

Wildcats roll past rival Paola to win second straight game



Louisburg senior running back Darby Van Eaton scored a pair of touchdowns and rushed for more than 130 yards in the Wildcats' 34-13 win over Paola.

PAOLA – The football rivalry between Louisburg and Paola has been one-sided as of late, and it has been controlled by the Wildcats.

Nothing changed following Friday's contest at Paola High School.

Louisburg dominated from the start as it scored 27 unanswered

points to start the game and never looked back in a 34-13 victory over the Panthers. It marks the third consecutive season the Wildcats have come out on top in the rivalry battle.

It was a much more comfortable victory for the Wildcats following their week one overtime victory against Tonganoxie.

"We got a little better from last week," Louisburg coach Drew Harding said. "We are still far away from a finished product at this point, but we took a step forward and now we just need to keep taking steps each and every day."

Louisburg took control of the line of scrimmage and provided lots of room for running back Darby Van Eaton. The Wildcat senior tallied 134 yards on 24 carries with two touchdowns and had 40 yard receiving.

The Wildcat offensive line of Brayden Yoder, Nate Capuro, Miles Meek, Xander Lucas and Johnny Hendrickson, along with tight ends Conlee Hovey and Erik Lien, opened running lanes for Van Eaton.

"Darby ran the football hard," Harding said. "He was able to break tackles and he was finishing plays and always falling forward. That is what we want out of our backs and he did a good job."

Van Eaton scored his two touchdowns in the second quarter as he opened with a 2-yard run to give Louisburg a 7-0 lead. On the Wildcats' next possession, he then broke free for a 36-yard run to the end zone to put his team up two scores.

Louisburg added to its lead at halftime as it got its passing game going.



Louisburg senior Josh Holtzen hauls in a touchdown catch right before halftime on Friday against Paola.

Quarterback Alex Saad found senior Josh Holtzen in the corner of the end zone for a 30-yard touchdown pass with less than a second remaining in the first half. A Blaise Vohs extra point gave the Wildcats a 21-point lead at halftime.

"We definitely didn't feel like we were playing our best offensive football in the first half, so to be able connect there right before halftime, and put a bright spot on the first half was pretty nice," Harding said.

Saad continued the scoring to start the third quarter with a 1-yard touchdown run. Then after a Paola touchdown, the Wildcats answered right back when Saad found Hovey for a 28-yard score and Louisburg led 34-6.

The Louisburg quarterback finished the game with 177 yards and

two touchdowns on 12 of 19 passing. Senior Myles Vohs and Hovey each led the team with 53 yards receiving.

Defensively, the Wildcats stymied the Paola offense in a first half shutout. Louisburg limited the big plays as it held the Panthers scoreless till midway through the third quarter when the game was already in-hand.

Lien led Louisburg with 11 tackles on the night, while Rickey Giles and Yoder each finished with five. Yoder also had 1.5 tackles for a loss and Giles had a sack.



Louisburg senior Logan Henry races down the sideline following an interception Friday at Paola.

Louisburg senior Logan Henry had a first half interception that led to a Wildcat score, while Hovey, Holtzen, Swartz, Lien, Russell Wiseman and Ashton Moore also had tackles for a loss.

"I thought the defense played great," Harding said. "I still think we are playing better defensive football than offensive football right now. We did a really good job of being assignment sound and getting lined up and making Paola work for what they got."

The Wildcats also got a chance to put in its reserves in the second half, which doesn't happen often in a Louisburg-Paola matchup.

"It is really fun to get those guys in because they get beat up on scout team so much," Harding said. "They put in just as much work as everyone else, so for them to get in on a Friday night is a lot of fun."

Louisburg will try for its third straight win to start the season this Friday as it hosts an out-of-league opponent in Clay Center – a team the Wildcats aren't very familiar with. Still, it presents a new type of challenge.

"It is fun to play someone new," Harding said. "You don't really know what they do well, so we will obviously watch some film on them, but they have some really good athletes and it will be a challenge for us for sure. We are excited to play someone a little different."

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SCORING SUMMARY

Second Quarter

L: Darby Van Eaton 2 run (Blaise Vohs kick)

L: Van Eaton 36 run (Vohs kick)

L: Josh Holtzen 30 pass from Alex Saad (Vohs kick)

Third Quarter

L: Saad 1 run (kick failed)

P: JD Troutman 1 run (kick blocked)

L: Conlee Hovey 28 pass from Saad (Vohs kick)

Fourth Quarter

P: Troutman 30 run (kick good)

STATISTICS

RUSHING – Darby Van Eaton 24-134; Freddy Moreau 3-13; Cole Heinrich 2-7; Bryce Thompson 1-4; Alex Saad 1-1

PASSING – Alex Saad 12-19-177

RECEIVING – Myles Vohs 4-53, Conlee Hovey 3-53, Darby Van Eaton 3-40, Josh Holtzen 1-30, Erik Lien 1-1.

TACKLES – Erik Lien 11, Rickey Giles 5, Brayden Yoder 5, Logan Henry 4, Josh Holtzen 4, Lucas Swartz 4, Gage Feldkamp 4, Russell Wiseman 3, Conlee Hovey 3, Ashton Moore 3, Myles Vohs 2, Bryce Thompson 2, Aidan Meyer 2, Johnny Hendrickson 2, Michael Foote 2, Daniel Aponte 1, Wyatt Crooks 1, Kael McGuire 1, Jimmy DeVary 1, Aiden Kennedy 1

Week 1 Athlete of the Week: Myles Vohs



Here is the Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Week for week one of the fall sports season, sponsored by Edward Jones-Craig Holtzen.

MYLES VOHS, SENIOR, FOOTBALL

Louisburg senior Myles Vohs certainly made an impact in the Wildcats' season opener against Tonganoxie and it took him only two plays to do it. On his first two touches of the game, Vohs scored a pair of touchdowns and helped the Wildcats to a 21-20 victory over Tonganoxie at Wildcat Stadium

On the game, Vohs had three catches and had a team-high 108 yards to go along with the two scores. He scored on a pair of touchdown passes from Alex Saad of 26 and 41 yards.

The athlete of the week award is announced every Wednesday morning during the fall season and the winner is selected by Louisburg Sports Zone with the help of nominations from coaches.

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**Big stop in overtime lifts
Wildcats past Tonganoxie in
season opener**



Louisburg senior Lucas Swartz (22) celebrates with his teammates after he recorded a stop on Tonganoxie's 2-point conversion in overtime to secure the win.

Louisburg's season opener against Tonganoxie seemed to have it all.

Big plays for touchdowns, mistakes, injuries and everything in between – including overtime. After Louisburg scored on its first possession of overtime to take the lead, Tonganoxie did the same.

However, instead of going for the tie, the Chieftains tried to win the game on the 2-point conversion.

Enter Lucas Swartz.

The Louisburg senior came around the end to stop the 2-point conversion for a loss and sealed the Wildcats' 21-20 win Friday, in what was a memorable season opener.

"That was a big time play there by Swartz," Louisburg coach

Drew Harding said. "We talked about how those guys have to work through the tight end and down the line of scrimmage and that is exactly what he did. It was a big time game-clinching play."

It was one of several big performances on the Wildcat sideline Friday.

Louisburg opened the 2024 season with a couple of highlight plays that both came thanks to senior Myles Vohs. On the game's opening drive, quarterback Alex Saad shoveled the ball to Vohs, who reversed field, and eventually scored on a 26-yard touchdown pass to put Louisburg up 7-0.



Louisburg senior Myles Vohs sheds a tackle to score one of his two touchdowns on Friday against Tonganoxie.

The Saad to Vohs connection came up big again in the second quarter when Saad hit Vohs on a short pass, and Vohs sped past several Chieftain defenders on what was a 41-yard score to put Louisburg up 14-0.

In all, Vohs had three catches on the night for 108 yards and it could have been more, but he had to sit part of the second half and overtime with cramping issues that he, and several other Wildcats, had to fight through.

“We thought before the season that Myles was going to be a big-time playmaker for us,” Harding said. “We said we have to figure out how to get him the ball, and then in his first game he got the ball twice and both times he scored touchdowns. That just shows how explosive he can be. I thought Alex played a good game in his first game as a starter as well and I didn’t think he was fazed at all.”

Tonganoxie eventually cut the Wildcat lead to 14-7 at halftime and then tied the game late in the third quarter. Neither team could find a rhythm offensively, and for Louisburg, injuries hampered drives as several starters had to leave with cramps.

“The first game can sometimes be kind of choppy and sloppy at times and this one was definitely some of that,” Harding said. “With all the cramping issues we had for a while, we weren’t even sure who all was in the huddle at certain times. We had to dig deep and some guys stepped in and made some big plays for us. Hopefully it will just help us in a long run.”

One of those big plays came in the overtime as senior running back Darby Van Eaton broke through a hole to score a 10-yard touchdown, and after a Blaise Vohs extra point, Louisburg had a 21-14 lead.

Van Eaton finished with 59 yards rushing as he started in place of Ashton Moore, who was limited to the defensive side of the ball.



Louisburg senior Darby Van Eaton runs through a hole to score a touchdown Friday in overtime.

"I thought Darby did a phenomenal job all night," Harding said. "He is someone that might not have as many carries as others because we have Ashton, as they are in the same grade. He has always been ready to go and he got some tough yards out there. Then to see him burst through that hole and have that run in overtime was awesome."

The Wildcat defense did a good job limiting big plays and buckled down in the second half with several big stops.

Moore led the way from his linebacker spot with 13 tackles, including two for a loss. Senior Erik Lien had 10 stops and two pass break-ups.

Another senior Logan Henry, had eight tackles to go along with an interception, while Swartz had seven stops, including 2.5 tackles for loss.

Louisburg will try and make it two straight wins to start the season this Friday when the Wildcats travel to Paola for a 7 p.m. start.

“I don’t think we played perfect by any means, and I am sure that we have a lot that we can improve on,” Harding said. “I know that it is definitely a lot more fun to do after a win than it is a loss.

“We know Paola will give us everything they got and it is a great rivalry. They are going to protect their home turf and there is no easy game for us on the schedule. It is going to be a grinder and that is just life in the Frontier League.”

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SCORING SUMMARY

First Quarter

L: Myles Vohs 26 pass from Alex Saad (Blaise Vohs kick)

Second Quarter

L: Vohs 41 pass from Saad (Vohs kick)

T: Tanner Hand 41 run (kick good)

Third quarter

T: Hand 1 run (kick good)

Overtime

L: Darby Van Eaton 10 run (Vohs kick)

T: Todd Brown 9 pass from Talon Langford (run failed)

STATISTICS

RUSHING – Darby Van Eaton 21-59

PASSING – Alex Saad 9-19-162

RECEIVING – Myles Vohs 3-108, Martin Alicia Soto 1-15, Rickey Giles 1-13, Conlee Hovey 2-11, Darby Van Eaton 1-11

TACKLES – Ashton Moore 13, Erik Lien 10, Logan Henry 8, Lucas Swartz 7, Conlee Hovey 5, Brayden Yoder 5, Russell Wiseman 4, Myles Vohs 3, Aidan Meyer 3, Gage Feldkamp 3, Rickey Giles 1, Bryce Thompson 1, Kael McGuire 1, Johnny Hendrickson 1, Jimmy DeVary 1.

**Wildcat football hoping for
third consecutive league
title**



Louisburg senior Ashton Moore is one of several returning starters for a Wildcat team that features 24 seniors.

For the last two seasons, Louisburg football has been the cream of the crop in the Frontier League.

The Wildcats are coming off their second straight league title and haven't lost a league contest in that 2-year span. They have been a dominating force and they want to continue that again in 2024.

However, Louisburg knows it won't be easy and will have a target on its back all season.

"A league title is something they have certainly set as one of their goals," Louisburg coach Drew Harding said. "We have talked a lot about that, but we can't be focused on that at this point. It has to be on a week by week basis, take opportunities given to us and get better. It is certainly a

goal of theirs, but we just have to a one game at a time mentality and hopefully put ourselves in a good position at the end of the season.”

Although the Wildcats lost six starters that earned All-Frontier League honors last season, they return several key pieces, along with 24 seniors, from last season’s team and it starts with a pair of Division I recruits in Ashton Moore and Conlee Hovey.

Moore, who committed to Kansas State over the summer, was also one of the leaders of the Wildcat defense at linebacker. He posted a team-high 125 tackles, including eight for a loss. Moore had four forced fumbles and two sacks.

As the team’s starting running back, Moore carried the load for the Wildcats as he carried the ball 151 times for 1,110 yards and had 18 total touchdowns.

As for Hovey, he has earned several Division I offers already and for good reason. The Louisburg tight end is big target down the field and had 250 yards and two touchdowns. He also finished with more than 40 tackles, had two sacks and a forced fumble on the defensive line.

“It is huge to have those guys back with that much experience and the caliber of athletes they are,” Harding said. “We are going to expect a lot out of them this year and we are really excited to see what those guys can do. They are really good football players.

“Ashton is in very good shape and fully expect him to be the leader of that defense and carrying the load for us on offense. You always want to get your best players the ball and Conlee is a big target with good hands and he helps us a lot in the run game. Getting him involved will be big for us.”



Louisburg senior Conlee Hovey returns to the Wildcats after earning all-league honors on both sides of the ball.

The Wildcats have had the same signal caller the last three seasons in Declan Battle, but the Louisburg graduate has moved on to Washburn and they will have a new quarterback under center.

Senior Alex Saad will take the reins of the Wildcat offense, and after seeing a little bit of time last season, will be thrust into the starting role this year.

“We lost a 3-year starter which is always tough to replace, but the good thing is we have another talented quarterback to step into that role,” Harding said. “Alex is very talented and I think he would have played for a majority of our opponents last year. He can do a lot of really good things for us.

“There will be some differences for sure between Declan and Alex for sure. As coaches, you have to adjust that scheme to what fit your players the best. Both are talented but they are

different and we have some things that suit Alex a little better.”

Louisburg also returns a fixture on both the offensive and defensive lines. Senior Brayden Yoder, who earned first team all-league honors on both sides of the ball, is back to lead the players on the line of scrimmage.

Yoder will join Miles Meek, Xander Lucas, Johnny Hendrickson and Nate Capuro on the offensive line, while Yoder, Hovey, Meek, Jimmy DeVary, Capuro and Lucas Swartz could all see time on the defensive line.



Louisburg senior Brayden Yoder (56), who earned first-team all-league honors on both sides of the ball, will anchor both the offensive and defensive lines.

“Brayden doesn’t say much, but he just works his tail off every single day,” Harding said. “He doesn’t need a break and

that same mentally is still with him this year. He is a tough guy to move on defense and he can move people on the offensive side. We are going to rely on him and excited to see him step up into that leadership role.”

The Wildcats also bring back a few wide receivers who earned varsity minutes last season in seniors Myles Vohs, Josh Holtzen and Reid McCaskill. Senior Garrison Bloustine, along with juniors Rickey Giles, Blaise Vohs and Martin Alicea Soto could see time as well.

On the defensive side, Moore and senior Erik Lien will lead the linebacking crew and the Wildcats will see several new faces in the secondary.

Swartz, Logan Henry, Russell Wiseman, Rickey Giles and Holtzen will all see time at the safety spot, while Vohs, Saad, McCaskill, Gage Feldkamp and Aidan Meyer will all see cornerback duty.

It will be another different schedule for the Wildcats this season as they open with Tonganoxie on Friday and then turn around to play rival Paola on the road the next week.

It will also feature games against unfamiliar foes in Clay Center and Wichita West, and the Wildcats will also be on the road for three straight weeks in the middle of their schedule.

“It is definitely a unique schedule and we start off with Tonganoxie and next week is your rival in Paola,” Harding said. “Then you play a team (Clay Center) we haven’t played before the week after that. Then we go on the road for three straight. There are no easy opponents and they all have good players and coaches. There won’t be an easy game on the schedule.”

Louisburg has set several goals for itself in 2024, but with a tough schedule, the Wildcats know they will not be able overlook anyone.

“Our expectations is try to keep it week by week,” Harding said. “We have some long term goals, like winning a league title, and we want to go on a playoff run. The players set the expectation to have fun every day and win the next game. It was a cool goal for them to set and it highlights what we are trying to do.”

Moore sees dream become reality with commitment to K-State



Louisburg senior Ashton Moore made it official this summer with a commitment to the Kansas State football program

Ever since his brother, Austin, joined the Kansas State football program, Ashton Moore wanted to follow in his footsteps.

Playing Division I football has always been a goal for Ashton, but like many athletes in Louisburg to come before him, scholarship offers to big time programs have been hard to come by.

So when he attended a K-State camp early this summer, Ashton's life changed.

The K-State coaching staff gave him the offer he was looking for, and about a month later, Ashton made it official and committed to the Wildcat program in early July.

"It's been a goal of mine to play at K-State since I was in seventh grade, so to be able to announce my commitment there was like a dream come true," Ashton said. "Committing was definitely a huge relief. For a long time I didn't have the offers I wanted and didn't know what decision I would have to make, so being able to commit to K-State really eased a lot of those worries."

At the Kansas State camp, Ashton put together a strong performance for the Wildcat coaches and assistant Taylor Braet, pulled him aside and told him that head coach Chris Klieman wanted to chat with him.

The Wildcat coaches knew what they had in his older brother Austin, who is an All-Big 12 linebacker and entering his final year with the program, and they saw a lot of the same traits in Ashton.

*I'm excited to announce my commitment to Kansas State University! Thank you to my family, coaches, teammates and everyone who has supported me along the way, especially the Louisburg community. Go Cats! ☐☐ #EMAW
pic.twitter.com/liYJm1B7zf*

– Ashton Moore (@ashtonmoore_21) July 10, 2024

As he walked over to talk with Coach Klieman, Ashton's father, Tommy, and Austin were watching from the stands. Ashton got the news he was hoping for, but waited till the ride home to tell his family.

With his mom, Alison, on the phone, Ashton informed them all of his good news. Needless to say it was a loud ride home back to Louisburg.

"Getting my offer was one of the best experiences of my entire life," Ashton said, "I had a good camp and getting to have my dad and Austin there to experience it with me was amazing. After watching Austin these last few years, I knew before they even offered me that's where I wanted to go, so it made the decision very easy."

It was about a month later when Ashton made his commitment official and he will join the Wildcat program for the 2025 season.

The recruiting journey has been a positive one, albeit stressful at times. Still, Ashton's life has definitely changed since making his announcement.

"Since committing I've definitely met a lot of new people," He said. "I've had a lot of K-State fans reach out to me over social media as well as my future teammates. I also had lots of coaches from other schools I had been talking to reach out and congratulate me and it was good to know all those relationships ended on good terms."

Ashton had a big junior year for Louisburg as he earned first team All-Frontier League honors on both sides of the ball with 125 tackles at linebacker, and close to 1,500 total yards at running back with 18 touchdowns.

He will help lead the Wildcats this season as they try for a third consecutive Frontier League title.

Louisburg football uses work day to give back to community



(Submitted Photo)

Members of the Louisburg football team cleaned off headstones at the Louisburg cemetery on July 31 in what was a community work day for the Wildcat program.

The Louisburg football team has spent

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As important as that is, several Wildcats also took time out of their busy schedules to give back to the Louisburg community.

On July 31, more than 50 football players hit the town to do some clean-up work. It was a small way for them to give back to the people around town who support the program.

“I remember when I was in high school we did a couple of community service projects around Louisburg,” Louisburg coach, and alum, Drew Harding said. “We thought this would be something that would be cool to bring back these last couple years. This project is important to us just because this community supports us so much. We know from our road games that nobody is as supported as we are here in Louisburg. We felt it was important for us to give back to the community that supports us so well.”

For close to three hours, players repainted fire hydrants around town, while others went to the cemetery. They focused on the older part of the cemetery, where they cleaned the algae and grime off the headstones.



(Submitted photo)

Louisburg senior Alex Saad helps put a new coat of paint on a fire hydrant during the Wildcats' community service work day on July 31.

The players have been busy throughout the summer, whether it is with weights and conditioning, camp, team practices or scrimmages. It takes a lot to prepare for a season, but Harding was proud to see his team come together and do some more hard work off the field.

“It was really cool to see that many boys show up to help out and give back to their community,” Harding said. “They have all had really busy summers, and for that many to show up on their down time demonstrates how important this project was to them. I think it really shows that we have good kids here in Louisburg.”

Doing community service and giving back is a passion of Harding’s, but one that his players share as well.

“The community work day is very important to the entire team because we are super grateful to the Louisburg community for everything they do for us,” senior captain Ashton Moore said. “The amount of support we receive is incredible and we want to show them our gratitude and give back as much as possible.”

Decision to return to football pays off for O’Bryan as he joins Benedictine program



Louisburg's Ben O'Bryan found a new home on the gridiron as he signed with the Benedictine football team last spring.

Ben O'Bryan hadn't played football in a few years going into his senior season, but he decided to give it one last try.

It turned out to be a good decision for O'Bryan, who certainly made the most of his short time with the Louisburg football team. It also gave him opportunities at the college level, as well.

O'Bryan will join the Benedictine football team this fall after signing his letter of intent with the Ravens last spring.

"It meant a lot to me to get the opportunity to play in college and to get to play this sport I have a new found love for," O'Bryan said. "I knew it was something I wanted to do when I got to play with this team that past season."

It was a memorable senior campaign for O'Bryan, who was a

starting offensive tackle on the Frontier League championship team that finished the regular season undefeated.

O'Bryan helped the unit amass more than 4,000 yards of total offense. He was pretty hard to miss on the field as well as he was team's biggest player at 6-foot-5 and 275 pounds.



Louisburg's Ben O'Bryan signed his letter of intent to join the Benedictine football program. Sitting next to Ben are his parents Tom and Debra O'Bryan. Standing (from left) are Louisburg assistants Joel McGhee, Nick Chapman, head coach Drew Harding, along with assistants Kade Larson and Jake Hinson.

The choice to come back out for football was obviously a positive one for him.

"The experience I had with the guys on the team was priceless and I enjoyed every moment of it," O'Bryan said. "What made me want to come back out was really my teammates. They were adamant about it and I am glad they were."

O'Bryan now joins a tradition-filled Benedictine program that competes toward the top of the Heart of America Conference. However, he was looking more than just football in his next stop.

"What made Benedictine the right fit for me was the team and academics there," O'Bryan said. "I wanted to find a team that was close knit and loved the sport just like Louisburg, and that's what I found there."

As much as he is looking forward to his future with the Ravens, he can't help but think about what his 2023 season was like, and he is hoping for some the same success with Benedictine.

"I felt I had a memorable season with all my teammates," O'Bryan said. "It was really something special, and the vibes during practice and games were unmatched."

"When I get to Benedictine I want to push myself to a new limit to be the best version of myself for me and my teammates."

Battle named Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year



Louisburg senior Declan Battle had a special season in his final year at Louisburg as he was voted the Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year.

Declan Battle has become synonymous with winning – more this past year than ever.

Battle was the starting quarterback for the Louisburg football team that won back-to-back Frontier League titles. Then during the baseball season, he helped lead the Wildcats to a league and regional championship.

It was certainly a year to remember for him and those were just some of the reasons Battle was named the 2024 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year.

“This award means the world to me,” Battle said. “It is such an honor to be named Athlete of the Year. I couldn’t have done this without my amazing teammates, coaches and community pushing me to be my best.”

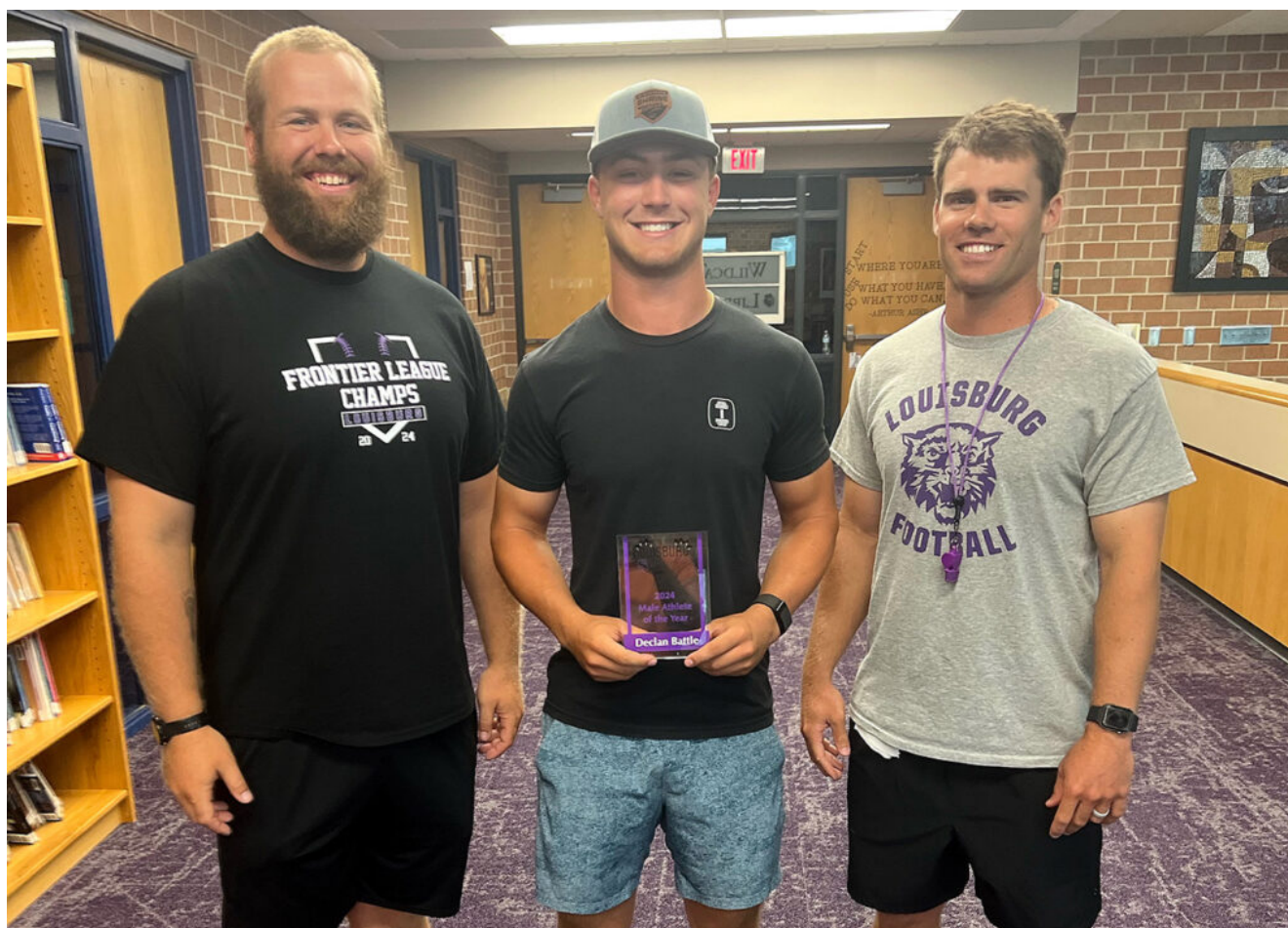
Battle was one of the best in the state when it came to his performance under the lights on Fridays and on the diamond.

Last fall, Battle was a first team All-Frontier League

quarterback and defensive back. He was also an all-state selection from multiple media outlets and was a finalist for the Frank Fontana Award, which is given annually to the best all-around small school player in Class 1-4 on the Kansas and Missouri sides of the metro.

In 10 games for the Wildcats, Battle completed 105 passes for 1,364 yards and had 16 touchdowns to just two interceptions. He also did a lot of damage on the ground with 1,009 yards rushing and 16 more touchdowns. As a defensive back, Battle finished with 36 tackles and also had an interception for a touchdown.

His efforts earned him a spot in the Kansas Shrine Bowl, which will be played Saturday (June 29) at Emporia State University. Battle also signed his letter of intent to join the Washburn University football team.



Declan Battle is pictured with Louisburg head coaches Kade Larson and Drew Harding after receiving the athlete of the

year award.

"Declan is certainly deserving of this award," Louisburg coach Drew Harding said. "He was a standout athlete in both football and baseball. Besides that though he always represented himself and Louisburg in the right way.

"Declan was fantastic to coach. Obviously anyone who watched him play could see he was a tremendous athlete. However, Declan was also a great leader for us. He always approached things the right way and was dedicated to making himself, and his teams, better."

Battle and the Wildcats also had a memorable season in baseball.

Louisburg captured its first Frontier League championship since 2002 and later went on to qualify for its first state tournament since 2009.

Battle was a big part of that group as well. He led the team in triples, stolen bases and runs scored that earned him first team all-league and first team all-state outfield.

He was atop the Wildcat lineup all season and set the tone in several games. Battle finished with a .378 average to go along with 34 hits, five doubles, three triples, a home run and had 23 RBIs.

Battle also led the team with 41 runs scored, which is a school record and had a team-high 15 stolen bases. He holds three individual career team records for runs scored (102), triples (8) and stolen bases (47).

"Declan was a great leader for us," Louisburg baseball coach Kade Larson. "He found a way to get the job done all year long. It didn't matter if it was hitting, pitching or fielding, Declan always made a big play when we needed it."

Now that his Wildcat career has come to a close, Battle had

some time to reflect on what was a special time at Louisburg High School – one he won't soon forget.

"Playing at Louisburg was always great, knowing no matter what happened, the community was there supporting us," Battle said. "Playing sports at Louisburg was a great experience and I wouldn't change it for anything."

Previous winners:

2018: Austin Moore

2019: Blue Caplinger

2020: Garrett Rolofson

2021: Weston Guetterman

2022: Tom Koontz

2023: Mason Dobbins

Battle ready to make his own mark with Washburn football



Louisburg's Declan Battle is excited to make the jump from high school to college football at Washburn this fall.

Football has always been a big part of Declan Battle's life, so the idea of playing in college has always been something he's desired.

He certainly did everything he could at the high school level to get to that point. Battle led Louisburg to back-to-back Frontier League titles, became the school's all-time leading passer and earned numerous all-league and all-state honors.

After making several visits and looking at multiple offers, he found the place that was right for him. Battle will join the Washburn University program this fall after signing with the Ichabods earlier this year.

"Since I first started playing, I always had a dream of playing college football," Battle said. "It seems crazy to think I am already heading off to do that. It feels amazing."

The journey to find a home wasn't always an easy one, but when then time came, Battle found a spot that was very familiar to him – and his family.

Battle's father, Aaron, played football for Ichabods and his mother, Torrie, was a member of the Washburn softball program. So needless to say, the Battle family bleeds the Yale blue and white.



Declan Battle signed his letter of intent to join the Washburn football program this fall. Seated next to Declan are his parents Torrie and Aaron Battle. Standing (from left) are Louisburg coaches Nick Chapman, Alex Gentges, head coach Drew Harding, Kade Larson, Jake Hinson and Joel McGhee.

"It didn't play too much of an impact on my decision, but it definitely helped a little bit," Battle said of the family connection to Washburn. "Washburn gave me a great opportunity to come play in a highly competitive MIAA. They have amazing facilities and an awesome school. I loved it there."

“The recruiting process is definitely the real deal. It was a lot harder than I thought of it would be. Lots of coaches just said no, or wouldn’t respond at all. I just had to let that fuel my fire to keep improving week in and week out. After the season I started getting some more opportunities, but I still had a lot of weight on my shoulders knowing I wasn’t where I wanted to be yet. When I made my decision to make it official to Washburn, it was like a weight lifted off my shoulders.”

Battle will compete at the quarterback spot when he arrives on campus and will look to continue his success from the high school level to college.

He was a first team All-Frontier League quarterback and defensive back. He was an all-state pick from multiple media outlets and was a finalist for the Frank Fontana Award, which is given annually to the best all-around small school player in Class 1-4 on the Kansas and Missouri sides of the metro.

In 10 games for the Wildcats, Battle completed 105 passes for 1,364 yards and had 16 touchdowns to just two interceptions. He also did a lot of damage on the ground with 1,009 yards rushing and 16 more touchdowns. As a defensive back, Battle finished with 36 tackles and also had an interception for a touchdown.

Following the season, Battle also became the school’s all-time leading passer and is fifth on the Wildcat career rushing list. He was the Wildcat starting quarterback the last three seasons.

“I am coming in to play quarterback, what I dreamed of playing as a kid,” Battle said. “There is not really an ‘upperclassman’ quarterback there. Most of us are young and it’s definitely going to be competitive every day for the starting spot.”

“Having three years of varsity experience has taught me a lot. I truly felt that every year I progressed a ton. Playing in a

tough Frontier League is definitely a grind and is something I think has got me more prepared for college football, where it will almost turn into a full time job for me.”

KSHSAA approves several postseason changes



KANSAS STATE HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATION PRESS RELEASE

TOPEKA – Changes to postseason formats and championship sites for basketball, football, wrestling and track and field highlight actions approved at the June 12-13 KSHSAA Executive Board Meeting. The postseason formats are set by the KSHSAA Executive Board each year.

Basketball – Beginning in March of 2026, the state basketball tournaments will be moving to four total sites. Four facilities will play host to the seven classifications, 14 championships. By honoring the KSHSAA membership voted in the fall of 2023 to qualify eight boys teams and eight girls teams

involved at the final site, modifications to the daily schedule will be developed. The schedule and other event details, including classification designations for each site and venue selection will be determined and announced following the 2024-25 basketball season.

Another basketball postseason change effective with the 2024-25 season will come at the 3A, 2A, 1A DI and 1A DII classifications. Each class will be divided into four regions and then seeded into two sub-states within the region: Substate A: 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, 16; Substate B: 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15. The winner of each substate will advance to the state basketball tournament. Further format details and dates will be sent to member schools.

Football – As announced in January, the state football championships will be moving to three sites with three games being played at each site. The executive board approved the following sites and schedule for 2024:

Emporia State University:

Class 6A = Friday, November 29 at 2:00pm

Class 4A = Saturday, November 30 at 1:00pm

Class 5A = Saturday, November 30 at 7:00pm

Hutchinson Community College:

Class 2A = Friday, November 29 at 6:00pm

Class 3A = Saturday, November 30 at 12:00pm

Class 1A = Saturday, November 30 at 5:00pm

Kiowa County High School, Greensburg:

Class 8-player DII = Saturday, November 30 at 11:00am

Class 6-Player = Saturday, November 30 at 3:00pm

Class 8-Player DI = Saturday, November 30 at 7:00pm

Wrestling – Girl's wrestling will now include four classes to mirror the boy's classification designations. The addition of another class for girl's wrestling necessitates the addition of another championship site. 6A, 5A, 4A and 3-1A will each have their own site to determine a champion. 3-1A state wrestling will be in Hays and 4A will be in Salina. Park City Arena and one other facility to be named later will house either 6A or 5A. State sites and regional dates will be determined at the September KSHSAA Executive Board meeting. The state wrestling tournament will take place February 28 – March 1, 2025.

Track and Field – Qualification for the state meet was adjusted to now be the top 3 plus the next four best regional performance in each event.

Two committees will be formed to gather input from membership school leaders. One to discuss the details behind the implementation of Esports prior to the possible adoption as a KSHSAA sanctioned activity. The second committee will review the KSHSAA calendar to consider possible alternatives to dates of postseason activities.