

Fall sports season kicks off with first day of practice



Louisburg senior Kris Light goes through a drill during the first day of soccer practice Monday. All four Wildcat teams got their season started with workouts on Monday as the fall sports season kicks off.

Summer time and vacations are coming to an end just in time for fall sports to heat up as four Louisburg High School teams had their first day of practice Monday.

The Wildcat cross country, football, soccer and volleyball teams got the 2017 season kicked off right with either two-a-days or tryouts. Each program also had strong numbers out as they either increased or stayed the same from the year before.

All four Louisburg teams experienced success last season and they hope it carries over into this year.

Louisburg soccer made program history as the Wildcats advanced to the state semifinals for the first time. Cross country also had a big season as it qualified three for the state meet.

Football is coming off a regional championship, while the volleyball team was one victory away from reaching the state tournament.

Louisburg had a lot of positives going its way in 2016, but all four coaches realize it is time to start anew.

The Wildcat football team opened practice with approximately 60 players out as they start two-a-days for the rest of this week under first-year coach Robert Ebenstein. The players will practice in helmets and shoulder pads through Thursday and full pads Friday. They will conclude the week with a scrimmage Saturday morning.



Louisburg junior Austin Moore and the rest of the Wildcat football team begin two-a-day practices this week.

Louisburg, which finished with eight wins last season, is hoping build on that success.

“I thought practice went well,” Ebenstein said. “The guys and coaches were excited to get going and the guys brought a ton of enthusiasm and had a great first day of practice.”

The Wildcat soccer team saw a big jump in numbers as they had 45 players sign up to play this season and the team will be

going through tryouts through Wednesday.

Practice opened at the track as the players ran the mile at 7 a.m. Monday, watched a concussion video in the afternoon and hit the practice field for the first time shortly after. The Wildcats are hard at work under second-year coach Kyle Conley, making sure they use the momentum they created after their fourth place finish at state last season.

“I know for the boys and coaches it is fantastic to get back to the field,” Conley said. “We are very excited and anxious to prove last year was not a fluke. We will have to work even harder than we did last year, because we will not be able to fly under the radar. The boys are ready for that challenge and I think they are going to give it their all to see how this journey transpires. The boys are focused and determined. I am really excited to also see what this group can achieve as a team.”



Sophomore Trinity Moore is one of three returning state qualifiers for the Louisburg cross country team.

The cross country team also has high expectations for itself as the Wildcats return three state qualifiers in seniors Wyatt Reece, Tim Smith and sophomore Trinity Moore. Moore garnered a state medal after finishing 19th as a freshman at the Class 4A meet and became the first female runner in Louisburg history to earn a state honor.

Runners hit the streets around town on Monday for a 30-minute workout to begin to build their base for the season and will progress as the season goes along. Head coach John Reece has 35 runners out this season, which is close to last year's number, as the Wildcats prepare for what they hope is a special season.

"My summer crew of runners are excited to get going, some even started altering their summer runs on their own to start preparing for the season," coach Reece said. "We are working on duration runs vs. miles. Instead of going for a 5-mile run, I will have them run for a minimum of say 45 minutes and allow some to extend up to 60 minutes of training, which some runners could reach close to eight miles within the hour. Our non-duration days will be focused on speed and lots of repeats with active recovery. There will be no walking for us."

The Lady Cat volleyball team felt out of place at the end of last season. Louisburg's year ended sooner than it would have liked after losing in the substate championship game and didn't qualify for state for the first time in five years.



Louisburg senior Sophie McMullen goes through a drill during the first day of tryouts Monday at Louisburg High School.

Louisburg is hard at work in hopes of earning a state tournament bid. Head coach Jessica Compliment has 35 players out this season, and after two more days of tryouts, will get practice in full swing.

The Lady Cats open their season at home on Aug. 26 when they host the Frontier League preseason tournament and the junior varsity will compete in Paola. All three teams will play again at home on Aug. 29 against Blue Valley Southwest.

“The coaching staff is excited to get the season started and begin preparing for the preseason league tournament for varsity and junior varsity,” Compliment said. “We are looking forward to a lot of home matches this season and the athletes were ready to start tryouts and get the season kicked off.”

Holloway excited for new role as LHS activities director



Louisburg High School activities director Jeremy Holloway is looking forward to his new position as he starts his 17th year in the USD 416 school district.

Growing up, Jeremy Holloway wasn't one to stay in a place for too long.

Holloway spent most of his childhood and young adult life moving from place to place. He wasn't the type of person who envisioned himself putting down roots.

“I was a constant migrant,” Holloway said.

That was until he moved to Louisburg with his wife Megan. Now instead of a migrant, Holloway is deep-rooted in a town he loves.

It made his decision, almost two months ago, an easy one.

Back in June, Holloway was hired as the new Louisburg High School activities director and assistant principal, following the resignation of former activities director Darin Gagnebin. Holloway, who has spent the last 16 years as a teacher at Louisburg Middle School, is ready for the new challenge.

“I am really looking forward to it,” Holloway said. “I have been here in Louisburg for 17 years. I never lived anywhere for more than four years in my life until I came to Louisburg. I never knew what it was like to be a part of a community and when I got here I just fell in love with the town. I was excited to become a part of it and Louisburg became important to me. The teaching was great and getting to know all the kids and see them grow up all the way through college was fun. Now I see some of my former students teaching in the building here and it is an amazing feeling. It just felt like home to me.”

Fate seemed to step in at the right time for Holloway. He entered the summer still planning to teach history at the middle school, but the dominoes quickly started to fall into place.

Holloway was well on his way to getting his administration degree this past school year as he was planning on holding on to it until something in Louisburg came open. He didn't have to wait long.

“I had to get recertified, so I talked with my wife and I said why get an education masters if it is just going to move me on the pay scale,” he said. “Why not get an administration degree to have options? There are other places near here that are looking for people, but that isn't what I want. The only move I would make is to stay in Louisburg. I happened to be down in Eureka Springs on vacation and I got a text in middle of night that Gagnebin had resigned. I had just got my diploma the day before we left. I applied and it turned out well and hopefully

it was a good thing.”

Louisburg USD 416 superintendent Dr. Brian Biermann had to sift through more than 20 different applicants for the job, but he believes Holloway is going to do great things in the position.

“Jeremy has been a loyal and dedicated teacher and coach in our community for 17 years,” Dr. Biermann said. “Jeremy possesses many strong leadership attributes that will allow him to be a strong, instructional leader at Louisburg High School. He is passionate about education, has a strong work ethic and is committed to our community.

“Jeremy is all about building positive relationships with students, staff and the community. For 17 years he has been building these relationships. Now, he will be able to build upon his unique skill set in a leadership position in our district. I am excited to see the great things Mr. Holloway can contribute to our district and community in this new role.”

One of the first things Holloway wanted to do was to get to know his new coaching staff. Several new coaches were hired this past school year and he wanted to see what they were all about.

“I just want them to feel comfortable with me and let them understand that I am approachable,” Holloway said. “That relationship piece is huge. I am getting to know where they are from, how many kids they have and I want them to feel comfortable coming to me. We do lose some great experience, but we have gained some capable coaches and a lot of enthusiasm. I just want to be a positive impact for them.”

Since he started officially on July 24, Holloway has been hard at work in several different areas, but one of the bigger things going on now is the shuffling of the Frontier League.

The league, which will be at seven schools this year, will move up to nine starting for the 2018-19 school year. Bonner Springs, Tonganoxie and Piper will join the league, while De Soto will depart.

Baldwin, an original league member, is concerned the school will move down to Class 3A starting in 2018-19, thanks to changes in the classification system. If it happens, it will create scheduling conflicts for football.

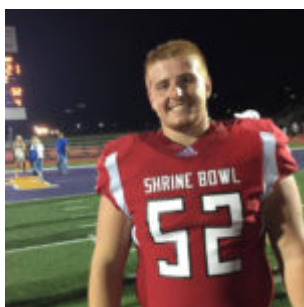
“The biggest conflict right now is Baldwin is right on the edge of becoming 3A and they think it will happen,” Holloway said. “If Baldwin is in our league, which is what we plan on, they are required to play five district games for football, which only leaves them three league games. If only three league teams play Baldwin, then the rest of the league teams have to find another team to play. I have schools from Lansing, Independence, Coffeyville, Chanute and other schools calling me trying to lock up games. There are so many different scenarios so we just have to wait and see. That is one thing that I am really working on right now.”

With the activity season fast approaching, Holloway is excited for everything to get underway. He is also looking forward to getting to know the fan base more.

“I have always been highly impressed of Louisburg and the support of its teams and the turnout we will get, especially for football games,” Holloway said. “I encourage Louisburg to continue the tradition of being a class act. I think that every town has its own culture and a lot of it starts with the coaches. If your coaches are harassing refs, your players are probably going to start to learn that they can do that and that will trickle down to the parents and crowd. Without pointing fingers, there are certain places where that is the climate. I think Louisburg has been great. There are always going to be situations, but I would encourage fans and parents to support our coaches and let them coach.

“I am looking forward to an exciting year. We have great coaches, that are experienced and they are very innovative. They are organized and they all seem truly excited about what is going on. The community can rest assured that the coaches that are in place right now have the best interest of the kids and the programs.”

Koechner relishes Shrine Bowl experience



Mason Koechner, a 2017 Louisburg graduate, was a fixture on the offensive line for the East team on July 29 during the Kansas Shrine Bowl in El Dorado. Koechner enjoyed his week-long experience preparing, and playing, in the annual all-star game.

Mason Koechner and the East team may have lost its game in the Kansas Shrine Bowl, but he was a big winner when it came to the experience itself.

Koechner, who was one of several Kansas seniors voted to play in the annual all-star game, had an opportunity to make a difference in a lot of other lives. The 2017 Louisburg graduate took part in the contest on July 29 at Butler Community College in El Dorado and helped raise money for

Shriners Hospitals for Children at the same time.

The Kansas Shrine Bowl, and events surrounding the contest, benefited the health care system of 22 hospitals dedicated to improving the lives of children. The Kansas Shrine Bowl is a non-profit charity raising funds and awareness for the Shriners Hospitals for Children.

The Shrine Bowl has been in existence since 1974, and since its inception, it has been promoting Kansas talent and the network of hospitals raising more than \$2.5 million.

The purpose for the Kansas Shrine Bowl is to raise money every year for Shriners Hospitals across the United States. The Shrine Bowl generates close to \$70,000 each year for the hospitals.

They provide pediatric specialty care, innovative research and teaching programs for medical professionals. Children up to the age of 18 are eligible for care and receive all services in a family-centered environment, regardless of the patients' ability to pay.

"It was a lot of fun," Koechner said. "I got to play with a lot of good players and made a lot of good friends in the process."

Koechner spent the week prior to the game practicing with his East teammates, but he also had a few special moments away from the football field.



Several of Mason Koechner's family and friends traveled to El Dorado to watch him compete in the Kansas Shrine Bowl on July 29.

The players had a chance to meet some of the patients from the Shriners Hospitals for Children and Koechner quickly realized the battles he has on and off the football field pales in comparison to what some of those children are dealing with on a daily basis.

"Meeting those kids was really inspiring," Koechner said. "They can do everything we do, just in a different way. They overcome obstacles every day that I could never dream of having. It was really a great experience."

Koechner reported to the Butler campus earlier in the week where he worked at left guard and played most of the game on the East offensive line.

It was the first time Koechner had put the pads on since the end of the 2016 season – one where the Wildcats earned a regional championship. He had knee surgery following his wrestling season and a spent a lot of time rehabbing.

All that hard work paid off as Koechner is healthy and he relished his time on the football field again.

“I enjoyed getting back into the pads and practices were fun,” Koechner said. “Going up against all those talented players made practices feel like games, which was very competitive.”

Koechner and the East players rallied from a 14-point deficit to start the game and eventually took a 21-20 lead into the fourth quarter.

“With the players both teams had, you never knew when a big play was going to happen,” he said.

That big play came late in the fourth, as East was called for a penalty, which backed it up to its own 1-yard line. The West team then recorded a safety with a minute left in the game to secure the 22-21 win and left the opposite side a little disappointed.

Still, the experience was a positive one for Koechner that he will take with him to Garden City Community College, as he begins his collegiate football journey.

“I reported to Garden City the day after the game and I am really looking forward to playing at the college level,” he said.

**Cook excited to join
Hutchinson coaching staff**



Kody Cook, who played at Kansas State during the 2014 and 2015 season, will begin his career as a full-time coach this season with Hutchinson Community College – the school Cook signed with in 2011 when he graduated from Louisburg High School.

The last time Kody Cook roamed the sidelines at Hutchinson Community College was as a player as he led the Blue Dragons to a come-from-behind victory in the Salt City Bowl.

Five years later, he is back on the Hutchinson sidelines – this time as a coach.

Cook, a 2011 Louisburg High School graduate, was recently hired to be the tight end coach for the Blue Dragons after spending his last four years either playing or coaching at Kansas State University.

“It is kind of weird how it has come full circle,” Cook said. “It is a little ironic, especially after that last game gave me an opportunity to play football at my dream school (K-State). It put me on a path to having a successful career as a player and now hopefully I can do that as a coach as well.

“The opportunity came out of nowhere. Coach (Rion Rhodes) called me up and said there was a spot available if I wanted to apply for it. So I did and when he called to offer me the job I was really excited. I have already gotten to know a lot of the players and we have a good room here. We have a lot of talented players and I can’t wait to work with them.”

To know how truly dramatic the Salt City Bowl was, one would

have almost had to have been there to believe it. The story is one Cook will never forget and one that put him back on track to reaching his dream.

After not practicing all season at the quarterback position, Hutchinson head coach Rion Rhodes put Cook, a starting wide receiver, in at quarterback in the second quarter after his starter left with an injury. Cook entered Hutchinson as a quarterback from Louisburg after he helped the Wildcats to a perfect season and state championship in 2010. He was moved to wide receiver later in his freshman year, where he stayed until his final game.

Cook quickly shook off whatever rust he had as he led the Blue Dragons to a 41-21 win over Iowa Central. He was named the bowl's Offensive Most Valuable Player after completing 20 of 30 passes for 277 yards and five touchdowns. He also rushed for another and his six touchdowns was a bowl record.

That performance caught the eye of Kansas State assistant coach Dana Dimel, who offered Cook a preferred walk-on spot.

"The game gave me chance to play for a school I grew up rooting for," Cook said. "It was a dream come true for me."

Cook went on to redshirt at Kansas State in 2013, before playing, and eventually starting at wide receiver in 2014 as a junior.

His senior season was an exciting one, as like at Hutch, he was put in at quarterback against Oklahoma State in an emergency situation. All he did was complete 16 of 22 passes for 122 yards and two touchdowns as the Wildcats almost rallied to beat the nationally-ranked Cowboys.

On senior night in Manhattan later in the season, Cook was once again brought in at quarterback due to injury and he led the Wildcats to a comeback victory over West Virginia, which made them bowl eligible.

Cook then started at quarterback in the Liberty Bowl against Arkansas, where he threw for 163 yards and a touchdown in a loss.

When his playing career was finished, Cook stayed on the Kansas State sideline for the 2016 season as a student assistant coach.

“I knew that when I was done playing football that what I wanted to do was be a coach,” Cook said. “I just love the game and being around it. It was a little weird not playing last year because I still have that itch to get out there, but I got a chance to be around former teammates and learn from some of the best there is on how to be a coach. I couldn’t have asked for a better start.”

Cook was fortunate to spend the last four years at Kansas State under hall of fame coach Bill Snyder and he knows there is no better person to learn from on how to be a good leader.

“Coach Snyder is a legend and such a great coach,” Cook said. “I couldn’t have asked for a better situation than to learn under him and watch how he does things. When I was playing, I watched how meticulous he was in his preparation and how he led young men like myself. Then I learned a little more when I was an assistant.

“I also got to learn from the best wide receivers coach in the country in coach (Andre) Coleman. Both of those guys have influenced me so much in my career and I can’t wait to see what is in store for me in the coaching world.”

He hopes like in his playing days, that his position at Hutch could lead to even bigger things down the road.

“My goal is to keep coaching and doing my best at no matter where I am at,” Cook said. “Like anything else in life, you strive to get to the highest level you can in your job. One day I would love to be an offensive coordinator at a Division

I program. To do that though, I have to keep working, learning and getting better.

“When it comes down to it though, I am not worried about all that stuff. I just want to enjoy all the friendships that come along the way. I just love being around the game and the energy that comes with it every Saturday. I just want to enjoy the ride and see what happens. The rest will take care of itself.”

Opinion: Time to look back and enjoy successes



The Louisburg High School football team was one of many bright spots for LHS athletics this past school year.

We live in a world where, especially in sports, we often don't take time to reflect on our accomplishments – and instead we are in a rush to move on to the next set of obstacles.

In reality, we are in a “what have you done for me lately” society and sometimes don't remember, or enjoy, those special moments where our hard work has paid off.

Yes, I understand you don't want to relish in those

accomplishments as that doesn't make you a better athlete, or whatever your specialty may be, but not taking the time to enjoy the ride can be detrimental.

And what a ride it was for Louisburg High School athletics this past season.

The Wildcats had a special year in several sports, and before we focus on the 2017-18 campaign, we should look back at what the 16-17 season brought us. Just take a look at what these Wildcats accomplished.

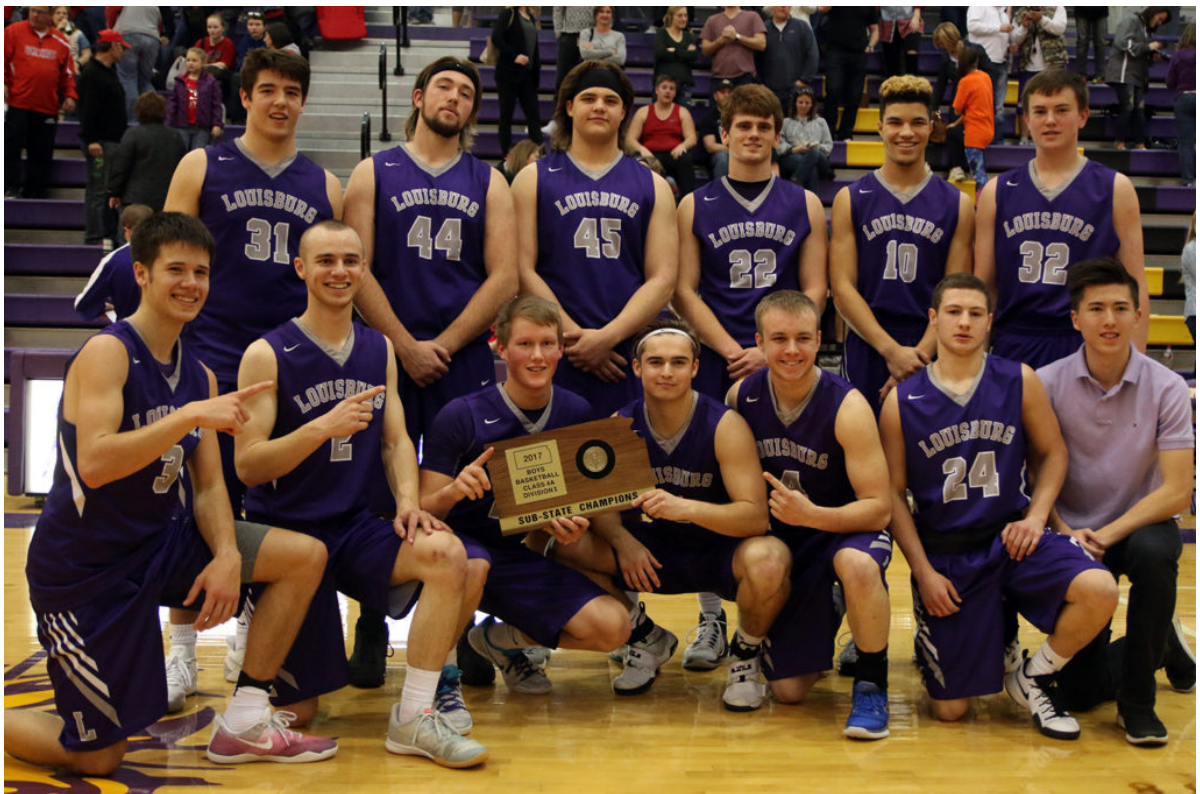
- There is probably no better place to start than the Louisburg soccer teams. Both the boys and girls teams earned spots in the state semifinals for the first time in program history and both finished fourth. The boys team made it to state for the first time in their 14 years, while the girls advanced to the state tournament in just their second season.



The Louisburg High School girls soccer team finished fourth in the state in just their second season. The

Wildcat boys also finished fourth as they advanced to the state semifinals for the first time in program history.

- It was quite the season for the Wildcat boys basketball team as they advanced to the state tournament for the first time since 2005. Louisburg won its sub-state tournament with a 64-52 win over Fort Scott in the championship game.



The Louisburg boys basketball team qualified for state for the first time since 2005.

- The Louisburg football team made quite the run in the 2016 season. The Wildcats won their first playoff game since 2012 and earned a regional title in the process with a win over Independence. Even though their season came to an end in the next round to eventual state champion Bishop Miege, the Wildcats' still finished with an 8-3 record.
- Wrestling had another big season as the Wildcats qualified eight for the Class 4A state tournament in

Salina. Although Ryan Adams was the lone state medalist, as he finished sixth overall at 138 pounds, the Wildcats tied a school record for number of state qualifiers that was set back in 1984.

- In cross country, the Wildcats sent three runners to the state meet and had their first state medalist since 2006 when freshman Trinity Moore finished 19th overall, as she, Wyatt Reece and Tim Smith competed at the Wamego meet. Moore was also the school's first female runner to earn a state medal.
- Freshman golfer Calvin Dillon became the Wildcats' first state medalist in several years as he finished 10th at the Class 4A state tournament and was one of two Wildcats, along with Ty Martin, to qualify for state. Dillon could quite possibly be the first freshman golfer in school history to get a medal, but since golf stats aren't quite as well kept, it is hard to tell for sure.
- T.J. Dover and Isabelle Holtzen came through with state medals of their own following the state track meet. Holtzen finished seventh at the Class 4A meet in the pole vault and Dover was eighth in the discus as both medaled for the first time. Holtzen also broke the school record in the pole vault earlier in the season after she cleared 11 feet, 1 inch.
- The girls basketball and softball teams both had big improvements from a season ago as they each reached 10 wins despite falling in the first round of their sub-state and regional tournaments. Softball doubled their win total from 2016, while the girls basketball team improved by seven victories.
- The Louisburg volleyball team advanced to the sub-state championship game against rival Paola and was just a few points away from advancing to its fifth consecutive state tournament. The Lady Cats also finished the season with 23 victories.

Most schools across the state would love to have the kind of

success Louisburg experienced this year and to me that doesn't seem like it is talked about enough.

Sometimes we get caught up in losses or not meeting expectations, when in fact, compared to a lot of schools, Louisburg exceeds expectations – at least it does mine.

Could these programs be better? Sure they could and the coaches would be the first to tell you. At the same time, we all need to take a step back, look at the big picture and enjoy the success we have.

To me, Louisburg athletics is as healthy as it has been in a long time.

A lot has been made about all the coaches that have left recently. Louisburg will have four new head coaches this upcoming school year and several new assistants.

Some people have considered this a mass exodus due problems at the school. It couldn't be further from the truth. A lot of it is just coincidence. For some it was retirement, others wanted to spend more time with family and a few more just wanted a change.

Former activities director Darin Gagenbin left to be closer to his family and work in the town where he lives. I know all about how great of an opportunity that is and it is the same thing I did almost 10 years ago when I moved here with my family. Working in the town you live in is something you can't put a value on.

Louisburg found a great replacement in Jeremy Holloway, who has been with the district for 17 years and is invested in the community. The school has also brought in a lot of new, young coaches that have come in with excitement and new ideas.

It is bittersweet for me as a lot of those coaches I had a chance to get to know really well are now gone. Although I am

mainly a solo operation, I consider a lot them my co-workers and it stinks to see them move on, but I also know they are doing the best for themselves and their families.

The same could be said for the class of 2017. The group of seniors I worked with this past year were great to get to know, just like all the senior classes before them.

I appreciated all their support and what I do could not be done without those kids. It is great to see them grow up and watch them become successful outside the classroom. I am not a teacher or coach, but still appreciate all they accomplish.

With 2016-17 in the rear view mirror, it will soon be time to focus on the upcoming season and I couldn't be more excited to see what accomplishments this group of Wildcats have in store. It has all the makings of a fun and special year.

Gagnebin steps down as LHS activities director



Louisburg High School activities director Darin Gagnebin presents the Wildcat girls soccer team with their regional championship trophy last month. Gagnebin resigned his post earlier this month to take a similar position in Paola.

Darin Gagnebin has a fondness for Louisburg High School, his coaches and students.

That made it all the more hard to say goodbye.

Gagnebin resigned his post as LHS assistant principal and activities director earlier this month to tentatively take the same position at Paola High School. His last day in Louisburg was last week.

Gagnebin spent a total of 17 years in the Louisburg school district, with the last six spent as activities director. He was also a teacher and coach for 11 years.

Family was the biggest reason he decided to make the move. Gagnebin and his family currently reside in Paola and his two children attend schools in Paola.

“People have come and gone, but it is still family here,” Gagnebin said. “I am comfortable here and Louisburg has done a lot for me. I just can’t pass up an opportunity to be where my kids are at. I know I could have brought my kids here, but my wife and I made that decision a long time ago of where we were going to live because of where she taught and I taught. I never thought back when we first moved to Paola and when we had kids, that we would be in this position.”

It was a difficult decision for Gagnebin as he leaves behind a group of coaches, several of whom he recently hired. The Louisburg district had a number of new coaches come on board for the upcoming school year.

“We have gone through some trials in the last couple of years and that is with any school,” Gagnebin said. “I told my wife, that if this was going to happen the way it did and I could pick the time, I wish the timing would have happened two years down the road. I would have loved to see what this young group

of teachers and coaches are going to do coming in.

“I told my wife that I was really excited about coming back next year and I felt we made some good hires. We have a passionate coaching staff coming on and they are great people with new ideas. It just happened out of the blue.”

The opening came when former Paola High School principal Phil Bressler took the new principal job at Pittsburg High School. Paola assistant principal and activities director Jeff Hines was elevated to the Paola principal position, which left the Panthers needing an activities director.

It can be traced back even further when the Pittsburg High School journalism class wrote an investigative piece that ousted its newly hired principal, which forced the school to reopen the position and eventually hired Bressler.

“Had Pittsburg’s journalism class not done their job, we wouldn’t be sitting here talking right now,” Gagnebin said.

The Paola position was an opportunity Gagnebin just couldn’t pass up as he will have an opportunity to watch more of his children’s events and work closer to home.

“I have missed a lot of my own kids’ stuff,” he said. “But the people here have been really great, (Principal) Tammy (Thomasson) now and Dave (Tappan) before her, to let me try to get to as much stuff as I can. I still miss things. These opportunities don’t come around very often and I just figured this would be a great fit for me and my family.

“But I couldn’t ask for a better group of coaches here in Louisburg. They are good and passionate about what they do. I really have developed some good bonds over the years. I know some have left and some have stayed on, but the coaches and staff I have had has been great.”

New look Wildcats working hard to prepare for football season



Louisburg quarterback Blue Caplinger finds some running room thanks to a block from lineman Kiefer Tucker during the final day of the Wildcats' team camp on June 16.

The Louisburg High School football team had a little different look to it when it took to the practice field earlier this month.

Not only do the Wildcats have a new head coach in Robert Ebenstein, they also have four new assistants. Ty Pfannenstiel and Pete Skakal are new teachers at LHS this year and moved into the assistant role, as did Louisburg graduates Drew Harding and T.J. McKiearnan.

Jeff Lohse returns as defensive coordinator after serving as co-head coach with Gary Griffin last season, who retired at the end of last school year.

Add to the fact that Louisburg graduated 16 off of last season's team, many of whom were starters off of a regional championship squad, and the Wildcats have some rebuilding to

do.

Although many of the faces have changed for the Wildcats, the way they work on the practice field hasn't. The Wildcats took part in their team camp that began on June 12, and have also hit the weight room hard as they prepare for the 2017 season

"There are no major changes in our approach to summer," Ebenstein said. "We just want to focus on the kids working hard and meshing with some of the new coaches we will have."

The Wildcat players did a lot of that during their 5-day team camp that wrapped up on June 16 as they had 53 come out for the summer workout. Louisburg installed a lot of its offense during that time and worked on fundamentals for both sides of the ball.



Louisburg head football coach Robert Ebenstein talks with his team prior to a camp session earlier this month.

One thing that will be different is the way they communicate on the field and play-calling.

“For the high school camp our goals were to work hard and learn new terminology,” Ebenstein said. “We lost a lot of players on both sides of the ball so we wanted to see these kids come out and work hard in an attempt to earn a spot come the start of the season. We also are changing our offensive terminology so that was a major focus of ours at camp.”

Along with the high school session, Ebenstein also held an elementary and middle school camp as well. Louisburg had 58 children attend the youth session and had 49 at the middle school workout.

“Overall I thought camp went very well,” Ebenstein said. “I am very excited for the future of our program based on the numbers of the youth and middle school camps. I think every kid that was there had a great time and learned something.”

With new personnel comes changes to any scheme and the offense will have a different look to it, but the foundation that defines Louisburg football hasn't changed.



Charlie Koontz looks for some running room during the Wildcats' team camp on June 16.

The Wildcats showed a lot of shotgun sets and different formations during its camp as they try to give their Frontier League opponents an alternate look.

“Terminology is definitely different, but our kids are doing a great job of picking it up,” Ebenstein said. “I was very impressed with their mental focus during the week of camp, they did a great job. The offense may look different at times, but when you break it down it is still the same principles as before, establish the run and take advantage of play action when we can.”

Although camp is over, the Wildcats are still busy trying to get better before the first day of practice hits in mid-August. Louisburg will scrimmage Prairie View for a second time, and will also have 7-on-7 workouts every Monday in

Paola.

The Wildcats will also hold lineman skill practices, along with team review sessions starting in July. The players will also be in the weight room three days a week.

Changes to classification system will impact Louisburg



Member schools in the Kansas State High School Activities Association sent ripples across the state last week when they passed two proposals that will affect high school athletics beginning in the 2018-19 season.

For football, the two 4A divisions and Class 2-1A have been eliminated. They have been replaced with 32 team classifications in 4A, 5A and 6A, while 3A and 2A will have 48-team classifications. The remaining schools will play in 1A.

The second proposal was for all other sports. Other than football, classes 4A, 5A and 6A will have 36 teams in each division. Classes 3A and 2A will have 64 schools each, while the remaining schools will be in 1A.

The football proposal passed with a vote of 215-73 and the all-sports proposal passed with a 207-145 majority. All of the

classes, except 6A and 1A, were in favor.

With those new proposals comes a different playoff system for many of the sports.

Louisburg High School, which is a Class 4A school, will see changes in five sports programs – football, basketball, baseball, softball and volleyball.

In football, Louisburg will no longer have district play as the playoffs will begin in week nine. Class 4A will play an eight-game regular season and then each side of the state will be seeded in a bracket from 1 through 16, based on their record.

Given the fact the Frontier League currently has nine teams after recently adding three schools in Tonganoxie, Bonner Springs and Piper, the Wildcats will no longer have to play a non-league opponent. De Soto recently chose to leave the Frontier League following the 2017-18 season to join a new league made up of 5A schools.

“Normally we go out in October to Salina, we would redistrict for 2018 and 2019,” Louisburg activities director Darin Gagnebin said. “I don’t even know that we will have to go cause our league has nine teams, so we would play eight league games and the ninth game gets assigned to you for the playoffs. As of right now in football, we will no longer have any out of conference opponents as long as we maintain nine in the league.”

Another change will be in basketball. For the postseason, there will no longer be substates, instead the 18 teams on each side of the state will be bracketed out by record beginning with two play-in games.

From there, the bracket will be sized down to four-team pods, with the higher seed hosting the game. Teams will have to win two games to reach the state tournaments. Pods will be

1-16-8-9 seeds, 4-13-5-12, 2-15-7-10 and 3-14-6-11. The eight pod winners will advance to the state tournament.

“Depending on where we fall, it could increase travel depending on where we are seeded,” Gagnebin said. “We could have to drive down to Coffeyville or drive up to Atchison, you just don’t know until the end of the year.”

Basketball schedules will also be different with the addition of the new league teams in 2018-19. There will no longer be double round-robin schedules. There will be eight league games, six tournament games and athletic directors will have to find a way to fill the other six.

“We will start in August about building the new league schedule and it will be tough,” Gagnebin said. “One thing you will see is we won’t have double round-robin’s anymore because we can’t play everyone twice. I think there will be traditional rivalries that are held to where we would play those twice due to proximity. Quite frankly, it wouldn’t be smart for Louisburg not to play Paola, Ottawa or Spring Hill twice due to higher attendance numbers and proximity. It will probably increase travel costs because you are playing more non-conference opponents.”

Baseball and softball will be similar as there will no longer be regionals. Like basketball, there will be two play-in games with the same pod structure. The top four overall seeds will each host all games in their pod on the same day.

In volleyball, there will be four substates across the state, broken into eight brackets. There will also be nine teams in each substate, which will require a play-in game. Teams will need to win two games to qualify for state.

Postseasons for wrestling, track, soccer, cross country and golf will remain the same.

However, even with the new changes, the proposals don’t

address the competitive balance issue between public and private schools that many members have been talking about for the last several years.

Although he likes the new playoff system, the fact these changes don't address the problem is one of the reasons Gagnebin voted no on the new proposals.

"It was a shock because I didn't think it was going to pass," Gagnebin said. "Other than the playoff system, in my opinion, it doesn't do anything for Class 4A. All the work that went into splitting 4A into two divisions is now gone. I feel bad for those schools because they put in a ton of work. It doesn't really affect us because we are locked into 4A and we are right in the middle of the pack.

"I didn't see how it benefited Louisburg or 4A, other than the playoffs system where it should ensure you have more competitive teams at state. Since you are seeding them out now, you shouldn't have a substate of teams with losing records. They could have done that without this."

Although private schools like Bishop Miege, which have won several state titles in the last few years, could find itself moving up a classification with the new measures, it isn't a permanent solution according to Gagnebin.

"Enrollment could bump some private schools up a class, but that doesn't fix the problem," Gagnebin said. "Private schools can control enrollment. According to (Miege) they are losing enrollment and could be back in 4A. It doesn't impact the private issue at all and that is why I didn't vote for it. It is not fixing what the 80 percent of athletic directors polled in Kansas asking what the biggest problems in classifications are. It doesn't address the real problem."

Former Wildcats enjoy all-star experience



Kansas defensive lineman Dustyn Rizzo tries to shed a Missouri blocker Thursday during the GKCFCA Kansas vs. Missouri All-Star Game at Blue Springs South High School.

BLUE SPRINGS, Mo. – For 10 days, Louisburg High School graduates Korbin Hankinson and Dustyn Rizzo played alongside some of the best football players the Kansas City area had to offer.

The two former Wildcats suited up for Kansas during the Kansas vs. Missouri All-Star Game put on by the Greater Kansas City Football Coaches Association on Thursday at Blue Springs South High School. Although Kansas ended up falling to Missouri 17-7, for the Sunflower State's seventh consecutive loss, both players took several positives away from their time on the gridiron.

"The last couple weeks have been a great experience, just getting a chance to play with guys who are just as good as me or better," Rizzo said. "It makes me a lot better player and I am honored to play in this game. I had a chance to meet a lot of new people and maybe I will see them in college. Even though we lost, it was a good experience."

Hankinson and Rizzo both started practicing with their Kansas teammates 10 days prior to the contest and that allowed them to get to know their future teammates.

“These last two weeks have been a once in a lifetime opportunity for me,” Hankinson said. “I have always wanted to do this and I am so glad that I am out here with all these kids. It is a neat experience to play against guys who are from all these different schools. It has been a lot of fun.”



Kansas receiver Korbin Hankinson makes a catch and tries to get some extra yardage Thursday during the GKCFCA all-star game at Blue Springs South High School.

In the game itself, Kansas and Missouri were scoreless first half, but Kansas had three potential touchdowns that were called back due to a holding penalty.

Missouri opened the second half with a big play when Kearney

quarterback Anthony Pretzel hit Center's Cristian Cox for a 68-yard touchdown pass.

Then on Kansas' first possession of the third quarter, Blue Valley quarterback Matt Dercher rolled out and his pass was tipped by the Missouri defense and Center linebacker John Taylor intercepted it for a touchdown and all of a sudden Kansas found themselves down two scores just a couple minutes into the second half.

Kansas' lone touchdown came in the fourth quarter when Shawnee Mission West's Isreal Watson scored on a 15-yard pass.

Rizzo played more than half of the game at defensive end for Kansas and recorded three tackles on the evening.

"I didn't think that was going to happen at all," Rizzo said of Missouri's quick start to the second half. "I thought we were going to come out and kick some butt. That didn't happen and those two scores were hard to come back from.

"Missouri's line was pretty big, but I thought our line was a little bigger honestly. Going through practice, the Missouri line knew how to hold a lot better than our line did. I practiced against the Kansas line for a week so I was able to get past them as the week went on, but the Missouri line was a whole new experience and a different kind of game."



Dustyn Rizzo tries to get around the edge to get to the quarterback Thursday.

Hankinson lined up as a slot receiver and played on every-other possession for the Kansas offense. Kansas ran a lot of four or five wide-receiver sets and Hankinson ran several different routes, including a bubble screen that gave him his lone catch of the game. He also returned a kickoff for 20 yards in the second half.

“The offense we ran is like (Bishop) Miege’s offense, which is a fast-paced, no-huddle offense,” Hankinson said. “You have wristbands that have all the plays on it and it is completely different than Louisburg’s, but I loved it. I figured this is what it will be like for me in college next year, so it gave me a little taste on what to expect.”



Korbin Hankinson jokes around with Kansas assistant coaches Jon Holmes (left) and Tim Grunhard during pre-game introductions.

Now both players will prepare for their life as a college football player. Hankinson will report to Missouri Southern in early August, while Rizzo will make the journey to Garden City Community College in July.

“I am not too excited for school in August, but I am excited to get back into pads and play for Garden City and make a name for myself,” Rizzo said.

Hankinson added, “I am just going to lift some weights, get into shape and just keep working until I report in August. I am very excited to get to college and see what happens.”

Hankinson, Rizzo to participate in KC Metro all-star game



Dustyn Rizzo (left) and Korbin Hankinson, both 2017 Louisburg High School graduates, will participate in the Papa John's Kansas vs. Missouri All-Star Game on Thursday at Blue Springs South High School.

For the last four years, Korbin Hankinson and Dustyn Rizzo have strapped on their pads and put on their purple and white Louisburg jersey.

Both players thought those days of playing football were over when their final season with the Wildcats ended last November.

As it turns out, both players will get one last opportunity to team up with each other, but they will wear a different jersey. Hankinson and Rizzo earned a spot on the Team Kansas roster for the Papa John's Kansas vs. Missouri All-Star Game that is put on by the Greater Kansas City Football Coaches Association.

The all-star game will be held at 7 p.m. on Thursday at Blue Springs South High School and both players are looking forward

to the challenge of going up against some of the top players in the Kansas City area.

“Playing in this game means a lot to me,” Hankinson said. “I’ve always wanted to do this and get to represent the state of Kansas. It’s truly an honor to be selected on this team.”

Rizzo feels the same way as he and Hankinson both prepare to play in their final high school contest.



“I’m excited I get the chance to compete with some of the best kids in the area,” Rizzo said. “It’s definitely a learning experience and it really gets me going when I get to strap the pads back on.”

The two recent Louisburg High School graduates have spent the last week practicing with their new Kansas teammates for two hours each night and will continue to work until kickoff on Thursday.

Hankinson will spend a majority of his time on the offensive side of the ball as a slot receiver and possibly some special

teams. Rizzo will see a bulk of his minutes on the opposite side as a defensive end and also on punt return situations.

“It’s an honor to play with these guys and it has humbled me, especially playing with guys that are just as good, if not better, than me at my position and on the other side of the ball,” Rizzo said.

The head coach of Team Kansas is Basehor-Linwood coach Rod Stallbaumer, who led the Bobcats to an 11-1 mark and a Kaw Valley League championship. Kansas will try and snap a six-game losing streak to Missouri that dates back to 2011.

Anders Vance, a 2016 Louisburg graduate, played in the game last season as an offensive lineman before moving on to play at Pittsburg State.

Following this year’s all-star game, Hankinson and Rizzo will be focused on their next stops. Hankinson signed with Missouri Southern, while Rizzo will join the Garden City Community College team this fall.

“Getting to play with Dustyn one more time means a lot to me,” Hankinson said. “When I found out we were both selected to play I was very excited because I didn’t think I would get the chance to play in an all-star game with someone I’ve been playing with for almost my whole life.

“Having two kids from Louisburg selected to play in this games shows that Louisburg has a good program. I know a lot of people doubt the program, but we have amazing coaches and kids that love to work hard.”

As excited as the two players are to move to college, there will be some mixed emotions after Thursday’s game.

“Getting the chance to play with Korbin is nice, knowing this will be the final time we get to strap on the pads together with the same goal in mind,” Rizzo said. “I’ve missed the game

and I look forward to playing one last time with him.”

KANSAS ALL-STARS

Sam	Arnold	OL	Spring Hill
Zac	Bayless	OLB	Blue Valley North
Blaine	Boudreaux	DT	Mill Valley
Simon	Bradley	OLB	Shawnee Mission East
Kobe	Buffalomeat	OL	Lawrence
Nick	Bulleigh	CB	St. Thomas Aquinas
Matt	Dercher	QB	Blue Valley
Joel	Donn	SS	Mill Valley
Will	Evans	RB	Blue Valley
Harrison	Frazier	OLB	Blue Valley North
Joe	Gleason	TE	Bishop Miege
Gus	Gomez	WR	Blue Valley
Drew	Greene	OL	Olathe North
Colin	Grunhard	C	Bishop Miege
Korbin	Hankinson	WR	Louisburg
Ben	Hartman	WR	Mill Valley
Aaron	Hawes	OL	Piper
Nigel	Houston	WR	Shawnee Mission East
Keilon	Hunter	CB	Blue Valley North
Gyun	Jung	K	Leavenworth
Kirrian	Kirby	OL	Blue Valley
J.J.	Letcher	FS	Piper
Montell	Madlock	ILB	Shawnee Mission West
Michael	Maffry	ILB	Blue Valley
Lawson	Marshall	NT	DeSoto

Jason	Meeker	SS	Shawnee Mission West
Chance	Montgomery	FS	DeSoto
Luke	Murphy	OL	Basehor-Linwood
Jonas	Pippitt	OLB	Gardner Edgerton
Danny	Presler	OL	Shawnee Mission North
Brock	Reed	ILB	Ottawa
Dustyn	Rizzo	DT	Louisburg
Chas	Rollo	RB	Basehor-Linwood
Cornelius	Ruff	RB	Schlagle
Brett	Sabath	DT	Blue Valley Southwest
Will	Schneider	QB	Shawnee Mission North
Hunter	Skeens	CB	Gardner Edgerton
Sam	Stranathan	DT	Gardner Edgerton
Trevor	Thompson	WR	Shawnee Mission East
Garret	Tierney	ILB	Blue Valley Northwest
Drevontae	Tiller	LB/CB	Harmon
Brent	Turner	C	Piper
Jacob	Unruh	DT	Lawrence
Israel	Watson	WR	Shawnee Mission West
Landry	Weber	WR	Bishop Miege
Keegan	Zars	OL	Mill Valley

MISSOURI ALL-STARS

Mohammad	Alkhateeb	DL	Blue Springs
Stephen	Benson	CB	Blue Springs
Sam	Buckner	W/S	Lee's Summit
Genesis	Combs	OL	Raymore-Peculiar

Nick	Cook	FS	Raymore-Peculiar
Roosevelt	Cooper	CB	Hogan Prep
Christian	Cox	X/Y	Center
Sahron	Cunningham	FS	Raytown South
Langdon	Douglas	FS	Center
Diaz	Elliot	DL	Richmond
Salvatore	Garozzo	RB	Lee's Summit
Chester	Graves	OLB	Park Hill
Bryce	Greenwood	OL	Blue Springs South
TJ	Guillory	X/Y	Platte County
DJ	Harrell	CB	Winnetonka
Mohammed	Herb	OL	Staley
Hunter	Heyne	ILB	Staley
Andrew	Houston	CB	Raymore-Peculiar
Tui	Huston-Asaeli	OL	Belton
Kyle	Linville	OL	Oak Park
Ethan	Luft	OLB	Kearney
Roger	McDaniel	DL	Belton
James	McMullen	DL	Winnetonka
Mike	McNair	RB	Platte County
Mason	Moreland	ILB	Excelsior Springs
Kevin	Neal	FS	Platte County
Brady	Orwick	OL	Fort Osage
Jaeger	Plymell	OL	Richmond
Anthony	Pritzel	QB	Kearney
Cody	Richardson	TE/Y	Grain Valley
Zach	Shanholtzer	W/S	Lee's Summit West
Nathan	Shook	DL	North Kansas City
Nick	Snider	X/Y	Belton

Andrew	Stroud	OL	St. Joseph LeBlond
Bennett	Swope	DL	Liberty
John	Taylor	ILB	Center
Norvell	Trent	RB	Center
Kole	Wagener	ILB	Grain Valley
Trace	Weatherford	TE/Y	Park Hill South
Rasean	Weathers	CB	North Kansas City
Collin	West	OLB	Blue Springs South
Damon	Whitmill	RB	North Kansas City
Dominic	Williams	QB	Richmond
Max	Wittman	OL	Liberty