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



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



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 gameto-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 outpossessed 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."

Wildcats suffer first setback of season at Gardner-Edgerton



Louisburg senior defender Jackson Olson tries to poke the ball away from a Gardner-Edgerton player Thursday at Gardner-Edgerton High School. The Wildcats lost their first game of the season, 3-0.

GARDNER - In just its second match of the season, the

Louisburg boys soccer team squared off with one of the tougher teams the Wildcats will see all season.

Louisburg traveled to Gardner-Edgerton and squared off against the Class 6A school, and unfortunately for the Wildcats, left with their first loss.

The Wildcats gave up two first half goals, and had limited chances of their own against the Trailblazers, in their 3-0 loss Thursday at Gardner-Edgerton High School.

'It was a tough and humbling loss, but Gardner is an improved team from last year," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "They controlled the ball and were much faster on their attacks than we were. It's good to have this kind of game early in the season. It highlights a lot of things we need to work on."

The game didn't stay scoreless for long as Gardner scored in the first four minutes of the match as the Blazers took a shot just outside the 18 for the goal.

Gardner doubled that lead later on in the half when the Blazers scored on a penalty kick and took a 2-0 halftime advantage.



Louisburg goalie Brecon Klugman jumps up for a save Thursday against Gardner.

Louisburg goalie Brecon Klugman was busy throughout the contest as he made several saves that kept the Wildcats in it, before the Blazers iced the match with their third goal with 24 minutes remaining.

"That game could have easily been 5-0 or 6-0 with some of their attacks, but Brecon had some great plays in goal for us," Bovaird said. "Watching film of last night's game, we're going to have to learn to adapt when our opponent has their outside mids shifting and crossing into the middle of the field. We also need to work on our first touch on the ball, especially on turf, and improve our possession game."

The Wildcats (1-1) did have a few opportunities on goal as Gavin York, Cade Gassman and Colin McManigal each had looks at the net, but couldn't convert.

Louisburg will try and get back on track this Thursday when it squares off with Bonner Springs in the Wildcats home opener. Bovaird believes his team will learn from this loss.

"We're up to the challenge of taking on 6A and 5A teams," Bovaird said. "In the long run, having our strength of schedule will set us up for the postseason."

Wildcats shutout Pittsburg on the road in season opener



PITTSBURG — It may have taken a little while to shake off the rust, but once it did, Louisburg showed what it is capable of accomplishing.

The Wildcats, who led Pittsburg by just a goal at halftime, scored three times in the second half, en route to a 4-0 shutout Tuesday at Pittsburg High School.

A trio of seniors led the Louisburg attack as Colin McManigal and Gavin York each scored a pair of goals, while Cade Gassman earned assists on both McManigal scores.

In the process, Louisburg head coach Bobby Bovaird picked up his first varsity win.

"Before the game, we talked about the keys to winning: communication, mindset, moving to the pockets, and knowing our purpose on the field,"Bovaird said. "It took a little while to get into the groove, but I feel the game wasn't as close as the score suggested.

"Colin and Cade were connecting really well up top, and that's one of the key things we're looking to make happen. Gavin was a solid player up top as well, maintaining composure and showing the team what tough soccer looks like. Both Colin and Gavin earned some pretty nice goals for our first game of the season."

McManigal broke open the scoreless contest on a goal from about 18 yards out on an assist from Gassman.

The Wildcats took the 1-0 lead into halftime, before McManigal scored again, thanks to another Gassman assist eight minutes into the second half.

York then got into the action with 17 minutes left in the match, then a minute later, scored again on a free kick to all but seal the win for Louisburg.

Senior goalie Brecon Klugman, who started his first varsity game, earned the clean sheet with four saves.

Klugman got some help from his defense as the back line of Matthew Sword, Owen Barber and Caden French held strong and limited the Purple Dragons' shots on goal.

Although the Wildcats may have won convincingly, it was a rough contest from start to finish.

"It was a physical game, and after the game, one of the officials complimented our team for their sportsmanship and respectfulness," Bovaird said. "It could have gotten ugly — physical tackles from behind, contact after the play, and a lot of little comments from the other team — but I'm very proud of how our guys carried themselves."

Louisburg will try for win No. 2 today as the Wildcats hit the road again, this time at Gardner-Edgerton. The Wildcats will battle the 6A program in a 7 p.m. start.

"One thing we're going to stress early on in the season is the

style of soccer that will win us the key games, like any postseason game," Bovaird said. "Our style from the beginning needs to be solid and how we play against our competition early on will set the precedent for how we'll respond later in the season. It's not about playing to rack up the goal count; it's about polishing our style so it's second nature when we face the toughest competition."

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."