

Experienced Wildcats ready for another postseason run



Louisburg's Cade Gassman is one of 15 seniors of the Wildcat soccer team this season. Gassman is the team's top returning player as he was a first-team all-league and all-state performer.

The sting from last season's loss to Bishop Miege in the regional finals is still there for the Louisburg boys soccer team.

The Wildcats, who were the No. 1 seed in the state playoffs, fell to the eventual state champion in a tightly-played match and saw their season come to a close.

It is a loss many of the current players remember – mainly because many of them were a big part of the team.

Louisburg returns 15 seniors, nine of which saw varsity time at different points last season as the Wildcats went on to earn a share of the Frontier League title.

The Wildcats know experience will be key if they want to make a deep run in the postseason.

"They absolutely want that final run at a state title," Bovaird said. "They've had a taste of success two years ago, and they've swallowed the bitter pill of a disappointing defeat last year. We're looking at bringing home a fourth straight Frontier League title, as well as making a push for

that elusive championship. This senior class is special, and I believe they can aim high and hit the mark.”

The Wildcat senior class is a large one, and many of those players have played big roles in the team’s previous successes.

Bovaird, who is in his first year as the team’s head coach after he replaced Kyle Conley, feels grateful to have a wealth of experience to work with.

“Having 15 seniors is a rare treat, I imagine, and I feel a little spoiled,” Bovaird said. “I’m very fortunate to be able to step into this role and to have such great leadership from these guys. Many of them will be 4-year letterwinners, and there are a significant number who saw playing time two years ago when we finished third at state. They play club soccer year-round and are bringing in a lot of excellent experience.”



Louisburg’s Gavin York goes up for a header against the Bishop Miege last season. York is a team captain this year, along with Cade Gassman and Matthew Sword.

The head of that group is senior Cade Gassman, who enters this

season as a four-year varsity starter. Gassman was a first-team all-league and all-state selection as a junior as he finished with 11 goals and nine assists.

Gassman was selected as a team captain, along with fellow seniors Gavin York and Matthew Sword. York was a big piece of the varsity lineup last season at the forward spot and Sword was an honorable mention all-league selection on defense.

“Cade is a very charismatic leader, and one thing I love about him is how he inspires all his teammates – younger and older,” Bovaird said. “Sometimes I joke about how obnoxiously enthusiastic he can be, but the thing is – it works. He’s a ‘life-giver’ with his attitude and his daily approach to soccer. He loves the game, has incredible talent, and sets a high bar for leadership.

“He’s going to be joined by seniors Gavin York and Matthew Sword as captains this year. Between the three of them, not only do they have exceptional soccer skills, but they all three fulfill essential leadership roles in various ways. They all exude the qualities that a coach wants – accountability, work ethic, vocalization, encouragement, and more.”

Gassman and York will help lead the Wildcat attack, along with senior Colin McManigal, who was a second team all-league selection last year with 11 goals. Senior Jordan Brown will come off the bench from the forward spot as well.

Senior Toby Espina-Roca will move from defense to the center midfield position and will provide good experience at a key spot. On the outside, sophomores Emmett White and Colton Blue return after earning varsity minutes last season as freshmen. Seniors Andrew Brown and Brock Varns will also provide minutes on the outside.



Louisburg senior Toby Espina-Roca will move from his old defensive spot, to the midfield this season for the Wildcats.

Sword will lead the Wildcat defense from his center back spot, while senior Ayden Deterding will also provide defensive help in the middle. Seniors Caden French and Owen Barber will serve as the team's outside backs.

Seniors Jackson Olson, Kaven Bartlett, along with sophomores Jacob Brown and Dan Minster, will also see playing time on the defensive side.

A big change for the Wildcats will be in goal, as all-league and all-state goalie Mack Newell joined the football team for his senior season and has been replaced by senior Brecon Klugman.

Bovaird has liked what he has seen so far from his new keeper.

"Brecon has grown so much since joining the program last year – it's incredible," Bovaird said. "He's been working all summer to grow as a goalkeeper. Not only was he at nearly every summer practice, but he would regularly meet up with teammates to have them take shots on him in goal and he would stay after conditioning to get in more reps. He's showing his teammates how committed he is to being our goalie, and he's been very

coachable along the way.”

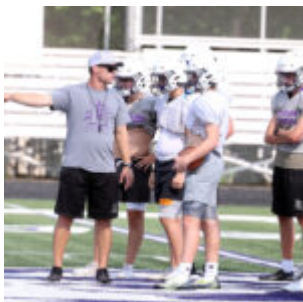
Helping Bovaird in his first year is former head coach Ben York, who is now serving as the team’s assistant. York was the head coach for 13 years before stepping away in 2015.

This is a group Bovaird is excited to lead in what the Wildcats hope is a special season.

“First of all, their drive and commitment are going to take them far,” Bovaird said. “They were getting together to practice the week after our season ended last year. They’ve been putting as much time in (if not more) on their own as what we’ve had for organized summer practices. These guys are willing to work hard, and they believe in the process, their teammates, and their coaches. We have experience and maturity on our side this year.”

Louisburg will open its season Tuesday when it travels to Pittsburg. Varsity is slated to begin at 6 p.m.

First week of practice breeds optimism for LHS fall programs



Louisburg head football coach Drew Harding speaks to his

players in the huddle during a practice this week. Harding is in his first year as head coach after serving as an assistant for several years.

It's only four days into practice, but all four Louisburg High School fall coaches have liked what they have seen so far out of their teams.

Numbers have been steady as each program has high expectations for the upcoming 2022 season.

There are also plenty of new faces this year as the Wildcats will feature two first year coaches in Bobby Bovaird (boys soccer) and Drew Harding (football). Leanna Willer (volleyball) is in her second season, while cross country coach John Reece is entering his 20th season.

On the gridiron, the Wildcat football team is returning several starters from last year's team that lost to St. James Academy in the first round of the playoffs.

Louisburg currently has 70 players out for football this season, including 15 seniors that will help lead the way.



Senior Mason Dobbins (left) and junior Declan Battle go up for the ball during practice this week.

“Practice has been going well so far,” Harding said. “We have a lot of competition for spots and competition brings out the best in everybody. We are very excited for the upcoming season. We have a large senior class and a junior class that has gained lots of experience from last year so we are excited to see what we can do.”

Having a new head coach can bring a learning curve, but the Wildcats worked hard over the summer. Along with their annual team camp, they had several scrimmages, 7-on-7 competitions and skill sessions.

“The team did a good job picking up on our installs on both sides of the ball so we were able to get a lot of really good reps that will hopefully help us in this upcoming season,” Harding said.



Seniors Ayden Deterding (left) and Cade Gassman go through a drill in practice this week.

As for the boys soccer team, the Wildcats will try and reach the state final four for the second time in three years after falling to Bishop Miege in the regional championship match a season ago.

Louisburg returns another experienced group as it enters the season with 15 seniors after earning the No. 1 seed in the playoffs a year ago. Numbers are once again high for the program as 40 players are out this year.

“Nine of them (seniors) saw some pretty solid varsity playing time last year, and five of them got playing time in the state tournament two years ago when we finished in 3rd place,” Bovaird said. “Practice has been running very smoothly. We’re getting a great look at the players during our tryouts this week, and we’re seeing lots of leaders emerge every day.”



First-year head coach Bobby Bovaird speaks to his team during the final day of tryouts.

The Wildcats also had a busy summer with camps and team workouts. It was a good way for Bovaird to get to know his players as a first-year head coach.

“Almost everyone was able to participate,” Bovaird said. “They were getting together for informal kick-arounds, they were either lifting weights with the school’s summer program or they were lifting together on their own, and I’m loving the buy-in that they’ve shown. We’re looking at the potential to have another outstanding season this year. Of course, conditioning is a factor and we’re working on improving that during practice.

“This year, we’ve got the motto ‘United,’ which comes from the fact that many soccer clubs use that word with their club names – Manchester United, New Mexico United, etc. I chose that motto because we have kids with all sorts of experience, from those who play year-round club soccer to kids who only play in the fall. They’ve grown up playing all over the place, whether it’s a club up in the city, Louisburg Rec, or

somewhere in another district or community. But we're here right now, and we have to come together to be united as a soccer family if we want to achieve our goals. This group of seniors has had a taste of state success, and they've had a taste of falling short of the team's goals. I think they have the hunger to buy into what the coaching staff is striving to provide for them and they are willing to make a commitment to get to the top this year."



The Louisburg girls cross country team is currently ranked in the preseason top 5 in Class 4A by Kansas MileSplit.

As for cross country, Reece has liked what he has seen from his runners so far after a successful season a year ago in which both teams qualified for state.

He currently has 25 runners out this season, while 18 are out on the middle school level. The girls team is already being thought of as one of the top squads in the state as they are ranked in the top five in Class 4A by Kansas MileSplit.



The Louisburg boys cross country team will look to earn another trip to the state meet this season.

"We are down a little in numbers but return many state qualifiers," Reece said. "Practices are going well and we are enjoying this stint of cooler weather. We are again focusing on the end of the season and are setting a goal to return both teams to state again. It is going to be an exciting year."

Volleyball also has strong numbers out as they had 36 athletes out for tryouts for the first three days and have settled at 30 for the rest of the season between the three levels.



Coach Leanna Willer speaks to her team at practice Thursday following a 3-day tryout.

Despite losing four starters from last season's team that fell one game short of reaching the state tournament, Willer is excited to see what this group can do.

"We've had a great first few days and are seeing really awesome things from our girls that have us excited about what we'll be able to do at all three levels this year," Willer said. "We see a lot of potential at all ages and we are hungry for the opportunities to keep improving and make some noise in the league."

The squad had a busy summer with its team camp in early June, followed by summer league action for two months and the varsity traveled to the University of Nebraska team camp in July. Add in the normal open gyms and weight sessions, Willer is pleased with how her players have improved.



Senior Claire Brown passes the ball during a drill Thursday.

“This was a very busy summer of all sorts of crazy twists and turns with the high school being under construction and schedules constantly changing,” Willer said. “Those that were able to dedicate time and effort consistently throughout the summer improved, not only in skill, but also in confidence. The coaches and athletes were typically here working four days a week with weights, conditioning, and open gyms.

“We love having these summer opportunities to get to know our team better and to start working on our team chemistry as much as possible. As a whole, we have grown a lot over the past couple months and we are looking forward to seeing what we can accomplish here in the next couple.”

Bovaird excited to take over Wildcat boys soccer program



Bobby Bovaird was hired as the Louisburg High School head boys soccer coach last month after resignation of former coach Kyle Conley, who left after seven seasons. Bovaird spent the last two season as the Wildcat assistant coach.

When Bobby Bovaird signed on as the Louisburg High School assistant boys soccer coach a couple years ago, it was a reunion of sorts.

Bovaird, who is currently the school's wrestling coach, had just been focusing on that sport and had gotten away from a sport he loved growing up.

"Soccer has been a part of my life since I was in elementary school," Bovaird said. "I'd gotten away from it when I started teaching and taking on head wrestling duties, but I loving being a part of the sport again.

"My son has been getting more and more into soccer the last few years, and I was his rec coach for a long time. When he transitioned to competitive soccer a few years ago, I found myself watching his club coaches quite a bit and looking at how the game has changed, as well as what drills they use."

He had the opportunity to get back into the soccer world and has enjoyed it ever since. With a chance to work under former coach Kyle Conley for the last two years, now he is looking forward to the next step.

Bovaird was hired as the school's new head coach after Conley resigned his position back in May. It is a challenge he is looking forward to taking on as he is just the third head coach in program history.

"I'm really excited," Bovaird said. "The last two years, I got a chance to closely observe one of the best coaches in the state first-hand, and I've become really familiar with how Coach Conley approached his vision for the program. I've also gotten to know the players pretty well.

"We're going to be using quite a few of the familiar drills that we've done in the past, and as we begin the season with those drills, we'll also be implementing new drills to help the team along the way."

Spending time as the team's assistant coach allowed Bovaird to get know the players as the Wildcats try for their second state final four in three years.

Conley spent seven years as the Wildcat head coach and took Louisburg to two state final fours and recorded the program's best finish in 2020. He also guided the Wildcats to the No. 1 seed in the state playoffs last season, before falling to defending state champion Bishop Miege in the regional championship.

Although there won't be wholesale changes to how the program is run, Bovaird said the players will see a few subtle changes along the way.

"Coach Conley left some big shoes to fill, and one of the major changes the team can expect is that I will be bringing a different approach to the game. I love the standard drill series that Coach Conley used, and I firmly believe that repetition of some of these basics is the key to making LHS soccer competitive, not only in the Frontier League, but also in Kansas 4A.

"We're looking at adjusting our formation this season as well. I grew up playing a 4-3-3 formation, and while the 4-3-3 is still in use, it's evolved from what I played back in the day. But I view myself as a student with a focus on continuous learning and improvement, so I have been studying up on the modern game."

Although wrestling and soccer are completely different sports, Bovaird does see a common theme he can use to help his team improve and that is all about having the right mindset.

"For the longest time, there wasn't a lot of overlap between soccer players and wrestlers, but in the last two years we've seen more and more athletes doing both sports," Bovaird said. "I take a holistic approach to coaching – the total person – so that athletes who graduate from programs I coach are better prepared for life beyond the wrestling mat or the soccer field. I've come to highly value the mindset training that has enabled quite a bit of our wrestling success, and I hope to bring that mindset focus to the soccer team as well."

"This summer during our practices, the guys might have noticed that I like to talk through the drills – explaining some fundamentals, explaining why I coach the way I coach, etc. I'm setting the stage for the upcoming season so that the learning curve is over and we can get right to work. As a wrestling coach over the years, I've often found that some of my best teaching moments have been on the mat during practice while I'm working one-on-one with the athletes. Now that I'm taking on the head soccer coach position, I'm finding that I can bring about some more teaching moments while playing in a scrimmage situation with the team."

As for the Louisburg team, the Wildcats are hoping for a big 2022 season. The Wildcats return several starters from a season ago and could feature a senior class that reaches close to 15 by the time tryouts start next month.

“This senior class especially has a ton of talent,” Bovaird said. “The week after our season ended last year, they were already organizing kick-around sessions. I think they’re focused on trying to win state, and they’re putting in the work on their own.

“We’ve had our official summer practices, but they are putting in more time on the field than that. They’re in the weight room, they’re running on their own, and their getting together to play. This season, we’re expecting to compete for another league title, a regional title, and a shot at the Kansas 4A crown.”

Conley’s family atmosphere lifted Wildcat soccer to new heights



Louisburg coach Kyle Conley hugs goalie Sierra Hahn following the team’s fourth place state finish in 2021. Conley stepped down after seven seasons with the Wildcats.

One hundred and sixty wins.

Nine regional championships.

Six state final four appearances.

Two state runner-up finishes.

Those are just some of the many accomplishments the Louisburg High School soccer programs had in the seven years under head coach Kyle Conley.

With all that success, many awards followed and the Wildcats became one of the top teams in Class 4-1A during that seven-year stretch.

In less than a decade, Conley accumulated a resume worthy enough to put him in the LHS Hall of Fame and is considered one of the top coaches in the state.

However, having that much notoriety brings more opportunities and Conley, despite it being a tough decision, has taken on a new challenge as he was recently hired to coach the Blue Valley West soccer programs.

It was one of the harder choices he's ever had to make.



Kyle Conley watches from the bench as his girls team advanced to the state final four in 2021.

“It is bittersweet,” Conley said. “Everything we have established, accomplished and the culture we have at Louisburg has been fantastic. There was just a great teaching and coaching opportunity that came along and it was hard to pass up.”

His decision left a lot his current and former players either sad or shocked – a lot of them probably both.

However, it didn’t make them appreciate him any less and it had nothing to do with the stats listed above. It is about more than just soccer.

It is about life.

It is about family.

Year One

It was a wild first season for Conley as he was hired to start

and lead the girls program in 2016 and was named as the boys head coach later that year.

No one could have imagine the success that followed.

In the girls' first ever season, Conley led the Wildcats to a 14-4-1 record, a regional championship and a spot in the state quarterfinals.

As if that wasn't enough, he guided the boys to their best finish in school history (at the time) as the Wildcats made their first state final four and took fourth.

"For the girls, we just didn't want to suck for three years so they would cancel the program," Conley said. "The community raised \$38,000 for the first four years. We had about 43 girls come out that were interested before the season and then it went down to like 24. We were trying to have a JV and a varsity and hope we would hold on.

"Then I took over the boys job in the summer and we were doing things a little differently and having the boys get used to our expectations and how we were going to do things. It took the boys six games or so for them to truly buy in and then we just went on a tear. They had a really good year. I think we beat Tonganoxie 2-1 in overtime and the boys' confidence really seemed to grow. We made the state final four and it was pretty exciting. It was wild, actually."



Kyle Conley huddles his team up prior to the program's first-ever game in 2016.

Conley put pressure on himself, especially on the girls side, to get a program out of its infancy and grow it into something Louisburg could look on with pride.

The community had just raised more than \$30,000 to fund the program for three years and Conley wanted to show that their hard work wasn't for nothing.

As it turned out, he had nothing to worry about.

Conley guided the Wildcat girls to four straight state final fours, including two state championship appearances in the program's first five years of existence.

The program went from an infant to being a full-grown adult in a matter of no time.

"It was an incredible situation," Conley said. "The kids did really well. The parents bought in, the school bought in and the community bought in and we just took off. It set the standard. The kids just wanted to keep going back and they made that their goal every year. It has been a heck of a run."



Kyle Conley coached the girls program to four state final fours and two state runner-up finishes.

One of the program's first players, Bailey Belcher, saw that Conley was going to have success even before the Wildcats took the field for that first time in 2016.

Belcher, who went on to play for Missouri Southern after high school, saw a person that cared about more than wins and losses.

"Conley has made a huge impact on the soccer programs," Belcher said. "I don't think it would have ever been where it's at, or what it got to, if he wouldn't have started coaching for Louisburg. He knew every player was different and developing them wasn't always the same process. He took the time to get to know his players and learn what they needed to be coached.

"Of course, there were certain things, like fitness, that were done his way, and for good reason. As hard as it was, we got better and it always showed. He gave everyone a chance to be at the best position they could be in. He is the only coach I've ever had that put as much time and effort into each individual player the way that he did."

Raistlin Brewer, who played under coach Ben York before Conley took over the boys program, noticed a change right away.



Kyle Conley gives instructions Brock Bila and Landon Johnson before entering the game.

“One of Conley’s first approaches for us was being in shape, so that meant tons and tons of running, even if it was triple digits outside,” Brewer said. “It wasn’t my favorite thing, but we definitely were in better shape than most teams. I loved having Ben as a coach, but having Conley at the school made things a lot easier. If we ever needed to talk to him about something, he was just down the hall. He would definitely get a little bit animated, but he just wanted us to be our best and to see us succeed.”

Success followed the Wildcat programs for the next six seasons as the boys won three more regional titles and had another state final four appearance in 2020, when the Wildcats finished third overall.

All that success, was due to the work the players – and Conley – put into the program.



The Louisburg boys celebrated their 2016 state quarterfinal win with a bucket dump on head coach Kyle Conley.

"First and foremost he is a great person who cares about every single one of his players," said Braden Yows, a senior on the 2021 team. "One of the big things that differentiates him is the enthusiasm and passion he brings to the program everyday. During his time here we saw both the boys and girls programs grow in the number of players and success. He expected discipline and great effort in everything we did on and off the field."

As much as the Wildcats' accomplishments were formed during the season, Conley never slowed down in the offseason

Recruiting The Halls

Despite the accolades, Louisburg is not loaded with tons of soccer talent.

So, because of that, Conley put on his salesman's hat and hit the hallways – trying to get as many kids out for soccer as he could.

“To be fair, people are always saying we have all these club kids and we don’t,” Conley said. “We have like five or six that play year-round, maybe a little more depending on the year. You buy into a kid, find what they are good at, find what makes them tick and then you just push that kid. Then all of a sudden you have an Erin Lemke.”

Lemke, a freshman in 2017, had plans on competing in track. She had just finished basketball and soccer really never entered her mind.

“Before high school I had only played maybe two seasons of soccer before,” Lemke said. “I planned on running track when I was asked by (Michael) Pickman my freshman year if I would play. Then Conley started asking me in the halls if I would play and to get my friends from the volleyball and basketball team to play. In the end, myself and Carson Buffington were at soccer tryouts that spring.”

Both Lemke and Buffington turned out to be key figures for the Wildcat program.

Buffington went on to be an all-league and all-state goalie, while Lemke had one of the more memorable goals in program history – as a freshman.

Lemke started the 2017 season at the junior varsity level, and due to injuries, moved up and got some varsity time. She saw more and more minutes as the season went along, and in the state quarterfinal game against Piper, scored the golden goal to send the Wildcats to their first state final four.



Erin Lemke is all smiles after she realized she scored the game-winning goal in the state quarterfinals in 2017 against Piper.

"I have used her as an example for a long time," Conley said. "I told other players that they can be like her and not to be nervous. It is just fun to watch kids like that take off and gain confidence in themselves on the field and in life."

One small conversation in the hallway changed Lemke's time in high school for the better.

"Playing for coach Conley created some of my favorite memories at Louisburg High School," Lemke said. "Being on the soccer team built my confidence as a high schooler that has carried into college."

"Conley helped us girls who had never played by teaching the fundamentals of soccer, literally how to kick a ball and who to pass to. Building on each skill and creating relationships with each of the girls really bonded our team."

Lemke's story is not an outlier as Conley has brought on a lot

of first-time soccer players and has had similar successes. It has even trickled down to the younger kids.



Kyle Conley gets dumped with water after one of the girls' state quarterfinal wins.

"We hit the hallways hard and recruited kids to come out and play," Conley said. "We found athletic kids and try to find those who wanted to come out and play soccer. The kids were put off or scared because they thought they had to just run a lot. It wasn't just running, and once we got a kid to practice, we could get them to play.

"When you have kids out there having fun and winning games, it just takes off. I think the youth camps we did helped tremendously. Diana Moore (Louisburg rec director) said that every year they are getting more and more kids play soccer. We just did a good job pushing information out there to kids and their families through social media or whatever."



Head coach Kyle Conley hugs Mackenzie Scholtz following her golden goal in 2018 that sent the Wildcats to their second straight final four.

Garrett Rolofson was another one of those stories as he played his final two years of high school under Conley during the 2019 and 2020 seasons.

He turned into an all-league and all-state goalie with the help of assistant coach Michael Pickman, who worked with the keepers. His time with Conley and the program changed his life for the better.

“Personally, playing for Coach Conley shaped me into the student athlete I was and person I am today,” Rolofson said. “I learned a lot in the two years I played for him. He taught me how to play soccer, understand the game and was very inviting for someone that had never played soccer before. Conley was encouraging when I was learning and encouraging when teaching other newcomers instead of just cutting someone from the team. He truly cared about each individual player no matter the skill or athletic abilities.

“Playing for Conley not only taught me a lot about soccer and athletics but he changed the person I was before playing soccer. My motivation to get better and succeed in sports went up as well as my overall confidence. Outside of sports Conley taught me how to be a leader, how to set an example for others and how to be a good person.”

Rolofson built a relationship with his coach that many other players did as well – one that became even more important after he graduated.

FAMILY

“1...2...3...Family”

That was the breakdown of every huddle – girls and boys – throughout Conley’s seven seasons and it was more than a simple gimmick. It was a mindset.

Soccer became Rolofson’s second family and they were there for him when he needed them the most.

Shortly after he graduated, his mother, Gloria, was diagnosed with cancer. It was a scary time for the Rolofson’s and for Garrett.

During his time as coach, Conley put together a cancer awareness game every season in hopes of raising money for a local family battling the terrible disease.

Little did Garrett know his family would be the ones touched by it all.

So, in the fall of 2020, Garrett found himself back at the field he played on, but this time as a spectator for the annual cancer awareness game as people came out to donate to the family in need – his family.

“My mom was battling breast cancer at the time and I will

never forget watching Conley walk across the soccer field and through the stands directly to me and giving me a big hug,” Garrett said. “Not only did the hug make me cry, but seeing his tears made me cry and really shows how good of a person Coach Conley is and how big of an impact he can have on someone’s life.”



Kyle Conley celebrates with his boys as they won the regional title back in 2017.

Gloria is currently in full remission from her breast cancer diagnosis, and according to Garrett, “She is finally getting back to feeling normal again.”

The Rolofson’s were just one of several families touched by the kindness of the Louisburg soccer family and Conley made it a point to make sure all of his players – current and former – were looked after.

“Conley was the kind of coach that was always there for any of us, no matter what it was,” Belcher said. “He constantly pushed all of us to strive for more and reach our greatest potential in literally everything.

“To me, he and his family were like family to me, even after I graduated. He has always made me want to do more and has shown

me there is always someone in my corner that believes in me, and no matter what it is, he has supported me. He has always been someone I can talk to when I need someone, with the most serious of things or just catching up. He is someone that I will always look up to.”

It was the family atmosphere that brought his players together and a big reason for all of the Wildcats’ success.

“It was an amazing environment to play for Coach Conley,” said Trinity Moore, a 2020 graduate. “The impact he had on my life and for soccer was amazing. He made me more confident and put me where I was needed and it helped impact my confidence and strive to help my teammates.”



The boys soccer team honored coach Kyle Conley following his 100th victory.

Treston Carlson, a 2021 graduate, believed Conley was a unique coach and got the best out of all of his players.

“The impact he had on his players lives and on our program was unmatched,” Carlson said. “The way he coached was different than any coach I’ve been around. He wanted us to realize it took hard work to get better and that nothing is just handed to us. He always made it clear that we had to outwork the other team. The way he affected who we were helped me have a

new mindset to the game.”

It is that family aspect that Conley will miss the most.

“The thing I will remember most is the relationships, whether it is with the kids, the parents or community members,” Conley said. “Having kids invite me to their wedding, or just texting me out of the blue to check in and see how things are going. Those are what mean the most to me in the long run. I am with these kids so much that they are almost like they are my own.”

Fond Farewell

As the final seconds ticked away, Conley realized his time at Louisburg was coming to a close.

The Louisburg girls lost to Topeka-Hayden in the regional championship game – a team they had beaten twice previously in the state semifinals and both in dramatic fashion.

It was Hayden’s turn this go-round and it was time for Conley to let go of a program that grew up before his very eyes.

Despite all the successes, Conley only had one regret with his time at Louisburg.



Kyle Conley gets a hug from Braden Yows following the team's regional championship loss to Bishop Miege in 2021.

"Not beating Bishop Miege," Conley said with a smirk on his face.

Miege ended the Wildcats' season, or handed them a loss in the state semifinals, on seven different occasions – including five on the boys side.

As tough as those losses were, Conley has nothing but great memories of his time as the Wildcat leader.

"At the end of the day, when I reflect on everything, looking back on this ride, I just want people to know that me, my coaches and my family went all in for these programs," Conley said. "I wouldn't do anything different on how we started a program, or how we carried another one on.

"I have zero regrets on how we did it and I think we gave everything we had, and in turn that is when the parents gave everything they had to us. The kids gave everything they had and we fed off each other. We built a fantastic culture and

did things the right way. We talked about improving kids, not just on the field, but in life as well. We wanted to make them better people.”



Kyle Conley embraces his wife, Kelli, following his final game on the Wildcat sideline last month.

Conley seemed to do just that as the seven former players interviewed for this story, echoed each other’s statements.

He changed their life for the better.

“The impact Conley has had in our lives goes deeper than soccer,” Carlson said. “He was a great coach that helped me get a better understanding of soccer, but he also taught us good life lessons to take with us past soccer. He always told us the saying ‘hard work will beat talent when talent doesn’t want to work’ and I think that saying goes way past just the game.”

Rolofson, who had played baseball for most of his life, grew to love soccer thanks to one person.

“I think it’s hard not to say he built an amazing program at Louisburg,” Rolofson said. “I think a testament to him as a

person and coach is his ability to not only attract people that had never played soccer before, but his ability to coach them to enjoy and love the game as it is with all of their teammates.

“What I think makes Conley unique isn’t his winning nature or motivational speeches, I think it’s the fact that he, as a coach, enables his players to enjoy and love the game of soccer. You always hear about athletes that had their dreams and love for their sports crushed by bad coaches at school and club, but you never hear about a coach that can make student athletes fall in love with a game they’ve never played before.”



Now it is time to move on to a new school, with new players and different expectations. However, Conley knows Louisburg soccer has a bright future ahead of itself.

“For me, I know it is a great opportunity,” Conley said. “At the same time, I am asking kids to be loyal to me and buy in and be a part of our family. Part of me feels that I am letting people down, letting the kids down, but at the same time I feel both programs are in a really good place. The girls team was pretty good this year, but they can potentially

be really, really good next season.

“The boys program is absolutely loaded right now. We graduated a few seniors, but there are a lot of boys ready to roll. There are a lot seniors that are ready to lead that program. I am not bailing in a situation where there is talent no longer there. I think I left both programs completely stocked and ready to roll and that makes me feel better knowing that I did the job I wanted to do.”

Bobby Bovaird (boys) and Ben York (girls) will now pick up where Conley left off as they prepare to guide the Wildcats to bigger and better things. Now is a chance for him to follow from afar.

“We will still be fans,” Conley said. “We are still going to live in Louisburg and it will be easy for me to walk up, put up my lawn chair and watch some games when I’m not coaching. We are giving all our social media stuff to Ben and Bobby so that they can continue to grow the programs and we can get ourselves out of it. That way we can follow how the teams are doing and we can become a fan too. We want to support the kids and the program.”

Just like any family member would.

2022 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year Nominees



For the past six years, Louisburg Sports Zone has given out Athlete of the Week awards during each of the three sports seasons. I do it to recognize special athletic achievements and to highlight the athletes.

For the fifth 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!



Aiden Barker, Senior, Football and Wrestling

Aiden Barker played big roles on both the Louisburg football and wrestling teams this past season. Barker was a starting lineman for the Wildcat football program and wrestled at 195 pounds for the wrestling team.

Barker was a key fixture on both sides of the ball for the Wildcat football team, but his biggest impact came on the defensive side. He was a first team All-Frontier League selection on the defensive line, where he finished with 58 tackles on the season to go along with 11 tackles for a loss and 5.5 sacks.

On the wrestling mat, Barker finished his season with a 31-8

record and earned a fifth place medal at the Class 4A state tournament in Salina. He was named the Wildcats' wrestler of the year and is a two-time first team KWCA Academic all-state winner. He finished with titles at the December Duals, Tonganoxie and Louisburg Invitationals. He finished his career with a program record of career reversals with 74. He will continue his athletic and academic career as a member of the MidAmerica Nazarene University football program this fall.



Brandon Doles, Senior, Football, Wrestling and Baseball

Brandon was a starter on three Wildcat programs during the 2021-22 school year. Doles was the starting linebacker on the football team, he was a varsity captain and 182-pound wrestler

on the wrestling team and played the outfield and pitched for the Louisburg baseball program.

In football, Doles was a key part of the Wildcat defense as he earned first team all-league honors from the linebacker spot. He finished the season with 90 tackles and averaged 11 stops per contest. He also forced two fumbles and had 11 tackles for a loss during the Wildcats' 4-5 season.

Injuries hampered most of Doles' wrestling season, but he was able to make a comeback late in the season and made his way to his third state tournament. At 182 pounds, Doles was win one short of a medal and finished the year with a 9-5 record. Doles ended his career as a two-time team captain and first team KWCA Academic All-State recipient.

On the baseball diamond, Doles was one of the Wildcats' top hitters during the 2022 season that saw them end with an 8-14 record and a spot in the regional championship game. Doles, who started in left field, finished with a .338 average and a .969 OPS. He also had 24 hits, seven doubles and two home runs to go along with 17 RBIs and 22 runs scored. Doles also earned second team All-Frontier League honors.



Kolby Kattau, Senior, Football and Baseball

Kolby was a senior starter for both the Louisburg football and baseball teams this past season. Kattau was the starting first baseman and pitcher for the baseball program that reached the regional championship. He was a two-way starter on the football team at running back and safety.

On the baseball diamond, Kattau thrived for the 2022 season as he was named as a first-team All-Frontier and all-state selection for his play at first base. Kattau had a team-high .471 average in 82 plate appearances. He had an OPS of 1.294 and had 33 hits on the season with seven doubles, five triples and a home run. He also scored 24 runs and had 13 RBIs from the leadoff spot. He started five games for the Wildcats and

earned three wins with 25 strikeouts. Kattau was also selected to participate in the KABC all-star game.

On the football field, Kattau was one of the team's starting running backs and recorded two touchdowns with more than 200 yards of total offense. He also started at safety for much of the season as well, and finished with 27 tackles and three deflections.



Tom Koontz, Senior, Football and Track and Field

Tom was a starting defensive back for the Wildcat football team that finished with a 4-5 record, along with being a hurdler and sprinter on the Louisburg track team.

On the track, Koontz helped the Wildcats to a third place team finish at the Class 4A state meet as he earned a pair of state titles in the hurdles and two more medals on relays. Koontz won the 300-meter hurdles with a school record time of 38.98 seconds and also won the state title in the 110 hurdles for the second straight year in 14.61 seconds.

He also helped the 4×400 relay to a fourth place state finish and the 4×100 relay to a sixth place medal. Koontz was also a part of the 4×100 team that broke the school record earlier in the year. He ends his Wildcat career as a 3-time state champion in the hurdles and garnered eight state medals. He was also a member of the 2021 state championship team.

Koontz also made his presence known on the football field as he was a starting cornerback for the Wildcats. He finished the year with 46 tackles, four deflections and a forced fumble.



Maverick Rockers, Senior, Basketball and Baseball

Maverick played key roles for the Wildcat basketball and baseball teams this season. Rockers was the starting point guard in basketball and made an impact on the baseball team as the starting shortstop.

On the baseball diamond, Rockers helped the Wildcats to their second straight regional championship game and had a big year at the plate. Rockers finished with a .406 batting average with a 1.111 OPS. He recorded 28 hits, seven doubles and two home runs to go along with 22 runs scored and 16 RBIs. He also had just six errors from his shortstop position. Following the season, he was named as a second team All-Frontier League player.

Rockers also had a big year on the basketball court as the team's starting point guard. He averaged 11 points a game to go along with three rebounds, two assists and 1.5 steals a game.



Michael Seuferling, Senior, Soccer and Basketball

Michael had big seasons for the Louisburg soccer and basketball teams in 2021-22. Seuferling was a starting defender for the Wildcat soccer team that made it to the regional championship game and was a starting guard for the Wildcat basketball program.

On the soccer field, Seuferling was one of the best outside backs in the Frontier League and was a first team all-league performer for Louisburg. He was also a first-team all-state player as he helped the Wildcats to a No. 1 seed in the Class 4-1A state playoffs.

Seuferling was also one of the top basketball players in the

Frontier League as earned honorable mention honors after leading the Wildcats in scoring. He averaged 13.3 points per contest to go along with 3.4 rebounds and 2.5 assists per game.



Braden Yows, Senior, Soccer

Braden had a big season for the Louisburg boys soccer team as he helped lead the Wildcats to the No. 1 seed in the Class 4-1A state playoffs and a spot in the regional championship game.

Yows was named as a first-team All-Frontier League and all-state player from his midfield spot and was named team captain. He ended his season with a 17 goals and 11 assists. He will continue his soccer career this fall at the University

of Missouri-Kansas City.

Conley resigns as head soccer coach, takes job at Blue Valley West



Louisburg head boys and girls soccer coach Kyle Conley is stepping down from both programs after seven years. He has led the programs to a combined six state final four appearances.

Louisburg High School head boys and girls soccer coach Kyle Conley is stepping 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.”

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.”

Conley was named the Class 4-1A Coach of the Year on three different occasions and also earned the Girls Midwest Coach of the Year by the United Soccer Coaches.

Now, Conley will move onto a Blue Valley West program that has won several state championships since its inception in 2001. The move was more than just about soccer, however.

“Blue Valley West provided a teaching atmosphere that is challenging and will push me to be a better educator,” he said. “The opportunity to coach such quality soccer programs, that are rich in history, is just icing on the cake.”

Top 10 Louisburg Sports Stories for 2021



It was a successful, and eventful, 2021 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 several programs brought back state hardware.

Below are the top stories from 2021, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the explanation 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 2022 will bring. Thank you to everyone for their support and can't wait for it all to begin again.



10. Louisburg golf team qualifies for state

INDEPENDENCE – For the second time in as many seasons, the Louisburg boys golf team qualified for the state tournament.

Except this time, the Wildcat team is made up of a completely new roster.

The Louisburg group of Johnny Eberhart, A.J. Arriola, Johnny Thompson, Sam Wheeler, Dacey Wieland and Jackson Olson shot a 392 to finish third at the Class 4A regional meet at Independence Country Club.

The Wildcats were just three strokes behind runner-up Field Kindley. Independence won the regional title with a 361.

Louisburg last went to state in 2019, but the 2020 season was canceled due to COVID-19.

Eberhart led Louisburg with an 87 and finished fourth overall and was the lone Wildcat to make the cut for the second day.



9. Compliment steps back from volleyball program after 15 seasons.

When Jessica Compliment walked off the floor following her team's semifinal sub-state loss to Bishop Miege back in October of 2020, the only thought on her mind was how that match was more like a state championship battle.s

It wasn't your normal match as the two perennial state contenders had to square off so early in the postseason. She was proud of her team and was looking forward to another season of helping Louisburg volleyball get to another state tournament.

Little did she know, it would be the last time she would find herself on the Lady Cat sideline.

In late January, Compliment submitted her resignation as head volleyball coach as she will be stepping away to spend more time with her growing family.

Compliment certainly left her mark on the Louisburg volleyball program as she finished her 15th season back in October and has an impressive resume to show for it.

In the decade-and-a-half as the Lady Cat coach, Compliment guided Louisburg to eight state tournament appearances and placed in the top four of seven of them.

She also finished nine wins shy of 400 as she posted a record of 391-226 and helped Louisburg to three state championship matches.

Shortly after, the district hired assistant coach Leanna Willer to take over the program.



8. Wildcat boys soccer wins Frontier League title, advances to regional title

It had the drama of a state championship match, but instead the No. 1 and 3 ranked teams in the state were playing for the Class 4-1A regional championship title.

Louisburg hosted Bishop Miege in hopes ending the Stags' string of consecutive state championships.

Instead, the Wildcats once again saw their season come to a close after a 2-0 loss to the Stags at Wildcat Stadium and ended their season with a 12-5-1 record.

The loss was heartbreaking defeat for the Wildcats, who had

their sights set on another state final four – and possibly – a state title. To make matters worse, it was to a Miego team that has handed Louisburg a loss in five of the last six postseasons.

Earlier in the season, the Wildcats were crowned as co-champions of the Frontier League with Spring Hill.

132	WEIGHT	220
35	WINS	35
1	LOSSES	0
17	PINS	26
3	4A RANKING	2

STATE BOUND

CADE
HOLTZEN

LOUISBURG WESTING

LOUISBURG WESTING

ALEC
YOUNGGREN

LOUISBURG
SPORTS
ZONE

7. Wildcat wrestling medals two

SALINA – Cade Holtzen and Alec Younggren didn't get to leave Salina with what they were hoping to earn.

Only a select few get to leave with the title of "state champion," and both Louisburg seniors were close to reaching their goal. Despite that, both wrestlers helped the Wildcat team to their best state finish in nearly 11 years.

Younggren reached the championship match, only to finish second at 220 pounds, while Holtzen rallied back to medal third at 132 during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships at the Tony's Pizza Events Center. The two wrestlers combined to score 30 points, which put them 14th in the team standings.

Louisburg hadn't finished that high since 2010, when Austin Hood won his first of three state titles and his brother Bryce, took second. The Wildcats were 10th that year.



6. Louisburg cross country qualifies both teams for state, medals four.

WAMEGO – It wasn't the finish Louisburg wanted following the Class 4A state cross country meet, but the Wildcats left with more than their fair share of hardware.

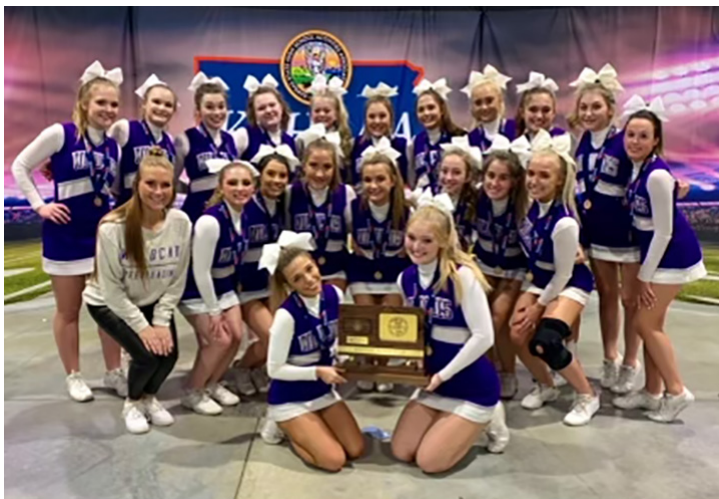
Louisburg was awarded four state medals following the meet at

Wamego Country Club, including three on the girls side for the second straight season.

The Lady Cats had hoped to earn a team plaque for the second year in a row, but took fifth overall with 144 points. Eudora won the girls championship with 56, Baldwin was second with 64 and Winfield was third with 93.

Sophomore Emma Vohs led the charge for Louisburg as she finished sixth overall. Sophomore Maddy Rhamy and senior Reese Johnson also medaled for the Lady Cats.

In his first year with the boys program, senior Jaden Vohs had a strong final run for the Wildcats as he medaled 12th overall.



5. Louisburg cheer finishes runner-up at state competition

TOPEKA – The Louisburg High cheer program knows a thing or two about being one of the last teams left standing at the Game Day Showcase.

Louisburg, which won a state title in 2019 and took third in 2020, found itself one of the two teams left standing.

When the final results were announced in November, the judges

awarded the Wildcat cheer squad the state runner-up plaque. Paola won the state title, while Baldwin made it a Frontier League sweep as it took third.



4. Wildcat girls take fourth at state soccer

WICHITA – The Louisburg girls soccer team may have left the Class 4-1A Kansas State Girls Soccer Championships with a pair of losses, but the Wildcats took a lot of pride in what they accomplished.

For the fourth straight season, Louisburg advanced to the state final four and the Wildcats finished fourth in the state – a far cry where many people thought they would end up. The Wildcats lost a pair of 2-1 matches to Mulvane and then to McPherson in the third-place match at the Stryker Sports

Complex in Wichita.

Louisburg, which lost 12 seniors from a season that didn't happen due to COVID, returned just three varsity players. Despite all that, they ended up being one of the top teams in the state.



3. Louisburg girls basketball snaps 47-year state drought, takes third at state

SALINA – The tears were abundant following Louisburg's loss to McPherson in the Class 4A state semifinal game.

The Lady Cats saw their season come to an end after their 58-46 loss to the Bullpups in Salina, but as hard as the finality of it was to take, they know what is the bigger

picture.

Before the game even started, Louisburg already wrapped up its best finish in program history and became the first Lady Cat team to place at state as it finished third.

A season that finished with a 19-5 record and a third place state trophy, is one that will always be remembered in Louisburg history.

“It means the world to me to finish third at state,” senior Megan Foote said. “Obviously it wasn’t how we wanted to finish, but that’s okay. I’m still beyond proud of this group and the accomplishments we have made. We are the best girls basketball team in Louisburg history. I’d say to be a part of that, is pretty awesome. I’m honored.”

For the last three quarters of the game, Louisburg actually outscored McPherson 43-37, but it was the first quarter that the Lady Cats weren’t able to overcome.

McPherson scored the first 15 points of the first quarter and took a 21-3 lead going into the second period.



2. Wildcat basketball advances to first-ever state title game, finish runner-up

SALINA – The result of the state championship game is not what the Louisburg boys basketball team will focus on several years from now.

The fact that the 2020-21 Wildcats recorded the best finish in school history, will be more than enough for them to fondly reminisce about.

Louisburg, which played in its first-ever state championship game in Salina, fell to state power Bishop Miege, 94-40. As disappointing as the result was, many of the Wildcats were looking bigger picture.

“We will forever live in history with this senior class and with this team,” senior Weston Guetterman said. “Until someone

wins it at least, we are going to be the bar that everyone looks to. It is a proud moment for all of us.”

In the state semifinal, the Wildcats got a revenge victory with a come-from-behind 58-55 win over Augusta to advance to the state title game.



1. Wildcat track wins second state championship; Wright wins three state titles.

WICHITA – On the 10th anniversary of the Louisburg boys’ first state track championship, this year’s team wanted to do something to commemorate the historic event.

The Wildcats decided they wanted to win one of their own.

Louisburg edged out Andale for the state championship Friday during the Class 4A Kansas Track and Field Championships at Cessna Stadium in Wichita.

It is just the second track championship for Louisburg and just the fourth team state championship in school history.

The first one was a golf title in 1977, and then football won its first state title in 2010. The track team followed with its first later that school year in 2011 and the Louisburg cheer squad won a state title in 2019.

“There are no words to describe how incredibly proud I was of the entire team,” Louisburg coach Andy Wright said. “It was a total team effort. It was a moment I will never forget as a coach, and how exciting that it came down to the final race. Everyone gave it their all, and I just couldn’t happier as a coach to see all of that hard work pay off for them with the greatest reward.”

Tom Koontz led the Wildcats with four state medals, including a state championship in the 110-meter hurdles.



On the girls side, Delaney Wright made some history of her own.

Wright was the favorite to win state titles in her three events at the Class 4A State Track and Field Championships.

She didn't disappoint.

Wright not only won three state championships, but she won them in convincing fashion, breaking two school records in the process. The Louisburg junior won the long jump, 400-meter dash and the 200-meter dash on her way to an historic day in Wichita.

"My experience at state track this year was amazing," Wright said. "The people competing there were super nice and my teammates made it more fun. It meant a lot to pull off winning three state titles."

Wright became the first female Wildcat athlete to win three state titles in the same year as she helped the Lady Cats to a fifth place finish in the team standings – also the highest finish for Louisburg girls track and field.

“I can’t say enough how awesome of a competitor Delaney is,” Louisburg girls coach John Reece said. “I know she went to state with one thing on her mind – win. She did just that and truly performed to her best. Winning three different events is an incredible feat.”

Six Wildcats named to all-state soccer team



After a season that ended with a Frontier League championship and a spot in the regional championship game, some members of the Louisburg boys soccer team were recognized for their special season.

First came the all-league honors, but more recently, six Wildcats were named to the Class 4-1A all-state team by the Kansas High School Soccer Coaches Association.

Seniors Braden Yows, Michael Seuferling and junior Cade Gassman were first team selections, while senior Isaac Guetterman and juniors Mack Newell and Colin McManigal earned second team honors.

"I was really excited to see these young men selected," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "These six boys have worked incredibly hard and they all earned that right. Our team had a lot of success this season and these six young men as well as the rest of the team had great influence on that."

Yows, a UMKC signee, ended his final season as a Wildcat with a team-high 17 goals, 11 assists and 48 shots on goal.

Gassman, who started out at forward, moved to the midfield halfway through the season. He finished with 11 goals, nine assists and had 34 shots on goal.

Seuferling is considered one of the top outside backs on defense in the Frontier League and in the state and helped anchor the Wildcat back line.

"Braden was the best player on the field each and every night we played," Conley said. "He was great for us over the last three years. He will go on to do great things at UMKC next year."

"Cade was a player who played all over the field for us this season. He is one of the most dynamic players and his soccer knowledge is incredible. He excelled in every position in which he played this season."

"Michael has started ever since his first game at Louisburg High School. He was one of the best outside backs I ever coached. His work ethic and never back down attitude was always shown each and every night."

Despite missing a few games, Newell was one of the top goalkeepers in the league with 68 saves and gave up just 13 goals.

McManigal was also among the top scorers on the team as he tied Gassman for second on the team with 11 goals and he also had two assists.

Guetterman was also key piece in the Wildcats' midfield/defense and won several 50-50 battles.

"Mack had another fantastic year in only his second season ever playing soccer," Conley said. "He has excelled and has been the best goalkeeper in the east for the second year in a row. In only his second season, he is becoming the most decorated goalkeeper in our program's history.

"Colin also had a fantastic season. He is constantly pressing and pressuring all over. His work ethic is second to none. He created so many chances and forced so many turnovers.

"Isaac played so hard for us in a role that might not have been the most glory-led. He did the dirty work defensively. He battled and never backed down from a tackle. He took away the other team's transition and did it so well."

Yows excited to move on to next soccer chapter with UMKC



Braden Yows has had a ball at his feet for as long as he can remember.

Soccer has been a big part of Yows' life and he always had dreams of playing in college one day.

On Nov. 10, which was National Signing Day, Yows put pen to paper and those dreams officially became a reality.

In a room full of family and friends, Yows signed to play Division I with the University of Missouri-Kansas City men's soccer program.

"It was fantastic," Yows said of his signing day. "I was able to have family, coaches and close friends at the signing. That was important to me. A lot of have been instrumental in helping me get to this point, so it was good to say thank you to all of them on that day.

"I started playing soccer when I was 3 years old. It's been a game that I've loved my whole life. I just enjoy everything about the game. So sure, getting an opportunity to play at this level is exciting and has always been a goal of mine."

Yows took a few visits and had offers from other schools, but the Kansas City program stood out, especially its head coach, Ryan Pore.

Pore, who just finished his second year as the Roos' head coach, has a deep soccer background. He played for the Kansas City Wizards (now Sporting KC) for four seasons and played professionally for seven years.



Braden Yows signed his letter of intent on Nov. 10 to play soccer at UMKC. Seated next to Braden are his parents Greg and Heather Yows. Standing (from left) is his club coach Rich Wolf, Louisburg head coach Kyle Conley, Braden's sisters Presley and Rowan Yows, and Louisburg assistant coach Bobby Bovaird.

He started his coaching career as an assistant at the University of Tulsa before getting the Kansas City job in 2020. Pore went on to win the Summit League Coach of the Year in 2020.

"He's played at the highest levels and is well respected within the soccer community," Yows said. "Without question, he's a winner. When he started recruiting me, he talked about his goals about wanting to win championships and talked about his plan to get there.

"Their style of play fits the way I like to play and the things I do well. He's placed an emphasis at recruiting at a high level. Hopefully I can go in and work hard and be a part of that success."

Yows built an impressive resume the last three years for the Wildcat program. He has earned first team all-league and all-

state honors in those three seasons and was named to the preseason All-American watch list in the state of Kansas earlier this year.

He is the program leader in assists with 46 and also holds the single season record with 21. This season, Yows finished the year with 17 goals and 11 assists.

It is that attacking style that Yows hopes to use to make an impact with the Roos program.

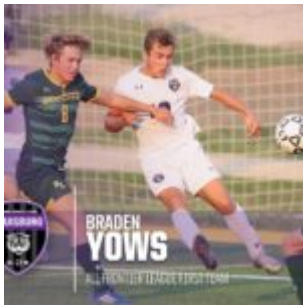
“I connected well with all the coaches,” Yows said. “Their style of play includes a lot of combination play, which is one of my strengths. They see me playing one of their attacking positions, either in the midfield, on the wings, or up top. They rotate a lot of their players through attacking positions, so hopefully I can be part of that rotation and make an impact.”

As for what he wants to accomplish, Yows just wants to enjoy the college experience and help his team in anyway he can.

“Anyone who’s been around me first and foremost knows I want to win,” Yows said. “I’m gonna listen to the coaches, and do they what they ask me to do, and compete every day at a high level. I’m looking forward to learning from the current players and coaching staff to help get better. It’s gonna be fun playing some of the best programs in college soccer.”

Nine Wildcats earn all-league soccer honors; Yows, Gassman

named first team



The Louisburg boys soccer team finished the season as the co-Frontier League champions and the Wildcats were recognized as such.

The all-league soccer teams were released early this week and the Wildcats earned nine spots, including two on the first team.

Senior midfielder Braden Yows and junior midfielder Cade Gassman were selected to the first team. Junior forward Colin McManigal, senior defender Michael Seuferling, senior midfielder Isaac Guetterman and junior goalie Mack Newell were second team honorees.

Senior midfielder/defender Hunter Rogers, junior defender Matthew Sword and junior forward Ethan Ptacek were named to the honorable mention team.

"I felt we had a lot of guys receive honors, in fact it was the most players we ever had get recognized in a single year," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "As a team that only lost one official league game and held their opponents to less goals per game, scored the most, etc..., I thought our boys deserved a better representation on the first team. We are way too good of a team only to get two players to receive first team All Frontier.



“We were a really good team and to get nine players recognized was that is pretty impressive. Just thought some of our players deserved a higher honor. Our league was wide open in regards to the middle of the pack and that had a big influence on how the voting went.”

Yows, a UMKC signee, wrapped up his final season as a Wildcat in impressive fashion. He led Louisburg with 17 goals on the season, 11 assists and 48 shots on goal.

Gassman, who started out at forward, moved to the midfield halfway through the season. He finished with 11 goals, nine assists and had 34 shots on goal.



“Braden and Cade have been two of the best players in our league over the past few years,” Conley said. “They are incredibly talented players and were fantastic for us this season. Those two did a very good job of breaking down our opponents and we flat out just attacked from everywhere. Braden and Cade have unbelievable individual skills and they both had great years. Those two guys made our team so dynamic on the ball and created so many chances.”

The Wildcats were well represented on the second team and it started in goal with Newell. Despite missing a few games, Newell was one of the top goalkeepers in the league with 68 saves and gave up just 13 goals.



McManigal was also among the top scorers on the team as he tied Gassman for second on the team with 11 goals and he also had two assists.

Seuferling and Guetterman were key pieces to a Louisville defense that gave up few chances during the league season.



“These young men had really good years and did so well,” Conley said. “They were all key parts of our team and had really solid years. Michael was one of the best, if not the

best, outside back in our league. He literally shutdown that side of the field. He made it really tough for teams to break down and expose us. Isaac had a great year in the middle of the field and moved the ball well in starting out possession. He also wasn't afraid to stick his nose in tackles either. He never backed down from a tackle.

"Colin finished the year on a high note and scored a lot of goals. His pressure and creating turnovers was great for us. He really took a big step this season and I can't wait to see what he becomes next year. Mack was a rock for us in goal. He was really good to start the year, but missed some time due to covid. It took him a little time to get his mojo back and he was really, really good. Can't wait to have him for a full year next year."



Rogers and Sword were vital pieces to the Wildcat defense this past season, while Rogers was active in the midfield as well and scored two goals and had two assists. Sword played starting center back for the first time this year.

As for Ptacek, he complemented the Wildcat scoring as he finished the year with five goals and four assists.



ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE SOCCER

First Team

Braden Yows, Louisburg, senior

Daniel Stone, Eudora, senior

Caleb Brueckner, Spring Hill, junior

Devin Prather, Baldwin, senior

Cade Gassman, Louisburg, junior

Parker Hurla, Eudora, junior

Caleb Carr, Baldwin, junior

Lukas Parizek, Tonganoxie, senior

Rocco Russo, Spring Hill, senior

Utah Hester, Baldwin, sophomore

GOALIE: Nate Steinlage, Eudora, freshman

Second Team

Mayson Sprague, Bonner Springs, senior

Daniel Zesati, Tonganoxie, senior

Camden Ridinger, Eudora, senior

Kaden Kerr, Eudora, sophomore

Reece Fogle, Ottawa, senior

Zach Brueckner, Spring Hill, freshman

Colin McManigal, Louisburg, junior

Brenan Kuzmic, Tonganoxie, junior

Michael Seufferling, Louisburg, senior

Isaac Guetterman, Louisburg, senior

GOALIE: Mack Newell, Louisburg, junior

Honorable Mention

Dom McCoy, Paola, senior

Hayden Worden, Paola, junior

Garrett Shoemaker, Eudora, senior

Christian Koehn, Eudora, sophomore

Adam Novak, Piper, senior

Carlos Renteria, Piper, sophomore

Brady Johnson, Piper, sophomore

Jacob Mena, Piper, sophomore

Francisco McGuinness, Baldwin, senior

Jesse Hopper, Baldwin, junior

Josue Navarro, Ottawa, sophomore

Hunter Rogers, Louisburg, senior

Matthew Sword, Louisburg, junior

Ethan Ptacek, Louisburg, junior

Cuyler Kietzmann, Tonganoxie, senior

Tavian Cruse, Bonner Springs, junior

Timmy Shockey, Bonner Springs, sophomore

Jorge Diaz, Bonner Springs, senior

GOALIES: Blake Ramsey, Paola, junior; Caden Englert, Baldwin, junior; Jackson McWilliams, Tonganoxie, sophomore; Otto Flach, Spring Hill, senior