

Wildcats score 51 unanswered points in rout of Bonner Springs



Louisburg running back Riley Van Eaton gets some running room thanks to offensive linemen Will Hutsell (61) and J.R. Rooney. Van Eaton rushed for 200 yards and three touchdowns in the Wildcats' 51-7 win Friday.

For most of the first half in Friday's home contest against Bonner Springs, Louisburg couldn't put much together offensively.

Bonner Springs dominated possession in the first half and even took a one-point lead at halftime. The Wildcats just couldn't get any rhythm offensively.

That all changed in the second half.

Louisburg scored 51 unanswered points – 45 coming in the second half – on its way to a 51-7 rout of Bonner Springs. The Wildcats went from being down at halftime to a running clock in the fourth quarter.

"Honestly there was no magical speech at halftime or anything, we just went in there and told them that we were fine," Louisburg coach Drew Harding said. "We didn't play well in the first half and it was stuff we were doing to ourselves, like mental errors and penalties. Once we cut those things out, we were efficient and able to move the football."

Bonner Springs' lone score of the game came midway through the second quarter. Quarterback Kahliek Rainey scored on a fourth-and-goal from the 1 that completed a 16-play drive that started in the first quarter.

From then on, it was all Louisburg.

Wildcat quarterback Declan Battle scored on a 3-yard touchdown run late in the first half, but a failed 2-point conversion left Louisburg still behind at halftime.



Louisburg's Nathan Apple (left) and Brayden Yoder (56) bring down a Bonner Springs player early in Friday's home win.

Louisburg's offense got going in the second half. Battle opened the third quarter with a 10-yard touchdown run. Battle then hit Ashton Moore for the 2-point conversion to go up 14-7.

Senior running back Riley Van Eaton also had a big second half with three touchdowns, including two in the third quarter. Van Eaton finished the game with 200 yards rushing on 13 carries.

The offensive line of Nathan Vincent, Brayton Brueggen, Jaymes

Melton, J.R. Rooney, Will Hutsell, Christian Golladay and tight end Mack Newell paved the way for 320 yards of total offense.

“Getting that touchdown at the end of the first half was good to see and then we were able to get the ball in the second half and do the same thing,” Harding said. “After that, we got rolling from there.

“The offensive line got it figured out and really started to wear on them in the second half. We blocked well on the perimeter and our backs and quarterback all ran hard, which is good to see.”



Louisburg senior Mack Newell brings down Bonner Springs' quarterback Kahliek Rainey for a loss Friday.

The Wildcat defense was flying all over the field and held the Bonner Springs offense in check, minus the one first half drive.

Sophomore linebacker Ashton Moore led Louisburg with 14 tackles on the night. Junior Wyatt Holland finished with 12

and Vincent was also in double figures with 10.

Vincent also finished with a sack and a forced fumble, while Rooney also had a sack and a tackle for loss.

"We struggled to get the offense going early, but the defense played great all night," Harding said. "We had one drive where they moved the football on us, but the rest of the time we locked it down."

After a pair of Van Eaton touchdowns in the third quarter, the Wildcat defense forced a Bonner Springs punt deep in its own territory. The Braves mishandled the snap and the kicked the ball out of the end zone for a safety.

Louisburg kept it moving in the fourth quarter as Moore scored on a 1-yard run, then Van Eaton answered with this third touchdown. Van Eaton reversed fields and scored on a 69-yard run to put Louisburg up 44-7.



Louisburg junior Wyatt Holland returns a kickoff for 51 yards, which set up a second half score Friday against Bonner Springs.

His brother, Darby Van Eaton, sealed the win late in the contest with a 9-yard run of his own. Kicker Layne Ryals was also 5-for-5 on extra points on the night.

The Wildcats have now won three straight after losing their week one contest to Rogers (Ark.) Heritage. Louisburg will be tested once again this Friday.

Louisburg will travel to undefeated Eudora in a game that could have big implications on the Frontier League title.

“Week one we made a lot of errors and it was a game we felt like we should have won,” Harding said. “To win three straight feels good, but we have a tough stretch here the rest of the way and that starts with Eudora. Hopefully we can keep this momentum going.

“It is a big game, there is no doubt about that. Eudora is undefeated and they have talented and very skilled kids. It sets up a big game for us and we have to be ready to play.”

LOU 0 6 24 21 – 51

BON 0 7 0 0 – 7

SCORING SUMMARY

Second Quarter

B: Kahliek Rainey 1 run (kick good)

L: Declan Battle 3 run (2-point failed)

Third quarter

L: Battle 10 run (Ashton Moore pass from Battle)

L: Riley Van Eaton 2 run (Layne Ryals kick)

L: Van Eaton 17 run (Ryals kick)

L: Safety (punt out of end zone)

Fourth quarter

L: Ashton Moore 1 run (Ryals kick)

L: Van Eaton 69 run (Ryals kick)

L: Darby Van Eaton 9 run (Ryals kick)

STATISTICS

RUSHING – Riley Van Eaton 13-200; Declan Battle 8-70; Jase Hovey 3-14; Darby Van Eaton 2-14; Ashton Moore 3-9

PASSING – Declan Battle 3-8-13

RECEIVING – Mason Dobbins 1-6; Mack Newell 1-4; Ashton Moore 1-3

TACKLES – Ashton Moore 14, Wyatt Holland 12, Nathan Vincent 10, Layne Ryals 8, J.R. Rooney 7, Jase Hovey 6, Caden Caplinger 3, Will Hutsell 3, Brayton Brueggen 3, Declan Battle 2, Mason Dobbins 1, Hunter Heinrich 1, Reid McCaskill 1, Isaiah Whitley 1, Mack Newell 1, Carson Wade 1, Nathan Apple 1, Hunter Moore 1, Brayden Yoder 1

Battle scores four touchdowns as Wildcats roll Baldwin in home opener



Louisburg junior quarterback Declan Battle scored four touchdowns Friday against Baldwin as the Wildcats cruised to a 41-13 win at Wildcat Stadium.

It had been almost 11 months since the Louisburg football team had a chance to play a game on its home field.

After going out on the road in the playoffs last season, and then starting the first two weeks on the road this year, the Wildcats were looking forward to a return home.

The Wildcats got the homecoming they were hoping for as they rolled to a 41-13 win over Baldwin on Friday at Wildcat Stadium in a game that featured a running clock in the fourth quarter.

"It felt really good to finally play at home," Louisburg coach Drew Harding said. "With going on the road for our jamboree, and then first two games away, it seemed like it had been forever. We had a really good crowd and it was an awesome environment for us to play in.

"Overall, I thought we played pretty well. We definitely played sloppy at times and still had some self inflicted wounds with penalties and mental errors. We need to continue to work on limiting those types of mistakes."

Louisburg quarterback Declan Battle made his presence known early as he hurt the Bulldogs with his legs and his arm.

Battle scored four touchdowns, including two on the ground, to lead the Wildcats. He finished the game with 142 yards through the air and another 137 yards rushing.

"I felt like we had a lot of individuals play well and Declan was one of those," Harding said. "He did a good job with his reads and he ran the football well when the opportunity presented itself. He threw some good balls and hit his receivers in stride so they could make yards after the catch."

Battle got the Wildcats going early as they scored on their first drive that ended on a 44-yard touchdown pass to senior Mason Dobbins.

The Louisburg special teams got involved next. The Wildcats forced Baldwin to punt on its first possession and had the Bulldogs pinned near the goal line.

Louisburg senior Carson Wade and junior Wyatt Holland converged to block the punt. Junior Brady Hickey then picked up the loose ball in the endzone for the Wildcats' second score of the game.



Louisburg offensive linemen Will Hutsell (left) and J.R. Rooney take on a pair of Baldwin defenders Friday at Wildcat Stadium.

In the second quarter, Battle struck again, this time on a 49-yard touchdown run to put the Wildcats up three scores. Senior Riley Van Eaton added a 12-yard touchdown to put the Wildcats up 28-0 at halftime.

For the game, the Wildcats amassed more than 400 yards of total offense, thanks to its offensive line. Nathan Vincent, Brayton Brueggem, Jaymes Melton, J.R. Rooney and Will Hutsell, along with tight end Mack Newell.

"To have over 400 yards of offense is a testament to how the offensive line played," Harding said. "They did a really good job adjusting to what Baldwin was trying to do up front. I thought they played physical all night. Our perimeter blocking was better as well. In order to have some of those big plays you have to have backs and receivers blocking down field and I thought they did a better job of that this week."



Senior punt returner Jackson Kush runs for some extra yards Friday against Baldwin.

The Wildcats (2-1) scored two more touchdowns in the second half. Battle opened the third quarter with a 34-yard touchdown

run and then connected with senior Corbin Hamman for a 26-yard score to go up 41-0.

Senior kicker Layne Ryals also had a good night as he was 5-for-6 on extra points.

The first string defense pitched a shutout for Louisburg as the Bulldogs didn't score until late in the third quarter.

Sophomore linebacker Ashton Moore led the Wildcats with 10 tackles on the night, while Vincent finished with seven. Vincent also had the team's lone sack, while Holland forced a fumble and Ryals earned the recovery.

"I thought we were in a much better position against the pass this week," Harding said. "We were in their hip pocket for most of the night. We can still improve on playing the ball, but our positioning was much better. There were a few missed tackles here and there, but overall I thought we played the run pretty well. We were also able to score on special teams this week, which is huge."



Senior Hunter Moore drags a Baldwin runner down by his jersey

late in Friday's game.

Harding also had the opportunity to empty his bench and give his reserves some well-earned varsity time.

"I thought it was really good to get some of those younger players in the game," Harding said. "They work their butt off on the scout team all week, so it was nice for them to get some playing time on Friday. It is good experience for them and hopefully benefits us down the road."

Louisburg will try for its third straight win this Friday when it hosts Bonner Springs. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m.

LOU 14 14 13 0 – 41

BAL 0 0 7 6 – 13

SCORING SUMMARY

First quarter

L: Mason Dobbins 44 pass from Declan Battle (Layne Ryals kick)

L: Brady Hickey 0 punt return for TD (Ryals kick)

Second quarter

L: Battle 49 run (Ryals kick)

L: Riley Van Eaton 12 run (Ryals kick)

Third quarter

L: Battle 34 run (Ryals kick)

L: Corbin Hamman 26 pass from Battle (kick failed)

B: Jack Harvey 66 run (kick good)

Fourth quarter

B: Jaiden Michael 6 run (kick failed)

STATISTICS

RUSHING – Declan Battle 9-137; Riley Van Eaton 9-97; Russell Wiseman 2-10; Darby Van Eaton 2-9; Wyatt Holland 2-5; Jase Hovey 1-1

PASSING – Declan Battle 7-11-142; Lane Cunningham 3-4-10

RECEIVING – Mason Dobbins 2-72; Caden Caplinger 2-26; Corbin Hamman 1-26; Mack Newell 1-11; Myles Vohs 1-9; Ashton Moore 1-7; Brock Vohs 1-1.

TACKLES – Ashton Moore 10, Nathan Vincent 7, Isaiah Whitley 6, Wyatt Holland 6, J.R. Rooney 6, Carson Wade 4, Hunter Heinrich 3, Erik Lien 3, Reid McCaskill 2, Brady Hickey 2, Jase Hovey 2, Darby Van Eaton 2, Hunter Moore 2, Brayden Yoder 2, Will Hutsell 2, Declan Battle 1, Mason Dobbins 1, Logan Henry 1, Layne Ryals 1, Brayton Brueggen 1.

Week 2 Athlete of the Week: Nathan Vincent



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

NATHAN VINCENT, SENIOR, FOOTBALL

Louisburg senior Nathan Vincent played a big role, on both sides of the ball, in the Wildcats; 35-14 win over rival Paola on Friday. As a defensive end, Vincent led the Wildcats with 13 tackles on the night. He also recorded a sack and had a fumble recovery.

Vincent is also the starting left tackle for the Wildcats. He helped lead an offensive line that paved the way for nearly 350 yards of total offense against the Panthers, including 225 yards on the ground.

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



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Wildcats roll past Paola on road to get first victory of season



Louisburg sophomore Ashton Moore squeezes through a hole for a touchdown thanks to the blocking of Jase Hovey (22) on Friday in Paola.

PAOLA – Louisburg couldn't have asked for a better start against its rival on the road.

The Wildcats scored two quick touchdowns against Paola on Friday, but that run was short-lived only to see Paola take the lead back in a matter of minutes.

It was a see-saw battle through the first quarter-and-a-half, but it was the Wildcats who dominated the rest of the way.

Louisburg scored 22 unanswered points and came away with a 35-14 victory over the Panthers. It was the Wildcats' first win of the season, and for head coach Drew Harding – who is also a Louisburg graduate – it was the perfect time for him to get his first career win as a head coach.

"It is a big time rivalry, so anytime you can beat Paola it feels good," Harding said. "It is a little different playing them this early in the year, but it is still fun.

"We are never going to be sad about to win, but we know we have some things that we need to clean up. The good thing is

it is only the second game of the season and we can hopefully continue to get better.”

Louisburg (1-1) got the opening kickoff and drove right down the field. A 25-yard pass from quarterback Declan Battle to Mason Dobbins, set up a 4-yard touchdown run by sophomore Ashton Moore.



Mason Dobbins rises up for a catch early in the first quarter of Friday's game against Paola.

Senior Nathan Vincent recovered a Paola fumble on the Panthers first play from scrimmage and the Wildcats took advantage.

Battle hit Mack Newell for a 22-yard pass, which put the ball on the 1-yard line. From there, senior Jase Hovey ran the ball in for the touchdown, and after a failed extra point attempt, the Wildcats led 13-0.

Paola answered as they went on a 92-yard drive to score its first touchdown, then on the first play of the second quarter, quarterback Jett Osbern hit Landon Taylor for a 51-yard touchdown pass and the Panthers took the 14-13 lead.

"We came out hot and drove it right down the field," Harding said. "We had success right off the bat, but then I felt like we let our foot off the gas pedal a little bit. Paola made some good plays too and you have to give them credit. We responded in the second half, and even though it was still a little sloppy, we were able to put drives together when we needed to."

One of those drives came midway through the second quarter. Facing a fourth-and-1 on the Paola 36-yard line, Battle ran a bootleg around the left side and went untouched for a 36-yard score and running back Riley Van Eaton ran in the 2-point conversion.



Quarterback Declan Battle stiff-arms a Paola defender for a big gain Friday in Paola.

Louisburg's defense rose to the occasion next as Hovey scored his second touchdown of the game, this time on a 46-yard interception return for a score. After a Layne Ryals extra point, the Wildcats took a 28-14 halftime lead.

"Jase plays that centerfield safety position for us and he is

big, athletic and he can run,” Harding said. “He can make a lot of plays for us and he made a couple big ones for sure.

“As a defense, we started off a little slow, and struggled against their pass a little bit, but we made some adjustments and I thought it was a good defensive game.”

The Wildcats shut out Paola in the second half as they held the Panthers to just 88 total yards in the final two quarters and just 56 yards on the ground.

Nathan Vincent led the Wildcat tacklers with 13 on the night, including a fumble recovery in the first quarter, and a sack. Junior Wyatt Holland and Moore also finished in double digit tackles with 11 and 10, respectively, while senior Will Hutsell added nine of his own.



Louisburg senior Nathan Vincent sacks Paola quarterback Jett Osbern on Friday in Paola.

Louisburg had success moving the ball down the field with their rushing attack – specifically Van Eaton and Moore.

Van Eaton broke several tackles on his way to 111 yards the

ground on 25 carries. Moore had four carries for 56 yards, while Battle had 57 yards rushing.

The offensive line of Vincent, Hutsell, J.R. Rooney, Jaymes Melton and Brayton Brueggen provided the open holes to run through.

"We challenged them and we told them that we wanted to see them run the football downhill and for the most part we did that," Harding said. "Offensive line was firing out and hitting people, so overall it was a good game for us."

Louisburg will try and make it back-to-back wins this Friday when it hosts Baldwin for its home opener.

"I like where we are," Harding said. "We are nowhere near a finished product and we aren't close to our potential. We just have to keep getting better and it will be nice to finally be at home. It feels like we haven't played a game there in so long, so it will be fun."

LOU 13 15 0 7 – 35

PAO 7 7 0 0 – 14

SCORING SUMMARY

First Quarter

L: Ashton Moore 4 run (Layne Ryals kick)

L: Jase Hovey 1 run (XP failed)

P: Landon Taylor 11 pass from Jett Osbern (kick good)

Second quarter

P: Taylor 51 pass from Osbern (kick good)

L: Declan Battle 36 run (Riley Van Eaton run)

L: Hovey 46 interception return (Ryals kick)

Fourth quarter

L: Riley Van Eaton 26 run (Ryals kick)

STATISTICS

RUSHING – Riley Van Eaton 25-111; Declan Battle 7-57; Ashton Moore 4-56; Jase Hovey 1-1

PASSING – Battle 10-16-119

RECEIVING – Van Eaton 3-36; Mason Dobbins 2-32; Mack Newell 2-27; Moore 2-23; Caden Caplinger 1-1

TACKLES – Nathan Vincent 13, Wyatt Holland 11, Ashton Moore 10, Will Hutsell 9, Carson Wade 5, Jase Hovey 5, Layne Ryals 5, Mason Dobbins 3, Hunter Heinrich 3, Mack Newell 3, Brady Hickey 3, J.R. Rooney 3, Caden Caplinger 2, Declan Battle 1, Jackson Kush 1, Brayton Brueggen 1

Wildcats' trip to Arkansas ends with close loss to 7A Heritage



Louisburg running back Riley Van Eaton runs for some extra

yards despite having his helmet ripped off Friday at Heritage High School in Rogers, Ark. The Wildcats fell to the War Eagles, 20-16.

ROGERS, Ark. – There were a lot of first for the Louisburg football team on Friday.

For one, it was the Wildcats' first game of the season. Second, for the first time in school history, Louisburg made the 3-hour trip to play a school in Arkansas.

It was also the first game for Drew Harding as the Wildcat head football coach.

A lot of unknowns plagued the Wildcats Friday against Heritage High School in Rogers, Ark. Despite all that, the Wildcats found a lot of positives going up against a 7A program in a different state.

Unfortunately, the one thing the Wildcats wanted to leave with, they couldn't.

Louisburg nearly came back to Kansas with its first win of the season, but fell short in a 20-16 loss to the War Eagles.

Two turnovers, penalties and miscues all hampered the Wildcats' efforts to win their season opener. Still, Louisburg found itself with a chance to win the game late and Harding found a lot of positives.



Louisburg senior lineman Nathan Vincent puts some pressure on Heritage quarterback Carter Hensley on Friday.

"We saw a lot of really good things," Harding said. "I am not discouraged at all after this game about what our potential can be. We had a lot self-inflicted wounds that will get cleaned up. That is a big difference from week one to week two. If we clean those up, it is a different ball game."

After both teams punted on their opening possessions, the Wildcat defense had Heritage backed up once again with a 1st and 20. Instead, the War Eagles connected on a 33-yard short pass that resulted in a touchdown.

The Wildcats appeared they were going to answer as they took the ball to midfield, but fumbled the ball and stopped one of many drives on the night.

The first score of the season for Louisburg came thanks to Ashton Moore, but not from his running back spot. Moore, a linebacker, tracked down a War Eagle running back for a safety late in the first quarter to cut the Heritage lead to 7-2.

Louisburg then answered on its next drive as senior Riley Van Eaton and Moore broke off big runs that set up a 4-yard score by Van Eaton. The Wildcats went for two points, and a Declan Battle tipped pass found the hands of a diving Isaiah Whitley to give them a 10-7 lead.



Isaiah Whitley dives to make a catch on a 2-point conversion, while Mack Newell signals for the score in the first half of Friday's contest at Heritage.

Heritage followed that up with a drive of its own that resulted in a 1-yard touchdown by quarterback Carter Hensley. Louisburg senior Jase Hovey blocked the extra point to keep it at a 3-point game.

Right before halftime, the Wildcats drove the ball down the field and was highlighted by a long run by Moore that set up a 25-yard field goal by Layne Ryals to tie it at 13-all.

It was a defensive battle in the second half as both teams had trouble finding the end zone.

Ryals gave Louisburg the lead for the second time as he

converted a 32-yard field goal to put the Wildcats up 16-13 in the third quarter.

Van Eaton and Moore provided a bulk of the offense for the Wildcats as the two combined for 160 yards on the ground. Van Eaton carried the ball 15 time for 109 yards and Moore finished with 51 on just three carries.

Louisburg had to face more obstacles as several players had to leave the game with cramping issues, including Moore and senior tight end Mack Newell.

“Downhill running was our best offense for sure,” Harding said. “We started to get some cramps, and that hurt us as we weren’t able to keep our two-back sets going. We are a better passing team than we showed out there and I think that is going to improve.”

The Wildcats tried extend their lead in the fourth quarter. They drove the ball down the field, including a conversion on fourth down, but a bad snap on the Heritage 30-yard line put the Wildcats out of field goal range at the 45, for a 15-yard loss on a third down with under nine minutes left.

“We were driving and doing well,” Harding said. “We had a third and 8 and had a play called that would get us five yards or so and we were planning on going for it on fourth and short. We didn’t take care of what we needed to and that swung the momentum a little bit.”



Louisburg senior Layne Ryals brings down a War Eagle running back.

Up until that point, the Wildcat defense had only given up one first down in the second half. However, the War Eagles opened their next drive with a 35-yard pass and ended with a 9-yard touchdown pass from Hensley on third and goal with six minutes left.

The Wildcats had time for a game-winning drive, but Heritage intercepted a Battle pass and the Wildcats didn't get another chance.

Defensively, the Wildcats held firm against Heritage, but gave up 253 yards through the air, including several big plays that led to scores for the War Eagles.

"At times we struggled to defend the pass a little bit," Harding said. "You have to give some credit to them as well. They have a good quarterback and some good receivers that can get open. They are a quality team. But we had some misalignment stuff and some of those first game mistakes."

Against the run, the Wildcats gave up just 56 yards on the ground. On special teams, Lucas Swartz forced a fumble on a mishandled Heritage punt in the second half and Ryals recovered.

Even with the cramping in the second half, Moore led the Wildcats with 13 tackles, including three for a loss. Junior Wyatt Holland and Hovey also finished in double figures with 12 stops each.

Although the Wildcats had a long trip back home, there is a lot of optimism for what lies ahead for the season.

“Obviously we would have liked to win, but I don’t regret the experience at all,” Harding said. “They have a beautiful facility that we were able to come play at and it was a cool experience for the kids. We wanted to finish a little better in the game, but if we correct the things we need to, then I think this will be a positive for us in the long run.”

Louisburg will try for its first win on the season Friday when the Wildcats travel to rival Paola. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m.

SCORING SUMMARY

HER 7 6 0 7 – 20

LOU 2 11 3 0 – 16

First quarter

H: Tillman McNair 33 pass from Carter Hensley (kick good)

L: Ashton Moore safety

Second quarter

L: Riley Van Eaton 4 run (Declan Battle pass to Isaiah Whitley)

H: Hensley 1 run (kick blocked)

L: Layne Ryals 25 FG

Third quarter

L: Ryals 32 FG

Fourth quarter

H: McNair 9 pass from Hensely (kick good)

STATISTICS

RUSHING – Riley Van Eaton 15-109; Ashton Moore 3-51; Declan Battle 9-33; Wyatt Holland 1-0

PASSING – Declan Battle 8-21-41

RECEIVING – Mason Dobbins 3-29; Riley Van Eaton 3-7; Caden Caplinger 2-5

TACKLES – Ashton Moore 13, Wyatt Holland 12, Jase Hovey 12, Layne Ryals 9, Nathan Vincent 7, Carson Wade 6, Declan Battle 4, Will Hutsell 4, J.R. Rooney 4, Mack Newell 2, Conlee Hovey 1, Isaiah Whitley 1, Brayden Yoder 1

Week 1 Athlete of the Week: Layne Ryals



Here is the Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Week for week

one of the fall sports season, sponsored by Edward Jones-Craig Holtzen.

LAYNE RYALS, SENIOR, FOOTBALL

Louisburg senior Layne Ryals kept the Wildcat football team in the game with his leg last Friday during the team's trip to Heritage High School in Rogers, Ark. Ryals converted both of his field goal attempts from 25 and 32 yards in the team's 20-16 setback.

As the team's punter, he pinned the opposition inside the 20 on four of his six punts. Ryals also made an impact as the team's starting safety. He finished the game with nine tackles and had a fumble recovery.

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.



Veteran group, new head coach to lead Wildcat football in 2022



Louisburg junior quarterback Declan Battle returns as the Wildcat signal caller this season after Battle recorded 20 touchdowns as a sophomore.

This isn't just any normal season for the Louisburg football team – in fact – it is almost the exact opposite.

The Wildcats are under new leadership as Drew Harding begins his first season as the team's head coach. It is a new voice and different way of doing things for the players.

If that wasn't a big enough change, the schedule is another one.

Louisburg will travel outside the state to play Rogers Heritage High School in Rogers, Ark. for the season's first game on Friday. Not only will the Wildcats be traveling, but they will be playing a large 7A program in the process.

Then, in a game normally reserved for the final week of the season, Louisburg will face off with rival Paola in week two.

In what seems like a hectic beginning for many, there is a semblance of familiarity. Louisburg brings back 16 seniors to this season's team, and several returning starters from last year.

It is that experience that Harding hopes can provide smooth sailing for a hectic first part of the season.

"I am definitely lucky coming in with 16 seniors," Harding said. "It is really nice from a leadership standpoint. From a competitive standpoint, when you have some seniors who aren't

all on one side of the ball, you can put together a good scout team and gives us a good look. Those guys have been willing to do whatever. In practice, if they aren't playing on defense, they are going in to help out on offense. It has been good in developing some depth on the lines.

"Most of these guys have been playing for awhile now, so hopefully that pays off for us and that game experience is something that you can't replicate. It is really beneficial, especially early in the season."

Offensively, they return nearly the entire side of the ball from 2021 and it all starts with junior quarterback Declan Battle.

Battle, who amassed more than 1,800 yards and 20 touchdowns last season as an honorable mention all-league player, will lead the Wildcat offense behind an experienced offensive line and backfield.

Harding is hoping his signal caller can take another step forward this season.



Senior Mason Dobbins returns to lead the Louisburg wide receivers after earning second team all-league honors last

year.

“From what I have seen so far, his decision making is better and he is a lot more comfortable I would say,” Harding said. “We try to give him some simple reads where he can have one quick read and then get rid of the football. Same way in the run game. Having a year under your belt as a quarterback on Friday nights is huge. I think he is primed for a big season for us.”

Behind Battle, senior Riley Van Eaton and sophomore Ashton Moore return at running back after seeing varsity time a year ago. Junior Wyatt Holland also made the move to running back as all three will get their fair share of carries.

Senior Mason Dobbins, who earned second team all-league receiving honors a year ago, will lead the wide receiver group. Seniors Jackson Kush, Corbin Hamman, along with juniors Caden Caplinger, Brady Hickey and Hunter Heinrich, will all see time on the perimeter.



Louisburg senior Nathan Vincent returns and will play a big part on the offensive and defensive lines.

On the offensive line, the Wildcats will see a rotation of seniors Nathan Vincent, J.R. Rooney, Brayton Brueggen, Will Hutsell, Christian Golladay, junior Jaymes Melton and sophomore Conlee Hovey.

The biggest change on offense will be at the tight end spot. Senior Mack Newell made the move from soccer to football this fall and brings size to the position.

Newell, who is 6-3 and 230 pounds, will provide help in the run game and also a big target for Battle in the open field.

"That is a big addition for us," Harding said. "There aren't many high school football players who have the frame that he has. The ability to move and have the strength is going to help us in the run game as a blocker. He also is a big target over the middle in the pass game. There probably won't be too many secondary guys excited to try and bring him down. The scrimmage (last Friday) was really good for him since he hasn't played in two years and he was able to get the nerves out."

Defensively, the Wildcats also return several starters from a year ago.

Rooney will anchor the interior of the defensive line after being named a first-team all-league player last season. He will be joined by a rotation of Brueggen, Golladay and Hutsell. From the defensive end spot, Newell, senior Isaiah Whitley, Vincent and Hovey will all see playing time there.



Senior J.R. Rooney will help anchor the defensive line after earning first team all-league honors last year.

At linebacker, Holland and Moore will lead the way along with sophomores Lucas Swartz and Brayden Yoder.

Senior Jase Hovey leads the secondary from the safety spot after being named a first-team all-league player last year and will be joined by fellow seniors Layne Ryals and Carson Wade. Battle, Heinrich, Dobbins and Hickey will all see time at the cornerback spot.

"We are fast," Harding said of his defense. "The sideline to sideline speed is really, really good. Our linebackers are really fast, our safeties can run really well and we have a lot of team speed. Our defensive line is really athletic as well. We aren't the biggest by any means, but I think our speed can give teams some trouble."

Louisburg also returns its veteran kicker as Ryals, who was a second team all-league punter and honorable mention kicker a season ago, looks to take another step forward this season.

The Wildcats will certainly get a test out of the gate as they travel to face a bigger Rogers Heritage team that has struggled in recent years. Still, Harding knows it will be a challenge going up against a bigger program.

“It is definitely a different start than I was picturing when I first took over,” Harding said. “We are excited to go to Rogers and I think it will be a cool experience for us. We are playing a 7A school and it is something we are looking forward to. We are going to do some different stuff and hopefully this experience is something our kids will remember forever. There is no one in Louisburg, Kansas who said they have played a school from Arkansas.”

Louisburg is anxious to get back to the postseason after falling in the first round to the eventual state champion, St. James Academy. And despite having schools like St. James, Bishop Miege and St. Thomas Aquinas in 4A this season, Harding has high hopes for his group of players.

“Their goal every year is to win a state championship,” Harding said of his players. “We want to compete each and every game, but we can’t get there unless we get better. I know it is cliché, but we have to get better every single day. We need to come together as a team and we have a lot of potential. If we do those things, I think we have a chance to be pretty good.”

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.

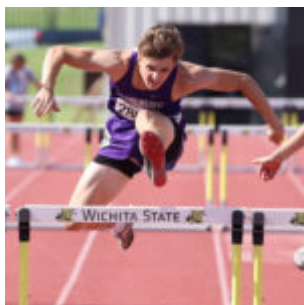


Senior Claire Brown passes the ball during a drill Thursday.

"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."

Tom Koontz named 2022 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year



It was the middle of December, with the temperature near freezing, and Tom Koontz was at the track.

Yes, the outdoor track at Wildcat Stadium. As you might expect, there weren't many people around on that frigid day.

Almost six months earlier, Koontz won a state title in the 110-meter high hurdles as a junior, but it was the 300 hurdle race that haunted him. He just couldn't get over finishing as a state runner-up.

"All I could think about was winning state and winning the 300s this time around," Koontz said. "It drove me so much, so winning that race, when it came down to the inches, was basically the definition of achieving a dream."

The hard work, and practicing his craft, all paid off as he got his revenge and won state in the 300 hurdles along with defending with 110 hurdle title in Wichita back in May.

It was Koontz's drive that helped him become one of the pillars of a team that finished as the state champion in 2021 and also one that took third at state this past May.

It was also one of the reasons why Koontz was chosen as the Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year.

“To win this is a huge honor because it adds me to a list of former Louisburg athletes like Blue Caplinger and Weston Guetterman, both people I looked up to for a long time,” Koontz said. “Now it feels like I can be one of those people to be looked up at, and it’s an amazing feeling.”

There weren’t a lot of people necessarily looking up at Koontz on the track – a lot of them were trying to catch him from behind.

Koontz dominated both hurdle races all season long and only lost on a few different occasions. It is a sport, and event, that is a passion of his and it started as freshman.

He came out of nowhere and qualified for state in the 300 hurdles and that lit the spark for what he was to become.

“Track started simply as another sport, but as I started to get better and impress myself with what I was capable of, I felt the need to devote more and more time to it,” Koontz said. “I changed so much for it, like my diet and sleep habits, where I went and who I hung out with, what I did after practice, etc... It was the most important thing to me for a long time.”

Still, as much as he wanted to win a state title in the 300 hurdles, he wasn’t exactly loving it.



The Louisburg High School head coaches voted Tom Koontz and Delaney Wright as the Louisburg Sports Zone Athletes of the Year.

“Since I started running the race freshman year, I never really liked it,” Koontz said. “In fact, I despised it and only liked it for the feeling of finishing it. But coach (Leanna) Willer knew I had potential to be great at it.

“It was the only event I qualified in freshman year, and I was the only freshman on the list for it. So to come back my junior and just barely lose, stuck with me and it was my focus to win this year.”

Not only does Koontz have three state titles under his belt, he has eight career state medals, including four as a member of the 4×100 and 4×400 relay teams. He was a member of the 4×100 that broke the school record at the Frontier League meet last month.

As much love as he has for track, football is right up there for Koontz.

He found himself as one of the Wildcat starting cornerbacks this past season. Koontz finished the year with 46 tackles, four deflections and a forced fumble.

“Football was a sport for me to be a part of a team, that really made me feel like a part of something,” he said. “So finally getting to play the field the whole season was exhilarating, and I wish I could do it again. Having to say goodbye to it was difficult, just ask any of them who saw me after the St. James (playoff) game.

“Playing a sport that creates such powerful emotions like football and track and anything else helped me grow as a person and an athlete, and each one sharpened my ability in and out of the classroom. It’s hard work, but the work is rewarding.”

After four years of competing at the high school level, Koontz doesn’t really have a favorite moment. It is the overall experience that he will remember most.

“It’s hard for me to pick just one thing that sticks out about high school,” Koontz said. “I couldn’t just pick one day. What does stick with me is the idea that one day, I’m not sure when, I went from someone admiring those who could do amazing things, to being the person doing those things. Being able to win homecoming king or be a state champion. It’s unreal that it happened.

“So I would say if anything sticks out the most, it’s the surrealness of it all, and how I was able to make a name for myself, in high school at least. But I’m also glad I could make such good friends and have such great coaches and teachers to support me.”

Previous winners:

2018: Austin Moore

2019: Blue Caplinger

2020: Garrett Rolofson

2021: Weston Guetterman

Doles looking forward to football career at Ottawa University



Louisburg's Brandon Doles is excited for the opportunity to join the Ottawa University football program this fall after a strong senior season for Louisburg.

There was a time where Brandon Doles felt football just wasn't in the cards.

That time came his junior season when he sustained a gruesome leg injury that ended his football and wrestling seasons. It was a long road to recovery.

Doles also had a love for baseball and thought it was the sport he wanted to focus on the most. Still, he wanted to give football one last shot and had a strong season for Louisburg in his senior campaign.

What he found out was, his love for the game was still there. So much so, Doles is continuing on at the college level.

Doles signed his letter of intent to play football at Ottawa University earlier this spring and he can't wait to make the jump from high school to college.

"The past couple of years I thought I wanted to play college baseball, especially after my injury," Doles said. "But after I got back on the field my senior year, I knew that football was what I wanted to do and I can't wait to continue to play at the next level."

Ottawa is a familiar place for Doles as his brother, Desmond, also played football for the Braves and he grew up following the Ottawa.



Brandon Doles signed his letter of intent earlier this spring to play football for Ottawa University. Sitting next to Brandon are his parents Desiree and Bryan, along with his brother Desmond. Standing from left is former Louisville head coach Robert Ebenstein and current head coach Drew Harding.

So when it came to make a decision, he leaned on his brother for some guidance.

"Definitely Dez playing there helped with my decision," he said. "Watching the team play the last four years has been so much fun. He showed me how great the atmosphere was with the team and on campus and helped me make my decision."

However, there will be something new to the program that Doles

didn't see much in those four year – a new coach.

Nick Davis was chosen to take over the program after serving as the defensive coordinator last season.

Defense is where Doles will try to thrive on the football field as the Braves hope to use him as a middle linebacker, along with some time as a long snapper.

"They have some of the best facilities which was a major factor and I really liked their coaching staff when I came and visited," Doles said. "I'm excited to play for the new head coach in Coach Davis."

Doles had a big final season for the Wildcats as he was a first-team All-Frontier League selection from the linebacker spot. He finished with 90 tackles and averaged more than 11 per game. He also forced two fumbles.

Now, he hopes some of that success transfers over to the college level.

"Playing college football has always been a dream of mine ever since I was little," Doles said. "Seeing all my friends and family there at my signing day, supporting me, was the best feeling ever and always knowing they are there to cheer me on is amazing.

"As a freshman it's gonna be hard to get playing time but I will be working hard all summer and all fall to try and see some time on the field."