

# Wildcat football ready to defend Frontier League title



Louisburg quarterback Madden Rutherford hands the ball off to junior Ben Wiedenmann during a workout over the summer. The Wildcats open their season Friday at Spring Hill.

It was one of those special years for Louisburg football that doesn't come along very often.

The Wildcats won their first 10 games in 2018, captured a Frontier League title and finished with a regional championship, before defending state champion Bishop Miege came calling and ended the Wildcats' season.

Last year may be hard to replicate, especially after losing 18 seniors, but the Wildcats have the pieces to make a lot of noise in the Frontier League once again.

Louisburg has close to 70 players out this season, which is the most since head coach Robert Ebenstein has been involved with the program, and the Wildcats have 10 seniors this year that will be looked to fill the leadership left behind from last year's group.

"So far practices have been going very well," Ebenstein said. "We have some holes

to fill from last year's roster, but the guys have been working very hard and are ready to fill those spots.

"We return 13 letterman with 8 individuals who started a game on offense and 6 individuals who started a game on defense. We will be younger with some new faces, but we have many kids who are ready to take that step up and compete at the varsity level."

One constant is third-year quarterback Madden Rutherford, who will once again lead the Wildcat offense. The Louisburg senior threw for more than 1,100 yards last season and had 14 touchdowns.

Rutherford

is also a threat to take off and run as he recorded 354 yards on the ground and had four touchdowns a year ago as a second-team All-Frontier League player. He also earned an all-league first team as a punter.

"Returning

a quarterback is always a blessing, but when you can bring back a kid who is starting for his third season, it is a huge advantage," Ebenstein said. "He is the smartest football player I have ever coached and knows our offensive system inside and out. He knows his job, he knows every route the receivers run and he knows all the blocking assignments the backs have. Honestly, he knows most all of the offensive line responsibilities as well."



**Louisburg head coach Robert Ebenstein is in his third season leading the Wildcats.**

That offensive line will have a little different look from a year ago. Returning are all-league players Brayden White and Garrett Harding, and the Wildcats seniors will anchor that front along with fellow senior tight end Michael Waldron.

White, who was a first-team All-Frontier League selection a year ago, will lead the way at tackle and Harding will be a fixture at guard. Seniors Ian McGuire, Sam Kratochvil, along with juniors Andy Hupp, Eli Johnson and sophomore Dominic Owens are new faces who could help the Wildcats up front this season.

Louisburg lost three off that line from last season, including Kiefer Tucker, who was an All-Frontier League first team player on both sides of ball. Still, Ebenstein

likes what he has coming back to help pave the way up front.

“Our offensive line will have some new faces, but should be a dominant force,” Ebenstein said. “We have smart football kids all over the field and we will have the most athletic offensive line we have had in a long time. We might not be as big as we have in the past, but our speed up front will be a strength.

“Being able to zone our opponents, and double off and be able to pick up those quick linebackers, will be a strength of ours. Also having Waldron return at tight end is a plus as well as his blocking, and knowledge of the system, is outstanding.”



**Senior Michael Waldron hauls in a catch during the team's camp over the summer.**

The Wildcats also have a stable of running backs to be able to get through those holes. Gone is All-League first-teamer Austin Moore, who is now with the Kansas State football program, but Ebenstein will have plenty have plenty to choose from to help fill the void.

Senior Charlie Koontz and junior Ben Wiedenmann both saw varsity time last season, and will lead the way in 2019. Juniors Justin Collins, Jay Scollin and sophomore Kolby Kattau will also see time in the backfield.

"This year our running backs will look a lot different," Ebenstein said. "We lost some quality kids, but some tough kids are ready to take those spots. All of those guys will be in the backfield this year and all do certain things very well. You should be hearing many names called out over the speakers this season. This is, by far, is the fastest backfield we have had in Louisburg since I have been here."

Defense was a staple for the Wildcats a year ago, and that helped them to an undefeated league title. Although they have spots to fill, the Wildcats still figure to be strong in that area as well.

Hupp, Koontz, Kattau and sophomore Brandon Doles will all see a lot of time at the linebacker spot, while Hupp and Koontz are both returning starters at the position. White and Harding will anchor the middle of the defensive line as returning starters.

Wiedenmann will bring some speed off the edge from the defensive end spot, while Johnson, senior Andrew Krause and Owens will see time at defensive end.

In the secondary, Waldron, along with juniors Weston Guetterman, Collins, Konnor Vohs and Ben Guetterman will all see action in the defensive backfield.

Assistant coach Jeff Lohse is also returning as the team's defensive coordinator as he guided the Wildcats to one of Class 4A's top defenses a year ago.

"With Lohse calling the defense, I am always confident in our defense to be in the right spots and make plays," Ebenstein said. "Schematically, it will look similar to the Louisburg defenses over the years, but we will have some new faces for sure.

"Our defensive line should be a strength of ours with Harding and White anchoring the middle and I think Ben Wiedenmann could possibly be one of the fastest defensive ends in the state."

The Wildcats also return both of their kickers on special teams as senior Drake Varns will resume his placekicking duties, while Rutherford is the team's punter.

The Frontier League will provide a lot of competition for the Wildcats again this season, including rival Paola, which is one of the favorites to win the league crown.

Still, Louisburg hopes to figure into that conversation at the end of the year and make a run in the state playoffs. It all starts Friday when the Wildcats travel to Spring Hill for their season opener.

"Our expectations are always the same," Ebenstein said. "We want to get better every practice, be prepared for every game, and represent this team in the best light we can.

"The Frontier League is tough week in and week out. There are no easy games in this league, but right now I am really only concerned with Spring Hill and leaving that game, 1-0."

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# Numbers up for all LHS fall programs as athletes battle through heat



Last fall, each of the four Louisburg High School athletic programs had something to brag about.

Whether it was football's 10-1 season that ended with a regional championship, volleyball's state runner-up finish, cross country's two state medalists and state qualifying girls team or the boys' soccer regional championship appearance – the Wildcats had plenty to cheer about and several athletes took notice.

Numbers are up for all four programs following the first day of practice Monday and the coaches and athletes are excited to get the season started after last year's successes.

The Wildcat football team saw a big jump in numbers as they have 70 students out this season and football coach Robert Ebenstein and has liked what he seen through the first couple days of workouts.

"Our numbers are up and based on the numbers at the middle



school and youth programs and I expect them to keep growing,” Ebenstein said. “I am very excited for practice to get going. When you finish the season off with a loss in the playoffs it sticks with you and the opportunity to go play another game creates that energy and that eager feeling to get going. So far I am very pleased with our kids’ focus and effort. We need to continue to get better every day.”

Louisburg volleyball has also seen a spike in its numbers as 40 athletes have attended tryouts. Those tryouts will go through Wednesday and head coach Jessica Compliment believes those high numbers will be beneficial down the road.

“The players are excited, but I think some are nervous as well with tryouts and cuts these first few days,” Compliment said. “Forty is the most we’ve had tryout for quite some time. Generally we have around 35. The higher numbers leads to more competition for uniforms and playing time.”

Cross country head coach John Reece is pulling double duty this season as he, and assistant coach Paul Restivo, will also be leading the new Louisburg Middle School program. The Wildcats have a combined 59 runners out between the two programs, including 37 on the high school side.

Louisburg returns a majority of its girls team that qualified for state a year ago, including its two state medalists in senior Trinity Moore and sophomore Reese Johnson.



Despite a little hiccup with the heat during the first two days of workouts, coach Reece likes what he sees from both teams.

"It was great to get started, and yes the heat caused us to change our workout a little bit, but we still got in our miles," Reece said. "We had a good turnout during summer running, so as a whole they are ready to get to the good stuff and go compete.

"There is definitely a huge difference with LMS joining the crew. Two coaches managing 59 kids is a lot, and we might need more help for supervision as we get more personalized with workouts for different levels of runners, but this is a good thing for Louisburg's cross country program. It is going to be a fun year."

Soccer also saw a big increase in interest as the Wildcats have 44 athletes trying out this season and they will continue the tryout process through Thursday. It is a good problem to have for head coach Kyle Conley and he has liked what he has seen so far as the Wildcats look to take another step forward this year.

"The kids worked hard, but showed we have a lot of work to do," Conley said. "We had a really, really good summer, but we got a little rusty with the month off. This year we are getting back to focus on our culture and getting back to playing for each other. The boys have been focused and determined to improve this season."

However, the first two day of practices weren't without their challenges as intense heat and humidity caused some of the programs to change their schedules, including soccer, which moved its practice to the evening on Tuesday and spent some time indoors Monday.

"The heat was an interesting factor to go along with the late start due to the KSHSAA schedule," Conley said. "We started in the AUX gym for the first hour and 15 minutes then transitioned outside for an hour. It was frustrating but the boys handled it very well."

With the heat advisories, teams had to take precautions with their athletes and everything seemed to go smoothly with the hot weather.

"There is nothing you can do about the heat, and it is not centralized to Louisburg, so everybody has to deal with it," Ebenstein said. "So you just do what you have to do when it comes to moving practice to the evening or whatever. I do not mind these hot early practices as it sets the tone that athletes need to take care of their bodies, and the acclimatization process gets going from the beginning. I would much rather have it this way instead of it being cool and the first hot week comes on a game week."

With the first day of practice starting later than normal, the start of competition will also be pushed back. Team scrimmages will be the Friday before Labor Day and actual competition won't start until Sept. 3.

Soccer will host Fort Scott in its season

opener on Sept. 3 and volleyball will travel to Paola for dual on the same day.

Cross country opens its season on Sept. 5 at the Anderson County Invitational

and football will travel to Spring Hill on Sept. 6.

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## Stiles, Lohse, Burk and Bowes to be inducted into LHS Hall of Fame



Dennis Stiles (top left), John Lohse (top right), Jason Burk (bottom left) and Krystal (Bowes) Grojean will be inducted into the Louisburg High School Athletic Hall of Fame this fall.

It has been 11 years since Louisburg High School had inducted a class into its athletic hall of fame, but the wait for a new class is finally over.

The USD 416 Endowment Association, which oversees the LHS Athletic Hall of Fame, has announced a new 4-member class. Dennis Stiles (Class of 1969), John Lohse (1995), Jason Burk (1999) and Krystal (Bowes) Grojean (2001) were the top four vote getters in this year's hall of fame voting and will be honored in an induction ceremony sometime this fall.

“Louisburg has a history of great athletes,” said Damon Dennis, a USD 416 Endowment Association board member. “We had a good cross-section of both young and older voters this year that really took their job seriously. The four athletes chosen represent several generations of former Wildcats and each one were dominant in their particular era and sports. The Endowment Association is excited to get the Hall of Fame going again and plan on some big things in the future.”

More than two dozen voters, that includes current members of the hall of fame, long-time Louisburg residents, teachers and coaches, voted on the class in June. Each voter was asked to submit their top four choices for the hall and votes were then tabulated.

To be eligible for the hall of fame, the inductee must wait at least 10 years following graduation to be nominated.

The last class that was inducted was in 2008 and Dennis, and the rest of the Endowment Association, is committed to making this a yearly occurrence moving forward.

Here  
are the accomplishments of each of the newest hall of fame inductees. Look for  
more information on an induction ceremony in the coming weeks.



**Dennis Stiles**

# **Dennis Stiles – Class of 1969 – Football, Basketball, Track**

Stiles

lettered 4 years in football and track and 3 years in basketball. His senior year he was named all-league and all-state in football and was co-captain on the Wildcat team that finished the year 4-4.

As sophomore, he played on the varsity basketball team which was 12-0 in league play, finished the year 19-3 and were district champions. He earned honorable mention all-state honors his sophomore and junior seasons and was second-team all-state his senior year. Stiles was at one time the school's career scoring leader.

Stiles competed at the state track meet as a junior and senior where he placed fourth in the discus his senior year. He previously held school records in the discus and triple jump. He also received a football scholarship to Kansas State University.



**John Lohse**

## **John Lohse – Class of 1995 – Football, Basketball and Baseball**

Lohse lettered all four years in baseball and was selected to represent

Kansas in the all-star baseball classic his senior year. He was an all-league

pitcher and centerfielder for the Wildcats his sophomore through senior years.

He had a .510 average his junior and senior seasons with 10 home runs his

junior year and 12 more his senior season.

In football, Lohse was a 3-year letterwinner. He was an all-league wide

receiver his junior and senior seasons. In his senior year, he had 850 yards

receiving and 11 touchdowns and was later selected to represent Kansas in the

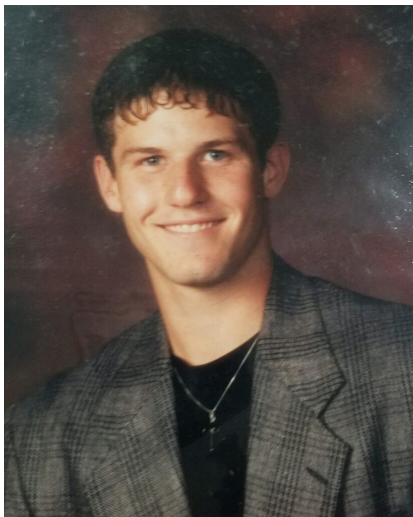
Metro Classic All-Star Game.

Lohse was also a 3-year letterwinner in basketball and was an

all-league selection his junior and senior seasons. He averaged a double-double

his junior and senior years.

Post-graduation, Lohse attended Pittsburg State on a baseball scholarship and played on the Gorilla team for four years. He was selected to the all-MIAA team his sophomore and junior seasons before injuring his shoulder his senior year. He had a .315 average his junior and senior seasons. In his first collegiate at-bat his freshman year, Lohse hit a game-winning grand slam to give Pitt State its first win over Missouri Southern in five years.



**Jason Burk**

## **Jason Burk – Class of 1999 – Track and Football**

Burk was a 4-year letterwinner for the Louisburg track and field team and qualified for state in all four years in four events. He accumulated 12 state medals, 16 regional track medals and 14 Frontier League medals. Burk was selected to the Kansas City All-Metro track team in 1998 and 1999.

During his senior season, Burk was a state champion in both



the triple  
and long jump. He won the triple jump with a leap 48 feet and  
the long jump  
with a mark of 22-5. He also finished fifth in the 100-meter  
dash and sixth in  
the high jump. As a junior, Burk won a state championship in  
the triple jump  
with mark of 46 feet and won three more state medals. He took  
second long jump,  
fourth in the 100 dash and sixth in the 200 dash. As a  
sophomore, Burk won  
state medals in the triple jump (second), long jump (fourth)  
and 4×100 relay  
(third). He was a member of the 4×100 team that took second at  
state as a  
freshman in 1996.

At one time, Burk held seven school records. He currently  
holds school  
records in the triple jump, high jump and long jump. Burk  
holds the school  
record for most points in a season with 326.

Burk also played football, where he was a part of bi-district,  
district  
and regional championship teams.



**Krystal (Bowes) Grojean**

## **Krystal (Bowes) Grojean – Class of 2001 – Volleyball, Basketball, Track**

Bowes was a 4-year letterwinner in track before she was offered a scholarship on the Wichita State track and field team.

In her senior season at Louisburg, Bowes earned three state medals, including a second-place finish in the javelin with a throw of 145-10. She was also third in the discus with a toss of 126-9 and fifth in the shot put at 37-5. As a sophomore and junior, she finished sixth in the discus at state. In all, Bowes racked up five state medals in her high school career before moving on to Wichita State. She is the current Louisburg record holder in the javelin (146-10) and discus (137-11).

At Wichita State, she earned academic All-American honors and was a team captain all four years. Bowes was a two-time NCAA national qualifier and finished fifth in the javelin and was second in the Missouri Valley Conference in 2006. In 2004, Bowes took first in the MVC in the javelin and fourth in the discus. In 2003, she won the Missouri Valley Conference discus title, was second in the javelin and fourth in the hammer throw. Bowes was also a member two Shocker teams that won conference titles.

In volleyball and basketball at LHS, Bowes was a 3-year letterwinner in each sport and earned first-team all-Frontier League honors each season.

Current members of the LHS Hall of Fame

### **Class of 2005:**

Tom

Stevens – 1934 – Track and Field (High Jump)

1947/48

Undefeated Football Teams

Richard

Meiers – 1949 – Basketball/Football

Don

Meek – 1965-1998 – Coach/Administrator

Larry

Harding – 1976-1994 – Volleyball/Golf Coach

Amy

Dodson Goode – 1986 – Volleyball/Basketball

### **Class of 2006:**

Jim

Wells – 1936 – Track and Field (Pole Vault)/Football

Doug

Eaton – 1971 – Wrestling

Sue

Truman Apple – 1974 – Track and Field/Volleyball/Basketball

Mike

Meek – 1985- Football/Wrestling/Track and Field

Jamie

Waite – 1991 – Track and Field (Pole Vault)/Football/Basketball

### **Class of 2007**

Alan

Taylor – 1949 – Football

Tim

Dozier – 1987 – Wrestling/Football

Beth

Dodson Dixon – 1989 – Volleyball/Basketball

Jeff

Lohse – 1991 – Baseball/Football/Basketball

### **Class of 2008**

Greg

Kahmann – 1987 – Baseball/Football/Basketball

Mark

Buckingham – 1994 – Basketball

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# 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.

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## **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](http://www.kansasshrinebowl.com).

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## **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.

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## **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.”

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# 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 40<sup>th</sup> 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."

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## **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 16<sup>th</sup> 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.”

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# 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."