# Week 2 Athlete of the Week: Lola Edwards




Here is the Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Week for week two of the fall sports season, sponsored by Louisburg Family Dental.

## LOLA EDWARDS, FRESHMAN, CROSS COUNTRY

In her first major varsity race, Louisburg freshman Lola Edwards put together an impressive showing against some of the top runners in Class 4A. Edwards medaled sixth at the Wamego Invitational last Saturday with a time of 21 minutes and 5 seconds. She finished in the top 10 in the 66-runner field and the Lady Cats finished fifth in the team standings.

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.




# Wildcat cross country opens season with home quad



***Louisburg freshman Lola Edwards leads a pack of runners during the Wildcats' season opener Sept. 3 at Lewis-Young Park.***

It wasn't the way its season was supposed to start, but the

Louisburg cross country team made the best of a bad situation.

The Wildcats, who were originally scheduled to compete in Garnett for their season opener, had to find a different meet due to COVID-19 restrictions. It didn't take them long to figures something out as they were able to host a quadrangular with three other Frontier League schools on Sept. 3 at Lewis-Young Park.

Louisburg was able to put together a successful performance in its first meet of the season as the Wildcats had several top 10 finishes on both teams as they squared off against quality competition in Baldwin, Spring Hill and Ottawa.

The Wildcats had the most success on the boys' side as they came away with three in the top 10.

Junior Ryan Rogers had a strong opening meet as he finished fourth overall in 19 minutes and 40 seconds and junior teammate Caden Bradshaw was sixth in 19:59. Senior Cade Holtzen took eighth in 20:12.

Freshman Noah Cotter finished just outside the top 10 as he took 13th in 21:03, while junior Hayden Ross and sophomore Braden Branine were 15th and 16th, respectively. Sophomore Leo Martin was 18th in 21:55.

Trent Allen (21st), Griffin Drew (22:19), Sawyer Richardson (25th), Landan Henry (28th), Max LaJoy (30th), Carson Houchen (38th), Drake Baus (46th) and Kemper Johnson (47th) also competed for Louisburg.

Spring Hill's Tommy O'Leary won the boys race in 18:34 and Baldwin's Caleb Carr was second in 18:40.

For the Louisburg girls, the Lady Cats had a pair of top 10 finishes, led by junior Reese Johnson, who placed eighth.

Freshman Lola Edwards was right behind her in ninth in her first varsity race.

Sophomore Claire Brown finished 15th, while Nova Ptacek (22nd), Bree Gassman (23rd), Kennady Wilkerson (24th), Erin Apple (25th) and Maddie Rhamy (26th) all finished in the upper-half of the race.

Alexis French (29th), Maddy O'Keefe (39th), Andrea Gaza (40th), Ruth Minster (42nd) and Elizabeth George also competed for Louisburg.

Baldwin's Riley Smith won the race and finished two seconds ahead of Spring Hill's Vienna Lahner.

The Wildcats are back in action Saturday when they travel to the Wamego Invitational. The first race is set to begin at 8:30 a.m. at the Wamego Country Club.

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# Wildcat runners ready to try for another trip to state



***The Louisburg boys cross country team returns five varsity runners from a year ago and are led by seniors Cade Holtzen (pictured, front) and Carson Houchen.***

It was another historic season for the Louisburg cross country team a year ago.

For the third consecutive year, the Louisburg girls qualified for state as team, and one of those runners – Trinity Moore – had the school's best finish as she took third at the Class 4A meet and broke her school record in the process.

Fast forward to the present day and the Wildcats will have a little different look to it. Gone is Moore, who is now a member of the Pittsburg State cross country team, but much of the team still remains.

They may be some of the same names, but they are a year older, a lot faster and there are some new faces mixed in.

Still, the goal remains the same for the Wildcats – to find themselves at the final meet of the year in Wamego for the Class 4A state competition.

"Our end of season goal is a state bid by both teams and it is the same for this year," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "We will run and have fun and enjoy our time together because we know it can be taken away at the drop of a hat."

The threat of COVID-19 has every team in the state knowing full well that they can't take anything for granted and the Wildcat runners plan to compete with that mentality.

Louisburg will bring of a lot of experience on both the boys and girls side.

Five runners off the girls state team return to try and make it a fourth consecutive trip to state and are led by returning state medalist, Reese Johnson. Senior Kennady Wilkerson, junior Ruth Minster and sophomores Bree Gassman and Claire Brown could also play big roles on varsity this season.




***Junior Reese Johnson, a state medalist from two years ago, will look to make even more impact on the varsity squad this year.***

Sophomore Nova Ptacek, who was an alternate on the team last season, will look to add the depth, as will freshman Lola Edwards as she works her way into the top seven runners.

Other freshmen such as Erin Apple, Madison Rhamy and Madison O'Keefe could all see varsity time as the season goes along.

"The girls team will be solid this year," Reece said. "We return lots of experience and have added some quality freshman to the team. State last year was not what a few of the runners wanted and they are working hard to go back and improve.

"Lola, Erin, Maddie and Maddy, our freshman girls, will add a lot of depth to the team and they could even be varsity

runners sooner than later. Lola will be one of our top girls from the start and we will bring her along slowly as she learns to race the 5K.”

On the boys side, the Wildcats return much of their starting lineup from a season ago and they are led by a pair of seniors in Cade Holtzen and Carson Houchen, who will be in their fourth year with the program.

Juniors Ryan Rogers, Sawyer Richardson and Caden Bradshaw all steadily improved last season and will look to do the same thing this year as they welcome some new faces to the group.

“Like the girls, we bring back lots of experience in the boys team,” Reece said. “Carson and Cade are our seniors and they are stepping up to lead the others. We will be rolling through races together and going for it at the end of the season.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has already put its fingerprints on the Wildcats’ season as Louisburg was not able to compete in Garnett in its opener this week due to numbers restrictions.

Instead, Louisburg was able to put together a quad competition for Thursday on its home course at Lewis-Young Park. Races are set to begin at 4 p.m.

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# LHS fall sports practices underway with precautions



With the cloud of a different looking fall season hanging over their heads, the Louisburg High School fall sports teams officially got back to work Monday for the first day of practice.

The possibility of having a shortened fall season due to the COVID-19 pandemic hasn’t scared off Wildcat athletes from giving this season a go and making the most it.

All four teams saw good numbers on the first day of practice as it was business as usual for many of those squads.

In all, Louisburg saw a total of 181 athletes come out for sports at the high school level. Those numbers will drop when volleyball and boys soccer makes their cuts, but it shows the athletes aren’t afraid of what lies ahead and are excited to get their season going.

For the Louisburg football team, Wildcat coach Robert Ebenstein has 70 players out this season after the Wildcats finished last year with a 6-4 record and spot in the regional playoffs.

Practice has been similar than in year’s past, even with COVID-19, however the players and coaches are doing their part to stay as healthy as possible. That includes players bringing their own water bottles to practice and coaches instructing with face coverings.

“The kids and coaches were very excited to get back to it,” Ebenstein said. “We have a very young group and it was good to see them get out on the field and compete.

“We are following all the guidelines passed down from KSHSAA, the county and general guidelines from our school administration. The kids have done an amazing job buying in and doing what we have to do to ensure we get our opportunity to play this season.”



On the volleyball court, the Lady Cats came together to try and put together another strong season. Louisburg finished last year with a spot in the state tournament and took fourth overall.

When practice began, Louisburg had 38 athletes out for volleyball and the Lady Cats will try and continue to work off what they have done over summer as they try and make it back to the state tournament. Practices have looked a little different than in year’s past as players and coaches are wearing face masks at all times, unless certain physical activities are taking place.

“I think the first few days have gone well,” Louisburg volleyball coach Jessica Compliment said. “We have a set of

volleyball skill drills and physical tests that each athlete completes as part of the tryout process. Like every year, they are excited to get the season started. I’m sure there are different emotions because there are some unknowns. We are preparing to compete for the entire season but know there is the possibility it could be cut short or we could see adjustments to our schedules that are out of our control. We had 35 athletes, split among three teams, participate this summer in a league ran out of Olathe. Playing for six weeks over summer gave us an idea of what the season could look like and how we can adapt to the new guidelines that have been put in place.

“We are still practicing social distancing so we’ve adapted some of our drills to accommodate for that while also creating a competitive environment. We are encouraged to work in smaller groups when possible as well. As the season progresses, we’ll see the biggest changes come when we have a match because some pre-game protocol has changed as well as structure during a match. For instance, teams will not switch benches at the conclusion of a set.”



The Louisburg boys soccer team is coming off one of its best season's in program history as the Wildcats reeled off 16 wins a year ago and won a regional title. Louisburg returns several starters from last season and the Wildcats currently have 43 players out.

Along with football, soccer is considered a close-contact sport and the Wildcats are doing everything they can to keep themselves – and others – healthy throughout the year.

"The first day of practice was a typical first day," Louisburg soccer coach Kyle Conley said. "We were a little rusty, but we got through it. The boys are incredibly grateful for the ability to play the game they love. The boys have some massive goals this year and understand what it is going to take to obtain them.

"We made the kids have their masks on during breaks and their own water bottle. This will hopefully limit the chance of COVID spreading."

The one sport that probably won't see too much change this season is cross country. The Wildcat runners are coming off a season in which they had a runner – Trinity Moore – take third at state and watched as the girls' team qualified for state for the third year in a row.




Louisburg still has high goals on both the girls and boys side and the Wildcats have 30 athletes out this season. Thanks to a successful summer of running workouts, Louisburg is ready to get its season underway.

"We are always excited to get started," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "This year is not much different because we had a great season last year and the returners are very focused on improving over last year. Once summer running got started, a sense of normalcy crept in and we started getting ready for the season. They were excited to be with friends again.

"Not much has changed for us since there is not 'contact' during our races. The only thing that could change is how races are started to reduce numbers and losing meets due to a

large number of schools participating. We are already scrambling to get a first meet in this year. We will make it happen for the kids.”

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# LHS coaches thankful, excited about KSHSAA ruling on fall sports



Coaches, parents and athletes held their collective breath last week during the Kansas High School Activities Association’s executive board meeting.

People around the state watched to see what KSHSAA would recommend for fall sports during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Back to school will be different than normal, and for some, will start after Labor Day due to a high number of positive cases.

Still, many have wondered what was going to happen to fall activities around the state and they got their answer. A motion by KSHSAA failed 5-4 in the executive board session, which in turn allowed the fall sports season to continue as scheduled.

“I am relieved that we know a definite start date and there will be no changes to the start of games,” Louisburg High

School activities director Michael Pickman said. “The kids and coaches worked all summer, and I didn’t want to see that start date delayed and lose that progress. However, there will be some changes due to the pandemic so the focus turns to safety. The last thing I want is for the athletic events and protocols to create the spread of COVID that affects the academic side, so it will be very important that we take the recommendations of the health organizations and KSHSAA to make the athletics and competitions as safe as possible for this year.”

During the meeting, KSHSAA had proposed keeping the original start of practice date of Aug. 17 for all activities. For activities being able to allow social distancing and minimal contact, such as girls golf, girls tennis, cross country, debate and scholars bowl, no modifications were recommended.

However, the proposal called for moving the start dates for competition in football, volleyball and boys soccer to begin no earlier than Sept. 8 – which basically took a week of their season.

It would have made football and eight game season, instead of the normal nine. For soccer, number of games would have been reduced from 16 to 14 and volleyball would have been reduced from 36-30 points.

For many of the Wildcat head coaches, the vote of the executive board was a breath of fresh air in what has been a challenging spring and summer for local athletes.

“I really think it was a good decision,” Louisburg football coach Robert Ebenstein said. “The kids deserve a chance to be able to play their season. It could be different than we have seen before, but I think we have done a good job of keeping the exposure down. They deserve this opportunity and activities like football will keep kids focused on school as well. I believe it is something they need.

“It was also good decision for the whole state. Yes, we are close to the metro, but you have schools like Smith Center or somewhere else in the state where the exposure is low. Starting the season on time was the right thing to do, and if there are cancellations, it gives schools an opportunity to reschedule if they need to.”

Louisburg’s boys soccer program is looking to have another big season as it tries to repeat as a Frontier League champion and their 16 wins from a year ago. Although, the Wildcats are looking forward to getting their season underway, they realize things could change on a daily basis.

“I was extremely excited,” Louisburg soccer coach Kyle Conley said. “There were so many rumors and recommendations that were flying I was worried. The vote at least gives this group an opportunity to actually get some games in. This gives the boys soccer team a chance to back up the season they had a year ago. I am excited to see us at least get a chance to start the season.

“I will be honest, I was extremely worried over the summer. In fact, a comment was made in the KSHSAA executive board meeting that still has me worried. They said let’s start the season as soon as possible, because we are not sure how long it is going to last. It will also be interesting to see if the CDC or local health departments change their protocols when someone may have it, otherwise teams will be shut down right and left because they might have the virus.”

Cross country is a sport that considered somewhat safe when it comes to the spread of COVID-19. Louisburg head coach John Reece has treated this summer like normal.

Reece had 35 runners out for the first day of their daily morning runs, and have averaged 20 a day since then. It is considered a “socially-distanced” sport, and one that KSHSAA had no problems with starting their schedule on time.

“Very excited for our seniors to have a fall season,” Reece said. “I’m not gonna hold my breath as who knows what could happen in a month. For now it is go time, and we will be ready.

“We have been able to transition into some workouts on Wednesdays to get some quality work in. The rest of the time we are running this town and getting in the miles. It is going to be another fun year for both boys and girls teams. We want to get both to state and we will work hard to accomplish this goal.”

Volleyball is the one indoor sport in the fall, which has some worried about how social distancing will work in the gym and how many teams will be invited to tournaments. As for now, nothing has changed in that department, and head coach Jessica Compliment is looking forward to working with her team in a couple weeks.

“It’s nice to know what the season is going to look like,” Compliment said. “The uncertainty and the unknowns for the upcoming school has been a little unnerving, but I am happy to see that the players will have a season.

“I do not know of any changes to our schedule as of right now. I have been told the schedule will go as scheduled until we hear differently. I have not heard from tournament host schools on whether or not they plan to change anything.”

As far as spectators go, there has not been a limit set as of yet as members of the school district are working on protocols to use during the season. For now, the obvious guidelines are the ones people experience on a daily basis.

“There will be guidelines more than restrictions as related to Covid-19 safe practices that align with each sport and specific to that sport,” Pickman said. “Universal aspects like wearing masks to practice and during periods of inactivity will apply to all. Cleaning equipment schedules and protocols

to have water bottles and cease use of water fountains, etc, along with others are sport specific guidelines for both practice and game day. These documents are being drafted and will be communicated once final.

“We are following the Executive Order 20-59, so if the event is outside, there will not be masks required, but we will still encourage social distancing. If the event is inside, masks will be required as well as social distancing encouraged.”

The district has had to make one change to the start of the fall season and that is the cancellation of the Fall Sports Pep Rally that has annually been held at the high school.

“The Community Pep Rally was a hard decision because it is a great school and community business partnership that the community and our coaches, players, and students look forward to, but it was more important to avoid these extra opportunities for mass gathering to place focus on opening school and activities on time and healthy as possible,” Pickman said. “We are looking to reschedule possibly during the buffer week at the conclusion of the fall season. No other events have been cancelled at this time.”

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# 2020 Athlete of the Year Nominees



For the past four 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 third straight 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."

Obviously, 2020 has not been the typical year when the spring was cancelled due to COVID-19. However, I still want to make sure those athletes that were set to make an impact in the spring were recognized as well.

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 voted for their top male and female athletes and then I tabulated the results. I will release the results in the coming days.

Below are the nominees for this year's award in alphabetical order by last name. Congrats to all those who were nominated and best of luck!

# Female Athlete of the Year Nominees




## Haley Cain – Senior – Volleyball, Basketball, Soccer

Haley was a three-sport athlete during her time at Louisburg High School and recorded the rare feat of earning 12 varsity letters.

In the fall, she helped the Louisburg volleyball team to its third consecutive state tournament and was selected to represent Kansas in the Greater Kansas City All-Star Match. She was also named to the All-Frontier League second team as a middle hitter.

Cain was also a two-time team captain for the Louisburg girls basketball team and was a key player for the Lady Cats this past season. She was also set to be a big contributor for the Wildcat soccer team in the spring as well.




## Trinity Moore – Senior – Cross Country, Soccer

Trinity made cross country history for the Wildcats this past season as she medaled third at state and broke her own school record in the process. The Louisburg senior also medaled at state all four years.

Moore was also a returning starter for the Wildcat soccer team and was a key factor in helping the Wildcats to three consecutive state final fours and two state runner-up finishes.

She started 43 games for the Wildcats and concluded her career with 18 goals and eight assists. She is fifth in school history with 44 points.



## Erin Lemke – Senior – Volleyball, Soccer

Erin was another multi-sport athlete for Louisburg as she was a member of the volleyball and soccer teams. Lemke was an outside hitter for the Lady Cat volleyball team and was selected to represent Kansas in the Greater Kansas City All-Star Match.

On the soccer team, Lemke was a two-time team captain for the Wildcats and was a returning all-league and all-state player. She was also one of the team's top goal scorers.

Lemke had a very productive career for the Wildcats as she started 48 of her 59 games and earned all-league and all-state honors as a sophomore and a junior.

She finished her career with 29 goals and 27 assists and Lemke

has the second-best assist mark for a season in program history with 17 and is third in career assists. She also added seven game-winning goals.




**Reilly Ratliff-Becher – Senior – Volleyball,**

### Powerlifting, Softball

Reilly was a multi-sport athlete for Louisburg High School as she competed in volleyball, power-lifiting and softball. She was an honorable mention all-league selection in volleyball as she served as the Lady Cat libero.

Ratliff-Becher was a big part of the Lady Cats' state tournament runs the last three years. She was also selected to participate in the Greater Kansas City All-Star game last November.

As a powerlifter, Reilly recorded her second-straight state championship and took first in each of the three individual events.

Ratliff-Becher was also a returning starter on the Lady Cat softball team after she helped Louisburg to a state tournament appearance a year ago as a catcher and outfielder.

## Male Athlete of the Year Nominees




## Garrett Rolofson – Senior – Soccer, Basketball, Golf

Garrett is a three-sport athlete for Louisburg as he was a member of the soccer, basketball and golf teams. In soccer, Rolofson served as the Wildcats' goalkeeper and helped Louisburg to a regional title and a school record 16 wins.

Rolofson was named to the All-Frontier League first team and to the all-state second team. He posted eight shutouts on the season and allowed only 17 goals, four of which came from penalty shots. He also finished with 78 saves on the season and allowed the second fewest goals in Class 4-1A.

In basketball, Rolofson was a starter on the Wildcat basketball team and this spring he was all set to help the Wildcat golf team to their second consecutive state tournament

appearance. He was the team’s No. 3 golfer a year ago.



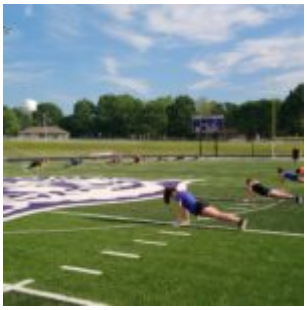
## Madden Rutherford – Senior – Football, Baseball

Madden was a multi-sport athlete for Louisburg as he was a key member of the Wildcat football and baseball teams.

Rutherford, who was a team captain on the football team, was selected as a first team All-Frontier League quarterback. Rutherford finished the year with 671 yards passing with eight touchdowns and he also added 245 yards on the ground and four more scores.

On the baseball team, Rutherford was also a returning all-league player and was slated to be the Wildcats’ No. 1 starter this spring.

# Wildcat athletes report back for summer conditioning



**Almost 80 high school girls attended the first day of summer conditioning on Monday at Louisburg High School.**

For the first time in almost three months, Louisburg High School and Louisburg Middle School athletes found themselves back on the field starting Monday at Wildcat Stadium.

It didn’t include any balls, equipment, weights and wasn’t indoors, but more than 300 athletes participated in the mandatory conditioning drills that were set by the Kansas State High School Activities Association.

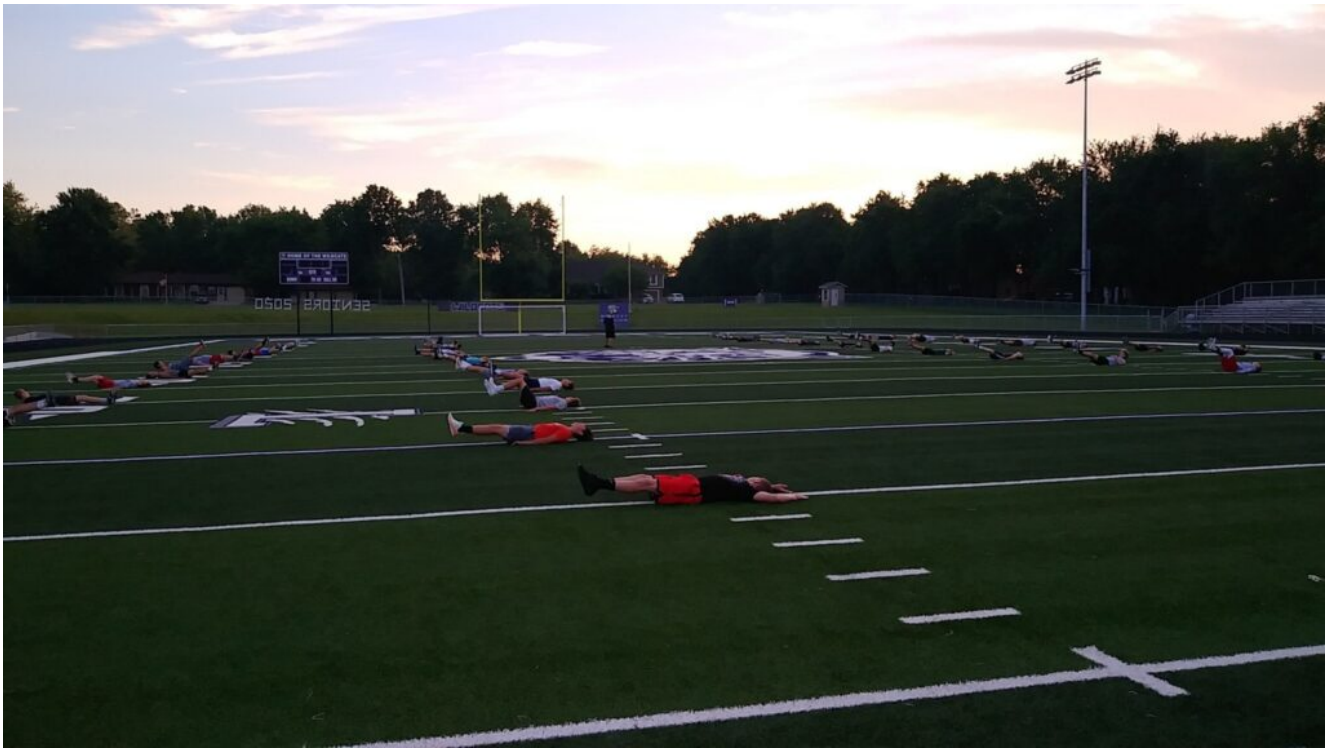
“The turnout was exceptional, and considering the limit on group sizes, distance restrictions, and getting creative in using multiple spaces to accommodate the large numbers in appropriately sized groups allowed in phase three, these coordinators did a great job setting a standard,” Louisburg activities director Michael Pickman said.

This was all following the cancellation of the spring season to the spread of COVID-19 and KSHSAA allowed school districts to begin conditioning exercises on June 1. The Louisburg school district started this past Monday and each athlete must participate in 10 sessions before being able to attend in any team activities or camps.

Several coaches were in attendance running athletes through drills in three separate stations that would allow some space between everyone. Football coaches Robert Ebenstein, Ty Pfannenstiel, Joel McGhee and Drew Harding were on hand to lead drills, along with other staff from within the USD 416 school district.

“There are many coaches who are volunteering and just want to be there to support their athletes,” Pickman said. “It’s what makes the LHS coaching staff stand out from others. However, I have encouraged coaches not directly coordinating weights to stay home as much as they can with numbers restrictions, but so far we haven’t had that be an issue.”

High school boys begin each morning at 6 a.m., for the hour-long workout and high school girls follow and then it all finishes up with middle school. To start there were 121 high school boys in attendance, 79 girls and 126 middle school students.



**More than 120 Louisburg High School boys attended the first day of summer conditioning at Wildcat Stadium.**

To start the day, each athlete is screened before the start of

conditioning with a temperature check and then they are divided into three groups. Each of them will participate in three stations that focuses on different workouts. There are no more than 45 athletes in a group and the coaches design workouts to promote the six feet of distance.

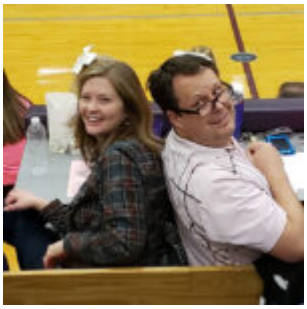
“There were temperatures that needed to be taken and protocol for sanitizing hands and checking in that went efficiently and smoothly overall,” Pickman said. “A lot of planning went into this with the coaches to make sure it went well. And Mr. Holloway (LHS principal) volunteered his time to help take temps at the various sessions.”

As far as cross country goes, interested runners instead attend running sessions held by coach John Reece that will take place throughout the summer and they do not have to attend conditioning.

Whenever the athletes have completed their 10 sessions, they are allowed to participate in team activities the rest of the summer. As of right now, everything is on track to allow athletes to begin attending camps after June 29.

“Everything is progressing so far to according to schedule,” Pickman said. “Assuming the governor’s phase out stage begins when it is supposed to, we will be ready to begin using the weight room, gyms, and sports equipment. Coaches will be able to have practices and then middle school and high school age camps after June 29. The younger kids who do not have to have the 10 days of acclimatization are able to run the week of June 22. With the schedule the way it is, kids should have no problem getting their 10 days of acclimatization needed to participate in camps.”

# Dennis leaves lasting legacy in Louisburg, LHS athletics



**Damon Dennis, and his wife Karla, pose for quick picture during a timeout at a Louisburg High School basketball game Dennis was announcing. Dennis, who is better known as Doc D, is handing over his business at Louisburg Chiropractic Office to Dr. Jacob Polzin and is stepping away as the LHS team doctor after 28 years of service. His last day at the office is tomorrow (Saturday).**

Almost every day of the week, if you were looking for Damon Dennis, he could be found at his office on 11 S. Broadway St., helping treat those pesky aches and pains, taking X-rays, or mending those beaten up athletes after a game.

Doc D – as he his affectionately known – opened Louisburg Chiropractic Office 28 years ago and has served as the Louisburg High School athletic team doctor for almost that same amount of time.

Dennis has seen it all. The walls in his office are lined with mementos from his years of service to both the community and the high school.

He has taped thousands of ankles, seen even more patients and has touched many lives during his time in Louisburg. That is why this week is one of the more emotional times in his life.

On Saturday, he will officially leave Louisburg Chiropractic Office and hand the reins over to Dr. Jake Polzin. Add to

that, Dennis is also stepping away as LHS' team doctor and will leave an absence on the sidelines and behind the mic that many in Louisburg have come to know.

"My decision to step down and sell the practice has turned out to be the hardest thing I have ever done," Dennis said. "I have poured everything I have into my job and community. It has become my entire existence. I was taught from a young age to serve others and your community. I feel like the pressures I have put on myself have become unhealthy. I have put about 40 years work in to 28 and feel like there is never going to be a good time to make such a huge life change.

"That being said, I feel like I need to make changes while I am still able to do the things that will be best for my family. Dr. Polzin came along and I think he will carry on the work at the office wonderfully. We are a lot alike in many ways. I could not have found anyone better to replace me."

For many, Dennis has been a big part of people's lives, especially in the athletic arena. He has served as the LHS team doctor since 1992 and has treated many athletes in those 28 years.



**Dennis (left) and Dr. Jake Polzin pose for a picture in their office. Polzin will officially take over the practice from Dennis after this week, but both have been seeing the patients the last three months.**

During the school year, Dennis would leave his place of business every day after 3 to go to the high school to tape up athletes from all different sports and made sure they were all ready to go for practice. After that was over, he would rush back to his office to finish the day treating his patients.

It would be hectic life for some, but it is one that he has treasured for the last nearly three decades.

“My time in practice has been a blessing,” Dennis said. “I truly care about all of the patients and people in the community that I have been involved with. I have tried to be a positive impact on the town through my involvement in different organizations. As with any business, there are bumps in the road. I genuinely appreciate everyone who has had a positive impact on me through these years.

“I have poured my heart and soul in to every aspect of my business and involvement in the community, sometimes at the sacrifice of my wife, Karla. I am eternally grateful for her patience and love. Part of the reason why I am handing over the reigns is that I have a lot of making up for time to do.”



**Damon Dennis (middle) walks out of the locker room with the Wildcat football coaches prior to a game.**

Dennis and his family have made a lot of sacrifices during his

time and many of the Wildcat coaches – both former and present – appreciate what he has done for them and their players.

“As far as what he has meant to the community, it is immeasurable,” longtime former coach Gary Griffin said. “He came in the first year and made himself available to all the coaches and was there for whatever the kids needed from the medical stuff, to a new pair of shoes, or money to go to a team dinner. He was even there to lend an ear to a kid that was having issues from girlfriends, teacher issues or problems at home.

“For me personally, he was a cheerleader when times were not good, he was an advocate for kids when I didn’t always know what was going on behind the scenes. I trusted Doc like he was a member of the coaching staff. I told him a lot of things in confidence so I could get his advice knowing it would not go any further. As far as the community goes, he is a pillar and he is involved in everything and is held in high regards by most. It is really hard for Doc to tell anyone no, so most of his days are longer than just his office hours. Doc is going to be missed in so many ways. He is a very humble man and he is very deserving of slowing down and enjoying the fruits of his labor.”

## A Small Beginning

Back in June of 1992 is when Dennis began to plant his roots in the town he would begin to call home.

Dennis purchased the small satellite office from Dr. Larry Fulk, who at the time also had a practice in Paola. Dennis was less than a year out of school and was eager to get involved in the Louisburg community.

Two months later, Dennis reached out to then Louisburg High School administrator Doug Chisam and asked if he could serve as the team’s doctor – free of charge. Since August of 1992,

Louisburg High School would not be the same.

Dennis made trips over to the high school for treatment and would also follow many of the team's to their games after work was over. It was a life that would go on to create many memories.

"Jim Knox, Don Meek and Doug Chisam were all very supportive and I am forever in their debt," Dennis said. "I started out just going to all games, home and away, and every sport that I could.  At that time I was in the office from 6 am to 7 pm and then off to games 3-4 nights a week. The things I have always enjoyed about being the team doctor was the kids and the coaches. High school athletes have not changed since day one. They want someone who cares about and shows interest in what they are doing. I am still close with a lot of the students who have come through the high school and will continue to be.

"My role evolved over the years. I began doing all the taping before practice and games, Impact testing, announcing basketball and other roles as the coaches requested. I enjoy helping others and that is how my role evolved in to so many other areas. Over the years, the coaches have included me and I will always be grateful to them for allowing me to be a part of the experience."




**Damon and his wife Karla pose for a picture in front of his office back in the early 90s.**

His role got even bigger when the new high school was built and Dennis was asked if he would like to announce basketball games. He certainly didn't mind having a mic in his hand and loved playing off the crowd and making sure the athletes felt a little extra special.

"We had a girls' tournament and Dave Tappan asked me if I would announce the game," Dennis said. "He thought it would be a nice touch to have an announcer. I am not sure he ever asked me to continue, I just did it. I had to be at games anyway and I like to talk, so it worked out. Dave never said to quit, so I just kept doing it.

"I really did enjoy that. I would try to throw in a little funny once and awhile just to see if people were listening. Dottie Cook had a birthday every game night for several years. Knowing the kids so well, it was fun to add their middle name or nickname at the game."

Tappan, who is currently the USD 416 assistant superintendent, worked as the LHS activities director and principal during many of Dennis' years in Louisburg and the two became quick

friends.

With that, Tappan is well aware of Dennis' work ethic and commitment to Louisburg athletics. In fact, he has seen it firsthand.



**Doc D lets out a cheer on the sidelines following a big play during the Wildcats' 2010 state championship game.**

"Most people know that Doc doesn't take vacations very often," Tappan said. "In fact, it usually takes a team of us to get him out of the office for more than a day. But in 2010, he and Karla scheduled a trip over Thanksgiving break to Chicago. Well, that was also the year of our run to the state football championship and there was no way he was going to miss it. In typical Doc D fashion, he lined things up to perfection. He takes a 5 a.m. flight from Chicago to Kansas City, has Karla drive him to the Legends off of I-70 and at about 6:30 I'm

picking him up and we beat the team to Salina. When the bus finally rolls in, he looks at Coach (Gary) Griffin with a grin and says, ‘What took you so long?’ About four hours later we were celebrating a championship.

“The commitment that Doc D has demonstrated over the years to the students of Louisburg schools is second to none. From the football sidelines on a Friday night in the fall, to being behind the mic in the LHS gym during basketball season, Doc always supported the students, the coaches and the administration of USD 416. I am proud to call Damon Dennis my friend.”

## Beyond The Call of Duty

Running a business can be difficult enough, but when you have other responsibilities on top of all that, it can be stressful at times.

The coaches at Louisburg High School never got that when working with Doc D. Veteran and young coaches alike were amazed at the dedication he displayed.

“Doc D is one of the most honest and honorable men I have ever met,” Louisburg soccer coach Kyle Conley said. “He has donated countless hours and years for helping Louisburg student athletes. He always went out of his way to help anyone and everyone. He wasn’t always just helping players. He would always check in on the coaches as well – checking on their well-being, their teams, and their families.

“Doc always went out of his way to make someone feel important and special. He was NEVER too busy for anyone. He will be greatly missed and he is irreplaceable. Thank you Doc D for everything that you have done for my teams, my family and for myself. You are someone I am lucky enough to call a friend.”

That dedication would not only be found after school in the evenings, but even before the sun came up as well.



**Doc D checks out Louisburg's Hallie Hutsell following an injury during last soccer season.**

"Doc D will be greatly missed," Louisburg volleyball coach Jessica Compliment said. "He unselfishly devoted many hours to our athletes and was always a phone call or a text away. I can't count how many times he would meet myself and an athlete or two at the school at 5:30 a.m. prior to departure for a volleyball tournament. Not only was he a great role model and mentor for the athletes, but he served as a great mentor to a young coach for the past 14 years. He will be greatly missed by many."

However, where Dennis is most recognized was on the football sidelines. He did anything from tending to injured athletes, mentoring future trainers and handing out free food or candy to the student section before certain games.

It wasn't gone unnoticed as many around the school and

community know what Doc D has meant to the district.

“If Louisburg had a Mt. Rushmore, Damon would definitely be up there,” Louisburg graduate and longtime coach Jeff Lohse said. “Doc is one of the most selfless people that I know. He was always more than willing to help anyone out and never expected anything in return. I consider Doc to be a great friend of mine and this is definitely bittersweet. I wish him and Karla nothing but the best as they open up this new chapter in their lives. Damon will be missed but his legacy in Louisburg will live on forever.”

Dennis always made sure to welcome the new coaches to the district and made them feel a part of the family and that was the case with boys basketball coach Ty Pfannenstiel when he came to the school three years ago.




**Doc D was presented with a team signed helmet following the team's award banquet two years ago.**

"Doc D is the most selfless man I know," Pfannenstiel said. "What Doc gave to this school and community is unprecedented. He cared so much for all of our athletes, there's no way we are going to be able to replace what he brought to this school. I feel bad for whoever is going to come in and try to fill his shoes – he set the bar way too high."

Dennis has been on the sideline for many of Louisburg's greatest athletic achievements, including three state football appearances and has watched many athletes along the way achieve great individual accomplishments.

He knows that he has been blessed to be able to be a part of Wildcat athletics in one form or another the last 28 years.

“As for favorite memories, it is not always about the wins and losses,” Dennis said. “The things I have most enjoyed is the time spent with athletes and coaches. The things that go on in the locker room, before and after games were the fun part. I have had a behind the scenes view of some pretty amazing people.

“Obviously the 2010 state football championship is at the top of the list. We had gone to the championship twice and come home in second on two occasions. It was a great group to be around and a great experience. If I had to choose a group of kids that really stand out the most, it would be the seniors my first year here (class of 1993). They welcomed me with open arms and made me feel like I was appreciated. I still speak to members of that class often and consider them friends. It was a really special group. I also loved seeing kids accomplish their dreams of success. Louisburg has had its share of champions and athletes that have gone on to do some amazing things.”




**Doc D was also good with equipment as he works on Madden Rutherford's helmet prior to a game.**

In his last week at the office, Doc D has seen a lot of visitors that have come to thank him for everything he has done. Although Dennis won't be around as much as he used to, he wants people to know that this isn't a farewell – but more of a see you later.

"I want everyone to know how much I appreciate their kind words," Dennis said. "There has been talk of various activities surrounding my career change that have been proposed. While I genuinely appreciate this, I don't think I can handle the attention. My emotions have gotten the better of me and I am not sure that I can handle any celebrations publicly, unless everyone wants to see me cry.

"I am not going away. I just won't be at 11 South Broadway or at the high school every day. Thank you to everyone that has

supported me as I have made every effort to support my community.”

No, Doc – thank you…

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# LHS sports preparing to start back up in June with summer workouts



Kansas high school sports has been absent since the middle of March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but that all could change very soon.

During its board of directors meeting earlier this month, the Kansas State High School Activities Association made a change to its summer regulations. Starting on June 1, school employed coaches may begin summer programs as long as it is permitted by the community’s health authorities and the school district.

Coaches at Louisburg High School are making plans to move forward beginning the first of June, but they must meet some guidelines to do so.

In the first two calendar weeks in June, athletes will need to attend a conditioning session each day. Those must be completed to be able to participate in a coach’s camp or

organized competition.

If an athlete is playing football, they must complete an extra five days of conditioning before being able to participate in competition.

The first two weeks of conditioning sessions will not involve weights, indoor facilities or sporting equipment to ensure safety. Masks will be optional at workouts, but six feet of distance will be in place along with no more than the 90 gathering restriction under the phase 3 guidelines put out by the state.

Then on June 15, barring no setbacks, conditioning will include indoor weight sessions and indoor facilities will be allowed. Coaches will also be able to hold camps and competition throughout the summer.



**Louisburg football coach Robert Ebenstein has plotted out summer workouts for his football team beginning with three weeks of conditioning starting June 1**

“I think the guidelines were set to help ensure the safety of all student athletes accords the state, along with their physical health as well as the preparation for the season,” Louisburg football coach Robert Ebenstein said. “Challenges may be there, but overall they are irrelevant as all the teams in the state have to follow the same guidelines. Our school administrators have been very supportive throughout this process.”

Along with the new changes, KSHSAA also lifted the moratorium period at the end of the summer and will allow teams to practice all the way up to the beginning of the school year. Fall sports, however, will take precedence from Aug. 1 through Aug. 15.

For some programs, the changes won’t be much different as what they have experienced in the past, other than practicing social distancing through the first two weeks of conditioning.

“We are still allowed to compete in leagues and camps after all athletes have completed 10 days of conditioning/training,” Louisburg volleyball coach Jessica Compliment said. “Our summer weights program is changing some this summer, so it gives the players a chance to acclimate back into workouts before putting a ball in their hands.

“When you really look at the schedule, we lost the first two weeks in June (in terms of volleyball skill work), but we gained the moratorium week and have full contact until August 16. The fall season starts on August 17. Normally, we can’t have contact, outside of weights and conditioning, after mid-July. This actually gives us about four weeks on the back end of summer to work with the athletes.”




**Louisburg volleyball coach Jessica Compliment has her normal summer scheduled planned out despite a different start.**

Still, the new-look summer won't be without its challenges – especially in the first 10 days of the summer calendar. However, the coaches and athletes will gladly work around the new rules in order to get back together and competing again.

"I think the new guidelines will help kids get back to some normalcy as long as everything continues to get better, but the six feet of social distancing could be challenging when you are coaching a team sport," Louisburg soccer coach Kyle Conley said. "We will find a way to overcome these challenges and help the kids develop as much as possible."

Coaches have already altered their camp schedules for the summer, and that information, along with a list of camps, can be found here.

As for Louisburg cross country, the runners will also be going through a conditioning period like everyone else. They will meet at the football practice field at 7 a.m. for an hour every morning beginning June 1 and that will continue through the summer.

Since school has been out since the middle of March, coaches have tried to find a way to stay in touch with their players – and like with online schooling – the zoom platform has been a big help for coaches.

“Football has been doing online zoom workout together for those currently in high school every Monday, Wednesday and Friday while we have been out of school, so I have still been seeing them and they have been doing some cardio,” Ebenstein said. “We have as normal of a summer planned as possible. We will have our weights sessions, our team camp, review/skills night, and we will have our contact camp that KSHSAA is allowing.”

With everything going on around the state and the country, everything is still in limbo and dates could have to be altered once again depending on what local officials decide. Even with all that, the coaches believe there will be a fall season.



**Louisburg soccer coach Kyle Conley has tried to keep many of his same events for both the boys and girls teams.**

“I am confident our fall season will be played,” Conley said “It may have some things that are different, but we will play. I know that the boys are very anxious in having conversations with some of them.”

Many of the coaches and players are just ready to return to some kind of routine following the spread of COVID-19 and they hope sports can give that to them.

“As of right now, our season is scheduled, and we’ll plan accordingly if told differently,” Compliment said. “But for right now, (activities director Michael) Pickman has stressed that for most of the athletes, a return to summer weights/conditioning/activities will be their first taste of ‘normalcy.’ I’m excited to get back at it and see the athletes

and students again.”

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# Pickman named as new LHS activities director



**Michael Pickman (left) was hired as Louisburg High School’s new activities director and assistant principal last week following the USD Board of Education meeting. Current Louisburg AD, Scott Hinkle (right), will move to the middle school to serve in the same capacity starting next school year.**

Louisburg High School will have a little different look to its activities department for the 2020-21 school year.

Following the USD 416 Board of Education meeting on April 13, Michael Pickman was hired to serve as the school’s new assistant principal and activities director. Pickman will replace Scott Hinkle, who has been in that position for the last two years.

Hinkle will remain in the district and will move over to the middle school to serve in the same capacity.

“I had known for a while that I wanted to continue my education by getting a second master’s degree, but I didn’t really know which area,” Pickman said. “I talked with current

administration and was both inspired and encouraged to explore administrative leadership. This is the job I wanted because it meant staying in Louisburg and continuing to work with the staff and coaches who I know have, can and will achieve great things when it comes to our students and student athletes.

“We are a Louisburg family and I want my daughter in the Louisburg community and school system, so I wouldn’t have done this anywhere else. The atmosphere from district leadership to the building leadership is top notch and I am ready to grow as an educator and work alongside (principal) Jeremy (Holloway) and the administrative staff at the high school and the amazing coaches and support them.”

Pickman has taught English at the high school for the last seven years and has also worked in the Prairie View, West Franklin and Maur Hill Prep school districts.

He has also spent a lot of time in the athletic arena as he has served as the Wildcat boys and girls soccer assistant coach, alongside head coach Kyle Conley, for the last five-plus years.

“It will be tough to give up all aspects of it, but the magic of these soccer programs will be especially difficult,” Pickman said. “Kyle has been an amazing person to coach with and his passion is contagious. Getting to start the girls program with him and the immediate success has been amazing. State finals and big wins and the atmosphere – some don’t ever get to experience that – and lastly the players, both boys and girls who have graduated and those who remain to carry on the greatness are why I said yes to coaching. They make the whole experience amazing and fun.

“So it will be hard, but I would also not have gone anywhere else to do a different job and so I will still be able to support the soccer players and every other student and athlete through my new opportunity and to do so the Wildcat Way.”

As for Hinkle, he spent the last two years as the LHS activities director after coming from Liberal High School. He is excited that his new position at the middle school will allow him to spend more time with family.

“I really enjoyed my time at the high school, even though it was only two years,” Hinkle said. “I am leaving behind a great workplace with a great culture and an unbelievable staff. It was not an easy decision.

“I made the move to the middle school to get back some evenings and weekends. I have been an athletic director for 11 years at the high school level in my career, and I was ready to free up some time. I know I am joining another great staff at LMS, and look forward to the new challenge ahead of me.”