

# Numbers are up for LHS fall sports



After making the playoffs a season ago, the Louisburg High School football watched its number rise by a small number as they try to improve off of its 7-3 season in 2015. The Wildcats hold a scrimmage at 8 a.m., on Saturday.

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A week into the fall sports season, all of the Louisburg High School sports teams have seen their participation numbers rise from last year – albeit by a small number.

It would make sense as all four programs made strides in the 2015-16 campaign. The football team returned to the playoffs after a 3-win season the year before and volleyball placed third at the state tournament.

Boys soccer won its first regional title in five years despite a rough beginning. Meanwhile, cross country qualified a runner for the state meet for the first time in several years and the girls team made program history when it won its first ever meet.

Needless to say, last year's results have left several excited for what is to come in all sports.



**Sophie McMullen is one of three returning varsity players from last season's third place finish at state for the LHS volleyball team.**

Louisburg's football team won seven games last season, which was four more than the year before despite a first-round exit in the playoffs. The Wildcats saw their numbers rise from 58 to 63 this season and are ready to make an improvement on the field as well.

They are going through 2-a-days now and will finish a grueling week with an 8 a.m. scrimmage Saturday.

"The first couple days have gone real well, however we are a little limited in what we can do and expect without full pads," football coach Kyle Littrell said. "We have a great group of kids who have committed themselves to our grueling summer program and the seniors have really taken the leadership role and ran with it."

Volleyball spent the first three days of practice going through tryouts, but head coach Jessica Compliment saw numbers rise from 28 to 36 this season, which means a few more cuts

than last year, but Louisburg has to replace five varsity players from a year ago.

The Lady Cats might have the shortest amount of time to get ready of all the sports as they open their season with the preseason Frontier League tournament on Aug. 27 in Baldwin.

“The first few days of practice have centered around testing and conditioning,” Compliment said. “We started practice with the team on Thursday. I know the players are ready to get the season going, which is good because we have a quick turnaround with a tournament in a week.”



**Louisburg's (from left) Jon Paul Totta, Kyle Allen and Jacob Arnett take part in a drill during a soccer practice Wednesday.**

First-year boys soccer coach Kyle Conley inherits a Wildcat program that won the regional tournament and advanced to the state quarterfinals. The numbers for the Wildcats program were up by just two from last year, but Conley has liked what he has seen out of his group thus far.

“The kids are focused and determined,” Conley said. “I am very pleased with their attitudes and work ethic. They seem eager to learn from each session. I love how the kids are believing

in the program and my philosophy.

“It is really good to finally get started and get things going. I am excited to see what this team will become. I do understand that our league is incredibly talented, but our mind set it going to be we have something to prove.”

As for cross country, head coach John Reece has seen a large number return for the season, especially on the girls. The Wildcats have 36 runners out this season – with 24 of those competing on the girls team. Louisburg had 31 total runners out a year ago.



**Louisburg cross country runners Kaitlyn Gaza (left) and Lilly Mick finish up a practice run Wednesday.**

Junior Wyatt Reece returns to help the boys after qualifying for the state meet as a sophomore.

“Practices have started great, especially since it is not 110 degrees in the shade,” coach Reece said. “Those who ran through the summer are ahead of the game. We hope to do some great things this year with almost all of my varsity girls returning.”

Look for full previews on each team next week at Louisburg

# Vance enjoys time at Shrine Bowl



**Anders Vance, a 2016 Louisburg High School graduate, signs an autograph for a couple fans on July 30 following the Kansas Shrine Bowl at Emporia State University. Vance and the East squad won going away, 48-27.**

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The Kansas Shrine Bowl brought a lot of unforgettable memories for Anders Vance, but the one he will remember the most didn't happen on the football field.

Vance spent a week at Emporia State University preparing for the annual all-star football game as a member of the East team. The 2016 Louisburg High School graduate developed a lot of friendships along the way as he was the starting center that helped the East to a 48-27 win over the West squad on July 30.

As much fun as that was, he will never forget what happened two days before.

Vance and the rest of the Shrine Bowl players met with

patients from the Shriners Hospital for Children (SHC) out of St. Louis. Not only did he get to meet them, but Vance also took part in several stations that helped him understand what it was like to live the life of a patient.

“Those kids are just amazing,” Vance said. “That is what stuck out to me is just how tough these kids are. They are tough as nails and pretty inspirational. We took part in different stations, including one that had us try and tie our shoe with just one hand. I don’t know how they do what they do.”



**Vance’s Louisburg teammates (from left) Austin Moore, Mason Koechner and Grant Harding made the trip down to Emporia to watch Vance play in the Shrine Bowl.**

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.

SHC is a healthcare system of 22 hospitals dedicated to improving the lives of children by providing pediatric specialty care, innovative research and outstanding 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.

Vance reported to Emporia State a week before the game to take part in practice with his East teammates. It wasn't a vacation for any of the players as they practiced every morning, had film in the afternoon and another practice in the evening.

Then came the game as Vance was the starting center and helped the East to a quick lead as it scored 19 straight points in the game's first seven minutes. Vance, who is headed to Pittsburg State to play football this fall, teamed up with fellow Pitt State signee in Rossville quarterback Tucker Horak.

"It was good to be back at center again and I thought we played pretty well, especially early," Vance said. "It was nice to get the win too because a lot of the West players were pretty cocky all week. To be able to score all those points early was really nice."

The West actually scored 20 unanswered points itself and took a 20-19 lead before the East answered with a touchdown right before halftime.

"The coaches really challenged us at halftime," Vance said. "They told us the only thing we were missing was effort and I think everyone of us came out ready to go in the second half."

The East certainly did that as it outscored the West 22-7 in the second half to earn its second straight Shrine Bowl win and three out of the last four.

The entire week was something Vance will cherish for a long time to come.

"To be honest, it was a pretty awesome experience," he said. "Whether it was meeting the kids, or getting to know new people or bonding with my new teammates. I really loved all of

it.”

With the completion of the game, Vance’s high school career has officially come to an end and will report to Pittsburg State this week to begin his collegiate journey with the Gorillas.

Vance has actually been in Pittsburg since late May and has been participating in offseason workouts with his new teammates.

“I am really looking forward to playing at Pitt State,” Vance said. “I have been working hard this summer and staying down in Pittsburg and coming home on weekends. It is just a great opportunity for me and I can’t wait to see what happens.”

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## **Cook happy to give back to hometown**



Former Kansas State wide receiver and quarterback Kody Cook works with a camper in a footwork drill during the Kansas Gridiron Greats Football Camp on Saturday at Louisburg High School. Cook, an LHS graduate, came back to his hometown to run the camp along with former K-State players Tramaine Thompson, Morgan Burns and Chris Harper.



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Area youth gathered on the Louisburg High School practice football field Saturday to learn the sport from a few former Kansas State football players who have played in some pretty big games.

One of those players competed in a few large games in Louisburg history as well.

LHS and Kansas State graduate Kody Cook returned home as the Kansas Gridiron Greats Football Camp made a stop in Louisburg. Former K-State football players Tramaine Thompson, Morgan Burns and Chris Harper joined Cook to help teach the young players how to compete on the football field, and in life.

“It was a good time,” Cook said. “It was the first time I have been able to come back in a long time and being on the field really brought back a lot of memories. I got to talk to the high school kids about what is getting ready to happen this season and try to help them out in any way I can. Plus, seeing the little kids laugh and smile a lot – it was just a good time and it was great to give back.”

Athletes from kindergarten all the way up through high school had a chance to learn from the four K-State players. Each player conducted position specific drills such as passing and catching and also defensive drills.



**Tramaine Thompson holds the bag as he teaches a camper how to run through contact.**

Cook then had a chance to talk to the athletes and tell them his story of perseverance. His story of quarterbacking Louisburg to a state title in high school, not getting many big college offers and eventually landing in junior college.

It was during his time at Hutchinson Community College where he saw time as a wide receiver just so he could get on the field. Then during his final game at Hutch in the Salt City Bowl, Cook was asked to come in and quarterback the Blue Dragons without taking any snaps at the position all season.

Cook came in and played like a veteran as he recorded six touchdowns in three quarters on his way to being named the game's MVP and K-State took notice. He earned a spot as a walk-on the next season and eventually made his way onto scholarship as one of the team's wide receivers.



**Morgan Burns works with an older group of players on a defensive drill.**

It was a bit of déjà vu for him during his senior season at K-State as he saw several snaps at quarterback for the Wildcats due to an injury and Cook eventually became just the third player in Big 12 history with 100 yards passing, rushing and receiving in the same season.

The story is one Cook loves to tell. Not to gloat on his own accomplishments, but to give kids hope that their dreams can come true.

“I just told them to push through adversity and to never give up in life,” Cook said. “Just because you are from a small town doesn’t mean you can’t do something that you put your mind to. Everything is earned through hard work and dedication. I know it sounds cliché, but that is what it boils down to at the end of the day. I know there are plenty of guys in the NFL right now that outwork people instead of necessarily being more talented.”

Following the completion of the camp, Cook also met with some members of the LHS football team and gave them some advice on how to prepare for the upcoming season and enjoy the ride.

“Hopefully these high school kids just cherish these moments,” Cook said. “I have played at K-State and done things in front of thousands of people, but every memory I have had of

football, my favorite ones are playing here and under the Friday night lights.

“Winning a state championship with all those guys that you grew up with is just special. It is not to say those K-State memories don’t mean a lot, because they do, but the high school ones are the ones that stick with you.”

Saturday was the final day in what was a busy week for Cook. Along with Thompson, Harper and Burns, he conducted camps for six straight days that included stops in Wichita, Newton, Osborne, Topeka and Garden City.

“It has been a lot of fun,” Cook said. “It has been pretty crazy but it has been good to stop at different places and see how people do things. I just enjoy getting a chance to talk to the kids and let them know they can achieve whatever their dream is if they work hard for it.



**LHS grad Kody Cook talks to a group of current Wildcat football players and gives them some advice on their upcoming season.**

Cook is looking to heed his own advice as he is still looking to accomplish his ultimate dream, which is to play in the NFL. Despite not getting invited to a team’s minicamp, he is still working out in hopes of one day getting a shot to do what he

loves.

Till then, Cook is hoping to earn a graduate assistant job with the K-State football program and possibly tryout for the Canadian Football League in March.

“One of the things I want to do is coach, so hopefully I can get that opportunity,” Cook said. “At the same time, I still want to prove that I am good enough to play and maybe something works out up in the Canadian league. I am just going to work as hard as I can and see where that takes me.”

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## Wildcat football finishes off busy month



Louisburg's Mason Koechner wraps up a Blue Valley Northwest defender during the Wildcats' scrimmage on June 29 in Louisburg. The Wildcats scrimmaged Blue Valley Southwest the week before and just finished up a busy month of June.

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It scrimmaged with Class 5A and 6A programs, traveled to Paola every Monday in June for 7-on-7 workouts and also held its team camp.

Add in the fact players hit the weight room several days a

week and it was a busy month of June for the Louisburg High School football team. The Wildcats have put in a lot of work as they prepare for the 2016 season and try for a Frontier League title and a spot in the playoffs.

The Wildcats have taken the right steps to get there, and although Louisburg coach Kyle Littrell has liked what he has seen on the field, he is looking for even more from his team in the month of July.

“I like how our summer is going so far and what we have accomplished, however I think we have not reached our expectations in our conditioning portion of our workouts,” Littrell said. “Workouts get tougher in July and it’s going to be interesting to see who responds. We still have a lot of work to do.”

In in the final two weeks of June, Blue Valley Southwest and Blue Valley Northwest ventured to Louisburg to compete in a controlled scrimmage at the Wildcats’ practice field. Louisburg had a chance to see where it stood against bigger programs and it held its own.



**Louisburg running back Thomas San Agustin spins away from a Blue Valley Northwest defender on June 29.**

Littrell especially liked what he saw from his group against Blue Valley Northwest as he had more players in attendance.

"I thought the scrimmage with Northwest was the better scrimmage, probably because our whole offensive line was there and we were able to start the gelling process with that group," he said.

Louisburg also participated in several 7-on-7 workouts throughout the month of June, and while those are geared to improving a team's offense, Littrell thought those workouts really helped the Wildcat defense.

He is still looking to see improvement from his offense before the team hits the field for the first day of practice on Aug. 15.

"I thought we got better defensively at 7-on-7," Littrell said. "We did some nice things offensively, but we have a ways to go throwing the ball and the only way to get better at that is by grabbing guys and throwing and catching on your own."

The Wildcats appear to be one of the favorites in the Frontier League this season as they return several starters on both sides of the ball. Senior lineman Dustyn Rizzo, who was an all-league first team player on defense, returns to lead the Wildcat line.

Fellow seniors Mason Koechner and T.J. Dover, who earned honorable mention, will also help anchor the line of scrimmage with junior Garrett Lowry.

Senior running backs Thomas San Agustin (second team offense last year) and Korbin Hankinson hope to take advantage of the experienced offensive line, while senior Grant Harding will step in to the quarterback spot after serving as the team's backup last season.

Despite having a number of spots already filled, there are

still plenty of positions to be had and Littrell is looking forward to seeing how it shakes out.

“We are having some really nice battles and it is fun to watch these kids compete for something that they love and care about,” he said. “We have battles right now at center, tight end, wide receiver, linebacker and defensive tackle. It will be fun to watch and evaluate these kids as we go along. Every year when we put on the pads, the separation usually takes place.”

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## **K-State's Cook to host football camp in Louisburg**



Kody Cook served several different roles for the Kansas State football team last season, including a few games at quarterback. Cook, a Louisburg High School graduate, will join former K-State players Tramaine Thompson, Chris Harper and Morgan Burns and will host the Kansas Gridiron Greats Youth Football Camp on July 16 at the LHS football practice field.

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Kody Cook spent most of his high school years on the Louisburg High School football practice field.

Cook used that opportunity to get better as a player and



person. Then in his final year of high school all that hard work paid off as he led the Wildcats to their first state football championship in 2010.

That success catapulted him to the junior college ranks and he eventually earned a scholarship to play for Kansas State and legendary head coach Bill Snyder.

Six years later, Cook is returning to that same practice field where it all started.

Cook, along with former Kansas State players Chris Harper, Tramaine Thompson and Morgan Burns, will be in Louisburg on July 16 to conduct the Kansas Gridiron Greats Youth Football Camp.

"I really excited to get back home," Cook said. "I have been so busy that I haven't had a lot of time to make it back, but I am looking forward to giving back to the community that helped me out so much and working with the kids and not just teach them about football, but about life as well."

The camp, which will be held on the LHS practice field, will be held in two sessions. The cost for one session is \$50 or it is \$80 to attend both sessions. The first session will run from 9 a.m. to noon and the second session will go from 1 to 4 p.m.

All four former Wildcats will be on hand to teach young athletes from kindergarten all the way up through 12<sup>th</sup> grade to work on fundamentals on both sides of the ball. Those interested in the camp can visit [www.kansasgridirongreats.com](http://www.kansasgridirongreats.com) to download a registration form.

Cook quarterbacked Kansas State for part of his senior season in 2015 along with seeing time as a starting wide receiver. He became just the third player in Big 12 history with 100 yards passing, rushing and receiving in the same season. Cook was also named to the All-Big 12 second team this past season.

Burns finished his Wildcat career as was on the top kick returners in Kansas State history and finished the season as a first team All-American and broke numerous school and Big 12 records.

Thompson was a big target at wide receiver for Kansas State as he helped the Wildcats to a Big 12 championship in 2012. He is eighth in school history in all-purpose yards and was also an All-Big 12 player.

Harper transferred from the University of Oregon to Kansas State in 2010 and led the Wildcats in receptions in his final two years with the program to earn All-Big 12 second team honors.

The camp tour begins Monday in Wichita, followed by stops in Maize, Newton, Garden City, Osborne, Topeka and ends with Louisburg.

As for the camp itself, it will feature specific position training for quarterbacks, running backs receivers, tight ends and linemen along with some defensive work. Mixed in with all the football lingo, Cook is looking forward to working with the campers on more than just their game.

"We are definitely going to help them with the fundamentals, but I just want to let them know how there is more to life than just football," Cook said. "Education is so important because football is going to end for everyone sometime, whether it is high school, college or in the pros. I just want to help mentor the young kids and tell them things I wish someone would have told me when I was their age.

"All these guys coming with me are good people and kids are going to learn a lot from them. I hope to see a lot of people out there."

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# Griffin thankful for opportunity with Saints



Garrett Griffin (left) is all smiles as he chats with fellow Louisburg High School graduate Jason Spradling as he watches the Louisburg High School scrimmage last Wednesday. Griffin is currently trying to make the New Orleans Saints roster.

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In early June, Garrett Griffin received his diploma from the Air Force Academy and shook hands with the President of the United States.

That event alone is enough to top most people's list of accomplishments. Four days later, Griffin fulfilled a life-long dream.

Following his graduation from the Air Force, Griffin was signed by the New Orleans Saints and his dream of playing professional football became a reality. It was a whirlwind of emotions for the Louisburg native in what was a short period of time.

"To be honest, those moments haven't really hit me yet," Griffin said. "There is just so much going on, whether it was with graduation or signing with Saints, to really sit back and think about what just happened. Once I graduated, I hopped on

a plane to New Orleans, signed my contract and then went out to practice. It is crazy to think about how fast everything happens, but it is going well so far.”

Signing with the Saints was no surprise to Griffin. New Orleans offered Griffin a contract in May, but he was unable to sign until after graduation.

Griffin, who played tight end at the Air Force Academy, was invited to participate in rookie minicamps with the Kansas City Chiefs and Saints. He attended the Chiefs minicamp first and got a good idea of what the coaches were looking for.

He left Kansas City without a contract and then traveled to New Orleans the following weekend for its rookie minicamp. The Saints had scouted Griffin since his pro day and were impressed by what they saw and offered him a contract before he left town.

“When they told me they were going to offer me a contract, it was a childhood dream come true for me,” Griffin said. “Going to Kansas City for their camp was a good experience for me because playing in the NFL is a lot different than at Air Force, so it helped me catch up on what I needed to know.

“But going to New Orleans, I could just tell it was a better fit for me. They know me as a player and have followed me since the draft process began. The team is just one big family and they take care of each other. It has been a great experience so far.”

After Griffin signed his free agent contract, he immediately hit the practice field to take part in the team’s four-day OTA offseason workout and then followed that up with a three-day mandatory minicamp on June 14-16.

Griffin got a lot of work in at the tight end spot during that time and had several eye-opening experiences, but none were much bigger than when he caught passes thrown by All-Pro

quarterback, and Super Bowl MVP, Drew Brees.

“That was pretty cool,” Griffin said. “When you are doing drills, you just line up and do what you are supposed to and don’t think about it too much. But after I caught my first pass from him, time kind of slowed down and I realized what had just happened. It was awesome.”



Photo taken by Michael C. Herbert / New Orleans Saints

**Garrett Griffin goes through a drill during the Saints offseason workouts in June.**

The Saints signed Griffin as a tight end/long snapper, but he has his work cut for him in making the roster as there are several veterans currently ahead of him, including Coby Fleener, who spent the last four seasons with the Indianapolis Colts. Fleener signed with the Saints in the offseason and is the favorite to be the team’s starter.

“He and the rest of the vets have been really great at helping me and making sure I am in the right spots,” Griffin said of Fleener. “They like to give the rookies a hard time, and that

happens no matter where you go, but they have been good about it.

“The Saints are just a great organization and they have a great fan base. There is a family atmosphere around the whole team and the city just embraces them. In some ways it is kind of what Louisburg is like. They really love football and they love their team. It is great to be a part of.”

Griffin’s immediate future will begin to take shape later this month when he travels to West Virginia with the rest of the Saints for the team’s training camp that begins July 27.

That also includes a trip to Foxborough, Mass., where the Saints will take part in two joint practices with the New England Patriots before the two team’s square off in the exhibition opener on Aug. 8.

“I think that will be pretty cool, just getting a chance to go up there and practice against the Patriots,” Griffin said. “Then to have a chance to watch one of the best tight ends in football in Rob Gronkowski and see how he prepares, it will be a great learning experience for me.”

Although most of his time is dedicated to the tight end spot, Griffin is also spending some time working as a long-snapper, a position he held the backup role on at Air Force. When it comes time to make cuts as training camp winds down, being able to play two different roles could be a positive for Griffin.

“Tight end is my main focus, and if I am going to make it in the NFL then that is what I have to spend most of my time on,” Griffin said. “But if I can work on my long snapping a little, and it comes down to me and another tight end, then the team might decide to go with the player that can play two spots, and that can only help me. I am just trying to do everything I can right now and I am working hard.”

As excited as Griffin would be to make the Saints roster, he knows there is another obstacle in his way. Currently, he is on a 60-day leave from the Air Force before he is set to begin his two-year military obligation.

That obligation would prevent Griffin from playing in the NFL until that two years is complete. Still, there has been precedence that the Air Force could allow Griffin to play and complete his military requirements in the reserves.

Most recently, Navy Secretary Ray Mabus gave Naval Academy grad Keenan Reynolds permission to play with the Baltimore Ravens. Reynolds was drafted in the sixth round by the Ravens in the NFL Draft.

"I don't want to say, the rules have gotten a little bit more relaxed. That's not the right term but, if a player like (Griffin) has an opportunity they're going to work with him where maybe 20 years ago it may have been a little bit different," Saints head coach Sean Payton said during a press conference last month. "I know in his case, he won't miss anything. We like him as a young prospect and because of graduation he was one of the guys that got here a little late but that was really more of the graduation rules. Fortunately for us he will be involved with everything we do."

Until training camp arrives, however, Griffin is currently back in Louisburg where he is enjoying some time off. Last week, Garrett made his way back to where it all started for him – the Louisburg High School practice field – where he took in the Wildcats' scrimmage with his father Gary, who is an assistant coach.

"It was great to be back out there again," Garrett said. "I watch every game on film, but it was great to be able to see them in person and see what this team is going to be like. It was fun to be able to be with those coaches again and kind of stand back and learn a little bit from there. I wouldn't mind

being a coach one day so there are always things that you can learn, no matter how much football you play.”

Still, he is focused on making his dream come true.

“I don’t want to think a lot about it because I don’t know exactly what is going to happen yet, but I can only do what I can control and that is to work hard and be prepared,” he said. “If for some reason the NFL doesn’t work out, I have a great Plan B with the Air Force and I know a lot of guys don’t have that. At the same time, I don’t want to have any regrets. So, we will see how it goes. Whatever happens is fine with me.”

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## Vance competes for Kansas in all-star game



**Anders Vance (52) jumps out of his stance as he prepares to block a Missouri defender Thursday during the Greater Kansas City Football Coaches Association Kansas vs. Missouri All-Star Game at Blue Springs (Mo.) High School.**

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BLUE SPRINGS, Mo. – Anders Vance traded in his purple and white jersey of Louisburg for one of the red and white variety.



No, it wasn't a Pittsburg State one – at least not yet anyway.

Vance donned the Kansas all-star uniform for the Greater Kansas City Football Coaches Association Kansas vs. Missouri All-Star game on Thursday at Blue Springs (Mo.) High School. He wore his usual No. 52 as Vance took the field with Team Kansas in hopes of snapping a Missouri winning streak.

Kansas nearly stopped Missouri's winning ways, but came up short in a 28-24 loss. Vance still enjoyed his team practicing and playing with his new teammates.

"I really had a good time," Vance said. "I had a chance to see a lot of great players from around the metro and I got to meet some cool coaches. It was a lot of fun and I got to learn some new stuff."

The game featured some of the best players from the Kansas City area and Vance saw a lot time on the offensive line. He played several snaps at right guard, while also seeing time on special teams for punts and extra points.



**Anders Vance listens to the Kansas coaches during a timeout Thursday.**

Kansas took a 15-14 lead at halftime and held a 24-21 advantage in the fourth quarter before Missouri scored a

touchdown with five minutes left in the contest to all but seal the win for the sixth consecutive time.

"It's always disappointing to lose, but it is a different feeling because you are wanting to beat another state instead of a school and there isn't that family aspect there so it is a lot different," Vance said.

"They moved me to guard the day before the game," said Vance, who usually plays center. "It was a little different for me, but I think I did alright."

Vance spent the last two weeks before the game practicing with his Kansas teammates in the evenings at Mill Valley High School and had a chance to work with some different coaches.

He also saw several familiar faces as he teamed up with four other Frontier League players. Paola's Nate Staats and Alex Wilson, along with Baldwin's Jake and Joel Katzer, also participated in the game

The contest was a culmination of what was a great high school season for Vance. He earned a lot of recognition in the offseason as he was selected to the Class 4A all-state first team by the Kansas Football Coaches Association, Topeka Capital-Journal and Wichita Eagle. He was also an honorable mention selection to the all-metro team by the Kansas City Star.

Vance, who has signed to play football at Pittsburg State this fall, has one more high school game left to play. He will represent the East quad in the Kansas Shrine Bowl on July 30 at Emporia State University.



Louisburg High School graduate Anders Vance takes on a Missouri lineman Thursday in Blue Springs.

“I am excited for that one,” he said. “It is going to be fun and a little more intense I think.”

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## Wildcats get work done during team camp



Louisburg running back Brayden Gage looks for a hole while

lineman Matt Rison (right) tries to block Dalton Frazier during the Wildcat team camp last week. The Wildcats will hold two scrimmages later this month against Blue Valley Southwest and Blue Valley Northwest.

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Ever since last November, the sting has stayed with several members of the Louisburg football team and its coaching staff.

That feeling has been hard to shake, but they are out to use that as motivation. Close to 60 players hit the Louisburg High School football practice field every evening last week hoping to erase the memory of the way last season ended.

Louisburg went through the regular season winning seven of its nine games before getting upset in the first round of the playoffs to Basehor-Linwood. The Wildcats are out to make another run at the state playoffs and they started that journey during last week's team camp.

The Wildcat players took the field for two-and-half-hour sessions during the five-day camp that ended Friday.

"I really liked everything about the camp, except for maybe Friday," Louisburg coach Kyle Littrell said. "Monday through Thursday I thought we did some really nice things. I thought we executed well and saw improvement. But Friday was just a rough day. I am not sure if it was because we started a couple hours earlier or what it was, but it just wasn't a good day. We just weren't as crisp as I would like us to be."



**Korbin Hankinson hauls in a catch during the Wildcat team camp last week.**

Littrell said he used a majority of the camp to install 80 to 90 percent of the team's offense, along with portions of the team defense. The camp was also used to see who would be able to fill the holes left by the 12 Wildcat seniors from a year ago.

The Wildcats have to replace their starting quarterback, center, wide receivers, fullback, middle linebacker, two defensive linemen and several parts of the secondary. Littrell believes the team took a step forward.

He really liked what he saw out of the running back group at camp, including seniors Thomas San Agustin, Korbin Hankinson and Jake Hill. Returning starters T.J. Dover, Garrett Lowry, Mason Koechner and Dustyn Rizzo provided some lanes to run through on the line.

"I think we were able to get all the basics down and I think we showed that we are going to be a good running team," Littrell said. "On the offensive line, we have four guys that are 2 to 3 year starters for us and then whoever wins the center battle. We just need to fix some little things there,

but I feel that is going to be a strength for us.

"We just need to develop some more offensive lineman and backups to give us a little more depth there. I was definitely happy with the running back group this past week. I thought they did a really good job."

As good as the running game was for the Wildcats, Littrell knows his team has to show more balance if they want to be successful this season. Senior Grant Harding returns to take over the quarterback spot for Austin Terry and Littrell said his team needs to improve its aerial attack.

"We are going to have to be able to throw the ball some," Littrell said. "We might be a running team, but if we don't show that we can throw the ball and be successful at that, teams are going to stack nine or 10 guys in the box and we won't be able to do much. If we can become a balanced offensive team then I think we have a chance to be pretty successful."

Although the Wildcats didn't have the best final day of camp, it did end on a good note as approximately 40 moms took the field with their sons to take part in a simulated practice.

Each mother played their son's position and the coaches walked them through what a day of practice is like.

"It was a lot of fun," Littrell said. "I am surprised at how many moms actually showed up, but it was good to see that many out there. It gave the coaches a chance to put some names with faces and it let the moms become a little more familiar with us and what we are trying to do."

Even though camp may be over, team activities are just beginning.

Along with the normal summer weight sessions, the Wildcats will travel to Paola the next two Mondays for 7-on-7 workouts

to go up against several area teams.



**Quarterback Grant Harding releases a pass during a drill last week.**

Something new for the Wildcats this season is they will get the opportunity to scrimmage against two different teams.

Louisburg will host Blue Valley Southwest for a scrimmage from 9 to 11 a.m. on Wednesday. The Wildcats will host their second scrimmage a week later when Blue Valley Northwest comes to town from 10 a.m. to noon on June 29.

Both scrimmages will be held on the school's practice field.

"It will be nice to go up against defenses that don't necessarily know what we run," Littrell said. "That is the problem with camp is we know what the other is going to do. Plus, it will give us a chance to go up against different formations, that maybe we wouldn't normally do until two-a-days start so this will give us a little jump start. Plus, I know the players look forward to going up against someone different."

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# Griffin invited to Chiefs, Saints minicamps



**Air Force senior Garrett Griffin was recently offered rookie minicamp invitations by the Kansas City Chiefs and New Orleans Saints.**

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His name might not have been called during the final rounds of the NFL Draft on Saturday, but Garrett Griffin's aspirations of playing professional football is still very much alive.

Following the conclusion of the draft, teams from around the league made phone calls to those who weren't drafted to offer free agent contracts or rookie minicamp invitations. Griffin was one of those players.

The Air Force senior tight end, and Louisburg High School graduate, was offered invitations to take part in rookie minicamps with the Kansas City Chiefs and New Orleans Saints.

Those invitations are a chance for Griffin to showcase himself in front of both teams with the hopes of earning an opportunity to compete for a roster spot and take part in the team's training camp.

Griffin's road is a little different than most, however. He



must first receive permission from his commanding officer in the Air Force to leave and compete in both minicamps. The Chiefs camp begins this Saturday, while the Saints camp starts the following week.

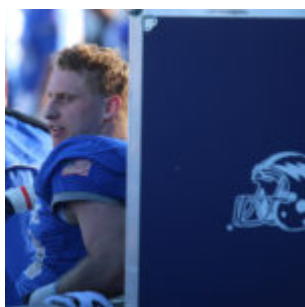
Should Griffin be allowed to compete in both camps, he will then compete for a spot. If a team offers him a contract, he will then sign and be placed on the military reserve roster so that team will have his rights until he gets put into the Air Force reserves, which is two years following his graduation in June.

Despite missing some games in his senior season, Griffin finished his final year at Air Force strong with 12 catches for 208 yards and three touchdowns. He ended his Air Force career with 41 catches for 678 yards and eight touchdowns in an option offense.

Griffin, who is listed at 6-feet, 4 inches and 240 pounds, ran a 40-yard dash in 4.75 seconds and had a vertical jump of 36 inches at his Air Force pro day in March. He also had a broad jump of 9 feet, 9 inches and 15 bench reps at 225 pounds.

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## **Griffin hopes NFL dream becomes reality**



**Air Force senior, and Louisburg High School graduate, Garrett**

**Griffin has a big weekend ahead of him as he hopes to be selected in the NFL Draft or possibly sign on with a team via free agency.**

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COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. – Hundreds of college football players will be sitting in front of the television this weekend, with their phone within reach, watching the National Football League draft.

It is a weekend where dreams come true for several athletes across the country.

Garrett Griffin hopes to be one of those players.

However, as the final round of the draft gets underway Saturday morning, the Air Force Academy senior won't be in front of a television. Nor will he have a phone to get updates about what is going on.

Nope, Griffin will be out in the wilderness with no way to know if his dream is about to become a reality.

"I will be out in the woods on military exercise till like 6 or so," Griffin said. "So I could get drafted and I won't even know anything until I get back. It is kind of weird, but that is what I signed up for.

"I have people calling and asking if they can come out and be with me while the draft is going on. I have to tell them 'Guys, thanks but I am kind of busy.'"

Still, Griffin, a Louisburg High School graduate, is hoping for good news when he returns.

It sounds like it could be the case as a lot more teams have taken interest in the Air Force tight end. He is projected as a late-round pick or will perhaps sign with a team as an unrestricted free agent.

Although Griffin had his highlights throughout the season, it was his pro day at the Air Force in early March where things started to heat up for him.



**Air Force tight end Garrett Griffin reportedly has several NFL teams interested in drafting or signing him as a free agent.**

Griffin, who is listed at 6-feet, 4 inches and 240 pounds, ran a 40-yard dash in 4.75 seconds and had a vertical jump of 36 inches. He also had a broad jump of 9 feet, 9 inches and 15 bench reps at 225 pounds.

Those numbers seemed to please the scouts in attendance and word of his workout made its way to other teams across the league.

"I had a pretty good pro day," Griffin said. "Teams just wanted to see if I was athletic enough to play and that is one of my strengths. I am pretty light compared to other tight ends in the NFL who are about 255 or 260 pounds, so I still have to get stronger. I thought I ran well in the 40 and a lot of the jumping drills went well too."

Scouts from the Detroit Lions and New Orleans Saints were on hand for the Air Force pro day and have stayed in touch with

Griffin and told him they liked what they saw.

Since then, Griffin's phone has been ringing more and more. He estimates he has talked with representatives from 15 to 20 teams and it became so hectic that he needed some help.

After what Griffin did on his pro day, Air Force head coach Troy Calhoun, who was also an offensive coordinator in the NFL, gave him some advice.

"He told me I needed to get an agent," Griffin said. "So I went out and started looking. It took me a while to find the right person, but I eventually found him and he has done a great job. I was getting calls all the time from general managers and other people asking me to send them film or asking other questions and it was getting a little overwhelming.

"The whole process is weird because I don't know if I ever saw myself hiring an agent and had no idea what that was going to be like. It was actually a pretty surreal moment, but it was exciting at the same time because it is looking more like playing in the NFL could happen."

Following that hire, reports started to emerge at the different teams interested in Griffin. Along with the Saints and Lions, the Denver Broncos, San Francisco 49ers, San Diego Chargers – and yes – the Kansas City Chiefs were also reported to have interest in him.

Griffin's name took a while to get out there as he didn't have the stats that would catch a team's eye during his senior campaign. After missing part of the season with an injury, Griffin finished the year with 12 catches for 208 yards and three touchdowns.

He was a part of a run-first Air Force option offense where Griffin's main responsibility was to block – but he did it well and was a big part of their attack.

When he came back from his injury, Air Force won five out of its next six games and the Falcons won the Mountain West Mountain Division title.

“I knew when I came to Air Force that I wasn’t going to get a lot of targets and I was fine with that,” Griffin said. “I knew I wasn’t going to have big numbers, but I just wanted to do whatever I could to help the team win and that is what I did.”

What seems to have a lot of teams interested in Griffin is his ability to play multiple positions. He has shown he can block from the tight end spot, he can also line up as a receiver and he can even do a little long snapping.

“Some of the scouts that saw me asked me to do some long snapping and I think that went pretty well,” Griffin said. “The fact that I can do multiple things can only help me. I can play tight end, I can lineup as a wide receiver and I can even play a little fullback. I was actually the backup long snapper at Air Force so I have worked at that as well.”

However, the one thing that could work against Griffin is the fact he plays for Air Force. Griffin is required to serve in the academy for two years following his 60-day leave after graduation – and therefore cannot be on an NFL roster until that two years is up.

That fact could prevent him from getting drafted, but teams could still sign him as a free agent following the draft.

“A lot of people have come up to me and said that it stinks and that they should allow you to play,” Griffin said. “At the same time, I knew what I signed up for when I got here. Playing in the NFL has always been my goal, but not very many people have the chance and I needed a good backup plan and the Air Force has given me that. I think the lifespan of an average player in the NFL is like 2 to 3 years and players are always moving in and out of the league.

"If I do sign on with a team, I can go to their minicamp, OTA's and part of training camp and find out what I need to work on before I have to report. Then I can use that two years to get bigger and stronger and hopefully be ready when that time is up."

Still, with his future up in the air, Griffin is trying to not think about football on what could be the most critical time in his life.

"I am just trying to prepare myself for everything," he said. "I've thought about what is going to happen if I get drafted, or if I end up signing as a free agent or if I am done playing football altogether. I have mentally prepared for all three options and I am good with whatever happens. I am in a good place."

"Right now, I am just focused on graduating and staying in the best shape I can. I am trying not to think about football, but it is hard not to think about something that has been a life-long dream."

A dream that he hopes comes true this weekend.