

Blue Caplinger selected as 2019 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year



Blue Caplinger made history in a few different ways for Louisburg High School during the 2018-19 season.

Caplinger, along with fellow LHS student Alyse Moore, became the first Wildcat athlete in recent memory – if ever – to participate in two sports during the same season. All that led up to what was a spectacular finish to his senior year.

Caplinger helped the 4×400-meter relay to a state championship in late May, which was the school's first individual track title since 2015. When all was said and done, Caplinger lettered in four sports this past year.

These are just a couple of the reasons why Caplinger was chosen as the 2019 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year.

The award, which is in its second year, is to recognize an outstanding LHS student athlete. Louisburg Sports Zone asked the head coaches at LHS to submit nominations and those nominations were then organized and submitted back to the coaches for a vote.

The coaches then submitted their top three choices and the number of votes were added up, which decided the winner.

Caplinger was one of the leaders of the Wildcat football team that reeled off 10 straight wins to start the season and captured a regional championship before falling to eventual state champion Bishop Miege.

He was an All-Frontier League player on both sides of the ball as he earned first team defensive honors from the safety spot with 31 tackles, two fumble recoveries and an interception.



Blue Caplinger poses for picture with his coaches (from left), boys track coach Andy Wright, head football coach Robert Ebenstein and baseball coach Joel McGhee. Not pictured is wrestling coach Bobby Bovaird.

Caplinger played a couple different positions offensively and earned second team all-league honors as a multi-purpose player. He had 310 yards rushing and four touchdowns to go

along 234 yards receiving and two more scores.

He was also the lead blocker on a lot of the big runs that teammate Austin Moore – who was a first-team all-league and all-state running back – had during the season.

“Blue was the most all-purpose player we had,” Louisburg football coach Robert Ebenstein said. “He was the ideal teammate who put the team first all the time. He always did anything that was asked of him. He was a tough competitor and a great all-around person.”

During the wrestling season, Caplinger was a state-ranked wrestler at 170 pounds for much of the year. He ended his season with a team-high 33-5 record and was a regional champion.

At the Class 4A state tournament, Caplinger finished one win shy of his first state medal. In all, Caplinger finished with a team high in wins and also holds the school record for most career reversals (72) and most career escapes (86). He ended his Wildcat career with a 111-57 record.

“Anyone who knows Blue understands what a great young man he is,” Louisburg wrestling coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Blue embodies so much about what wrestling is all about. I wanted him to get that state medal so badly, and he came so close not once, but twice. With these sorts of setbacks, Blue has demonstrated that he’s gained the resilience to be a champion in life.”

In the spring, Caplinger became a dual-sport athlete as he participated in both baseball and track and field.

Although his focus was on track, Caplinger helped out the Wildcat baseball team as a pinch-runner as he stole five bases

in eight games.

However, Caplinger did a lot of his damage on the track as he was one of the Wildcats' top sprinters. He joined Justin Collins, Ben Wiedenmann and Chris Williams to win the Class 4A state title in the 4×400-meter relay.

Caplinger, along with Charlie Koontz, Wiedenmann and Collins, also medaled fifth at state in the 4×100 relay. Both relays broke school records this past season in the Frontier League and regional meets.

Caplinger will continue his athletic career this fall as he plans to attend Benedictine College on a football scholarship.

Moore, Tucker excited for Shrine Bowl opportunity



Louisburg's Austin Moore (left) and Kiefer Tucker will represent the East side of the state Saturday during the Kansas Shrine Bowl in Dodge City. They will be joined by Louisburg head football coach Robert Ebenstein, who is an assistant coach on the team.

The Kansas Shrine Bowl is one of the premier all-star football games as it pits the best high school seniors

from each side of the state.

As it turns out, Louisburg High School is going to have two representatives.

Austin Moore was selected to join the East squad back in December along with Louisburg head coach Robert Ebenstein, but the Shrine Bowl rules state that only one player from each school can be chosen – that is unless an opening comes up shortly before the game.

So when an opening became available, Kiefer Tucker, who was a first team All-Frontier League player on both sides of the ball for Louisburg, got a text from his high school coach.

Tucker is going to get one more chance to play alongside his former teammate and coach as he was selected as a replacement to play in the Shrine Bowl and practiced with the East team earlier this week in Ottawa.

“Being selected to play in the Shrine Bowl is a great honor and I was smiling pretty big when I got the text from Coach E saying there is a spot open for me,” Tucker said. “I’m excited to be able to go up against great talent.”

Moore, who won first team all-league, all-state and player of the year honors following his senior season last fall, will be one the East’s top players on defense. He will start at linebacker and is looking forward to the challenge of going up against the West.

“The defense we are running is a 3-5 and I will be one of the ‘dog linebackers,’” Moore said. “The dog linebackers are to the outside of the middle backer. I’m just really excited to

represent Louisburg again on Saturday and to play another football game.”

Tucker, on the other hand, will see a lot of time on the offensive side of the ball. He is going to play at the guard spot after originally starting on the defensive side and will be coached by Ebenstein, who is working with the offensive line.

Tucker is looking forward to suiting up one final time with his teammate and coach, as they will each go their separate ways after this game.

“Being able to play with Austin one last time is one of my favorite parts about this coming weekend,” Tucker said. “The last time we were on the field together, Austin’s season was taken from him early (broken collarbone) and to be able to play with him again means a lot to me. One top of that, to be able to get coached by Coach E one more time is a pretty great thing. To be able to end my high school career with both of them right by me will mean a lot.”

Moore feels the same as the three Louisburg representatives have gotten a chance to relive some of the Wildcats’ past successes.

“It has been really fun being out on the field with Coach E and Kiefer one more time,” Moore said. “We’ve been talking about all of the fun times we’ve had over the past four years, and it has definitely made me miss playing for Louisburg even more.”

Although the game is what Moore and Tucker have been preparing for, they both also realize this week is more than just a game.

The Kansas Shrine Bowl is an all-star high school senior, East vs. West, football game put on each year in Kansas, by the Kansas Shrine.

It is a 501(c) 3 non-profit charity that produces annual events and related activities, with net proceeds benefiting Shriners Hospitals for Children. The Kansas Shrine Bowl has sent over \$2M to Shriners Hospitals for Children.

Notable alumni of the game include current Oakland Raiders All-Pro Wide Receiver Jordy Nelson, NFL Hall of Famer Barry Sanders, former Kansas State and Kansas City Chiefs Linebacker Gary Spani, former Big 12 Defensive Player of the Year and Super Bowl Champion Linebacker Mark Simoneau and many others.

Both Moore and Tucker traveled from Ottawa to Dodge City yesterday and will spend the rest of this week preparing for the game. They will also get the opportunity to meet some of the patients from the Shriners Hospital.

"I'm just honored to be selected because the Shrine Bowl is more than just a game," Tucker said. "On the day where we meet some of the kids, I hope to be able to spread a few smiles and share some laughs with them."

Kickoff for the game is set for 7 p.m. on Saturday at

Memorial Stadium in Dodge City and the game will be streamed at www.kansasshrinebowl.com.

2019 Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Year nominees



For the past three 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 second 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.”

Although I am giving out the award, I wanted the process to be subjective, so I asked the head coaches at LHS to help me out. I asked each coach to send me nominations of who they thought exemplified the Athlete of the Year honor. They will then vote for their top 3 male and female athletes and then I will tabulate the results and determine the winner. In the next week, I will announce this year’s recipients.

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



CARSON BUFFINGTON – SENIOR – BASKETBALL, SOCCER, VOLLEYBALL

Carson was a 3-time letter winner in her senior season and was named as a team captain in volleyball, basketball and soccer.

In volleyball, Buffington earned second team All-Frontier League honors as she helped lead the Lady Cats to a Class 4A state runner-up performance. She also moved from her starting setter position to the outside hitter spot and had a lot of success for the Lady Cats as she tallied 130 kills in her new position. With all that success, Buffington was also selected to the

Greater Kansas City Volleyball Coaches Association Senior All-Star Match.

Buffington also wrapped up a strong career for the Louisburg basketball team as she averaged eight points and seven rebounds to go along with three steals a contest. She was named as a Frontier League honorable mention this past season, and she also was selected as an all-state honorable mention.

In girls soccer, Buffington was the starting goalie for Louisburg in all 20 games. She posted 13 shutouts, which is a school record and had a .952 goals against average, which is also a school record. Buffington had 90 saves on the season that ended as a Class 4-1A state runner up for the second consecutive year. For her efforts, she was also selected second team All-Frontier League. Buffington was also named first team all-state goalie and was named Goalkeeper of the Year.



ANNA DIXON – SENIOR – VOLLEYBALL

Anna wrapped up her fourth volleyball season as a varsity starter for the Lady Cats and guided Louisburg to its second consecutive Class 4A-state runner-up finish.

Dixon, who is currently with the Kansas State volleyball team, ended her senior season with 584 kills and had a hitting percentage of .260. She also added 325 digs, 50 aces and 42 blocks as she played all six rotations. With those lofty numbers, Dixon earned several big time honors in her final season.

She was selected as an All-Frontier League first team player and was also named to the 4A State All-Tournament Team. Those honors continued as she was named the Kansas Volleyball Coaches Association Class 4A Player of the Year and earned a spot on KVA All-State First Team.

Following the season, Dixon was also named as an Under-Armour All-American also earned MaxPreps/American Volleyball Coaches Association Player of the Week honors.



ALYSE MOORE – SOPHOMORE – BASKETBALL, SOFTBALL, TRACK AND FIELD

Alyse is a 3-sport varsity letter-winner this past year as she earned letters for the basketball, softball and track and field teams. This past spring season, Moore went to state in two different sports and became the first Wildcat athlete in recent memory to do so.

In her first season in track and field, Moore threw the javelin for the Lady Cats and went on to become regional champion as she eclipsed her personal best throw by almost 25 feet in just her third competition of the season. The following week, she medaled fourth at the Class 4A state tournament with a personal best throw of 131 feet and

9 inches.

Moore was also the starting shortstop for the Lady Cats as she helped Louisburg to its first regional championship since 2014.

During the basketball season, Moore was a starter for the Lady Cats and averaged six points, five rebounds and three steals a game.



TRINITY MOORE – JUNIOR – CROSS COUNTRY, SOCCER

Trinity is 2-sport letter-winner for Louisburg this past year as she had state performances in both cross country and soccer.

During the fall, Moore was the top runner on the Louisburg girls cross country team as she helped the Lady Cats to a regional runner-up finish and qualified for state as a team for the first time in school history. Moore medaled fourth at the Class 4A state meet in Wamego and currently holds the school record for the fastest time in program history. She

also earned first-team All-Frontier League honors for her third place finish at the league meet.

In soccer, Moore was a starter on the Wildcat team that recently finished as the Class 4-1A state runner-up for the second consecutive year. At the midfield spot, she finished the season with 12 goals and six assists and was also named to the All-Frontier League first team.



DELANEY WRIGHT – FRESHMAN – BASKETBALL, CROSS COUNTRY, TRACK AND FIELD

Delaney is a 3-sport letter-winner as she took part in cross country, basketball and track and field and competed at the state level in two of those.

Wright found most of her success in track and field as she

earned four medals at the Class 4A Kansas State Track and Field Championships in Wichita this past month. She medaled in the long jump, 400-meter-dash, 200-meter dash and as a member of the 4×400-relay.

During the regional meet, Wright broke two school records (long jump, 400 dash) and earned a regional and Frontier League title in the long jump. She also earned a medal in the long jump at the Kansas Relays earlier in the season.

In cross country, Wright was a member of the Louisburg team that finished as a Class 4A regional runner-up and qualified for the state meet as a team for the first time in school history. In basketball, Wright saw playing time at the varsity level as a freshman at different points throughout the season.

MALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR NOMINEES



BLUE CAPLINGER – SENIOR – BASEBALL, FOOTBALL, TRACK AND FIELD, WRESTLING

Blue is a 4-sport letter-winner in football, wrestling, baseball and track and field and competed at the state level in two of the sports.

In football, Caplinger was an All-Frontier League player on both sides of the ball as he was named to the first team defense as a defensive back and second team offense as a multi-purpose player. On defense, Caplinger, who helped Louisburg to a 10-1 record and a regional championship, had 31 tackles from the safety spot and also had two tackles for a loss, two fumble

recoveries and an interception. Offensively, he had 544 total yards and six touchdowns.

On the wrestling mat, Caplinger was a regional champion at 170 pounds and finished his season with a 33-5 record. The Louisburg senior fell one match short of state medal with a 2-2 record at the Class 4A state tournament. He currently holds the school record for most career reversals (72) and most career escapes (86). Following the season, he was also named to the KWCA Academic All-State first team.

Caplinger split time between baseball and track and field in the spring. Although he spent time as a reserve and pinch-runner on the baseball team, Caplinger found a lot of success on the track.

He qualified for state as a member of two relays. Caplinger was a member of the 4×400 relay team that won the Class 4A state championship in 3 minutes and 25 seconds. Caplinger also helped the 4×100 relay to a fifth place finish and went on to garner two state medals.

Caplinger will join the Benedictine football team this fall.



AUSTIN MOORE – SENIOR – FOOTBALL, TRACK AND FIELD, WRESTLING

Austin is a 3-sport letter winner in football, wrestling and track and field and was among the state's best in two of the sports.

Moore thrived on the football field for the Wildcats as he helped Louisburg to a 10-1 record and a regional championship. Moore was a first team All-Frontier League player on both sides of the ball and was the league's leading vote-getter. He went on to rack up all-state awards as the Louisburg senior earned Class 4A first team all-state honors as a running back from the Topeka Capital-Journal and the Kansas Football Coaches Association. Moore was also named as a Class 4A first team all-state linebacker from the Wichita Eagle.

When the season was all said and done, Moore tallied 1,554 total yards from the running back spot, including 1,428 yards on the ground, and had 21 touchdowns before he broke his collarbone during the regional championship game.

With those numbers, he was named the Kansas Small Class Player of the Year by 810 Varsity and was All-Purpose Player of the Year by Kpreps.com. Earlier this year, Moore was also named to the Kansas Shrine Bowl roster.

On the wrestling mat, Moore missed more than half of the season with his broken collarbone, but came back in a big way. Moore won his first 14 matches when coming back at 220 pounds, which included a regional championship. He went on to earn his first state medal as he finished fourth at the Class 4A state tournament with a 3-2 record. He was also named to the KWCA Academic All-State first team.

During the spring, he was a member of the Louisburg track and field team and threw the javelin for the Wildcats. He was also on the throwers relay that ranked Top 5 nationally at one point in the season.

Moore will join the Kansas State football team this fall.



KIEFER TUCKER – SENIOR – FOOTBALL, TRACK AND FIELD, WEIGHTLIFTING

Kiefer is a 2-sport letter winner in football and track and field and also went to state competition in two activities.

Tucker was a presence on the line of scrimmage for the Louisburg football team as he was a first team All-Frontier League player on both sides of the ball and helped the Wildcats to a 10-1 record and a regional championship.

The Louisburg senior was among on the leaders on the offensive line as he helped pave the way for more than 3,500 yards of total offense. On defense, Tucker recorded 55 tackles from the defensive end spot, including three tackles for a loss, three forced fumbles, a fumble recovery and a sack. Those numbers helped earn him honorable mention all-

state honors and was also named to the all-state team by the Kansas Football Coaches Association. The honors kept coming for Tucker as he was recently selected to participate in the Kansas Shrine Bowl.

During the winter, Tucker was a member of the Louisburg powerlifting team and certainly made his mark there as well. Tucker won the Class 4A state championship in the 220-pound class and broke a 24-year-old record in the bench press with a lift of 375 pounds.

In track and field, Tucker qualified for state for the first time in the discus. He finished as a regional runner-up and went on to take ninth at the Class 4A state meet in Wichita, just one spot away from earning a state medal.

Tucker will join the Emporia State football team this fall.

Gage hopes to make most of opportunity at Pitt State



Brayden Gage is ready to take the next step in his football career as he joins the Pittsburg State football team this fall.

The decision wasn't an easy one for Brayden Gage, but the one thing the recent Louisburg graduate wanted to do was to play college football.

The idea of playing football at the next level was a simple one for Gage, but he wanted to make sure he found the right place. As it turned out, Pittsburg State was the best fit for him.

Gage accepted a preferred walk-on spot to play for the Gorillas in the fall and he is looking forward to the opportunity of playing Division II football.

"I am very excited," Gage said. "The process was long, and I think I waited too long, but I am glad to finally know where I am going and what I am doing. I think I went on about six visits and it was pretty tough. I wasn't sure on what I wanted to do and I didn't know where I wanted to go, but I am glad to have the opportunity at Pitt State."

Gage received offers from Baker, William Jewell and Ottawa, but none felt like they were the right fit. Then the opportunity arose with the Gorillas and he was able to connect with the coaches, especially on the defensive side of the ball.

"The defensive coordinator is also the safeties coach at Pitt," Gage said. "He is the one that has been talking to me and I really like him. The rest of the coaches are great guys and they have a lot of experience. I am ready to go down there and get to work."

Along with a new team comes a new position. Gage, who played cornerback in high school, will move to the safety position in college.



Brayden Gage signed with the Pittsburg State football in April. Sitting (from left) is his brother Bryce, his parents Jason and Melissa Gage, and his brother Brock. Standing is Louisburg head football coach Robert Ebenstein.

Gage was a first team All-Frontier League wide receiver last season as he led Louisburg with 283 yards through the air. He also had 258 yards rushing and a total of five touchdowns.

He hopes the speed he displayed on both sides of the ball last season will translate well at his new safety position.

"I am excited about the change and I think it is going to be a good move," Gage said. "At the Division II level, the corners are all really tall because they have to match up

with the
receivers, so I think I will fit in better at safety.”

His time with the Louisburg
football team was a memorable one as the Wildcats finished
this past season
with a 10-1 record and a regional championship, before falling
to eventual
state champion Bishop Miege.

However, Gage realizes his
experience with Wildcat football was more than just about wins
and losses.

“Louisburg football is amazing,”
he said. “I could talk a lot of about it, but then I would be
here all day. It
is a true brotherhood. The friendships you make are going to
last forever and I
had a lot of fun these last four years. It is a hard sport,
but it is worth it.”

Now, Gage will leave his Wildcat uniform behind and he will
solely focus on Pittsburg State. He hopes to use that walk-on
spot and turn it into something bigger and he might the get
the opportunity to see some former Wildcats on the other side
of the field.

“I just want to work hard every single
day and see what happens,” Gage said. “I would love to have a
scholarship maybe
my junior or senior year. I am very excited to play against
the competition
down there. Kiefer (Tucker) is going to Emporia State, and
that is our rival,
so I will be pretty excited to go up against him one day.”

Caplinger excited to join NAIA national runner-up Benedictine



Louisburg senior Blue Caplinger, who earned first-team all-league defensive honors last season, is excited for his new challenge after he recently signed with Benedictine College.

Blue Caplinger played a lot of positions during his time with the Louisburg football team.

Caplinger saw some time at quarterback, was used as a blocking back – and then for his senior year – had some snaps at running back. However, the place where he felt right at home was at safety.

The Wildcat defensive back loved to hit the opposition whenever he had the chance and he thrived at that position. However, now that his time as a Wildcat is over, he needed to find a new place to bring the pain.

Caplinger found the perfect spot with one of most successful programs in the NAIA. In front of family and friends last month, the Louisburg senior made it official as

he signed his letter of intent to play at Benedictine College next season.

“They are a really awesome football program,” Caplinger said. “Their campus is great and academically they just really fit me well. They have a great group of coaches and they were honest with me. I am looking forward to getting to work when I get down there.”

Benedictine is coming off one of the best seasons in its program’s history as the Ravens advanced to the NAIA National Championship game and finished second in the nation.

The Ravens have had a lot of success in the Heart of America Conference under head coach Larry Wilcox and

his staff. Wilcox just finished his 40th season as the Ravens’ head

coach and has won more than 250 games during that span.



Louisburg senior Blue Caplinger recently signed his letter of intent to play football at Benedictine. Sitting next to Blue

are his parents Wade and Sirena Caplinger and his sister, Toni. Standing (from left) is Louisburg head football coach Robert Ebenstein and head wrestling coach Bobby Bovaird.

"In a way, their success played a part in my decision," Caplinger said. "I was looking at Baker too, and they are both really good programs, and both have had a lot of success, but Benedictine was a great option for me and it was hard to pass up.

"They have an older group of coaches, but they are all great guys. Coach Wilcox and his defensive coordinator have been there for over 40 years so they definitely have the experience and they have a great program. I feel it is a great fit for me."

Caplinger was a key figure in a Wildcat defense that helped Louisburg to a 10-1 finish and a regional championship this past season. From his safety spot, he finished with 31 tackles, two for a loss, two fumble recoveries and an interception.

That performance helped him earn first-team All-Frontier League honors on defense and Caplinger was also a second team selection at running back after racking up 544 total yards and six touchdowns.

It's his experience with the Wildcat football program that helped him mature as a player and get ready for the collegiate level.

"Louisburg football has done everything for me," Caplinger said. "Growing up as a kid and getting all that football experience with my friends, and then getting into high school and having awesome seasons is something that I will always remember."

As much fun as his high school football days were, Caplinger is looking forward to the challenges of playing college football at one of the NAIA's best programs.

"I don't expect to play right away and I will probably redshirt, which is fine for me because their engineering program is five years," Caplinger said. "After that, hopefully I can make my way onto special teams and maybe get a starting position one day. That is the goal. I am really excited for the opportunity and can't wait to get down there."

DePriest ready to make his mark with Ottawa football



Louisburg senior Jonathan DePriest was a big part of the Wildcat offensive line this past season and hopes to do the same next season at Ottawa University.

He may not have played football till the sixth grade, but football has always been a big part of Jonathan DePriest's life.

DePriest's uncle, Adam Helm, played quarterback at Kansas State under Bill Snyder in the late 90s and engineered one of the best comebacks in K-State history in 1999. His grandfather, J.D. Helm, was an assistant coach for the Kansas City Chiefs in the 1980s and was the assistant director of player personnel before that.

Needless to say, DePriest has always been around the game and he got a chance to make his mark with the Wildcat football team this past season.

The Louisburg senior was on the Wildcat offensive line that helped Louisburg finish the season with a 10-1 record and a regional championship. It was a year to remember for DePriest and the Wildcats, but his football career is far from over.

DePriest made it official on Feb. 6, in front of family and friends, as he signed his letter of intent to play football for Ottawa University as an offensive lineman for the Braves.

"Honestly it is a huge blessing to have the opportunity to play at the next level and I am really excited for it," DePriest said. "It is a great campus and they have great coaches and I think it is going to be a great experience there."

DePriest will join an Ottawa program that has found a lot of success in the Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference (KCAC) and in the NAIA. He will play under head

coach Kent

Kessinger, who is in his 16th year with the Braves and during that time he has won four KCAC titles.



Louisburg senior Jonathan DePriest signed his letter of intent on Feb. 6 to play football at Ottawa next season. Sitting next to Jonathan are his parents Heather and Greg DePriest and standing is Louisburg head coach Robert Ebenstein.

Kessinger also guided the Braves to a successful season in 2018 that ended with a No. 20 national ranking.

“Coach

Kessinger and his coaching staff have a completely different philosophy

when it comes to football than other colleges and that really resonated with

me,” DePriest said. “The Ottawa football program is more like a family in the

way they support you, hold you accountable and make you strive to be the best

you can be. The campus is easy to navigate, everyone I met was

welcoming
and the athletic facilities are state of the art.

“They
see me fitting in on the offensive line, probably at the guard
spot or
something like that. They have won some championships and they
have a really
good coaching staff. The whole campus was really nice and I
couldn’t turn it
down.”

Playing collegiate football is something
that takes a lot of dedication and hard work, but DePriest is
ready for the
challenge and he believes playing for the Louisburg program
has helped prepare
him for what to expect.

As a member of the Wildcat
offensive line, DePriest helped pave the way for 3,500 yards
of total offense
at the tackle position.

“It has taught me a lot of things,”
DePriest said of the Wildcat program. “It has made me a better
person, whether
it is waking up at 6 in the morning for weights in the summer
or the practices –
it builds a lot of character.”

DePriest, who would like to major
in psychology, is excited for what his future holds with the
Braves’ program
and he hopes to be a big part of it.

“I am just very thankful for the
opportunity that I have been given,” DePriest said. “I am
ready to work hard

and hopefully this is just the beginning.”

Tucker ready to take next step in football with Emporia State



Louisburg senior Kiefer Tucker, who earned first-team all-league honors last season, is excited for his opportunity with the Emporia State football team.

Kiefer Tucker remembers the exact moment and time when he fell in love with football – at soccer practice.

Tucker was in first grade, and like many other kids his age, he was learning how to play soccer when he looked around and noticed some other kids at a flag football practice.

“I told my parents I wanted to play football, so the next day they took me over to the practice and I was on the team,” Tucker said. “I have loved football ever since.”

As it turned out, that day put Tucker on a course that would

eventually give him the opportunity to play the sport he loves on a high level.

During a signing ceremony on Feb.

6, in front of family, friends and teammates, the Louisburg High School senior

made it official as Tucker signed his letter of intent to play football at

Emporia State University.

“This really means a lot,” Tucker

said. “It is going to be sad that I won’t be able to play football anymore with

the same guys I have played with since first grade. Even with the ones starting

in high school, I made a lot of memories with them too. It will be sad to see

that go, but I still love the game and I am excited to have the opportunity to

continue to play it. I am excited to see what the next four or five years have

for me and see how the program will develop me.”

Tucker enjoyed the family

atmosphere with the Louisburg program and he was looking for the same type of

fit in college. It didn’t take long for Tucker to find it with the Hornets.

While on a campus visit, Tucker

listened to the players and coaches talk about the program and he knew it was

going to be the right landing spot for him.

“When I first went there, they

told me that they have this brick that they give out to players who that week

showed toughness, character, had a good attitude and showed

that family is more important than anything,” Tucker said. “Right when they said that, I was sold. I really believe that all the players follow that mantra and you can tell that by hearing them talk. They had some bad years, but they are grinding now and they are on the up and up. It will be fun and it is a good town. Emporia just felt like home.”



LHS senior Kiefer Tucker signed his letter of intent with Emporia State on Feb. 6 to play football next season. Sitting next to Tucker is his mother Debbie Hardy and standing is Louisburg head football coach Robert Ebenstein. Not pictured is Kiefer's father, David Tucker.

Tucker will line up on the defensive side of the ball for Emporia State and he expects to play a little different position in college. Tucker, who lined up at defensive end for Louisburg, will do some of the same at Emporia, but the coaches also see him as a walk-up linebacker in certain situations as well.

Tucker was among the leaders on the line scrimmage for the Wildcats as he helped pave the way for more than 3,500 yards of total offense. Defensively, Tucker was a force from his defensive end position as he recorded 55 tackles, three tackles for a loss, three forced fumbles, a fumble recovery and a sack.

His season helped him earn first team All-Frontier League on both sides of the ball and he was also honored with an all-state selection as well.

Despite his success in high school, Tucker knows it is going to take him awhile to get acclimated to the college level.

"It will take a little time for them to teach me up and get a little more size on me, but I am fine with that," he said. "Everything is a process and I am not going to go in there and be a starter as a freshman. I fine with grinding for a couple years, and then when my time comes, I know I will be ready."

As for his time in Louisburg, life under the Friday night lights and the relationships he has built is something Tucker won't soon forget.

"It meant everything," Tucker said. "These guys are my friends. When I came to Louisburg in kindergarten I didn't know anyone. I truly believe that the Louisburg football program made me who I am today. The coaches taught me everything I know and it taught me to be strong minded and how to deal with problems.

"Most importantly it has taught me how to be a good teammate

and
help the community that supports you and how to be man.
Football is a
brotherhood and is something you never forget.”

Moore signs on with K-State football program



Louisburg senior Austin Moore had big season for the Wildcat football team on both sides of the ball. Moore, however, will walk-on to Kansas State next season as a linebacker.

Austin Moore has spent most of his young life rooting on the crimson and blue of the University of Kansas.

It was all Moore knew as he was raised a Jayhawk fan and had visions of maybe one day playing in Lawrence.

His rooting interests have now changed – at least on the football sides of things – and he is pretty happy about it.

On Feb. 6, Moore made it official that he would be attending Kansas State University as a preferred walk-on for the Wildcat football team. Playing Division I football trumped any loyalty he might have for his – *now* – rival school.

“That has always been a goal of mine, ever since I was little and it has been a dream to be able to play Division I football,” Moore said. “It makes me happy to be able to accomplish that and have that chance to play at that level.”

Moore will join the K-State team as a linebacker as he slowly works his way up the depth chart and hopes to one day earn a scholarship – something several walk-ons have done with the Wildcats over the years, including another former Louisburg Wildcat, Kody Cook.

The recruiting process was a stressful one at times for Moore as he weighed his options about whether to take a scholarship at a smaller school or walk-on at K-State. The Louisburg senior is definitely satisfied with his decision and is looking forward to his time in Manhattan.

“I am definitely grateful for the opportunity,” Moore said “I definitely wanted a scholarship and I was waiting to see if I could get some at other places. I had a couple smaller schools that gave me offers, but I wanted to be able to play at the highest level I could. K-State has a good walk-on tradition and I thought this would be a good opportunity for me.”

Moore was recruited by head coach Bill Snyder and his assistants, but when Snyder retired and defensive coordinator Blake Seiler left for a different job, the Wildcat assistants wanted to make sure to let Moore know they were still interested.



Louisburg senior Austin Moore signed his letter of intent to play football at K-State on Feb. 6. Sitting next to Austin are his parents Tommy and Alison Moore. Standing (from left) are his sisters Adelyn and Alyse Moore, Louisburg head football coach Robert Ebenstein, Louisburg head wrestling coach Bobby Bovaird and Austin's brother, Ashton.

Kansas State special teams coach and Director of Recruiting, Taylor Braet, stayed in touch with Moore and he got a chance to meet the new defensive coordinator and linebackers coach, Scottie Hazelton. Moore also chatted with new head coach Chris Klieman the day before he made it official, and Moore felt comfortable with his decision.

"I talked with Coach Klieman and he said that by next spring I will have a really good chance of getting a lot of playing time," Moore said. "He told me they were excited to have me and some the other younger kids they signed.

"The main coach who was recruiting me, coach Seiler, left and went to West Virginia. But I still knew Coach Braet and I met the new defensive coordinator (Hazelton) and really like him as well. It was a tough decision to make, but I knew I wanted to stay close to home and it was a good fit."

Moore would have been a good fit on several teams as he had a big senior season that ended with a regional championship and first team all-league and all-state honors on both sides of the ball.

Prior to breaking his collarbone in the next to last game of the year, Moore led Louisburg in tackles with 83 and had seven tackles for a loss, three sacks, two forced fumbles, a fumble recovery and an interception.

Offensively, he tallied 1,554 total yards, with 1,428 yards of those on the ground and also had 21 touchdowns. Those stats also helped Moore earn a spot on the Shrine Bowl roster this summer as he prepares for his journey to Manhattan.

"I am very excited for Austin," Louisburg coach Robert Ebenstein said. "K-State will be very young at linebacker after next season, which should give Austin a great opportunity to compete for a role on defense or special teams."

As for becoming a K-State fan, Moore knows it will be a difficult transition outside of football and it will be an adjustment.

"Basketball season might be kind

of weird," he said. "I might have to cheer for KU every once and while, but now it is time to start cheering for K-State."

First NFL touchdown was years in the making for Griffin



New Orleans Saints tight end, and Louisburg High School graduate, Garrett Griffin was all smiles after catching his first NFL touchdown on Jan. 20 in the NFC Championship game.

NEW ORLEANS – Garrett Griffin put his hand on the Superdome turf waiting for the snap, knowing this could be his moment.

New Orleans quarterback Drew Brees took the snap and rolled to the right, and Griffin from his tight end position, did the same. For some, it was a play that happened in slow motion.

Griffin's friends and family watched the No. 45 make his way across the endzone as two Los Angeles Rams defenders collided with each other. Griffin made a cut and sprinted to the right, and as

he got close the sideline, he turned and looked toward Brees.

Brees fired the ball to where only Griffin could get it. As it came spiraling his way, Griffin had only one thought in mind.

“Oh crap,” Griffin said to himself.

To put this in some context, Griffin, a 2012 Louisburg High School graduate, spent much of the last three years on the New Orleans Saints practice squad. He got the call up and was on the 53-man roster a year ago late in the season, but a foot injury ended his season prematurely.

During the 2018 regular season, Griffin found himself on the practice squad again. Then following the regular season, he made the move to the active roster for the NFL Playoffs and the Saints’ game against the Philadelphia Eagles on Jan. 13.

Griffin was the team’s No. 3 tight end in the Saints’ win over the Eagles and provided some key blocks on their way to the NFC Championship game the following week.

Blocking was mostly what Griffin was planning on doing in the championship game against the Rams, but fate had other ideas.

The team’s No. 1 tight end, Ben Watson, was unable to play due to an appendix issue and Josh Hill, the back-up, suffered a concussion early on in the game. That left Griffin and Dan Arnold as the team’s only tight ends for much of the contest.

As the Saints drove down to the Rams’ 5-yard line in the first quarter, the play was called

into huddle and
Griffin realized his time might be coming on what was one of
the biggest stages
in the NFL.

“We ran that play in practice
against our scout team and we were able to score on it so we
knew it was going
to be an option,” Griffin said. “I think about 2-3 plays
before one of our
other tight ends (Josh Hill) went out with an injury and he
was supposed to get
most of the plays. So we were all kind of scrambling on the
sidelines to see
what plays were going to what other tight ends.”

With 1 minute and 36 seconds left
in the first quarter, it was Griffin’s time to shine.

Brees took the snap, rolled right,
and found Griffin who went on his knees to scoop up the 5-yard
touchdown pass.

The touchdown was his first in the NFL and was just his second
career catch.

What a time for your first catch of the year.

*5-yard TD grab for Garrett Griffin! #HomeInTheDome
#NFLPlayoffs*

📷: #LARvsNO on FOX pic.twitter.com/mJFZ2Hgd6e

– NFL (@NFL) January 20, 2019

“They ended up calling the play we
worked on in practice and I got my opportunity,” Griffin said.
“I figured
someone else was going to get it, but the play kept going and

I was getting closer to the sideline so I looked over and he (Brees) found me.”

Although most players would find a creative way to celebrate their first NFL touchdown, Griffin was more interested in one thing – keeping the ball.

“Honestly, a lot of people were making fun of me after it happened because I didn’t really celebrate or anything,” he said. “We have a rule on the team where you can only keep a ball if it is your first touchdown or milestone or something like that. I had a teammate earlier this year that got his first touchdown, he spiked it and then he never got his ball back.

“I knew that I didn’t want to lose it, so I just tried to find some guys to celebrate with. It was a pretty cool moment and something I will always remember.”

It was a moment that left a few fans in tears, most notably, his parents, Gary and Lori Griffin who were at the game. Gary, who coached Garrett in high school, had a clear view of the touchdown as he sat about 20 rows behind the endzone in which he caught the pass.

“It was surreal,” Gary said. “It was directly in front of us. I looked up at the sky and the first thing I thought was, ‘Did that really just happen?’ I looked over and

those two guys
were getting kind of emotional and I was getting pretty
emotional. I just
couldn't believe it."

Those two guys sitting next to Gary were Garrett's former high
school teammates and long-time friends, David Embers and Ross
Dvorak.

Both made the trip to watch Garrett
play in his first NFC Championship and he didn't disappoint
them.

"Our hometown buddy
playing in an NFC championship game was enough for us to get
there," Dvorak
said. "Then having him catch a touchdown, and it literally
being right in front
of our seats, was just surreal. The atmosphere made it all the
better. I'd imagine Griff doesn't shed tears
too often, but it was an emotional minute for all of us for
sure.

"It's been a lot of
fun to watch him over the years and that moment was kind of a
culmination of
his journey. Small-town Kansas kid, small school in college,
plenty of injuries
along the way and for him to have a significant impact in a
game of that
magnitude, was just super special. So happy for Lori and
Gary."

It has been a long
road for Garrett to get to this moment.

He helped Louisburg
High School to its first football state championship in 2010
and then went on

to the Air Force Academy to play football after not getting much Division I interest out of high school.

Garrett then worked his way up the Air Force depth chart, but suffered an injury his senior year and was forced to miss half of that season after having strong sophomore and junior campaigns.

He went undrafted and later signed with the Saints as a free agent. Garrett eventually worked his way up the roster on the practice squad before getting the call last year and then for the playoffs this season.

“Most of the people close to Garrett know how hard he has worked to put himself in a position to always be ready,” Embers said. “Obviously the planets aligned a little bit with the injuries and the play call, but Garrett has always been prepared for the next step and he capitalized in the biggest moment.

“It gives you some nostalgia when you watch his games at Air Force and then even back in high school. It was pretty special to see in person and I know he was fired up too, even if his touchdown celebration was underwhelming.”

Not only was it the first touchdown of Griffin’s career, but it was also the first touchdown of the game and it gave the Saints a 13-0 lead at the time. It also left a lot Saints fans wondering who exactly No. 45 was.

“You end up kind of standing there in disbelief, looking around like ‘did that really just

happen?'" Embers said. "Saints fans all around us were just going bananas and fans in front of us were pulling out their phones and looking up Garrett's bio on ESPN not knowing his dad was right behind them."



Garrett Griffin had a chance to celebrate his milestone with some long-time friends. Pictured (from left) is Griffin, his girlfriend Sonya Murphy, Lindsay Dvorak, Ross Dvorak and David Embers.

As a dad, Gary was filled with pride when his son caught his first NFL touchdown and then went on to catch another 7-yard pass later in the game. It was an emotional moment because of everything his son has gone through.

"It has been surreal throughout the whole thing and just following him along the way," Gary said. "The whole Saints thing was an accident. One year the military lets their graduates go play professionally and he just so happens to fall in that window and he was able to try and play in the NFL. He was lucky.

"Then the Saints snagged him and put him on the practice squad. Then he gets that foot injury last

year and I honestly thought he might be done there. He wasn't fully healthy until right before training camp and he had a great camp. He has just stayed really positive throughout the whole process, even when he got put back on the practice squad. He just had great attitude this entire time and it paid off."

There were certainly plenty of people who knew Garrett Griffin's name in Louisburg and throughout Kansas as people took to social media to congratulate their hometown boy.

"I think I had over 100 text messages from people congratulating me on the touchdown and I didn't even go on social media for several days after it was over because I knew there would be a lot of negative stuff on there after we lost," Garrett said. "Overall, I heard from probably close to 200 people from Louisburg, from the Air Force, along with high school and college coaches calling me. It was kind of a surreal experience to be honest. It was amazing."

Just seconds after the touchdown, Lori's phone starting exploding with messages congratulating her on her son's accomplishment.

"I just couldn't believe it," Lori said. "That was my child out there that just caught a touchdown in the NFL. I knew he was going to do something when Josh went out with a concussion. He was

the only one left to do it and it was just amazing. My phone was just going crazy. I had more than 100 messages and some from people that I didn't even know that followed him.

"I heard from people from everywhere, whether it was Gary's and my hometown of Frankfort, Louisburg or people watching in New Orleans. Even one lady I worked with 20 years ago instant messaged me and didn't realize that was my son. It was crazy. Now everyone wants jerseys, shirts and autographs. The kids I work with at Blue Valley want him to come to our school and it is pretty cool."

The Saints did go on to lose to the Rams in overtime after a controversial no-call on a pass interference play late in regulation that would have all but sealed a trip for New Orleans to play in the Super Bowl. Instead, there was no flag on the play and the Rams won on a 57-yard field goal in overtime.

It was the second year in a row the Saints had suffered heartbreak in the postseason after losing to the Minnesota Vikings last season in the divisional round of the playoffs on the 'Miracle in Minneapolis.' The Vikings defeated the Saints on a touchdown on the final play of the game.

"I think what made the loss even tougher was last season when we ended up losing to Minnesota the way we did on the last play," Garrett said. "We have a passionate fan base in New Orleans and they are taking the loss pretty hard. We were so close to

making it to the Super Bowl and were just kind of a play away, kind of like the Chiefs against the Patriots. Both games were pretty intense.

“As far as the call goes, you just never want to leave the game in the hands of the referees. We had some chances to do things a little better and we could have made more plays. It is going to take a while to get over, that is for sure. Hopefully, maybe after the Super Bowl is over then maybe we can start to put it behind us.”

Following the game, Garrett met up with his family and friends in what was a weird moment for everyone. Although they were disappointed with the outcome, they were all still thrilled for what Garrett had accomplished just a couple hours earlier.

“A lot of people were pretty upset after losing the game and how we lost it, so that was hard,” Garrett said. “But at the same time, everyone who was there to watch me was really proud. It was great to have both my parents there, my girlfriend and then Ross and David as well. For them to be able to see me catch the touchdown in person was really awesome and it really means a lot.

“I even heard my dad cried a little bit, which he might not want out there, but I know he is proud of me. I think he is getting a little soft in his old age.”

Just like his parents, there are plenty of people out there cheering for Garrett, including the town of Louisburg that has

adopted the Saints as their new favorite team.

"I don't think Garrett has any clue that this whole town is now Saints fans," Gary said. "He doesn't realize yet just how many people still follow him and care about how he does. People tell me all the time about how much they are rooting for him and want to see him do well.

"Even people he doesn't know are rooting for him. I teach in Adrian (Mo.) now and some of the students there have Griffin jerseys on and they don't even know him. They just know me and want to see him do well. It is the same with Lori in Blue Valley. There are a lot Garrett fans out there and we couldn't be more proud."

Although he just finished his third year in the NFL, his parents believe there are bigger things to come with their son.

"I am proud of him no matter what he does and I tell him that before every game," Lori said. "Even if he doesn't do something right, I am so proud of him. I don't think that he gets that he is living every kid's dream of playing in the NFL. I was thrilled that he could show other people what he could do."

The news kept getting better for Garrett as the Saints signed him to a three-year minimum contract when he was called up to the practice squad. It is similar to the rookie deal he signed, which guarantees him a spot in training camp.

Garrett was in his final year of

his contract with the Saints before the extension and could have become a free agent. Instead, the Saints showed faith in him with the multi-year deal.

Depending on what happens in the draft and free agency, he will have the opportunity to move up on the depth chart next season and he is excited about the opportunity.

“In my eyes, it is my position to lose,” Garrett said. “Next year will be my fourth year with the team, and I feel like with a couple of guys retiring that I will have a good opportunity to make the team. You never know what guys the team will bring in through the draft or free agency, but I feel like I know the system and that will help me. I just have to keep working hard and do whatever I can to put myself in a good position.”

Top 10 Stories of 2018



It was a successful, and eventful, 2018 for Louisburg High School athletics and for those who are connected to the

Wildcat program. This past year created a lot of school history for LHS and several programs brought back state hardware to Louisburg.

Below are the Top 10 stories from 2018, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the explanation is the link to the actual story from the event.

This year was a blast to cover and I was blessed to have the opportunity to go along for the ride with many of these. As much fun as it was, I can't wait for 2019 to begin. Looking forward to it!



10. Dillon medals at state golf for second straight year

EMPORIA – All season, Calvin Dillon had been atop or near the front of leaderboard and that didn't change in what was his biggest tournament of the season.

The Louisburg High School sophomore went up against the

state's best during the Class 4A state golf tournament on May 19 at the Emporia Municipal Course and did more than old his own. Dillon earned a state medal as he finished 11th overall with a 3-over par 74.

It was the second consecutive state medal for Dillon after he finished 10th overall last season at Wamego as a freshman.

"It is a real honor to earn another state medal, especially with the quality players that were at the state tournament," Dillon said. "There were lots of good players and lots of good teams."

It was another notch on Dillon's list of accomplishments that included a Frontier League title and six straight tournament victories during the 2018 season.



Louisburg football coach Robert Ebenstein



Louisburg girls soccer coach Kyle Conley

9. Conley, Ebenstein named Class 4A Coach of the Year

Louisburg girls soccer coach Kyle Conley and Wildcat football coach Robert Ebenstein both led their respective teams to special seasons.

Those seasons were special enough for both coaches to earn two big awards.

Conley was rewarded for all his hard work in June when it was announced that he was named as the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association's Girls Coach of the Year for Class 4-1A.

He guided the Wildcats to a 14-7 record and a spot in the state championship match, where the Lady Cats finished second overall. The

finish was something to remember for Wildcat fans as that was accomplished in just the program's third year of existence.

He has posted a 41-18-2 record during his time as the Wildcat girls head coach and also guided the Louisburg boys soccer team to its best finish in program history in 2017 with a fourth place finish at state.

As for Ebenstein, he guided the Wildcats to 10 straight victories and a regional championship to start the 2018 season, before getting knocked out in the sectional round against eventual state champion, Bishop Miege.

Following the season, the Kansas Football Coaches Association named Ebenstein as the Class 4A Coach of the Year. Ebenstein, who is just in his second season as head coach, has a 16-4 record with the Wildcats as he guided his team to a Frontier League championship this year.



8.

Holtzen finishes Louisburg career with 12 varsity letters

Once Isabelle Holtzen received her diploma and walked out of Louisburg High School for the last time as a student, she officially became one of the most decorated female athletes in school history.

No, she doesn't have any individual state championships, or even one as part of a team. Holtzen's decorations aren't ones in the form of trophies or all-state honors, but instead, they can be found on the front of

her letter jacket.

Holtzen became the first female athlete in at least 20 years to earn 12 varsity letters, which means she lettered on the varsity level in three sports in each of her four years of high school.

In research done by Louisburg Sports Zone, it was unable to find the last athlete to accomplish the feat, which could mean Holtzen could be the first Lady Cat to do so. She competed in cross country, basketball and track and field

The last athlete to come close was in 2001 when Krystal Bowes earned 10 varsity letters before moving on to a collegiate track career at Wichita State.

“The biggest thing that it means to me is to just have an opportunity to participate in three sports at a school like Louisburg,” Holtzen said. “The bigger the school that you go to, the harder it is to play multiple sports at the varsity level and I think Louisburg is unique in that fact. The best part of this whole journey was I think my freshman year because there was no pressure and no one was expecting anything from me. It was surprising and exciting to be able to letter in all three sports.”

Holtzen is currently at Northern Iowa, where she received a scholarship to pole vault for the Panther Track and Field Team.



7.

Dixon earns All-American, Player of the Year honors, signs with Kansas State

Louisburg

senior Anna Dixon led the Lady Cat volleyball program all season and she was recognized for her play on the court.

Dixon was named to the Under Armour Volleyball All-American team as she received a spot on the honorable mention squad when the list was released in November.

Dixon, the 6-foot-3 outside hitter, was recently named the Class 4A Player of the Year by the Kansas Volleyball Association, and along with that was also selected to the all-state first team.

It was the second year in a row Dixon was named player of the year, as she had to share the honor last season with Rose Hill's Gracie Van

Driel.

The honors certainly didn't stop there as Dixon was all named to the All-Frontier League first team as she helped guide the Lady Cats to an undefeated league season.

Dixon led the Lady Cats in kills with 584 in 105 sets played. She also finished with 325 digs, as she played all six rotations and also had 50 aces and 42 blocks.

In her four years with the program, Dixon finished with 2,003 kills, which would place that total among the best the school has ever seen.

All that success resulted in a dream come true for Dixon as she made it official last November when she signed to play volleyball at Kansas State.

"I have always known Kansas State was going to be my home," Dixon said. "Even since I committed as a sophomore, I always wanted to go up to Manhattan and see the girls and spend time with the team. K-State is where I need to be."



6. Louisburg wrestling sends six to state, Holtzen earns first state medal

SALINA – As the final whistle sounded in his blood round match, Cade Holtzen looked up into the rafters of the Tony’s Pizza Events Center and smiled.

He had finally reached his goal.

Holtzen defeated Columbus’ Gabe Porter by a 6-0 decision Saturday during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in Salina and secured his state medal.

“It is one of the best feelings that I have had in my life,” Holtzen said. “Just knowing that I’m going to place – you just can’t match that with anything else.”

It certainly wasn’t

easy for the Louisburg freshman as he faced a win or go home with nothing scenario heading into his match with Porter. Holtzen pulled out the victory and eventually finished sixth overall at 113 pounds to give Louisburg a state medalist for the third consecutive season.

"It is pretty cool," he said. "I have been working for this all season, so to get a state medal is great. It may not have been as high as I wanted, but any state medal is pretty amazing."

Holtzen had a special year for the Wildcats as he finished with a 45-6 record and broke the school record for most wins in a single season. He won four different tournaments and was a Frontier League and regional tournament runner-up.

To add to his resume, he became only the second freshman in school history to earn state medal – second to only Austin Hood, who would go on to win three state titles.

Austin Moore finished one victory shy of earning his first state medal, while Ryan Adams, Thad Hendrix and Blue Caplinger also picked up wins at the state tournament.



5. Moore, Johnson finished in top 10 at state cross country, girls qualify for second straight year

WAMEGO – It was going to be hard for the Louisburg High School girls cross country team to duplicate its magical season of 2017.

Not only did the Lady Cats qualify their team for state for the first time in program history, but they also had a top five finisher in Trinity Moore.

Fast forward to 2018, Louisburg wasn't able to match that successful run – the Lady Cats took it a step further.

Moore, along with freshman Reese Johnson, each had a top 10 finish during the Class 4A Kansas State Cross Country Championships at Wamego Country Club, and it is the first time

in school history that two female runners had medaled at a state meet. Louisburg added on to that as the girls finished fifth in the team standings with 154 points, which is also the highest finish in school history.

Moore, who finished fifth at state a year ago, bested her performance by one place as she took fourth with one of her better performances of the season. Johnson was right behind her as she crossed the finish line in sixth.

Shaylor Whitham, Carlee Gassman, Kaitlyn Lewer, Delaney Wright and Kennady Wilkerson were also members of the Lady Cats' team to run at state. Emily Williams was a member of the regional team that finished second overall.



4. Louisburg track earns six state medals, Gassman state runner-up in

300 hurdles

WICHITA – Carlee Gassman had broken the Louisburg High School 300-meter hurdle record three different times in 2018 prior to the state track meet.

She picked the perfect time to make it a fourth.

Gassman broke her own school record in the 300 hurdles in May at the Class 4A Kansas State Track and Field Championships in Wichita as she ran a time of 45.68 seconds to earn a silver medal as she was the Wildcats' top performer on the weekend. Andale's Abby Smarsh, who is a senior, won the event in 44.73.

It was the Louisburg sophomore's first time competing at the Kansas meet as she transferred in from Iowa last year, where she qualified for the state meet there in the 400 hurdles.

Gassman's medal in the 300 hurdles was just one of six the Wildcats were able to bring home following the two-day meet. Those six medals were the most Louisburg has earned since 2011, when the Wildcats combined to medal in 10 events and the boys won their first team state title.

The 300 hurdles wasn't the only event Gassman found success in as she also medaled in the long jump. Gassman, who hadn't competed in the event prior to this year, finished fifth with a mark of 17 feet, 0.25 inches.

Isabelle Holtzen would go on to finish sixth in the pole vault, the boys 4×400 team of Chris Williams, Blue Caplinger, Ben Wiedenmann and Justin Collins went on to take seventh. Williams finished eighth in the 400-meter run and

Trent Martin medaled
eighth in the boys pole vault.



3. Louisburg volleyball takes runner-up at state for second straight season

HUTCHINSON – The
feeling was much of the same.

The pride of finishing as a state-runner up was a popular one among the members of the Louisburg volleyball team. At the same time, the frustration of taking second in state in back-to-back seasons was just as prevalent.

Louisburg wasn't quite sure what to feel following its 25-13 and 25-14 loss to Bishop Miege in the championship game of the Class 4A state tournament Saturday at Hutchinson Sports Arena.

In 2017, the Lady
Cats fell to Rose Hill by two points in the championship

match, and fast

forward to the present, they were in the same spot – holding the state

runner-up trophy. It was the 15th time in program history that Louisburg finished in the top four at state.

The Lady Cats rattled off four straight wins to start the tournament, including knocking off No. 1 seed Independence, and defending state champions Rose Hill and Topeka Hayden. Louisburg then battled back to defeat Andale in the state semifinals.

“The loss was tough,”

Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “To come so close to a state title two

years in a row, only to come up short is tough. But with that being said, it is

a huge accomplishment for this team to get back to the state championship and

make it two years in a row. Finishing second is nothing to hang our heads on.

Last year’s finish fueled the fire for the team this year, and I challenged the

returning players to use this loss and feeling to fuel them for next year.”

Louisburg has been

one of the more dominant teams in Class 4A in the last decade as the Lady Cats

have made the state tournament seven out of the last nine years and have

finished as a state runner-up on three different occasions, along with several

third and fourth place finishes. They finished 2018 with a 36-9 record.



2. Louisburg girls soccer advances to title game, has best finish in program history

NORTH NEWTON – The obstacle seemed insurmountable – and it was.

The Louisburg High School girls soccer team found itself in the Class 4-1A state championship match in the program's third year of existence, but if they wanted to take it another step further, the Wildcats were going to have to knock the defending state champion of its perch.

Unfortunately, Bishop Miege wasn't about to be moved.

In a state title game that was played in the sweltering heat in late May at Bethel College, the Wildcats couldn't stay with the Stags in a 5-0 defeat. It was the third consecutive title for Bishop Miege, while Louisburg earned a state plaque for the first time in its short history.

It was special season for the Wildcats as the night before they knocked off Topeka Hayden, 1-0, in the state semifinals to secure the program's first state plaque. In 2017, Louisburg

both games in its state tournament appearance and finished fourth.

The road to this state championship appearance has been an interesting one for the Wildcats. More than three years ago, a group of Louisburg parents and citizens raised enough money to begin the girls soccer program and fund it for three years.

Louisburg was in the final year of that funding, and while the program isn't going away, the team realized they needed to play for more than themselves.

"We played for the community tonight," Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher said after the Hayden win. "We have to remember that when they raised money for this program, it was just through this year, so I think we owed it to them to play well. I really think it might have helped with how we played and I think it was one of the best games we played all season."

"It is a third-year program with 41 wins, three regional championships, two state final fours and now a state runner-up," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said after the title game. "We just have kids who come in and work their butt off. They are not soft, they aren't weak and from top to bottom they are going to work hard."

"We worked hard, but we just played Miego. That is one of the best teams in the state, and that stinks, but our kids played hard, worked

their tail off and it was a great year. We had people criticize us for how we got there, but we won games and that really motivated the kids. It got them fired up to go do something bigger than themselves. I couldn't be more proud of they stuck together and what they accomplished."



1. Football wins 10 straight, takes Frontier League title and regional championship

It had been almost two months since Louisburg and Piper squared off on the football field in what was one of the more entertaining games on the Wildcats' schedule.

Back in early September, Louisburg left Piper High School with a seven-point win – a victory that would help propel them to a Frontier League championship and a perfect regular season.

The two teams squared off again and the stakes were a bit higher. The game, at least for Louisburg anyway, was even more exciting.

The Wildcats dominated action from the opening kickoff and never looked back in a 48-0 win over the Pirates. In the process, Louisburg won the school's first regional championship since 2016 and are off to a 10-0 start for the first time since 2010.

Louisburg advanced to the sectional round where it fell to eventual state champion Bishop Miege, 55-21, and finished its season with a 10-1 record.

It was as season marked with special moments, including a 28-7 victory over then-undefeated Paola late in the year to secure a league title.

"Being 10-0 and then having that first loss of the season was very disappointing," Louisburg coach Robert Ebenstein said. "Losing always sucks, but losing in the playoffs and having to wait until next August is the worst. At the end of the day, Miege is a very good team and we did some good things. We got them to fourth down on multiple drives in the first quarter, we just couldn't make the plays on those big downs. Then we got behind a little and started pressing.

"Overall it was a great year. I am very proud of our guys and excited for them that they were able to get double digit wins for only the third time since 2000, and

there was a
lot of really good football played during that time period. It
was a lot
fun to be a part of.”



Austin Moore was named to the Kansas Shrine Bowl and was a first-team all-state player for the Wildcats. Moore was also named as the Kansas Small-Class Player of the Year by 810 Varsity.

With all that success, honors
started to roll in for its players as running backs Austin
Moore and Blue
Caplinger, along with linemen Brayden White and Kiefer Tucker
all earned
all-state honors.

Moore and White went on to be
semifinalists for the Simone Awards and Moore was also
selected to participate
in the Kansas Shrine Bowl in the summer of 2019. Ebenstein was
also named as
coach of the year by the football coaches association.

Most recently, Moore was named the Kansas Small-Class Player of the Year and Running Back of the Year by 810varsity.com, while White was named the Small-Class Lineman of the Year. Ebenstein was also named Kansas Small-Class Coach of the Year by 810 Varsity.