

Opinion: Rough patch leads to new beginning



I am just going to come right out and say it, "I'm scared."

Yeah, it is an unusual way to start out an opinion piece, but there is no two ways around it – I am petrified. But believe it or not, it is what keeps me going.

We have all had at least one point in our existence where our lives changed for better or worse. I have had more than a few of those in my life, but the latest one came on Jan. 9.

It started out like all the other Fridays over the last seven years. I reported to work, spent a few hours in the office getting ready for what was a busy weekend of prep coverage ahead. It was the first action after Christmas break and I was ready to get back into the swing of things.

That never took place.

My bosses came into my office early that afternoon to inform me I was being let go. The job of covering Louisburg athletics was no longer mine. I packed up my things, turned in my key, went home, punched the wall a couple times and cried.

I was scared.

After all the tears came the questions. How was I going to support my family? What am I going to do for a job? The list went on and on and I couldn't come up with many answers.

As it turned out, one of the worst experiences of my life turned into one of the best.

Thanks to a lot of prayers, and support from family and friends, I decided to start Louisburg Sports Zone. Yep, that's right, I went from being unemployed to starting my own business for the first time in my life.

Not exactly the best way to alleviate fears.

However, when I kicked off the site just a month later, I was overwhelmed with the amount of support from students at Louisburg High School, employees throughout the district, parents and several others who offered encouragement and supported my new venture.

I finished the last half of the winter season and all of the spring doing what I took for granted the previous seven years. I got the chance to cover Louisburg athletics again.

You know, this whole starting your own business thing might not have been a bad idea after all. I would have never had the courage to go out on my own had I not been pushed in that direction.

Fast forward to the present and I am still alive and kicking, ready to start my eighth season of roaming the Wildcat sidelines with camera in hand, waiting to tell that next story.

This fall brings a lot of story lines to the Wildcat programs. The football team is looking to improve off its 3-win season a year ago and find its way back to the playoffs with a veteran group returning.

Volleyball is primed and ready to make its fourth consecutive state tournament this year after placing in the top four in the last three years. The Lady Cats return five seniors that have a lot of state experience and that bodes well for another

trip to Salina.

The Wildcat soccer team returns an experienced group from a year ago as they try to crack the top of the Frontier League standings. The cross country team also has several returning runners who will try and qualify for the state meet.

There is a lot to be excited about when it comes to Louisburg sports, but for me personally, I am just fortunate enough to still be a part of it in a small way.

I take a lot of pride in what I do and I hope that it shows when you read stories or look at pictures on this site. I started this business knowing that I will never be rich, but it gives me an opportunity to continue to do what I love.

Thanks to all those who have supported me and for the more than 23,000 views on the site in the last six months. I have said it before, but I am extremely blessed to live in a community that supports each other through good times and bad.

Every day I am fortunate enough to be able to go to work and support my family doing what I know how to do. That is all I have ever wanted, so thank you Louisburg for allowing me to do it.

I am still scared, though.

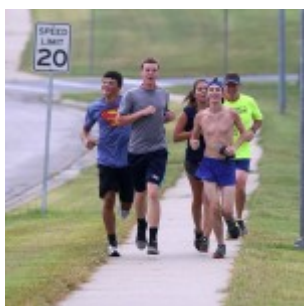
It is that fear that drives me to do the best I can in what I do in my job and in life. I don't want what happened on that day in January to happen again and I will do everything to make sure it doesn't.

Right now I am living the good life. I have the opportunity to work for myself, support my family and do what I enjoy. I can't ask for any more.

I am living the American dream.

I just don't want to wake up.

LHS cross country hits ground running



Members of the Louisburg High School cross country team (from left) Austin Raetzel, Spencer Rogers, Abby Bergman, Wyatt Reece and coach John Reece wrap up a morning workout Wednesday at the school.

Nearly every morning during the summer, Louisburg High School cross country coach John Reece woke up before the sunrise, laced up his running shoes and got ready for a nice jaunt around Louisburg.

More than a dozen Wildcat runners joined Reece on his daily routine to help get in shape for the upcoming season. Instead of holding just a week-long camp, Reece wanted to give his runners a chance to work out on a daily basis throughout the summer.

“I am here for them five days a week and I am here if they want to run,” Reece said. “Coach A (Arianne Seidl) comes over 2-3 times a week, brings her youngest son, puts him in the stroller and away we go. The core group has been better this year and hopefully that will pay off come this season.”

So around 7 a.m. every day, the group of Wildcat runners racked up the miles in an effort to put themselves in the best possible position to find success for the 2015 season.

Reece also got strong leadership throughout the summer from a few different people. Senior Spencer Rogers and sophomore Wyatt Reece were there most days for the boys team, as was senior Abby Bergman for the girls squad.

“Spencer has been here almost every single day to work out,” Reece said. “He is a good person to work around and is a great kid and a great student. He is an all-around kid that has put in the time here and he, and our team, is going to benefit from it. Wyatt has been here unless he was at cross country camp or we were on vacation and he has stepped up to become a spiritual leader and talking everybody up.

“Abby has been great and has been here almost every day as well as a senior. She ran six miles for the first time the other day and she was thrilled about it. She has put the time in and will be a good leader and running from the middle of our group. She will keep the other kids honest with her work ethic.”

There was a big change made to the Kansas cross country landscape in June when the Kansas State High School Activities Association voted to move all girls postseason competitions from a 4-kilometer to a 5-kilometer race – the same distance as the boys.

Each school that hosts a meet has the option to keep the 4K or move to a 5K, but postseason races will go to the new distance. Reece is in favor of the change and doesn't think his girls will have a big problem adjusting to the new format.

“We won't change a whole lot with them,” Reece said. “We will increase their long run base a little bit and that should help them out a little. I think it is great that we are running the 5K now. College coaches are excited about it. Some high

schools coaches aren't, and some girls are a little iffy about it, but it is less than a half-mile farther and that is what they have to understand. It is not a huge change.

"We are planning on running the 5K at our home meet because that is the meet before league and I believe they (the Frontier League) will decide to run the 5K to prepare them for regionals and state. Eventually all invitationals will do it in the near future."

In just a matter of days, Reece will have his entire squad working with him as the first day of practice begins Aug. 17 and he is hoping he can duplicate the strong turnout from a year ago.

"We had a few freshmen run with us this summer, but I am not sure what the turnout will be," Reece said. "I hope to hit 30 again, but not sure if we will get there. I had some girls say they aren't coming back because of the increase to the 5K, but we will just have to see. I am happy with the group I have coming back though."