has ever had. The Wildcats honored 16 seniors and their parents prior to the game and they wanted a memorable moment for what could be their final time playing on their home field.

The Wildcats got what they were looking for.

Turner was called for a handball in the box and the Wildcats were awarded a penalty kick late in the second half. Cade Gassman converted and the Wildcats held on for a 1-0 victory over the Golden Bears.

"Nothing is ever guaranteed, and I'm pleased with how the guys battled for a win on senior night," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "Turner is a tough team with some talented individuals and some physical players. That game may end up being our final home game of the season, depending on how regionals pan out. I'm really happy for the guys for them to have earned a win at home on such a special night."

Louisburg's senior class of Andrew Brown, Brock Varns, Jackson Olson, Caden French, Jordan Brown, Matthew Sword, Brecon Klugman, Dagon Klugman, Gavin York, Ayden Deterding, Kaven

Bartlett, Cade Gassman, Toby Espina-Roca, Owen Barber, Colin McManigal and manager Tehya Harvey left their home field with a lasting memory.



Toby Espina-Roca settles the ball Monday during the Wildcats' home match with Turner.

"I first got to know these seniors as a spectator when they were freshmen, and then the next two seasons I got to work with almost all of them on the JV squad at one point or another," Bovaird said. "This year, they've made huge strides as a team, and I'm so proud of the resilience they've shown. It's a really special class, and to have 15 seniors is pretty neat. They're definitely cementing their contributions to the foundation of future teams with our program."

It was a back and forth match that left both teams with good chances to score. Even with all that, it was penalty kick that decided it all.

With eight minutes left in regulation, Jackson Olson took a shot in the box that hit the hand of a Turner player. The Wildcats were awarded the penalty kick and Gassman put it in the back of the net with ease.

“It was definitely a back-and-forth game, and Turner had about 55 percent possession that game,” Bovaird said. “I was a little surprised to see that stat after the game, because I felt like we did well possessing the ball. Regardless, we out-shot them and had some nice strings of passes. I wasn’t worried if we had to go into overtime. We’ve been there several times this year, and I think our fitness is pretty good for this point in the season.”



The Louisburg seniors were honored Monday on Senior Night. Pictured are (front row, from let) Dagon Klugman, Gavin York, Ayden Deterding, Kaven Bartlett, Cade Gassman, Toby Espina-Roca, Owen Barber, Colin McManigal, manager Tehya Harvey; (back row, from left) Andrew Brown, Brock Varns, Jackson Olson, Caden French, Jordan Brown, Matthew Sword and Brecon Klugman.

Louisburg outshot Turner 12-11 and had four shots on goal. Gavin York, Toby Espina-Roca, Gassman and Colin McManigal each put shots on target.

Defensively, the back line of Ayden Deterding, Matthew Sword, York, Owen Barber, Caden French and Kaven Bartlett held strong, while senior goalie Brecon Klugman recorded six saves.

As good of a win this was for the Wildcats, Bovaird liked what he saw from his players throughout the contest.



Andrew Brown puts a shot on goal Monday against Turner.

“Before the game, I gave them a challenge – let’s get the ball in the corner and send across some crosses,” Bovaird said. “We had a team objective of getting at least 10 crosses in the attacking third, and we ended up with almost that many by the end of the first half. Although we didn’t get any goals off those crosses, it was great to see them respond to a challenge like that.

“What I really like is that they’re keeping things in perspective. We’re working on a style of soccer that will keep us in the game later in the post-season and give us a chance at moving on in regionals. It’s not about doing what it takes to win right now; it’s about improving on what’s important so we are ready to peak when it matters. The Turner game was a

positive example of that mindset for us.”

Wildcats shutout Paola to win second in a row

It may not have been the prettiest victory for Louisburg, but at this point in the season, a win is all that matters.

The Wildcats recorded their second straight shutout as they blanked Paola, 1-0, on the road Tuesday to improve their record to 6-5-2 on the season. Louisburg outshot Paola 28-3 in the contest, but had a tough time finding the back of the net.

“While there were a lot of frustrating things about the Paola game, I’m still pleased with the quality of soccer we played,” Bovaird said. “We dominated the field with over 60 percent possession during the game, and that’s good considering how much of a factor the wind ended up being. We limited Paola to just three shots on the night, and none of them were on target. Aside from the score being just 1-0, we played some good soccer against them.”



Louisburg's Jackson Olson clears the ball Monday at home against Turner.

Senior Colin McManigal provided the Wildcats with their lone goal as he broke open a scoreless game in the second half with a goal on an assist from sophomore Emmett White.

Jackson Olson, Toby-Espina Roca and McManigal all had two shots on target, while White, Andrew Brown and Jordan Brown also had a shot on goal.

Louisburg is back in action today when it travels for a match with Topeka High at Hummer Park.

Week 6 Athlete of the Week:

Colin McManigal



Here is the Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Week for week six of the fall sports season, sponsored by IronHorse Family and Cosmetic Dentistry.

COLIN MCMANIGAL, SENIOR, SOCCER

Louisburg senior Colin McManigal helped give the Wildcat boys soccer team the lift it had been looking for last week against Spring Hill. Louisburg, which lost to Spring Hill 6-2 earlier in the season, upset the Broncos, 2-1, and handed them their first Frontier League loss. McManigal was a big part of that as he scored the game-winning goal in the second half to help knock off the No. 7-ranked team in Class 5A.

On the season, McManigal has led Louisburg in scoring from his forward spot as he has nine goals on the year and has helped the Wildcats to a 6-5-2 record.

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



The collage features the Ironhorse Family & Cosmetic Dentistry logo (a horse head) and a QR code. It also includes Dr. Laura's Orthodontics logo (a sunburst) and a photo of a smiling child. Text on the right side of the collage reads: "Comfortable dental care for the entire family", "No shots, no drills, no pain", "We offer sedation dentistry", and "Orthodontics, TMJ and Sleep Apnea Treatment". At the bottom, two addresses are listed: "5321 W. 151st Street, Leawood, KS 66224 (913) 851-9969" and "1270 W. Amity, Louisburg, KS 66053 (913) 837-3096".

Wildcats pull upset of Spring Hill, get revenge win over Broncos



Louisburg senior Colin McManigal celebrates his goal Tuesday with teammates Jackson Olson (6) and Emmett White. The Wildcats earned the win at home over Spring Hill, 2-1.

Tuesday's home contest against Spring Hill seemed like a giant hill to climb for the Louisburg boys soccer team.

Earlier in the season, the Wildcats lost by four goals to Spring Hill and struggled to stay with the Broncos. It was a mismatch of a game.

On Tuesday, however, everything changed.

Louisburg handed Spring Hill its first loss in the Frontier League and got the big win it was hoping for as the Wildcats downed the Broncos, 2-1, at the Wildcat Soccer Complex.

For a team that has been struggling to find its identity, it was the signature win the Wildcats were looking for.

“For us, that was a huge win,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “We’ve definitely gotten some things figured out in the past two weeks, and I credit the players for that. They’re a focused group of athletes who not only believe in themselves, but they also believe in the process. They trust their coaching staff and they study their film from previous games. It’s an awesome statement to be able to turn around and play so much better against a team that had pretty much thumped us the previous game.

“The tone of this game compared to the last one was totally different. In the first game, Spring Hill scored a goal within the first 10 seconds. In the second game, we nearly scored a goal in the opening seconds. That set the tone for the game. We took it to Spring Hill from the beginning, and even in the final moments of the game when we were hanging onto our lead, we were still looking to go at them and remain on the offensive.”

The Wildcats (4-4-2) brought in a new sense of confidence with a lineup change. They moved Gavin York from forward to defender, and put senior Jackson Olson at midfield and sophomore Emmett White at forward.



Louisburg senior Gavin York clears a ball out of the back Tuesday against Spring Hill.

Moving pieces around seemed to pay off for the Wildcats as the defense of York, Matthew Sword, Ayden Deterding, Owen Barber and Caden French limited the Broncos' dangerous chances to just five shots on target. Spring Hill had 22 shots for the game.

"Gavin has been playing up top for us, but when we considered our team's needs on the back line, along with some feedback from Gavin, the decision was made to slide him back, adjust Emmett up to forward, and swing Jackson to outside mid to see how that solidified things for us," Bovaird said. "We tried it out against Baldwin, and then played like that at practice throughout the week and we realized that this was not only a solid change, but it may have been the key to getting us to where we want to be to reach out postseason goals.

"Matthew and Gavin, along with Owen, Ayden, Caden, and Kaven Bartlett, have been growing together so well as a defensive group. Throw in the athleticism of Brecon Klugman in goal, and I'm feeling pretty confident with what we're doing back

there.”



Louisburg goalie Brecon Klugman makes a diving save in the first half of Tuesday's match with Spring Hill.

Klugman had his best game of the season for the Wildcats as he turned away several Spring Hill (8-3) shots. He recorded four saves, blocked seven shots and allowed just the one goal.

“Brecon came out for high school soccer for the first time last season, and even then he split time as JV goalie with a few other players the whole season,” Bovaird said. “Over the summer and through the first part of the season, he’s really made huge strides. It helps having some veteran players with goalkeeper experience in the back to help guide him during games (Sword and Olson). Brecon is starting to figure out a lot of things with the position, and he’s developing his own style to go along with his confidence.”

Spring Hill opened the contest with a goal in the 18th minute to take the early lead, but the Wildcats still put pressure on the Bronco defense. It eventually worked as senior Toby Espina-Roca chipped a shot over the Bronco goalie from about

25 yards away to tie the match.

Espina-Roca and senior Cade Gassman worked a lot in the middle of the field to help the Wildcat get opportunities as both players played most of the match.

“Toby and Cade really paired up well in that game,” Bovaird said. “Cade Gassman is our center forward, but for a lot of the games, he’s been dropping back as a ‘false 9,’ and he and Toby are collaborating in the middle both defensively and offensively. Just watch how Toby and Cade play together – they’re like a couple of bulldogs out there. They cover so much of the field, and their fitness is outstanding so they’re able to play so much of the game. They are vocal leaders on the field, and especially with Toby’s goal, they get the rest of the team inspired and motivated to keep battling.”

With the game still tied at 1 at halftime, the Wildcats struck early in the second half as Olson sent a header down the line and senior Colin McManigal raced to get it. McManigal beat the Bronco keeper on a breakaway for the 2-1 advantage.



Louisburg sophomore Emmett White goes up for a header Tuesday against Spring Hill.

Spring Hill had a few more opportunities, including a shot that hit off the crossbar with 16 minutes left in the match, and then Klugman turned away two more chances with eight minutes remaining.

Louisburg will try and build off its biggest win of the season tonight as the Wildcats travel to Eudora for another Frontier League match. Varsity will begin at approximately 6 p.m.

The Cardinals are just 2-6-2 on the season, but have played a tough schedule, just like Louisburg. Bovaird is anticipating another tough challenge.

"Tonight's game is a test of our character and our culture," he said. "We've shown that not only can we beat a team that's beaten us previously, but we can also compete with the best

teams in the state. Eudora has become an established program with a respectable coaching staff.

“They can beat good teams and they’re not afraid to step onto the field against the best teams in the Kansas City area. That strong schedule makes them dangerous, but we’re in the same boat. It’ll be a dogfight tonight, but I think this game will show the rest of the league, the region, and the state what we’re capable of.”

Louisburg ties Baldwin in Wildcats’ third overtime match of season



Louisburg senior Cade Gassman weaves through the midfield Thursday against Baldwin in Louisburg. The Wildcats and Bulldogs tied, 1-1.

The Louisburg boys soccer team has found itself in its fair share of overtimes matches this season, and it happened again Thursday.

Louisburg hosted Baldwin in a Frontier League matchup, and for the third time this season, found itself in a double overtime match. As for the result, the Wildcats had their second tie of the season in a 1-1 draw with the Bulldogs.

The Wildcats are now 3-4-2 on the season, but they hope all this extra time on the pitch will be beneficial at the end of the season.

“We’re still keeping sight of the bigger picture – the whole season,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Overtime games are helpful for us in the long run because it means we’re having to battle extra hard, not only during regulation time, but also in those extra minutes of overtime. Our long-term goals include accomplishments in the post season, and we have to be able to play hard the whole game.

“Having three overtime games means we’re getting ready for those games. Win, lose, or tie, I’m trying to get the guys to recognize the fact that we’re staying competitive. Against Baldwin, I think we showed that we’re continuing to improve and build from our previous games.”

Baldwin opened the scoring early in the first half as Caleb Carr put the Bulldogs up 1-0 six minutes into the match and took that lead into halftime.

The Wildcats made a switch in the lineup as well as senior Gavin York moved from forward to outside back. Bovaird then pulled up senior Jackson Olson from outside back to outside mid and moved sophomore Emmett White to forward.

“Gavin has played left back for his club team, and it’s something I’ve been considering for a while this season,” Bovaird said. “He’s comfortable in the back, and with that comfort comes a great deal of confidence. He’s got the second most goals for the team this season, and he’s tough as nails on defense, so it’s a risky trade-off. I think we’ve got some younger guys like Emmett White who can step up and get some goals, and Gavin is providing some excellent leadership in back.”



Louisburg senior Brock Varns sends a pass through the air Thursday against Baldwin.

The Wildcats kept attacking and tied the match up with 28 minutes remaining in regulation.

Louisburg senior defender Matthew Sword had a free kick from midfield and sent the ball into the box. The pass went off a Baldwin defender and into the goal to even the score.

“I don’t think we could have asked Matthew to have a better free kick than the one that went in off the Baldwin player’s head to even up the score,” Bovaird said. “We had more possession in that game, and I love how the guys responded to the physicality of the game. While it was one of those games where it could have gone either way on any given night, the guys showed a ton of heart with how they played.”

Several Wildcats got shots off on the night as White had three shots on goal to lead the way. Senior Toby Espina-Roca had two shots on target.

York, Andrew Brown, Cade Gassman, Colin McManigal and Matthew Sword also had a shot on goal.

Senior goalie Brecon Klugman allowed just the one goal and had 10 saves on the night, including two in the overtime period.

Louisburg will try and bounce back today as the Wildcats host Spring Hill. The match is set to begin at 6 p.m.

Wildcats shutout Chanute at home to get second straight win



Louisburg senior Gavin York scored a goal in the Wildcats' 3-0 win over Chanute on Monday in Louisburg.

Louisburg started its first winning streak Monday after its posted a 3-0 shutout of Chanute at home, but the mood wasn't all celebratory.

The Wildcats had in the back of their mind that they could have played better.

Louisburg had 46 shots on the night, with 15 of those on target, and was a little unlucky in the scoring department. Despite that, the Wildcats will gladly take the win and build on it.

"I felt like we played really well against Chanute, and the score definitely didn't reflect the quality of soccer we

played,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Ultimately, a win is a win, and the guys played some solid soccer. We dominated with possession and attacks, but it was just one of those games where we couldn’t land our shots the way we wanted to. Four or five great shots rebounded off the crossbar or posts, and we set up some outstanding opportunities.”

A couple of those opportunities came in the first half as the Wildcats (3-4-1) were able to get on the board early.

Senior Colin McManigal beat the Chanute keeper for a goal in the sixth minute thanks to an assist from senior midfielder Cade Gassman.



Louisburg sophomore Colton Blue beat a Chanute defender to the ball Monday in Louisburg.

Midway through the first half, the Wildcats struck again. Senior Toby Espina-Roca recorded an assist as he made a pass down the middle of the field. Senior Gavin York chased it down and found the back of the net to put Louisburg up 2-0.

The score stayed that way through halftime, and late in the

second half, McManigal scored his second goal of the night on another assist from Gassman to ice the win for Louisburg.

McManigal and York took a bulk of the shots for Louisburg as the two combined for 24, including 12 shots on goal. Espina-Roca and senior Jackson Olson also had shots on goal.

Gassman finished the game with eight shots, while sophomore Emmett White had five. Seniors Ayden Deterding, Brock Varns and Jordan Brown also took shots.

The Wildcat defense wasn't tested much, but senior goalie Brecon Klugman earned the clean sheet – his second of the season.

Even in the win, the Wildcats know they have a lot to work on before the end of the season, but Bovaird is pleased with the progress they are making.

“The possession style of soccer is something we've been working on a lot the past few weeks,” Bovaird said. “Keeping things in perspective, we're continually improving from game-to-game. We've got our sights set on the bigger picture and the end of the season, and if we want to accomplish our goals in the postseason, we've got to continue working on a style of play that will beat a solid team.”

Louisburg will get another test tonight as the Wildcats host Baldwin in a Frontier League match. Varsity is set to begin at 6 p.m.

Wildcats snap winless skid

with victory over Ottawa at home



Members of the Louisburg team surround Cade Gassman after he scored the game's first goal Thursday at home against Ottawa.

It had been more than three weeks since the Louisburg boys soccer team had tasted victory and the Wildcats have gone through their fair share of tough times already this season.

On Thursday at home, the Wildcats got a chance to do a little celebrating again.

Louisburg senior Cade Gassman scored a pair of goals and the Wildcats secured a 2-1 home victory over Ottawa to snap a five-match winless skid. The win improved their record to 2-4-1 on the season.

"That win was greatly needed," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "Having a 5-game stretch without a win is demoralizing, that's for sure. Before the game, we talked about how things in life are cyclical, and sports are no different. They've got the talent, the desire, and the work ethic to make the change to get back on the winning track. The previous five games were not a forecast of the rest of the season; they were opportunities to grow and learn, and last night the guys showed they believed in it."

Gassman got the Wildcats on the board in the first half as he collected the rebound off a shot and put it away from 15 yards out with 22 minutes left in the first half.

The Wildcats took that lead into halftime and doubled it in the second half. Sophomore Colton Blue was fouled while in the box and Gassman took the penalty kick and found the back of the net. It was Gassman's first goals of the season.



Louisburg sophomore Emmett White heads the ball away Thursday during the Wildcats' win over Ottawa.

"Cade has been a foundational player for the program since he started, and this year has been no different," Bovaird said. "Even though his goals last night were his first two of the season, he's been integral in getting the team going in every game. Sometimes it's tough to see the bigger picture.

"When you've got a key player who's not producing as many goals as he'd like, the challenge is to keep him positive and moving in the right direction. With Cade, we didn't need to step in and guide him – he's got the maturity and drive to refocus and keep on pushing. It's great to see him have some goal-scoring stats in his favor though."

Ottawa scored a goal with about seven minutes left in the second half, but the Cyclones didn't threaten after that.

Louisburg goalie Brecon Klugman made a couple big saves early in the first half to keep the match scoreless.

Defensively, the back line of Jackson Olson, Ayden Deterding, Matthew Sword and Owen Barber worked hard in the back to limit the Cyclone opportunities.



Louisburg senior defender Owen Barber beats an Ottawa player to a 50-50 ball Thursday at home.

“Our keys to the game were using the outside channels to get some crosses sent in, improving on our defensive marking and transitions, and playing possession soccer,” Bovaird said. “We spend lots of time working on the keys to the game leading up to it, and I’d say the guys met the goal to do those things. We’ve got two younger players in the outside mid with Colton Blue and Emmett White, and both of them are capable of delivering some nice crosses.

“The team is getting more confident in getting the ball to these two guys on our attacks. Some of the teams we’ve played this season have been utilizing a lot of movement up top and in the middle, which can disrupt our defense. Last night, I felt like our guys handled Ottawa’s offensive pressure and transitional runs pretty well. The possession game is something we’ve been working on quite a bit. Against Spring Hill, we had no strings of passes of more than 3 in a row. We definitely improved on that.”

The Wildcats will try and make it back-to-back wins Monday as they host Chanute. Louisburg will then face off with Baldwin on Thursday as the Wildcats get back to playing more Class 4A programs.

“We played Pittsburg (5A), Gardner (6A), Bonner Springs (5A), Lansing (5A), Tonganoxie (4A), and Spring Hill (5A) right off the bat,” Bovaird said. “We beat Pittsburg, and so far this year we’re their only loss. We have a strong schedule that’s meant to challenge us. At the end of the season, we won’t have a stellar record because we play so many larger and tougher schools. Five out of our next nine games will be against 5A and 6A teams, too.

“When it comes time to start the postseason run, we’re going to have honed our game by facing such tough competition. Next week, we play Chanute and Baldwin. Chanute lost to Pittsburg but beat Paola. Baldwin lost to Eudora but beat Bonner Springs. It’s a weird sport – wins and losses over common opponents don’t guarantee anything when we face these teams. We just need to keep ourselves focused and moving with an upward trajectory next week.”

Wildcats lose to undefeated Spring

Hill on road

For the first half of Louisburg's road contest at Spring Hill, the Wildcats were more than holding their own against the undefeated Broncos.

Louisburg found itself down just one goal at halftime and the Wildcats put themselves in position for a possible road win.

Unfortunately for the Wildcats, Spring Hill recorded four goals in the second half and handed Louisburg a 6-2 loss Tuesday.

Spring Hill opened the game with a goal in the first minute, but junior Colin McManigal tied it up a few moments later.

"Take away that first goal, which was 11 seconds into the game, and we find ourselves up 1-0 within the first 10 minutes," Bovaird said. "We got caught flat-footed with their two first-half goals. The message Coach (Ben) York and I tried to give them at halftime was that this was still a competitive game that could go either way. We needed to step up and go to the ball more, clean up our touches and passes, and get the ball down the side, like we've been working on at practice.

"I think one huge positive from that game is that we never really gave up. The boys played hard against a very good team. We stayed disciplined in the face of adversity, which included some solid technical play from Spring Hill, a vocal crowd, and some physical tackles."

Spring Hill scored three unanswered goals in the second half to take a 5-1 advantage, before Louisburg senior Gavin York found the back of the net.

"A veteran Frontier League coach told me earlier this week that this is the best Spring Hill team he's coached against, and I thought their teams the last two years were pretty good," Bovaird said. "This year's Spring Hill team is

definitely going to make some noise in the postseason in 5A. They dominated with their passes and possession, capitalized on transitions, and won the 50-50 balls. They're a very well coached and experienced team."

Wildcats tie Tonganoxie in second straight double overtime match



Louisburg senior Matthew Sword battles a Lansing player to clear the ball out of the back during the Wildcats' home match on Sept. 13.

TONGANOXIE – Playing one double overtime match is grueling enough, but Louisburg found itself in its second in a matter of three days.

The Wildcats, who were trying to end their three-game losing skid, found themselves deadlocked Thursday against Tonganoxie. Twice the Wildcats had the lead, only to see the Chieftains tied it back up on both occasions to force overtime.

Louisburg was able to end its losing streak, but not in the matter it wanted as the Wildcats left Tonganoxie with a 2-2 tie. Still, Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird believes his team will use it as a positive and is better than its 1-3-1 record

indicates.

"Soccer is a weird sport," Bovaird said. "How many other games can end in a tie, even after an overtime period? The frustrating thing is coming off a 100-minute game and doing all that work but only being able to say it was a tie. It is nice to see the losing skid come to an end. Louisburg soccer is not used to that sort of start to a season. Granted, we've only played 5A and 6A teams up to this point, but we've been competitive.

"With the exception of the Gardner game, we've had the majority of possession time in our games. On top of that, we've had some pretty good success rates at connecting passes. We've been working on playing possession soccer and using that style to wear down our opponents, and with the stats from each game, we've been improving every time."

The Wildcats opened the scoring in the 10th minute as sophomore Colton Blue passed the ball to middle, where the ball was deflected in the box and senior Colin McManigal was there to tap it past the goalie.



Senior Toby Espina-Roca heads the ball away during the Wildcat's match against Lansing on Sept. 13.

The Chieftains tied it up moments later, but in the 34th minute, McManigal put a shot on goal that bounced off the post and Blue knocked it in to give Louisburg a 2-1 halftime lead.

Tonganoxie tied the match again later in the second half to force the overtime periods, in which both teams had opportunities, but couldn't find the back of the net.

"It's tough to go the distance plus overtime in any game, but when you have two games like that in a span of three days, it takes a toll," Bovaird said. "I think it was good, though, because it's helping us get into game shape. Running and doing drills at practice can only do so much for game conditioning, but real live soccer against an unfamiliar opponent can give us the chance to push ourselves further than we typically could at practice. The important thing is that we take care of

our bodies and give them the recovery that they need.”

McManigal had five shots on goal to lead the Wildcats and fellow senior Cade Gassman added three in the loss.

The Wildcats will try for their second win on the season Tuesday when they travel to Spring Hill, which is one of the top teams in the Frontier League.

“Louisburg soccer isn’t used to having a losing record, but this is a new year and a new team,” Bovaird said. “Bringing Coach (Ben) York back on staff has been a huge help with redefining what our program is all about. We’re not wiping the slate clean and starting fresh; rather, we’re taking what has brought us success in the past and making adjustments based on the strengths of the individuals in the program. I’m hopeful for the next few games. Spring Hill will be a tough one, as always, but in this sport, anything can happen. I love the attitudes of our guys so far this season.”

Wildcats fall to Lansing in double overtime

With just seconds left in its home match against Lansing on Sept. 13, Louisburg was in desperate need of a goal and Colin McManigal came through.

McManigal was in the right spot at the right time as he took the rebound off a Gavin York shot and put it away to tie the match with 56 seconds left in regulation. Unfortunately, the Wildcats couldn’t compete the comeback as Lansing scored in the second overtime to hand Louisburg a 3-2 home loss.



Colin McManigal celebrates his game-tying goal on Sept. 13 against Lansing.

The Wildcats were called for a penalty in the box and Lansing was awarded a penalty kick. The Lions converted the opportunity to leave Louisburg with a win.

“On paper and in the match report, we were the more dominant team than Lansing, but in the end, it’s about scoring goals and we weren’t able to do that,” Bovaird said. “We out-possessed them, out-shot them, and out-worked them – especially in the overtime period – but it came down to an unfortunate situation in the penalty box that gave them the game-winning goal.

“While it was a physical game, I think the things that hurt us were our inability to produce longer strings of passes and possession, along with not being able to get our shots on frame. Don’t get me wrong, the guys played with so much heart and passion, and I’m very proud of them for that. It’s still early in the season, and despite our record, we’re moving in the right direction.”

Louisburg got on the board first as senior Toby Espina-Roca found the upper-right corner of the net on a shot from about 20 yards out to give Louisburg a lead midway through the first half.

Lansing responded five minutes later to tied the match and then took the lead early in the second half.

Then came McManigal's goal, which gave the Wildcats a jolt of momentum.

"One of the greatest things I'm seeing from Colin is his confidence and his determination," Bovaird said. "I love the example he's setting for the younger players. He is so close to turning the corner and hitting the back of the net quite a bit more, and I'm confident that he'll continue to lead and step up to the challenges in front of him."