

New rules create different vibe for first day of fall practice



The Louisburg High School football team opened the 2018 season with its first day of practice Monday and did so under different guidelines. Despite that, the Wildcats are excited for the start of the season.

On the horizon, it looked like a normal first day of practice.

More than 150 athletes took to their respective field, court or course to begin their journey to greatness Monday for the 2018 fall sports season. Excitement was abound and coaches were happy to be back with their players.

However, the first day of practice was a little bit different this year as the Kansas High School Activities Association implemented new fall heat acclimation rules in late July. The rules, applied to all sports, includes:

- Only one practice per day is permitted during the first five days of practice. All individuals shall only practice once per day for the first five days the individual practices, no matter when the person joins the team or if the person misses days due to injury/illness.
- No single practice may last longer than three hours. All

warm-up, stretching, conditioning and weight lifting is included as part of the three-hour limit.

- A separate walkthrough is permitted in addition to the single practice. The walkthrough cannot be longer than one hour and must be separated from practice by at least three hours of rest. A walkthrough is defined as a teaching opportunity with the athletes in which no protective equipment is worn. No physically exerting activity, including any conditioning or weight lifting, may take place during the walkthrough.
- Beginning on practice day six, double practice sessions are permitted for any individual who has completed five days of single practices. Double practice sessions cannot be held on consecutive days. The day following a double practice day would be either a single practice day or a rest/recovery day.
- On days of multiple practices, no single practice may last longer than 3 hours and total practice time combined shall not exceed five hours.
- To be deemed a practice, a majority of the squad members must participate in the organized team training session.

Those rules left most of the coaches at Louisburg High School having to readjust how they run their practices or tryouts.

The Wildcat boys soccer team, which normally conditioned in the morning and worked on skills in the afternoon, were forced to cram everything into one practice.

"I am extremely frustrated with the new KSHSAA rule," Louisburg soccer coach Kyle Conley said. "Before to protect the student athletes, we ran in the morning before the sun was up and when it was cooler out. Now we have to practice and condition in the afternoon in the heat of the day. Personally, I fill this will lead to more issues. It would be interesting to see who all was included in this decision and what the data said."



Eli Minster passes a ball to a teammate during a drill Monday during the first official day of practice.

Louisburg volleyball, which also holds tryouts, had to split up the grade levels during the process. Senior and juniors had tryouts in the morning as a group, while sophomores and freshman practiced in the afternoon.

“In the past, we were able to put every athlete, freshman through senior, on the court at the same time and separate out the tested areas,” Louisburg volleyball coach Jessica Compliment said. “Physical testing had been in the morning with volleyball skill testing in the afternoon. Due to the change in the rule, we could no longer use that set up.

“It has forced a ‘split’ in the athletes because they can’t all work out together like they have been all summer long. Because of our numbers, and the tests we feel are necessary in order to make cuts and squad roster decisions, we need to run

the athletes through each test. We would not have enough time to do that if we had kept them all together and brought them in for only one session. Which means the athletes are that more anxious and excited to finish tryouts and start the season with their teammates.”

There were also specific rule changes in regards to football, which forced Wildcat coach Robert Ebenstein to adjust his practice schedule as well, including the removal of two-a-days for the first week practice. Other changes include:

- Players must have a minimum of one day of rest/recovery during any week (Sunday- Saturday). Only injury treatments are permitted on a rest/recovery day.
- Days No. 1 and 2 of practice: Helmets only (air and bags only are permitted.)
- Days No. 3 and 4: Helmets and shoulder pads are permitted (Day 3: control permitted; Day 4: thud permitted.)
- Days 5 through Saturday of third week of practice: Full contact (air, bags, control, thud and live action permitted) may begin with exceptions that on any day involving multiple practices, only one practice may involve thud and/or live action.

“The changes with KSHSAA policies are what they are,” Ebenstein said. “I think they were created with good intentions. Personally I feel that our practice tendencies over the last few years have put player safety as the No. 1 priority always, so in that regard not a whole lot will change for us. You are allowed to do a separate ‘walk-through” other than practice which we will still do every morning at 6 a.m., so we still have that old school two-a-day feeling just the approach of what we do and how we will do it has changed.

“The only thing that confused me is the purpose of the change is for heat acclimation, but the wording of it will force us to condition our players in the afternoon when it is hot

instead of in the morning when it is typically cooler. But most all of our players have been working their tails off all summer and are already in pretty good shape.”

Despite the changes in practice, all four Wildcat programs are excited for what their season has in store. LHS had a large number of participants for the first day of fall practice as 163 athletes participated.

Ebenstein had 70 players attend the first day of practice, which is the highest number the Wildcats have had since he joined the staff in 2012. Louisburg also hopes to improve off its 6-3 record last season as they return 18 seniors, including several starters on both sides of the ball.

“Practice went well and it was good to finally get back on the field with the guys,” Ebenstein said. “We are very excited for this season, as in every team in the state. The thing that separates us is how players, managers and coaches alike all really enjoy our time together. I am excited to coach, but I’m honestly excited to be around these coaches and kids again and give this season the best run we can.”



LHS freshmen and sophomore volleyball players gather at center court during tryouts Monday.

On the volleyball side, the Lady Cats had 34 athletes show up for the first day of tryouts, which will end on Wednesday as Louisburg begins its quest to get back to the state tournament after finishing second a year ago.

“The first couple days are focused on running each athlete through a set of volleyball skills and physical skills tests,” Compliment said. “The athletes did a good job for the first day, and we are looking forward to the next couple of days.

“Over the course of the summer, we had a lot of athletes participate in summer league matches, summer camps, team camps, open gym and weights. They are ready to get the season going. There is a lot of excitement among the athletes and a lot of anticipation for the season.”

Coming off a spot in the state quarterfinals, the Wildcat boys soccer team had 38 athletes compete for a spot on the team as they try to make another run in the playoffs.

“It was nice to see so many kids out for the team,” Conley said. “The boys work incredibly hard and we very supportive of each other. With having so many new players coming out for the team, we did a lot of teaching and developing expectations for the drills and why we do things. It was actually the first time in three years the majority of the team completed the mile under six minutes, which was fantastic.

“It is a great time of the year with a lot of optimism. The boys were very upbeat and very focused on getting better. With only four seniors, we are extremely young and we will need to do a lot of teaching.”



Trinity Moore (center) leads a pack of runners during the first day of practice Monday at LHS.

As for cross country, numbers have dwindled a little for head coach John Reece as he has close to 25 runners out this season, but he has a good group of runners coming back, including state medalist Trinity Moore.

The girls team is also hoping to make a return trip to state this season after qualifying for the first time in school history last year.

“The first practice was great,” Reece said. “We are going to have more girls than boys, but it seems like they are in shape and ready to start training for our first race.

“The kids are jazzed about the season and the girls are wanting to do even better than last year. I believe success builds the team numbers.”

Hinkle ready to take on role as LHS activities director



Walking into Scott Hinkle’s office, it doesn’t appear he started a new job two weeks ago.

The moving boxes are mostly gone. His desk is organized with everything in its place, along with a calendar crammed full of upcoming events.

Hinkle is not shy to tell people about his love for the Boston Red Sox. Sitting on one wall are two older chairs from Fenway Park, along other memorabilia.

The one thing that Hinkle hasn't caught up on is his efforts to get some purple gear. An avid Kansas Jayhawk fan, he hasn't had need to purchase any purple flair in the past. Seems like that will change shortly as he was hired as the new activities director and assistant principal at Louisburg High School earlier this summer.

"I have been a Jayhawk fan all my life," Hinkle said. "It will be a little weird to wear purple that is for sure, but I am sure I will get used to it. Before I left my old job, people found out where I was going so they started giving me little gifts with purple on it, like markers and stuff like that. They definitely got a kick out of that."

Hinkle takes over for Jeremy Holloway, who was promoted to principal at LHS and becomes the third activities director in as many years to take over that spot.

"My wife has family in Kansas City and I have family in Wichita and so we were looking to come this way," Hinkle said. "I had a couple friends that told me that the Louisburg position had opened up. I had heard of Louisburg a long time ago. I actually coached at Ottawa University in the early 90s and was familiar with the area. I came up, interviewed and here I am. It has obviously worked out well."

"Everyone has been so helpful and friendly and it is a good time to be coming to Louisburg. I am excited to be here."

Before taking the job in Louisburg, Hinkle had spent the last 22 years in the Liberal school district in a variety of roles. He served as the boys high school basketball coach, along with nine years as an activities director, a year as the head girls basketball coach at the local community college and last year he served as assistant principal at the high school.

Hinkle graduated from Valley Center High School, and went on from there to earn his bachelor's degree from Friends University, where he played basketball, and his master's from the University of Kansas.

Basketball has always been a passion for Hinkle, but during his time as activities director at Liberal, he had a chance to learn the life of other sports as well.

"Liberal changed a lot from when I first got there in the mid 90s when they were a football and track powerhouse," Hinkle said. "There were just athletes galore, but the culture kind of changed. We were really good in soccer and decent in track and volleyball. We still had good kids and good athletes, but it was a big transition as far as sports go when I first got there. My kids grew up there and being involved and being able to watch their events was something that has always appealed to me.

"Basketball has always been in my blood. Other than my nine years as athletic director, I have coached in some capacity and I am a big basketball fan. Obviously, being an athletic director I am just a big sports fan in general."

Still new in town, Hinkle is still trying to get to know his coaching staff, but he is excited about the situation he is walking into with the Wildcats finishing as state runner-ups in volleyball and girls soccer last season. Several cross country, golf, wrestling and track athletes also earned state medals.

However, if there is one thing he wanted to relay to everyone is that he wants to give his coaches the freedom to run their programs.

"I want to let the coaches, coach," he said. "I am not going to be the guy that says this is how we did things in Liberal and I am not that type of leader. If it comes to the point where they need some advice, I want to be a resource for them.

I don't want to be someone that is looking for something.

"I have met a few of the coaches. I have let them know that I am here if they need anything. I have stopped by the weight room to speak to a few coaches and some have stopped by to introduce themselves. I am still learning names and faces. We have a coaches meeting on the 10th and I will see and learn a lot more about them then."

With all the success the Wildcats had last season in the sports arena, Hinkle is happy to be a part of the LHS family and is learning new things about the town every day.

"I have heard all types of things," he said. "I have heard they take football pretty seriously here. I know they were state runner-up in volleyball and girls soccer last year and that is an exciting thing to walk into. I think expectations are obviously high in those sports, but I think everyone always has high expectations. I am not going to do anything different than normal and I am just going to sit back and observe for a while and take it all in."

Hinkle will experience some different things along with his new position. This season, the Frontier League will welcome three new teams – Bonner Springs, Piper and Tonganoxie – and will say goodbye to De Soto.

Another big change will be the postseason formats with several sports as the Kansas State High School Activities Association reshuffled their classification system, eliminating Class 4A-Division II.

"With the changes in the league, the classification system and being a new AD, it is probably a good time to be coming on," Hinkle said. "The learning curve is going to be the same for all of us."

"I walked into a good situation for scheduling because (Holloway) already had everything all taken care of," he said.

“I think the dynamics of the league are going to change. Liberal’s former girls basketball coach is the coach at Piper and I know a little bit about them. As far as the programs and rivalries, that is something that is going to come with time.”

Even with all the changes in his life – moving, starting a new job, getting to know new faces – Hinkle is ready for what lies ahead and the staff at Louisburg has helped with that transition.

“It has been a whirlwind and it has been information overload,” he said. “It is a lot of the same things I did in Liberal as athletic director, I just haven’t done it for the last five years. Being an assistant principal at Liberal last year, I think, helped me prepare for the principal side.

“People have just gone out of their way to be helpful. From the administration to the custodial staff to the secretaries, everyone has been super helpful. When I was out around town, people have welcomed me and it has been a friendly feel everywhere I have been.”

Wildcats hope summer work pays dividends in fall



Running back Austin Moore breaks free from a Prairie View defender thanks to a block from teammate Brayden White during

Louisburg's scrimmage with the Buffalos in June.

In his first season as the Louisburg High School head football coach, the 2017 campaign was a successful one for Robert Ebenstein.

Ebenstein helped guide the Wildcats to a 6-3 record on the season, and did so while implementing many different aspects to the Louisburg program. However, the one part that left a bad taste in the Wildcats' mouth was the fact they missed the playoffs by one game.

Louisburg finished with a 1-2 record in district play and the Wildcats are hoping for a different outcome in 2018. To make sure that doesn't happen again, the Wildcat coaches and players went right to work at the beginning of June and haven't let up.

"To say our guys are pumped for the season to get here is an understatement," Ebenstein said. "Returning eight starters on both sides of the ball, with a lot of kids pushing for those positions, has made for a very committed and competitive off season. Being 6-3 last season and missing the playoffs has left us with a terrible feeling.

"We have some pretty high season goals and expectations, and our guys have been backing those goals with their weights attendance and efforts. With our high goals our guys have stayed grounded, and understand that right now we are just looking at beating Spring Hill on August 31."



Louisburg head coach Robert Ebenstein talks to his team prior to a scrimmage last month.

The Wildcats do return several starters from last season as they try to make a run at a Frontier League title, which will have a little different look to it. Gone from the league is De Soto, and the Frontier will welcome three new teams in Piper, Tonganoxie and Bonner Springs.

Adding those extra teams will make winning the league even more difficult, but Ebenstein has liked what he has seen from his group so far this summer, especially in the weight room. Louisburg also had a pair of scrimmages to go along with their team camp.

"Like always we are putting our focus on our summer weights program," Ebenstein said. "Our weights program is as tough as any other program in the state both physically and mentally. Besides weights, we had our camp, review sessions

through June and two 'jamboree' sessions. Our first session was against Olathe West and Prairie View and our second session was against Basehor-Linwood and Prairie View."

At this time a year ago, Ebenstein and the Wildcats spent most of the summer instituting a new offense. Now, they are able to take it a step further and the players have even taken in upon themselves to get better.



Louisburg senior Noah Larson reaches out to bring down an Olathe West runner during the team's scrimmage in June.

Instead of organized 7-on-7 activities, players got together on their own every Sunday evening to go through workouts. The Wildcats also used the team camp to fine tune their offense as they had more than 60 athletes out for the week-long session.

"Overall the coaching staff thought that camp went really well," Ebenstein said. "As a team we are far more advanced

compared to where we were a year ago in our understanding of concepts and assignments.

“This year we already had the basic concept of the offense installed so we were able to go back and focus on the details. We were able to focus on technique that will allow us to be even better. Last year we were spinning mentally at times with terminology and concepts, this year being able to focus on the small things and perfect our steps, hand placement and timing will be very beneficial in the long run.”

Moore named Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year



No matter the sport, Austin Moore didn't back down from a challenge and it was evident whenever he took to the field, the wrestling mat or a track runway.

Moore was an all-league and all-state player on the football field, found himself one victory away from a state wrestling medal and improved throughout the season in the javelin.

It was his success in those athletic avenues that earned him the 2018 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year honor.

The award, which is in its first year, is to recognize an outstanding Louisburg High School 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.

On the football team, Moore was named a captain and had success on both sides of the ball. As a running back, he recorded 1,215 yards and 15 touchdowns. Defensively, he tallied more than 70 tackles from the linebacker spot.

Moore, a junior, was named to the all-Frontier League first team on both sides of the ball and was an honorable mention all-state selection by the Topeka-Capital Journal. He was also named an all-state, all-purpose player by K-Preps. Moore was also selected as the team's Offensive Player of the Year and recipient of the BAC Award.

"Austin is a great leader and is always looking to improve himself and his game," Louisburg football coach Robert Ebenstein said. "He is an extremely dedicated athlete to the program, but the most impressive thing about him is how he puts the team before himself all the time. Austin is not a real vocal kid, but actions speak louder than words and Austin is always leading by example."



Pictured (from left) is Louisburg boys track coach Andy Wright, football head coach Robert Ebenstein, Austin Moore and Wildcat wrestling coach Bobby Bovaird.

On the wrestling mat, he was also a team captain where he earned a 43-7 record and eclipsed the 100 career win mark. Moore was a state qualifier at 195 pounds and was a regional runner-up to go along with a Frontier League title. He won the team's Workhorse Award and set a program record with 38 pins. Moore also had the highest GPA on the team.

"Austin has been a pivotal part of our team's success since he joined us as a freshman," Louisburg wrestling coach Bobby Bovaird said. "He has a phenomenal work ethic in the practice room, and he is a relentless warrior in competitions. He knows how to set goals and pursue them with all his heart. He doesn't panic in adverse situations and he finds a way to prevail. No one wants to wrestle him twice. He's all about competitiveness, dedication, improvement and honor."

Moore threw the javelin for the Wildcat track and field team as recorded a season best throw of 151 feet in the regional meet and finished eighth.

With all he accomplished during the 2017-18 season, Moore will

get another crack at it all when he competes for the Wildcats in his senior season.

2018 Male Athlete of the Year Nominees



For the past two 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 highlight them a little bit. So this year, I wanted to take it a step further.

This 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 and then I will tabulate the results and determine the winner. In the next couple of weeks, I will announce this year's recipient.

Below are the male nominees for this year's award in alphabetical order by last name. Congrats to all those who

were nominated and best of luck!

2018 LOUISBURG SPORTS ZONE MALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR NOMINEES



Blue Caplinger – Junior – Football, Wrestling, Track and Field

Caplinger played a big role for the Wildcat football team as he shared quarterback duties to start the year and then moved over to the tight end spot, but his biggest impact came on defense where he earned honorable mention all-Frontier League honors. He finished the season with 32 tackles and two interceptions from his secondary spot.

On the wrestling mat, Caplinger was a state qualifier for the Wildcats at 160 pounds and finished his season with a 34-14 record. He won titles at two different tournaments and holds the team record with most career reversals with 71.

Caplinger also fared well on the track where he ran sprints and relays for Louisburg. Caplinger was a member of the 4×400-meter relay team that finished seventh in the state in Class 4A, and also ran on the 4×100-meter relay team that qualified for the Kansas Relays.



Cade Holtzen – Freshman – Cross Country, Wrestling, Track and Field

Holtzen thrived on the wrestling mat this past season as he earned the Wildcats' lone state medal. He finished sixth overall at 113 pounds and became the second freshman in school

history to place at state with a 45-6 record.

He also broke two team records in the process. Holtzen currently holds the mark for most wins in a season (45), most nearfall-2 (23). He also led the Wildcats in five other statistical categories.

Holtzen was a Frontier League and regional runner-up and won tournament titles at four different competitions.

He also ran on the Louisburg varsity cross country team and ran distance races for the Wildcat track team.



Austin Moore – junior – football, wrestling, track and field

On the football team, Moore was named a team captain and had

success on both sides of the ball. As a running back, he recorded 1,215 yards and 15 touchdowns. Defensively, he tallied more than 70 tackles from the linebacker spot.

Moore was named to the all-Frontier League first team on both sides of the ball and was an honorable mention all-state selection by the Topeka-Capital Journal and Wichita Eagle. He was also named an all-state, all-purpose player by K-Preps. Moore was also selected as the team's Offensive Player of the Year and recipient of the BAC Award.

On the wrestling mat, he was also a team captain and recorded a 43-7 record. Moore was a state qualifier at 195 pounds and was a regional runner-up. He won the team's Workhorse Award and set a program record with 38 pins. Moore also had the highest GPA on the team.

Moore threw the javelin for the Wildcat track and field team as recorded a season best throw of 151 feet in the regional meet and finished eighth.



John Wyatt Reece – Senior – Cross Country, Track and Field

Reece became the first state cross country medalist in several years for Louisburg High School. He finished 11th overall at the Class 4A meet in Wamego to earn a medal and also earned all-state honors for his effort.

He also finished runner-up in the Frontier League meet and currently holds the third fastest time in school history. He earned first-team all-league honors. Reece also competed at the CCCNC National Race where he medaled individually and was a part of the second place team.

In track, Reece qualified for state in the 1,600 and 3,200-meter runs and finished ninth at state in the 3,200. He was also a regional runner-up in both events.

Reece was a Kansas Relays qualifier and medalist in the 2,000-meter steeplechase and currently holds the school record.

Reece has signed with Southwest Minnesota State next season and will run for the Mustangs starting next fall.



Madden Rutherford – Sophomore – Football, Basketball, Baseball

Rutherford took over the starting quarterback role as a sophomore for the Wildcat football team and became a dual-threat athlete at that position. He finished with 670 yards through the air and had eight touchdowns. On the ground, he racked up 318 yards and two more touchdowns. His performance helped him to a second-team honor on the all-Frontier League

team.

On the baseball diamond, Rutherford was the Wildcats' top pitcher on the season and also did his job out on in the field as he earned second team all-Frontier League honors as an outfielder. Rutherford started six games this season and pitched 28 innings with a 5.12 earned run average and struck out 23 batters. At the plate, he finished the season with a .408 average, three doubles, a triple, a home run and had 10 RBIs. He also ended the year with only three errors in 19 games.

Rutherford also saw a lot of varsity time for the Wildcat basketball team as he played in 17 games.



Grant Ryals – Senior – Soccer, Golf

Ryals led the Louisburg boys soccer team as he garnered first team all-league and all-state honors this past season. He served as team captain the past two seasons and scored seven goals and had 11 assists from the midfield spot.

His 11 assists put him fourth in the all-time Louisburg single season record and his 23 career assists place him second all-time.

Ryals will continue his soccer career at William Jewell College next season.

Ryals was also a member of the Louisburg varsity golf team and was a part of several runner-up team finishes with the Wildcats.

Doles excited for next step with Ottawa football



Louisburg senior Desmond Doles had a good season for the Wildcat football program and it translated to an opportunity with the Ottawa University football program this fall.

Just two years ago, Desmond Doles was nowhere to be found on a football field.

After playing football as a freshman, he decided to take a break from the sport as a sophomore and focus his energy on other things.

“That turned out to be a big mistake,” Doles said.

Still, Doles learned from his miscue and went back out his junior season and fell in love with the sport. It turned out to be a good decision, because after a good senior year with the Wildcat program, Doles is ready to continue his career on the gridiron at the collegiate level.

Doles made it official on Feb. 14 when he signed his letter of intent, in front of family and friends at Louisburg High School, to play for Ottawa University.

It was a difficult decision for Doles as he had another offer to walk-on at Emporia State, a Division II program, but he felt Ottawa was going to be a better fit.

“My dad went there when I was first born and he played basketball there,” Doles said. “So we were all familiar with the scene at Ottawa. We got more information about it and it turned out to be a pretty good school. It was a tough decision because I had two schools that I wanted to go to, but I felt I was more wanted at Ottawa and would be more successful playing for the Braves.”



Desmond Doles signed his letter of intent to play football for Ottawa University on Feb. 14. Desmond is seated next to his parents Desiree and Bryan, along with his brother Brandon. Standing (from left) is Louisburg head football coach Robert Ebenstein and Ottawa offensive coordinator Curran White.

Doles played wide receiver and defensive back for the Wildcats and earned honorable mention all-Frontier League honors on both sides of the ball. He was the team's leading receiver with 284 yards through the air with five touchdowns.

On defense, Doles also finished with a team-high three interceptions to go along with 29 tackles. However, it is on offense where Doles plans to take the next step in college.

"Ottawa is more of a passing team and they said I would fit right in as a receiver and be able to help them," he said. "They didn't have the personnel they would have liked last year and they had a couple guys down that are going to be back

this year and I think there are a lot of components that will make Ottawa really good next year. They got a new strength and conditioning coach and guys got stronger during the season, and I think the program looks very bright.”

The Ottawa coaches also made a big impact on Doles and his decision to join a Braves program that finished with a 3-8 record a season ago. The Braves, under head coach Kent Kessinger, hope to take a step forward in the coming season as he has taken his program to the NAIA Championship Series six times.

“Coach K (Kessinger) is an awesome guy,” Doles said. “He is super energetic and loves what he does. I really like that about him. He was just really interested in me and I felt wanted. I really like the coaching staff and they are all nice and super excited to have me.”

As excited as Doles is to start his collegiate career, he knows playing football in Louisburg helped him grow as a player.

“My junior year, I got to see the field for varsity and I didn’t think that I would get to,” he said. “I just loved playing with those group of seniors. Even though it was mainly a run offense, it was still fun to be able to go outside and be considered a skinny offensive lineman as some wide receivers are called. This year we started throwing the ball more and it just made it so much more fun. It was a lot of fun.

“When I get to Ottawa, my goal is to just get stronger and faster. I want to work on coordination and footwork and being the best that I can be.”

Injury sidelines Griffin for rest of season



New Orleans tight end Garrett Griffin was placed on injured reserve today by the Saints. Griffin, a Louisburg High School graduate, caught his first NFL pass last week in the team's regular season finale.

Less than a week after catching his first pass in the National Football League, Garrett Griffin's season has come to a close with the New Orleans Saints.

The Saints announced today that they have placed Griffin on injured reserve, which means he is out for the rest of the season. New Orleans, the No. 4 seed in the NFC, is slated to host Carolina on Sunday in the first round of the playoffs.

Griffin, who is a 2012 Louisburg High School graduate, had been dealing with a foot injury according to reports in New Orleans and was forced to miss the Saints' game in week 16.

The Saints' tight end played the regular season finale last week in which he caught his first NFL pass – a four-yard reception. He also returned a kickoff for 12 yards in New Orleans' 31-24 loss to Tampa Bay.

Griffin was activated from the Saints' practice squad on December 2 and played in his first professional game the following day in the Saints' 31-21 win over Carolina.

He became the latest casualty on the Saints' injury list as New Orleans has had to place 19 players on injured reserve this season.

OPINION: 2017 was a banner year for Louisburg



Having the opportunity to cover Louisburg High School athletics, for what has been almost 10 years now, I have seen a lot of different highs and lows.

I have been lucky enough to cover state championship teams and watched several athletes perform at the highest level. However, this last year has to be one for the record books when it comes to success at Louisburg High School.

For Wildcat athletics, 2017 was a banner year for many reasons.

Louisburg qualified for the state tournament in three different sports – volleyball, girls soccer and boys basketball – and the first two each placed in the top four.

The volleyball team was just a point away from winning the school's first state title after the Lady Cats finished second to defending state champion Rose Hill, and tied for the best finish in school history.

The Wildcat girls soccer team qualified for the state semifinals in just its second year of existence and suffered a heartbreaking 1-0 loss in the semifinals to eventually take fourth overall.

In boys basketball, the Wildcats qualified for the state tournament for the first time in 12 years despite getting knocked out in the first round by defending state champion Bishop Miege.

Most schools would love to have that success with their athletic programs, but for Louisburg, that was just the tip of the iceberg. As special as the seasons were for those three programs, the Wildcats also thrived in a few other sports.

Louisburg's cross country program, which has been around for 19 years, had the best season in its history – by far. Not only did the Wildcats have three state medalists for the first time ever, but it had a year that featured the school's first female league champion in Trinity Moore and the best league finish by a male, Wyatt Reece, who took second.

Tim Smith continued the Wildcat success as he became the school's first regional cross country champion, and Moore, Reece and Smith each went on to win a state medal. Moore and Smith also set school records for the fastest time.

The Wildcats also qualified the girls team for the first time in school history as Moore, Carlee Gassman, Reilly Alexander, Isabelle Holtzen, Kaitlyn Lewer, Payton Shaffer and Emily Williams took third at regionals and eventually 10th at state.

The Wildcat wrestling team tied a program best by qualifying eight for the state tournament and came back with a medal by Ryan Adams, who finished sixth.

Louisburg's track and field team persevered and qualified for state in 10 events and had two regional champions in Quinn Rigney and Chris Williams. Isabelle Holtzen and T.J. Dover

each brought home their first state track medals.

The boys soccer team was one goal away from making its second consecutive trip to the state semifinals, but their run was halted by a loss to McPherson in state quarterfinals. Still, the Wildcats won a regional title, which was the seventh in team history.

Freshman Calvin Dillon led the Wildcat golf team this past year and recorded the program's first state medal in more than decade as he took 10th overall.

All these things and more I described in detail when releasing my top 10 stories of the year and what a year it was.

Obviously, I haven't had a chance to look through all the results, but I can't imagine a more successful year for LHS when you are talking about athletics. There may have been years in the 70s, 80s and 90s that I don't know about, but I find it hard to imagine one that tops 2017.

Sure, the 2010-11 school year featured two state championship teams in football and boys track and field and that was a fantastic time to be Wildcat, but as far as calendar years go, 2017 was one to remember.

Even outside the sports world, Louisburg High School put together many great accomplishments as the Wildcat Marching Band was selected to participate in the Tournament of Roses Parade and put on a great show for the nation on New Year's Day.

Then in October, the FFA Food Science team of Hallie Hutsell, Faith Seuferling, Addie Katzer and Hattie Harris won a national championship, while Hutsell and Seuferling placed second and third in the nation, respectively.

I don't get a lot of opportunities to cover programs or groups outside the sports world, but these are fantastic

accomplishments and deserved to be recognized.

For me, 2017 was a whirlwind. It seemed around every corner, school history was being made and there aren't many schools around the state that can boast about the successes Louisburg has experienced.

It was an honor for me to cover many of these historic runs in Wildcat history and I hope you all realize how lucky you have it. Louisburg is a school filled with great coaches who care about the student athletes.

Believe me, I know how fortunate I am to be able to be a part of something special and this place is it. If 2018 is half of what 2017 was, it will be a fun ride.

I can't wait for what 2018 has in store and hopefully you all will follow along to see what these Wildcats can accomplish.

Top 10 Stories of 2017



It was a successful, and eventful, 2017 for Louisburg High School athletics and for those who are connected to the Wildcat program. This past year created a lot of school history for LHS and several programs brought back state hardware to Louisburg.

Below are the Top 10 stories from 2017, along with a brief

explanation of each. Included in the explanation is the link to the actual story from the event.

This year was a blast to cover and I was blessed to have the opportunity to go along for the ride with many of these. As much fun as it was, I can't wait for 2018 to begin. Looking forward to it!



Louisburg's Calvin Dillon earns his first state golf medal as a freshman as he took 10th at the state meet.

10. Dillon medals at state golf

Louisburg freshman Calvin Dillon certainly didn't play like a first-year varsity player as he led the Wildcat golf team all season. Dillon finished 10th at the Class 4A state tournament in Wamego and became the first Wildcat golfer to earn a state medal in several years.

Dillon made the state tournament alongside senior Ty Martin,

who finished in 28th place overall after he earned his second straight state appearance.



Isabelle Holtzen earned her first state medal in the pole vault as she took seventh back in May.

9. Holtzen, Dover earn first state track medals



T.J. Dover finished eighth in the discus at the Class 4A Kansas State Track and Field Championships in Wichita.

Junior Isabelle Holtzen and senior T.J. Dover both ended their track and field seasons on a good note as they earned state medals in late May at the Class 4A state meet in Wichita.

Holtzen had a big season in the pole vault as she ended seventh in the state after she cleared 10 feet. Earlier in the year, Holtzen broke a 15-year old school record in the pole vault as she topped 11-1.

Dover made his second consecutive trip to the state meet and finished strong in his final high school performance. He took eighth with a throw of 143-4.

The Wildcats qualified for the state meet in 10 events and had two regional champions in junior Quinn Rigney (100-meter dash) and sophomore Chris Williams (400 dash).



8. Frontier League adds three schools, says goodbye to another

For the Frontier League, 2017 brought a lot of changes to a league that has featured seven schools for the last several years.

Starting in the 2018-19 season, the Frontier League will add three new schools. Piper, Tonganoxie and Bonner Springs each accepted invitations to join the league last April to create a 10-team league.

It is didn't stay 10 teams for long as De Soto will make the move to a different league during the same season. The current league will be made up of nine schools: Louisburg, Paola, Ottawa, Spring Hill, Baldwin, Eudora, Piper, Tonganoxie and Bonner Springs.



7. Louisburg boys soccer wins regional crown

The Louisburg High School boys soccer team was trying to make its second consecutive trip to the state tournament this past season and the Wildcats almost got there.

Although the Wildcats fell to McPherson in the state quarterfinal game in late October, Louisburg put together another successful season that included a 1-0 victory over Independence in the regional championship game.

The Wildcats finished the season with a 13-6 record and earned the school's first Frontier League championship since 2010.



Junior Ryan Adams celebrates after he earned a state medal at 138 pounds.

6. Wildcat wrestling qualifies eight for state, Adams picks up medal

The Louisburg High School wrestling team had an historic season as it qualified eight for the Class 4A state wrestling tournament, which tied for the most in school history, during the regional tournament in February at Frontenac High School

Thad Hendrix (106 pounds), Nathan Keegan (120), Kyle Allen (126), Ryan Adams (138), Dylan Meyer (145), Austin Moore (170), Austin Raetzel (195) and Mason Koechner (285) all competed at the state tournament in Salina.

Adams earned the school's lone state medal on the season as he finished sixth overall at 138 pounds.



Louisburg head football and boys track and field coach Gary Griffin retired from the district after 32 years. It was one of many changes for the LHS athletic department.

5. LHS goes through staff/coaching changes

The 2017-18 school year looked a lot of different than in previous years for Louisburg High School athletics.

LHS saw a lot of changes in its coaching staff and in the administration as well. Activities director Darin Gagnebin stepped down and was replaced by current director Jeremy Holloway.

In the coaching department, former head and assistant football Gary Griffin retired from the district after 32 years with the high school and Louisburg promoted assistant Robert Ebenstein

as the new Wildcat head football coach.

Jason Nelson resigned his post as the Wildcat head boys basketball coach and he was replaced with Ty Pfannenstiel. Griffin and Greg Darrington also resigned as the boys and girls track and field coaches, and were replaced by Andy Wright (boys) and John Reece (girls).



Louisburg cross country runners (from left) Tim Smith, Trinity Moore and Wyatt Reece each ended the season with a state medal.

4. LHS cross country earns three state medals, qualifies girls team

The Louisburg High School cross country team might have had

its best season in its 19-year history in 2017.

The Wildcats thrived against some of the state's best competition as seniors Wyatt Reece, Tim Smith and sophomore Trinity Moore all earned state medals at the Class 4A meet in Wamego.

Moore recorded the highest finish for a female runner in school history as she finished fifth in the state and broke her own school record in the process with a time of 19 minutes and 47 seconds.

In the boys race, Reece picked up his first state medal with a time of 17 minutes and finished 11th overall. Smith, who won a regional title the week before, came in 15th with a time of 17:05. Smith was the first Wildcat to win a regional title in school history.

Louisburg also made history as the Wildcat girls team qualified for the state meet for the first time after they finished third at their regional in Burlington. Moore joined Isabelle Holtzen, Reilly Alexander, Carlee Gassman, Kaitlyn Lewer, Payton Shaffer and Emily Williams to make up the seven-member squad that finished 10th in the team standings at state.

Earlier in the year, Moore became the school's first Frontier League champion, while Reece recorded the highest league finish in boys history as he took second at the league meet.



3. Louisburg boys basketball earns first state tournament berth in 12 years

The season may not have started out the way the Louisburg boys basketball team would have liked, but it certainly finished on a positive note.

Louisburg knocked off rival Paola in the sub-state semifinals and then defeated Fort Scott in the championship game in early March to earn its first sub-state championship since 2005.

The Wildcats earned the No. 6 seed and squared off with eventual champion Bishop Miege at the Class 4A state tournament in Salina. The Stags ended the Wildcats' season with an 81-47 loss.



2. LHS girls soccer finishes fourth at state tournament

Louisburg's girls soccer program has only been around for two years, but the Wildcats have set high expectations from the beginning and that continued in 2017.

The Wildcats advanced to the Class 4-1A state semifinals for the first time in school history as they defeated Piper with a 2-1 victory in overtime. This victory came off their second consecutive regional title as they knocked off Bonner Springs.

At the state tournament, Louisburg faced off with Thomas More Prep and suffered a heart-breaking 1-0 loss in the semifinals. The Wildcats moved on to the third-place game against Maize South and eventually finished fourth overall.



1. Lady Cat volleyball ends season as state runner-up

The Louisburg High School volleyball team was just one point away from not only becoming the school's first state volleyball champion – but also the first female team to win a state title in Louisburg history.

As close as the Lady Cats got, they came up just short against defending state champion Rose Hill in late October at the Class 4A-Division I state championship. Louisburg fell 23-25, 25-10 and 29-27 in heartbreaking fashion to finish as the state runner-up.

Still, it was an impressive season for Louisburg volleyball as it finished with a 34-10 record. The Lady Cats reeled off wins over Basehor-Linwood, Bishop Miege and Rose Hill in pool play and then downed Wellington in the state semifinals.

The Lady Cats received several accolades as junior Anna Dixon

and senior Sophie McMullen earned first team all-state and all-league honors. Dixon was also named as the Co-Player of the Year in Class 4A-Division I.

Junior Carson Buffington was also named to the all-state tournament team with Dixon and McMullen.

Wildcats earn 14 spots on All-Frontier League team



Louisburg junior Austin Moore was the lone Frontier League player to earn first team All-Frontier League honors on both sides of the ball. Moore finished the year with a team-high in tackles, rushing yards and touchdowns.

Although the Louisburg High School football team didn't make the state playoffs, the Wildcats still considered it a successful season for many reasons.

Louisburg posted a 6-3 record after losing 17 seniors the season before to graduation, and the Wildcats had nearly had an entire new coaching staff, led by head coach Robert Ebenstein.

The Wildcats were a test to everyone in the Frontier League

and the other six league coaches were aware of that. The all-league honors were officially released Monday and Louisburg had players all over the team.

Louisburg had five players selected on the offense, while nine were named to the all-league defensive team.

“When you take into consideration how much talent is in our league, I thought we were represented very well,” Ebenstein said. “Every year the Frontier is one of the toughest and most consistent leagues in the state of Kansas. Every season it seems like there is a Frontier League school in the final two in the East. De Soto was there this year, and last year us and Ottawa were two of the final four.”

Austin Moore was one Louisburg player where the Frontier League coaches liked what they saw as he earned first-team honors on both sides of the ball and was the only player in the league to do so.

Moore, a junior, was named first team all-league on defense at middle linebacker and was a first team skill player on offense. It was the second season in a row he finished the year with first team honors on defense.



Senior lineman Garrett Lowry was a first team all-league selection on offense.

Senior Garrett Lowry was a first team selection on the offensive line for the Wildcats, while senior safety Christian Tosterud was named to the first team on defense.

Moore had a big season for the Wildcats as he led the team with 1,154 yards rushing and 15 total touchdowns. Defensively, Moore led Louisburg with 69 tackles, five sacks, five tackles for a loss, two forced fumbles and two fumble recoveries.

“Austin had a very solid season on both sides of the ball, but the most impressive thing about Austin is that he is a great kid and a true leader,” Ebenstein said. “It is reassuring to have kids like Austin around because you know he is always going to do the right thing and represent Louisburg football to the utmost. Austin was the only player in the league to be selected to first team on both sides of the ball, and that is

just a testament to him and his work ethic.”

Lowry, who is a three-year starter for the Wildcats, was a fixture on the Wildcat offensive line as he helped pave the way for 2,145 yards rushing and almost 3,000 yards of total offense.

Tosterud was all over the field defensively for Louisburg as he was second on the team with 61 tackles and a forced fumble from his safety spot.



Senior safety Christian Tosterud earned first team all-league defensive honors.

“I was very excited to see Christian and Garrett both receive first team all-league honors as seniors this season,” Ebenstein said. “Both of those guys basically missed an entire year of their high school careers, so for them to get past

those trials and work their butts off I am so glad other coaches in the league saw their potential as well.”

The Wildcats also had a pair of players selected to the second team.

Quarterback Madden Rutherford was named as a second team skill player. The Louisburg sophomore finished the season with 670 yards through the air and had eight touchdowns. He also finished with 318 yards rushing and two more touchdowns on the ground.



Sophomore quarterback Madden Rutherford tallied almost 1,000 yards of total offense as he was named second team all-league.

Defensively, junior Kiefer Tucker was a big part of the Wildcat defensive line as he ended up with 35 tackles, two

sacks, three tackles for a loss and two fumble recoveries.

"I am very excited for the future of this program as there are many kids that are ready to rise up and take that next step," Ebenstein said. "We have a lot of young guys returning on both sides of the ball who will big time contributions for us next year. Having a quarterback return who received any honors is a huge advantage. By the end of the year, Madden was making some solid decisions, and began to read veer, midline and our other option plays very well. He had just under 1,000 total yards combined.

"As for Kiefer, he will never be the biggest by the definition of an offensive or defensive lineman, but his motor is relentless and I think that is what the other league coached noticed about him. He is a kid that can close down three gaps and still play stretch and sweep because he is so fast and only has one speed and that is 100 percent."



Junior lineman Kiefer Tucker earned second team all-league defensive honors.

Louisburg's defense was well-represented on the honorable mention team as the Wildcats six players named. Defensive linemen Noah Larson and Lowry, linebacker Will Ridley and defensive backs Blue Caplinger, Brayden Gage and Desmond Doles earned all-league honors.

Offensively, Doles and Tucker were selected as honorable mentions, as well.

Doles was the team's leading receiver with 284 yards through the air and five touchdowns. He also added 29 tackles and a team-high three interceptions on defense.

Caplinger and Gage each had two interceptions for the Wildcats and had 32 and 26 tackles, respectively. Gage also had two

forced fumbles and Caplinger had two fumble recoveries.

On the line, Larson had 22 tackles but was second on the team with four sacks and had three tackles for a loss. Lowry finished with 26 tackles and one sack. At linebacker, Ridley had 41 stops to go along with two forced fumbles, a fumble recovery and a sack.

Also for the first time in program history, Ebenstein unveiled six team awards and were handed out during the team's banquet on Nov. 9.

Austin Moore was named the team's Offensive Player of the Year and earned the B.A.C. Award. Christian Tosterud was selected as the team's Defensive Player of the Year and was also give the Hammer Award.

Special Teams Player of the Year was given to Will Ridley and Scout Team Player of the Year was awarded to Jonathan DePriest. Kiefer Tucker earned the Hardhat Award.

"The team awards are something we decided to do to just acknowledge some of the work that our kids put into this sport," Ebenstein said. "A lot of people do not realize how much most all of our players sacrifice for this program. I could not even attempt to explain, but this commitment aspect is something that separates Louisburg from many other programs throughout the state. The team awards were just a way for us to honor these kids and keep that motivation going all year.

"I honestly thought it would be a fun easy thing to do, it was honestly the hardest thing we had to decide on all year as a coaching staff. The decisions on who would get these awards were the most heated discussion we had all year, in a positive light of course but we have so many deserving kids that it was a really difficult process to get it down to one player for each award."

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE FOOTBALL

FIRST TEAM OFFENSE

Offensive Line: Marshall Kellner, De Soto, senior; Devin Haynes, De Soto, junior; Michael Mashburn, De Soto, junior; Jake Miller, senior, Paola; **Garrett Lowry, Louisburg, senior**

Skill: Bryce Mohl, De Soto, senior; Trevor Watts, De Soto, senior; Kurt Golubski, Paola, senior; Colton Gleghorn, Paola, senior; Luke Laskowski, Baldwin, senior; **Austin Moore, Louisburg, junior**

Kicker: Max Garrett, De Soto, senior

SECOND TEAM

Offensive Line: Dustin Adler, Eudora, senior; Keegan Wahlmeier, De Soto, senior; Jeff Schartz, Paola, junior; Mike Stribling, Paola, sophomore; Keegan Crotchett, Spring Hill, senior

Skill: Carter Neis, Eudora, junior; Leo Oplotnik, De Soto, senior; Brennen Feedback, Spring Hill, junior; Nathan Ewing, Spring Hill, senior; Hunter Ramirez, Baldwin, senior; **Madden Rutherford, Louisburg, sophomore**

Kicker: Jon Bock, Eudora, senior

HONORABLE MENTION

Offensive line: Griffin Oxley, Eudora, junior; Victor Berumen, De Soto, junior; Quinn Nichols, Baldwin, junior; **Kiefer Tucker, Louisburg, junior**; Tyler McKinney, Paola, junior

Skill: Elijah Kennedy, Eudora, senior; Darren Winans, De Soto, senior; Connor Strouse, De Soto, senior; Drew Smith, Paola, senior; Brandon Wilkes, Paola, senior; Brandon Carlson,

Ottawa, junior; Devion Bethea, Ottawa, senior; **Desmond Doles, Louisburg, senior**

Kicker: Bear Gardner, Spring Hill, sophomore; Ryan Wokutch, Paola, sophomore

FIRST TEAM DEFENSE

Defensive line: Zach Titus, De Soto, senior; Cole Zade, De Soto, senior; Clay Essex, Paola, sophomore; Keegan Crotchett, Spring Hill, senior

Linebacker: Jack Barger, De Soto, senior; Brendan Ohlmeier, Paola, junior; Kaleb Shaffer, Ottawa, senior; **Austin Moore, Louisburg, junior**

Defensive back: Brayden Brummer, De Soto, senior; Tanner Duncan, Paola, senior; **Christian Tosterud, Louisburg, senior**

Punter: Max Garrett, De Soto, senior

SECOND TEAM

Defensive line: Austin Ormsby, Eudora, senior; Josh Diehl, De Soto, senior; Brandon Wilkes, Paola, senior; **Kiefer Tucker, Louisburg, senior**

Linebacker: Jameson McGinness, Eudora, senior; Mason Taulbee, De Soto, senior; Trevor Gress, De Soto, senior; Winston Davis, Paola, senior

Defensive back: Bobby Gill, De Soto, senior; Mason Bell, Spring Hill, senior; Ethan Temple, Baldwin, senior

Punter: Jon Bock, Eudora, senior

HONORABLE MENTION

Defensive line: Elijah Kennedy, Eudora, junior; Jeff Schartz, Paola, junior; Jake Miller, Paola, senior; Kip Rogers, Paola,

junior; Garrett Borth, Baldwin, senior; Tristan Schweda, Baldwin, senior; **Garrett Lowry, Louisburg, senior; Noah Larson, Louisburg junior**

Linebacker: Carter Neis, Eudora, junior; Jimmy Bichelmeyer, De Soto, senior; Colton Gleghorn, Paola, senior; Jacob James, Spring Hill, senior; Nolan Ewing, Spring Hill, junior; Zach Flowers, Baldwin, junior; Cy Hockey, Baldwin, junior; **Will Ridley, Louisburg, senior**

Defensive back: Drew Smith, Paola, senior; Seth Richmond, Paola, junior; Trajan McCormick, Spring Hill, senior; **Desmond Doles, Louisburg, senior; Blue Caplinger, Louisburg, junior; Brayden Gage, Louisburg, junior**

Punter: Seth Richmond, Paola, junior; Brennen Feedback, Spring Hill, junior