

Hupp earns spot on Oklahoma State football team



After months of training, Luke Hupp, a Louisburg High School graduate, earned a walk-on spot on the Oklahoma State football team last August. Hupp, who will redshirt this season, will lineup as a 'Cowboy Back' which is hybrid position of a fullback and tight end.

Luke Hupp made quite the jump in the football world in the last year, and did all of it without playing a single snap.

Hupp, a 2014 Louisburg High School graduate, went from intending to play football at Fort Scott Community College to finding himself on the campus of a Division I program in a matter of months. It turned out to be quite the journey for Hupp as he transformed himself to compete at the highest level.

He saw his hard work pay off when he was told in August that he was invited to walk-on to the Oklahoma State football program and officially became a member of the Cowboys.

"I just realize how blessed I am to have this opportunity," Hupp said. "A lot of kids, especially from small towns like Louisburg, don't get to experience what this is like and play at this level. I am not where I want to be yet, though. I want

to eventually get on the field."

Hupp's road to Oklahoma State started in Fort Scott, where he originally signed to play football out of high school. However, when Hupp arrived, he was having second thoughts and wondered about giving up football entirely.

"When I left there I wasn't sure what I wanted to do," Hupp said. "I just wanted to take some time to think about things. Football is one of the things I truly did love and sometimes it takes you awhile to realize that."

His love definitely came back to him, but Hupp had to work for it.

When he realized he wanted to play football again, Hupp went to train at Simoneau Sports Performance in Overland Park, a training facility that is run by the former Kansas State linebacker Mark Simoneau.

For the next seven months, Hupp made the trek almost every day to train and get in better shape. While he was there, he would train alongside NFL players like Andy Studebaker, Chase Coffman and Ryan Mueller.

"It was great training against those guys because I would just push myself to try and keep up with them because I knew I would be facing that type of competition at Oklahoma State," Hupp said. "They gave me a little bit of advice on what to expect, but just training with him helped me out a great deal."

At the same time, he was checking out possible programs to walk-on to and Hupp had family in the Stillwater, Okla., area.

He contacted the Oklahoma State coaches and sent them film but never heard anything back. Hupp sent them another email, and again, nothing.

That didn't stop him.

"I think I probably emailed their recruiting coordinator every day," Hupp said. "I know they probably gets lots of email from kids with film so they have to pick out who they pay attention to, but I wanted them to know that I was going to school here and that I was serious. This was something that I really wanted."

Hupp's persistence paid off as he was one of 110 players that were invited to the walk-on tryouts. The coaches recorded his 40 time, bench press numbers and also did some route running drills among other things.



Hupp was welcomed to the Oklahoma State football team and given his own locker for earning a walk-on spot.

Based on the sheer number of participants, the odds were stacked against Hupp. Then a few days later, he received a phone call.

Hupp got the news he was waiting for as he was officially a member of the Oklahoma State team. He was one of just seven players to earn walk-on spots.

"I was just very excited to get the call," Hupp said. "I was beyond thrilled. But after I hung up the phone, it was strictly business right after that. I didn't want to celebrate too much because this was just one step on where I want to go, and that is on the field. Honestly, the whole time I was thinking that I had no other option but to make the team."

The joy of making the team was quickly doused when he went to his first college football practice against some of the top players in the Big 12 Conference and the nation.

"I hadn't put on the pads since I left high school probably," Hupp said. "Then when I get there, it is an eye-opening experience. The hardest hit I ever got in football in high school – that is what it is like every time they hit you in college, if not harder."

As for his spot on the field, the Cowboys have slotted Hupp as a "Cowboy back" which is a hybrid fullback and tight end in their offense. He is one of nine players on the roster at that position.

The coaches also told Hupp that he will redshirt this year to help him get acclimated to Division I football.

"I just need to keep working hard and getting stronger," Hupp said. "It is very hard to be a college football player because you are either in class, practice or in the weight room. There isn't much time for anything else. I just love it down here. The atmosphere around the program is great and they are excited for football.

"I am in it for the long run. I put in a lot of hard work to get to this point and I want to keep going and eventually see the field one day. I have been given a good opportunity, and I am not going to give this up."

Louisburg runs over Piper to stay perfect



Louisburg senior Alex Dunn sheds a couple Piper tacklers for a 10-yard touchdown run during Friday's road contest at Piper High School. The Wildcats rushed for 384 yards as a team and rolled the Pirates 29-7.

KANSAS CITY, Kan. – The game plan was a pretty simple one.

It was to run the ball, run it again and then run it some more. The plan wasn't necessarily creative, but it didn't have to be. It worked to perfection, especially in the first half.

Louisburg ran up and down the field on Piper Friday and scored 23 first-half points on its way to a 29-7 win at Piper High School. The win gives the Wildcats three straight victories to start the season.

"We challenged them to be more aggressive in the first half, pin their ears back and be physical," Louisburg coach Kyle Littrell said. "I thought they responded well and I was happy to see the way we came out."

The Wildcats (3-0) racked up 384 yards on the ground and a

bulk of that was thanks to Thomas San Agustin. The Louisburg junior running back carried the ball 38 times, tallied 249 yards and a touchdown.

San Agustin had some big holes to run through thanks to his offensive line of Anders Vance, Dustyn Rizzo, Jarod Woodward, Garrett Lowry, T.J. Dover, tight end Grant Harding and fullback Alex Dunn. San Agustin also added several yards after contact as he became difficult for the Pirates to bring down.

“Thomas is starting to learn,” Littrell said. “Every time he plays, the blinders are becoming a little wider and a little bit wider. I love the fact that he always finishes runs moving forward. The thing with him is that he has to stop getting in the air because you end up getting hurt when you get in the air like that. He is improving every day in practice, he is improving out here and he is doing good work.”

Louisburg made a statement on its opening drive. The Wildcats marched down the field and took more than eight minutes off the clock and scored on a 15-play drive.



Thomas San Agustin rushed for 249 yards and a touchdown to help Louisburg to a win over Piper on Friday.

Dunn, who finished the game with 82 yards on the ground, ended the drive with a 10-yard touchdown run to give the Wildcats an early 7-0 lead, and they took off from there.

"That first drive was really key for us," Littrell said. "We came out and put together a long drive that ate up about eight minutes of the first quarter. That was all just linemen blocking hard and running backs running hard."

Piper started driving down the field its first drive, but the Wildcat defense came up big as senior Mitchell McLellan intercepted a pass. Louisburg would drive down the field itself, but turned the ball over on downs at the 1-yard line.

The Wildcats still managed to find points, however. Dover broke through the Piper offensive line and recorded a safety to make it 9-0.

On the ensuing kickoff, senior Cole Kramer had a long kickoff return that set up a 35-yard touchdown run from San Agustin to make it 15-0. After the Wildcat defense forced a Piper punt, Louisburg added another touchdown right before halftime.

Louisburg quarterback Austin Terry found McLellan for a 13-yard touchdown. Terry then faked the extra point and ran it in for two points to give the Wildcats a 23-0 halftime lead.

The Wildcats tacked on a touchdown late in the fourth quarter when Terry scored on an 8-yard run to all but seal the win for the Wildcats.

Defensively, the Wildcats did their job as they held Piper to just 171 total yards of offense and gave up just the late touchdown in the third quarter. It was a big turnaround after giving up 42 points and nearly 500 yards of total offense the week before against Eudora.

"Our defense heard it all week long about the 42 points we gave up last week," Littrell said. "Our defensive coaches

challenged them. Linebackers played better and our tackling got a little bit better as well, but just like on offense, we aren't where we want to be yet. We are 3-0 and that is great, but we have to pay attention to detail."

McLellan led the Wildcats with five tackles, while Terry, Rizzo and Kramer each added four. San Agustin registered a sack and Harding added an interception for the Wildcat defense.

After two weeks on the road, the Wildcats return to Wildcat Stadium, which is also homecoming. Louisburg will face rival Paola for a 7 p.m. kickoff Friday.

The Wildcats have lost four straight to the Panthers, including the last two years that were decided by a touchdown or less.

"If you can't get jacked up for this one then you don't have a heartbeat," Littrell said. "I remember, our coaching staff remembers, and our players remember how the last two years went down. That is going to fuel our week of practice."

LOUISBURG	7	16
0	6 - 29	

PIPER	0	0
7	0 - 7	

First quarter

L: Alex Dunn 10 run (Dunn kick)

Second quarter

L: T.J. Dover safety

L: Thomas San Agustin 35 run (kick failed)

L: Mitchell McLellan 13 pass from Austin Terry (Terry run)

Third quarter:

P: 10 run (kick good)

Fourth quarter

L: Terry 8 run (kick failed)

STATISTICS

RUSHING: Thomas San Agustin 38-249; Alex Dunn 15-82; Austin Terry 10-53

PASSING: Austin Terry 5-9-43-1

RECEIVING: Mitchell McLellan 2-24; Thomas San Agustin 2-9; Grant Harding 1-10.

BOUNCE BACK: Big second half propels Louisburg



Louisburg junior Thomas San Agustin runs into the endzone with the football on his back in the fourth quarter to bring the Wildcats to within one point of Eudora on Friday in Eudora. The Wildcats rallied for a 50-42 win.

EUDORA – Louisburg quarterback Austin Terry got his team in the huddle before what was a critical 2-point conversion try.

The Wildcats trailed Eudora by one with four minutes left in the game and had been trailing the entire night. He had one simple message for his teammates.

“Austin said that plays like this is what wins games,” junior running back Thomas San Agustin said. “We don’t say stuff like that many times in the huddle, but that is when the line gave it their all, like it was their last play.”

Technically, Terry was right.

Terry gave the Wildcats the lead with a run up the middle to get the 2-point conversion and the Wildcats came through in the 50-42 victory Friday in Eudora. Terry broke two different tackles before following his offensive line to sneak into the endzone.

The Louisburg defense came up with its biggest stop of the night on Eudora’s next drive and the Wildcats responded with a big touchdown run from San Agustin to put the game away.

“That was just amazing,” Terry said. “I had some help from some teammates to help me get in there. I was definitely a little nervous before the play, but you just have to trust your teammates and do what you have been taught.”

The touchdown to bring the Wildcats within one was almost as memorable. San Agustin was trying to break free from a couple Eudora tacklers when the ball popped out and rolled on his back.

The Louisburg junior reached behind to secure the ball and ran in for the 14-yard touchdown run. About five of those yards

featured San Agustin holding the ball on his back as he ran into the endzone.

It was the second half Louisburg coach Kyle Littrell had wanted to see coming out of halftime. The Wildcats trailed by 14 points coming into the third quarter and had given up a lot of big plays on defense.

Eudora had 320 yards of total offense in the first half alone and Littrell knew his team had to change the way they did a lot of things, especially on defense. All the Wildcats did was outscore the Cardinals 36-14 in the second half and played with a different mindset.

“I just told them at halftime that I related it to my second favorite sport, which is a UFC fight,” Littrell said. “The first two rounds are over, you are sitting on your chair and are you going to answer the bell? We put up 36 points in the second half, so offensively we answered the bell. Defensively we did better, especially only giving up 14 points, but we had too many big plays, too many missed assignments. We need to get better at that.”



Senior Mitchell McLellan hauls in a pass in the second half Friday against Eudora.

It was a game that featured big play after big play in both halves. Eudora jumped out to a 28-14 halftime lead and all four of the Cardinals' scoring plays were over 47 yards.

The Wildcats had a couple big plays of their own. After Eudora's first score of the game, San Agustin answered as he scored on an 83-yard kickoff return for a touchdown to tie it at 7-all.

On Eudora's first play of its next drive, it scored on a 47-yard run from its quarterback, Grant Elston. The Wildcats drove the ball to start the second quarter and eventually scored on a 1-yard touchdown run from Alex Dunn to tie the game again.

The Cardinals put some distance between themselves and the Wildcats with two long touchdown runs to put Louisburg in a hole thanks to some missed tackles.

"It boils down to blocking, the desire to tackle and protecting the football," Littrell said. "The second half we had a desire to tackle. In the first half we were arm tackling, going down to our knees to tackle. We weren't clubbing up and accelerating on our feet, and when you get a team that is as good as they are, with the athletes that they have, you can't arm tackle. They were breaking those and that is what they did in the first half."

Louisburg opened the second half with a long drive that ended with a 3-yard touchdown run from San Agustin to cut the Eudora lead in half. The Wildcat defense held firm to hold Eudora on its first possession of the half.

The Wildcat offense responded again to tie the game when Terry found tight end Grant Harding for a 62-yard touchdown catch and run. The play swung all the momentum to the Wildcat sideline.

Both teams traded touchdowns on two different occasions, late

in the second half that eventually led to Terry's 2-point conversion try.



Running back Alex Dunn looks for some extra yards in the first half against Eudora on Friday.

"It was just one of those things where we have been playing from behind all night long and I wasn't sure if we ever would have the opportunity to touch the ball again," Littrell said. "I just trust my kids to execute any play that I call."

Louisburg defense forced the Cardinals to turn the ball over on downs on their next possession and San Agustin responded with a 39-yard touchdown run. Terry intercepted a pass with just seconds left in the game to seal the win.

San Agustin had a big game for the Wildcats as he finished with 110 yards rushing and three touchdowns. He had a fourth if you include the kickoff return.

"The thing I like about Thomas is that he gets tougher as the game goes on," Littrell said. "He gets so emotional, and is so tightly wound that sometimes his emotions drain his gas tank. When he learns to control that emotion, and not get gassed after the first two or three plays, he is just tough as nails. He is getting better and better all the time."

The Wildcats did have a scary moment as junior Korbin Hankinson, who finished with more than 100 yards on the ground, had to leave the game in the second half with a concussion. Before that time, Hankinson keyed the Wildcats on a couple of their scoring drives.

"Hankinson is as tough as nails," Littrell said. "He ran the ball great for us. Hopefully we can get him back as soon as possible, but we are not going to rush anything. We are going to take care of him just like any family member."

Terry also had one of his better games as the Wildcat quarterback as he completed 11 of 17 passes for 233 yards. Cole Kramer and Mitchell McLellan each had more than 70 yards receiving to lead Louisburg.

Defensively, San Agustin led Louisburg with seven tackles, while juniors Dustyn Rizzo, Jake Hill and Harding each added six. Rizzo also finished with the team's only sack.

Louisburg returns to action Friday when it travels to Piper for its second road game of the year. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m.

EUDORA		14	14
7	7 – 42		
LOUISBURG		7	7
14	22 – 50		

First quarter

E: Travis Neis 60 run (Grant Elston kick)

L: Thomas San Agustin 83 kickoff return (Alex Dunn kick)

E: Elston 47 run (Elston kick)

Second quarter

L: Dunn 1 run (Dunn kick)

E: Elston 65 run (Elston kick)

E: Lee Andrews 56 run (Elston kick)

Third quarter

L: San Agustin 3 run (Dunn kick)

L: Grant Harding 62 pass from Austin Terry (Dunn kick)

E: Ryan Verbanic 10 pass from Elston (Elston kick)

Fourth quarter

L: Terry 2 run (Dunn kick)

E: Austin Downing 6 run (Elston kick)

L: San Agustin 14 run (Terry run)

L: San Agustin 39 run (Dunn kick)

STATISTICS

RUSHING: Thomas San Agustin 22-110; Korbin Hankinson 13-107; Austin Terry 8-16; Alex Dunn 4-12; Mitchell McLellan 1-1

PASSING: Austin Terry 11-17-233-1

RECEIVING: Cole Kramer 3-73; Mitchell McLellan 5-72; Grant Harding 1-62; Alex Dunn 2-26.

Wildcats respond with big second half



Louisburg's Grant Harding signals for a touchdown as teammate Cole Kramer runs into the endzone for the Wildcats' first touchdown of the season Friday. The Wildcats scored 28 points in the second half against Ottawa to roll to a 35-6 win.

As the Louisburg High School football team ventured to its locker room at halftime of Friday's season opener against Ottawa, coach Kyle Littrell gave his players an option.

The Wildcats held a touchdown lead after two quarters in their home debut, but at times they looked sluggish. The performance had reminded Littrell of what his previous two teams have looked like.

"Guys, we are in the same place we have been the last two years," Littrell told his team. "Do you want to continue to be that, or do you want to be a different team?"

Following the game, it was obvious the Wildcats chose the latter.

Louisburg racked up 28 second-half points on its way to a 35-6 blowout win over Ottawa in which the Wildcats got several big plays on both sides of the ball.

"It was a great team win and everyone contributed," Littrell said. "The kids played hard in the second half and they responded to the challenge. I think they decided they wanted to be a different team."

It started on the defensive end for the Wildcats. Louisburg forced four turnovers, including three in the second half that eventually turned into two touchdowns.

Junior Dustyn Rizzo was a force on the defensive line for Louisburg as he caused a lot of havoc. Rizzo led the team with two sacks, a forced fumble, a fumble recovery and had five tackles.

Fellow junior T.J. Dover was also strong up front with a team-high six solo tackles and had two fumble recoveries. Junior linebacker Thomas San Agustin had four tackles to go along with a forced fumble and a fumble recovery. Senior lineman Anders Vance also had a forced fumble.



Junior lineman Dustyn Rizzo wraps up an Ottawa runner during the Wildcats' home opener on Friday. Rizzo led the Louisburg

defense with two sacks, along with a forced fumble and a fumble recovery.

"Both of them have motors and length," Littrell said of Rizzo and Dover. "They have power and explosion and it is nice to have players like that – that just go. You can tell even after the first game that our kids love each other, they love the coaching staff and the coaches love them.

"At the end of the day, we know this is just one game. We started off 2-0 last year as well, but we ended up 3-6 so our work is cut out for us to get better."

Offensively, the Wildcats were able to wear out the Cyclones on the ground and then beat them over the top with the pass. Senior quarterback Austin Terry found several different targets as he finished 10 of 12 passing for 183 yards and three touchdowns.

Terry found his favorite target of the night, Cole Kramer, on a 39-yard touchdown pass down the sideline with five minutes left in the first quarter to give the Wildcats the early lead. Kramer finished with five catches for 107 yards.

"He is making good decisions with the ball," Littrell said. "We have kids that are running good routes for him and our offensive line is giving him enough time to throw the ball. He is going to have to continue to get better and he is not as good as he can be yet."

From there, however, the Wildcat offense stalled a couple different times as they failed to convert on two fourth downs. Late in the second quarter, Ottawa was driving in hopes of tying the game, but Rizzo forced an Ottawa fumble that allowed the Wildcats to hold on to their lead.

"I thought they dominated us on the line of scrimmage when we

were on offense in the first half and even a little bit of the third quarter," Littrell said. "I knew their bigs would get tired before ours did so we just had to keep pounding it in there and loosen them up with some passes and getting their d-backs to drop a little bit and we did that."

The offensive line of Vance, Rizzo, Dover, Jarod Woodward, Garrett Lowry, tight end Grant Harding and fullback Alex Dunn, helped plow the way for the Wildcat rushing attack. Louisburg racked up 226 yards on the ground on 43 carries, which averaged a little more than 5 yards an attempt.

Ottawa started to wear down in the third quarter and the Wildcats took advantage when Terry found Mitchell McLellan for a 44-yard touchdown pass as McLellan blew by his defender for the easy score.

Terry once again found the endzone with his arm, this time he connected with Grant Harding on a 9-yard touchdown pass. That came after the Wildcat defense forced another fumble to set up the short field.

On Ottawa's next possession, Louisburg forced another fumble and recovered 14 yards away from another score. San Agustin finished the drive off with a 5-yard touchdown run to make it 28-0 late in the third quarter.

In the fourth quarter, the Wildcats sealed the win when Korbin Hankinson scored on a 9-yard touchdown run. That score was set up on a 54-yard run by Jake Hill to put the Wildcats in the redzone.

"I think the last quarter-and-a-half we ran the ball a heck of a lot better," Littrell said. "It was just one of those things where you run the ball it takes their will to play away."

Louisburg will try to make it two in a row this Friday when they travel to Eudora. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m.

LOUISBURG	7	0
21	7 - 35	

OTTAWA	0	0
0	6 - 6	

First quarter

L: Cole Kramer 39 pass from Austin Terry (Alex Dunn kick)

Third quarter

L: Mitchell McLellan 44 pass from Terry (Dunn kick)

L: Grant Harding 9 pass from Terry (Dunn kick)

L: Thomas San Agustin 5 run (Dunn kick)

Fourth quarter

L: Korbin Hankinson 9 run (Dunn kick)

STATISTICS

RUSHING: Jake Hill 4-65; Thomas San Agustin 15-55; Korbin Hankinson 8-37; Austin Terry 8-29; Cole Kramer 2-13; Grant Harding 2-10; Mitchell McLellan 1-7; Alex Dunn 1-2. Totals 43-226.

PASSING: Austin Terry 10-12-183-3-0

RECEIVING: Cole Kramer 5-107; Mitchell McLellan 2-54; Grant Harding 1-11; Dillin Roberts 1-11.

LHS football to use last year as motivation



Louisburg quarterback Austin Terry will look to lead the Wildcats this upcoming season as they return 15 starters from a year ago. The Wildcats open their season Friday night when they host Ottawa at Wildcat Stadium.

It has been almost 10 months since the Louisburg High School football team saw its season come to an end on a Friday night in Spring Hill.

The Wildcats were on the wrong side of a 29-6 score in a must win game and finished their season with only three wins. Instead of dwelling on what happened last October, the Wildcats are using it as motivation for the upcoming season.

“My message to the players is to go play with a chip on your shoulder,” Louisburg coach Kyle Littrell said. “Last year was an embarrassment and there really isn’t any way around it. As the head coach, I take full responsibility with what happened since it was under my watch. But I think all the coaches and players don’t want it to happen again and we have to make sure that it doesn’t.”

Louisburg features an experienced group as the Wildcats return 15 starters from a season ago and has some depth on a team

that only has 57 players on the roster. Some of that depth is at the quarterback spot.

Senior Austin Terry (6-foot, 155 pounds) won the quarterback spot after what Littrell saw over the course of the summer workouts and practices. Junior Grant Harding will serve as the backup, but will still see the field a great deal as the team's starting tight end.

"That allows us to put the best 11 players on the field, but Terry flat out won the quarterback spot," Littrell said. "I really saw a lot of growth from him and he has done all the right things. We will probably have Grant back there at times, maybe for a series or two a game just to get some work, but it will all depend.

"Terry is our quarterback and we are looking forward to seeing what he can do. I think Grant is really going to help at tight end because he is a real student of the game and he just wants to go out there and compete no matter what position he is at. He has really good hands and I really think he can help our offense that way."



The Louisburg offensive and defensive lines look to be two of the team's strengths

this season.

Terry should get time to throw the ball as he is working behind one of the larger offensive lines in recent school history.

Senior Anders Vance (6-0, 280) returns to lead the offensive line as the team's center. Jarod Woodward (6-2, 270), Dustyn Rizzo (6-0, 215), Garrett Lowry (6-4, 295) and T.J. Dover (6-3, 250) will try and pave the way for the Wildcat rushing attack.

The line weighs an average of 262 pounds and should present some problems to opposing defenses.

"We are big up front and I am confident that we will be able to move some people around, especially straight ahead," Littrell said. "Since we are bigger, we do lose some speed, but they have a chance to be good.

"Potential is a scary word. The line has looked pretty good in practice recently but they have to keep getting better as does everyone else. We need all 11 guys pulling in the same direction, and if they can do that, then we can do something pretty special. It just all boils down if we can play for each other."

There should be holes for the Wildcat backs to run through. Junior Thomas San Agustin is the team's starting tailback and senior Alex Dunn returns as the fullback after missing part of last season with a knee injury.

Fellow senior Cole Kramer is making the move from tailback to wide receiver alongside senior Mitchell McLellan.

On defensive, the line appears to be just as big. Vance, Dover, Rizzo and Mason Koechner (6-1, 250) will provide the push, while linebackers Jake Hill, Dunn and San Agustin hope to also provide a presence.

In the secondary, McLellan and Kramer will play at corner, while Terry and Harding will man the safety spots.

"Defensively we are looking pretty good," Littrell said. "We need to get a little better in the secondary on making reads. We just need to get better instincts and we have to want to tackle and put guys on the ground. I know we can get there though."

The Wildcats also have a tough schedule as they try to make their way through the Frontier League and will also play defending Class 4A Division I state champion Bishop Miege in late October.

Louisburg's journey back to the playoffs begins Friday when the Wildcats host Ottawa. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m.

"Ottawa is a really improved program and I think they have gone to the playoffs the last two years so I know they will be ready to play," Littrell said. "I have no doubt that our guys will be fired up and ready to go themselves and they are really looking forward to the opener and hitting someone else for a change."

2015 LOUISBURG HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Sept. 4

Ottawa

7 p.m.

Sept. 11

Eudora

@

7 p.m.

Sept. 18

Piper

@

7 p.m.

Sept. 25

(Homecoming)

Paola

7 p.m.

Oct. 2	@	
Baldwin		7 p.m.
Oct. 9	De	
Soto		7 p.m.
Oct. 16	Sumner	
Academy		7 p.m.
Oct. 24	@ Bishop	
Miege		7 p.m.
Oct. 30	Spring	
Hill		7 p.m.

Opinion: Rough patch leads to new beginning



I am just going to come right out and say it, "I'm scared."

Yeah, it is an unusual way to start out an opinion piece, but there is no two ways around it – I am petrified. But believe it or not, it is what keeps me going.

We have all had at least one point in our existence where our lives changed for better or worse. I have had more than a few of those in my life, but the latest one came on Jan. 9.

It started out like all the other Fridays over the last seven years. I reported to work, spent a few hours in the office getting ready for what was a busy weekend of prep coverage ahead. It was the first action after Christmas break and I was ready to get back into the swing of things.

That never took place.

My bosses came into my office early that afternoon to inform me I was being let go. The job of covering Louisburg athletics was no longer mine. I packed up my things, turned in my key, went home, punched the wall a couple times and cried.

I was scared.

After all the tears came the questions. How was I going to support my family? What am I going to do for a job? The list went on and on and I couldn't come up with many answers.

As it turned out, one of the worst experiences of my life turned into one of the best.

Thanks to a lot of prayers, and support from family and friends, I decided to start Louisburg Sports Zone. Yep, that's right, I went from being unemployed to starting my own business for the first time in my life.

Not exactly the best way to alleviate fears.

However, when I kicked off the site just a month later, I was overwhelmed with the amount of support from students at Louisburg High School, employees throughout the district, parents and several others who offered encouragement and supported my new venture.

I finished the last half of the winter season and all of the spring doing what I took for granted the previous seven years. I got the chance to cover Louisburg athletics again.

You know, this whole starting your own business thing might

not have been a bad idea after all. I would have never had the courage to go out on my own had I not been pushed in that direction.

Fast forward to the present and I am still alive and kicking, ready to start my eighth season of roaming the Wildcat sidelines with camera in hand, waiting to tell that next story.

This fall brings a lot of story lines to the Wildcat programs. The football team is looking to improve off its 3-win season a year ago and find its way back to the playoffs with a veteran group returning.

Volleyball is primed and ready to make its fourth consecutive state tournament this year after placing in the top four in the last three years. The Lady Cats return five seniors that have a lot of state experience and that bodes well for another trip to Salina.

The Wildcat soccer team returns an experienced group from a year ago as they try to crack the top of the Frontier League standings. The cross country team also has several returning runners who will try and qualify for the state meet.

There is a lot to be excited about when it comes to Louisburg sports, but for me personally, I am just fortunate enough to still be a part of it in a small way.

I take a lot of pride in what I do and I hope that it shows when you read stories or look at pictures on this site. I started this business knowing that I will never be rich, but it gives me an opportunity to continue to do what I love.

Thanks to all those who have supported me and for the more than 23,000 views on the site in the last six months. I have said it before, but I am extremely blessed to live in a community that supports each other through good times and bad.

Every day I am fortunate enough to be able to go to work and support my family doing what I know how to do. That is all I have ever wanted, so thank you Louisburg for allowing me to do it.

I am still scared, though.

It is that fear that drives me to do the best I can in what I do in my job and in life. I don't want what happened on that day in January to happen again and I will do everything to make sure it doesn't.

Right now I am living the good life. I have the opportunity to work for myself, support my family and do what I enjoy. I can't ask for any more.

I am living the American dream.

I just don't want to wake up.

Wildcat football wraps up summer workouts



Louisburg lineman Anders Vance breaks through the line in a drill during the Wildcats' team camp in June. The Wildcats finished up their team workouts with a 7-on-7 tournament on July 18.

The season can't get here fast enough for Louisburg football coach Kyle Littrell and this is after a summer filled with camps, weight sessions and other workouts.

Some coaches might want a little break to regroup, but these last two months have left Littrell optimistic about what is to come.

"I really do love this group of players," Littrell said. "We had a really good summer and we got a lot of things accomplished. The chemistry is starting to come together and we have gotten better in a lot of areas. We are more experienced than we have been the last two years and it will show on the field."

Football was on the mind of a lot of players this summer as they participated in many different activities that began with 7-on-7 workouts every Monday in June. The Wildcat skill players traveled to Paola to work on both sides of the ball against teams from around the area.

"I think what 7-on-7 was gave us a chance to look and see what teams will have coming back like Paola and Spring Hill," Littrell said. "I know 7-on-7 is a lot about passing and offense, but I really think defensively it helped us out a lot. We developed better communication, especially in the secondary and that is really big for us. Offensively we are obviously not going to throw the ball 30-40 times a game like we do in these drills, but it definitely helped us there as well."

Those sessions, along with the Louisburg team camp and a scrimmage with Blue Valley Southwest in July, gave Littrell a good look at what is his biggest competition of the offseason – quarterback.

Senior Austin Terry and junior Grant Harding have both gotten plenty of snaps the last two months as both are vying for the starting quarterback job. Both started games last year for the Wildcats, but both have different styles.

Terry is considered to have the more accurate arm, while Harding is better running the ball. The quarterbacks have their pluses and minuses and it has made for a good competition, Littrell said.

“I challenged both guys to improve in different areas before the summer started,” he said. “I wanted Austin to try and be more of a physical runner and I wanted Grant to be a little more accurate throwing the ball. Both guys have done a great job of improving in both areas. They have taken coaching and instruction really well and both are fighters and that is what you want out of your starting quarterback.

“I kind of have an idea of who I want the starter to be, but I am not quite sure yet. When it comes down to it, I need to sit back and figure out how to get the best 11 guys on the field.”

Whoever the quarterback is, Littrell knows they are going to have a large offensive line protecting him. He saw a lot of positives from his front five, including their work in a scrimmage with Blue Valley Southwest on July 17.

Both teams participated in the full pad scrimmage that featured light tackling, however the Louisburg coach was pleased with what he got out of his offensive and defensive lines.

“I thought the scrimmage was really good for both teams and we did some nice things,” Littrell said. “Defensively, we had a rough day and we didn’t communicate well and we fell asleep on a lot of counters and sweeps. But I thought we really did a nice job in-between the tackles of stopping the run.

“Our line is going to be bigger than we have seen here in a

really long time. Bigger doesn't always mean better, but these guys have improved and I look forward to seeing them improve even more as the season gets closer."

The Wildcats concluded their summer the next day at the Blue Valley Midsummer Classic 7-on-7 tournament and represented well. Louisburg was the smallest school of the 14 teams in attendance.

Louisburg finished with a 3-3-2 record and Littrell noticed a trend on a couple of their defeats.

"I really thought our guys competed well for the most part and we beat some decent teams, but two of our three losses were after we sat out for a break, which told me that we didn't do a good job of staying focused," he said. "So after that second one, I talked to them about it and we go out and beat St. James 20-0 in our next one so I think the message got across and it was a good learning experience for our guys."

The Wildcats won't have to wait long before they take the field again as the first day of practice begins Aug. 17 and the first game will be Sept. 4 when the Wildcats host Ottawa.

- **BENEFIT POKER TOURNAMENT:** Friends of the Louisburg High School football program will be hosting a benefit dinner and Texas Hold'Em Poker Tournament at 5 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 22 at the American Legion in Louisburg. The poker tournament begins at 6:30 p.m. and all proceeds will benefit the Louisburg High School football program.

Wildcat football improves at camp



Louisburg football coach Kyle Littrell works with the linebackers during a drill Friday on the final day of the team camp at Louisburg High School. The Wildcats are working to improve off their three-win season a year ago.

The 2014 campaign left a bad taste in the mouths of a lot of Louisburg football players and coaches.

Louisburg won three games a season ago and were on the wrong end of several close games. Since the beginning of summer break, the Wildcats have been working hard to get rid of those memories.

The Wildcats, under head coach Kyle Littrell, concluded their week-long team camp Friday at Louisburg High School and have put 2014 in their rearview mirror.

"I see a team that is ready to come out of their shells," Littrell said. "We have been considered young and inexperienced but now we are one of the big boys. We probably have the most experience coming back in the league. We are bigger across both lines and we have speed, so why shouldn't we be better? Our pieces have to come together and if that happens I really think we can have a good year."

The players hit the practice field around 6:30 p.m. every day last week and worked out for two-and-a-half hours improving on a variety of different aspects. Littrell said his group was able to get in 80 to 90 percent of their offense



Quarterback Austin Terry hands off to a Wildcat running back Friday during the team's final day of camp.

Defensively, the Wildcats were able to put in their base package and should give them a head start come August and the first day of practice. However, the work load doesn't stop with camp.

"There is a lot asked of the kids and they have a lot going on with all the other different sports and activities," Littrell said. "I know it is asking a lot, but I want them to come in for an hour every Monday just so we can keep what we learned at camp fresh in our minds so we don't have to go over it again come practice. I think they have responded well to that and will really help us."

Players also have the opportunity to hit the weight room a couple times a week and are currently participating in 7-on-7 workouts in Paola every Monday in June. The Wildcats will

conclude their summer workouts on July 17 when they will host Blue Valley Southwest in a controlled scrimmage.

Louisburg hopes to have a special season this time around as the Wildcats return 15 starters on both sides of the ball and should have depth at several positions, including quarterback. Senior Austin Terry and junior Grant Harding are both competing for the starting spot and both saw significant varsity time a season ago.

The Wildcats also return most of their offensive and defensive lines and Littrell hopes those players, along with a couple newcomers, can give Louisburg the physical front it is looking for.

"We were able to accomplish a lot during camp and I was really pleased with the whole week," Littrell said. "I think they were a little worn down Friday and we were making a lot of mistakes, but that really doesn't take away what we were able to do. I was really happy to see that."

The players may have been tired, but the players' moms were full strength and ready to go. To end the camp, Littrell invited all the of the players moms to take part in a little mini-camp.

All of the moms went through warm-ups and then took part in the position drills. Each mother played the position of her son.



Janie Dunn shows her son, Alex, how hard she can hit during the mom's portion of the camp Friday evening.

“The only time I took part in a mom football camp was when I coached at Shawnee Mission South in 2000 and that time it was a 3-day camp,” Littrell said. “I didn’t want to step out that far yet, but I thought it would be a good thing to have the moms come out for an evening and learn what all their sons do and what their responsibilities are.

“I also wanted them to know that we care about their kids and that we want them to be successful. I think for the most part it is just to give them a first-hand look at what their sons go through and what a normal practice might look like. Overall I thought it went really well.”

Summer camp information

Summer camps at Louisburg High School aren’t too far away and here is some information if you are interested in signing up.

FOOTBALL

LHS football coach Kyle Littrell is holding his team camp on June 15 through 19 on the team's practice field just outside the high school. The cost for the high school camp is \$45 and includes insurance, a T-shirt and shorts.

Littrell will also conduct a middle school and elementary school camp. The seventh and eighth-grade camp will run from 10 a.m. to noon on June 15 through 18 and will cost \$35. There will also be an elementary camp from 8:30 to 10 a.m. on June 15-17 for grades 3-6 and will cost \$25. Both camp fees include a T-shirts.

For more information, contact Littrell at 837-1720 or littrellk@usd416.org.

BOYS BASKETBALL

Head boys basketball coach Jason Nelson is conducting his team camp from 2 to 4:30 p.m. on June 8 through 12 in the LHS gymnasium. The cost for the high school camp is \$50 and includes a T-shirt.

Nelson will also hold a junior high and elementary school camp as well. The session for sixth through eighth-grade will run from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on June 8 through 11 and the cost is \$45. The third through fifth-grade camp will run from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. on June 8 through 10 and is \$40. Both camps include a T-shirt.

All three camps will have a heavy emphasis on fundamentals. The due date to sign up is May 23. For more information, contact Nelson at (913) 963-8421 or nelsonj@usd416.org.

VOLLEYBALL

LHS head volleyball coach Jessica Compliment will hold camps from fifth-grade on up through high school this July.

On July 13 through 17, Compliment will conduct the high school camp from 1 to 4 p.m. and the cost is \$45. The seventh and eighth-grade camp will run from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on July 13 through 16 and costs \$35. The fifth and sixth-grade session will go from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. on July 13 through 15 and costs \$30.

Deadline to sign-up for the camps is May 15 and all costs include a camp T-shirt. For more information, contact Compliment at (785) 766-3758 or complimentj@usd416.org.

WRESTLING

LHS head wrestling coach Bobby Bovaird will conduct a beginners and advanced camp on June 22 through June 25 in the LHS gymnasium

The beginners camp is for novice and youth wrestlers and will run from 5 to 7 p.m. each day. The minimum age is 6-years-old. Children who will be in kindergarten or first grade must have adult supervision.

The advanced camp will run from 7 to 9:15 p.m. for high school, middle school and experienced youth wrestlers. The cost for both camps is \$35 and includes a T-shirt. Deadline to register is June 1.

For more information, contact Bovaird at (913) 424-0999 or bovairdr@usd416.org

GIRLS SOCCER

The LHS girls soccer program will prepare for its inaugural season this summer. Head coach Kyle Conley is holding a high school camp from 10 a.m. to noon on June 15 through 19 along with assistant coach Michael Pickman.

The cost for the camp is \$40, which includes a T-shirt. Campers will need to bring shin-guards and a water bottle. Deadline to sign-up is May 15. For more information contact Conley at conleyk@usd416.org.

BOYS SOCCER

Head coach Ben York will be conducting his high school team camp on July 13 through 17. The cost for the camp is \$50. For more information, contact York at benyork13@gmail.com.

Blancarte inks with Fort Scott



Louisburg senior Nick Blancarte signs his letter of intent to play football for Fort Scott Community College on Feb. 4. Sitting next to Nick are his parents Christina and Matt Blancarte. Standing (from left) is Louisburg assistant football coach Gary Griffin, head coach Kyle Littrell and assistant Robert Ebenstein.

A lot of Louisburg football fans might not have heard the name Nick Blancarte before the season, but after it was over, everyone knew who Blancarte was, including Fort Scott Community College.

Blancarte signed his letter of intent to play football for Fort Scott on Feb. 4 at Louisburg High School and the Louisburg senior is ready to get his college career started.

"I am extremely excited to sign with Fort Scott," Blancarte said. "I think it will be a good place to further my football career and my education. I really got along with all the coaches there well and they made me feel that this was the place for me. It was a good fit."

The coaches see Blancarte fitting in as a safety in the Greyhounds' secondary, a position he has played since middle school.

"Nick was a really good addition to our football team this year," Louisburg coach Kyle Littrell said. "Safety is a position where I think he can flourish at. Nick has good speed, toughness and a mind for the game. I think what sets Nick apart is his desire to get better and his attention to detail when watching/studying film."

"Nick is a natural leader who has the ability to hold himself and his teammates to a higher standard. Fort Scott is going to love what they get from him. As long as Nick tackles the ball carrier and not just the ball, he will be just fine."

He may have only spent a year at Louisburg, but Blancarte certainly made his impact on the Wildcat football team.

As the team starting safety, Blancarte, a transfer from Mill Valley High School, made big play after big play in the

Louisburg secondary and quickly become one of the go-to players on defense.

Blancarte finished the season as the Wildcats' lone first team selection on the all-Frontier League team as an all-league defensive back. He finished the season second on the team in tackles with 67, had six tackles for a loss to go along with three interceptions. He led the team with 29 solo tackles.

He also made several ferocious hits on the year on defense and even on special teams.

"I definitely like making those big hits, especially early in the game," Blancarte said. "I think it really sets the tone for the game and it lets the opponent know you are there and it sends a message."

Blancarte has set a goal for himself to play football beyond his two years at Fort Scott, but he knows it won't be easy.

"I don't want to say that I am going to play Division I or Division II football because I know it will be a challenge," Blancarte said. "I know it is going to take a lot of hard work and preparation for that kind of next step, but I am looking forward to trying."

Joining Blancarte at Fort Scott will be teammate Brenton Wrigley, who was also a big part of the Louisburg defense. Once Blancarte and the rest of the Fort Scott signees report in the fall, the coaches will work them into the program by getting them in shape.

"What both players have to realize that the first three weeks, they are trying to run off the kids who really don't want to be there," Littrell said. "When they make it through that three-week period, both will know that they have accomplished something special. I wish the best of luck to both of these fine young gentlemen."

Nick is the son of Matt and Christina Blancarte.