

# Dobbins named Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year



*Louisburg senior Mason Dobbins was voted by the LHS head coaches as the 2023 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year*

Mason Dobbins had a senior season to remember when it came to athletics.

Dobbins left it all on the field/court/track during his final campaign with the Wildcats and he put his stamp on it. Whether it was winning a league title in football, helping the Wildcats to a state runner-up finish in track or earning all-league honors in three sports – Dobbins enjoyed it all.

Those were just some of the reasons Dobbins was named the 2023 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year.

“It means a lot to me to be named athlete of the year,” Dobbins said. “It feels good to that know that all your hard work pays off.”

He certainly put in a lot of work and it showed throughout the 2022-23 school year. It started during football season as the team’s starting wide receiver.

The Wildcats finished as undefeated Frontier League Champions and Dobbins played a big role in that. Dobbins earned first

team All-Frontier League honors at wide receiver with 25 catches, 382 yards and four touchdowns. He was also named honorable mention all-state.

Dobbins returned to the basketball court after taking a couple years off and his 6-foot-7 frame made an immediate impact as he led the team with 7.6 rebounds a game to go along with 1.5 steals and a block per contest. He was later named to the Frontier League All-Defensive Team.



***Mason Dobbins was awarded the 2023 Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Year award. Pictured with Dobbins is his coaches (from left) Ty Pfannenstiel, Andy Wright and Drew Harding.***

However it was the track where he made his biggest impact.

Dobbins won the state championship in the high jump, and earlier in the year, broke the school record with a jump of 6 feet, 7 inches. He was a state runner-up in the 110-meter hurdles and also took third in the 200-meter dash.

He was also a part of the 4×100-meter relay that also medaled third and set a new school record earlier in the year. In all, Dobbins won nine state medals in his Wildcat career.

At the state meet, Dobbins racked up 30 points to help Louisburg to a state runner-up finish as the Wildcats lost to Andale by just half-a-point.

“This past season was my best one yet,” Dobbins said. “In football we were league champs. In basketball, I thought I played way better than I thought I would. Then in track, I was a state champ and we almost won a state championship. It was a lot of fun.”

As easy as he made it look at times, competing in three sports has its challenges.

“It’s definitely something that I am proud of,” Dobbins said. “Three sports can be a lot on the body, and for me to go without an injury the whole year, was a blessing.”

Now that his high school career is finished, he is looking forward to starting a new chapter in his life – with the Northwest Missouri State track and field program.

“I am so excited to start my track career at Northwest,” Dobbins said. “It’s a whole different world than what high school track is, but I am ready for it.”

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**Ryals, Vincent represent Louisburg in GKCFCA all-star game**



***Layne Ryals (33) and Nathan Vincent (51) pose for a picture with Louisburg coach Drew Harding following the Greater Kansas City Football Coaches Association all-star game on June 16 at Ray-Pec High School.***

Layne Ryals and Nathan Vincent were part of a lot of big moments on the football field, including helping the Wildcats to an undefeated Frontier League title last season.

As they both go their separate ways for college, they were reunited on the football field one last time as the two Louisburg players were selected to play in the Greater Kansas City Football Coaches Association All-Star Game.

The contest pitted the best players from the Kansas City metro area from Kansas against the Missouri side on June 16 at Ray-Pec High School, and both players were honored to take part in the game.

“I’m very very thankful to have been able to play in that all star game,” Vincent said. “I loved every second of playing football again and especially because I was going up against some of the top talent in Kansas and Missouri.”

The two players have played football together since elementary school, so for both to have a chance to represent Louisburg made a for special night – to say the least.



***Layne Ryals gets a punt off for Team Kansas during the June 16 all-star game at Ray-Pec High School. (Photo courtesy of A.J. Hildreth)***

“To be selected for an all star game and compete against Missouri was a big honor,” Ryals said. “I’ve played football with Nathan since the second grade and we’ve watched each other grow as people and players. It was an awesome experience for the both of us to be able to represent Kansas. It was my last high school football game, so it was a little emotional when the game was over, but it makes me excited to play at the next level.”

Ryals, who is playing college football at Missouri S&T this fall, handled the kicking duties for team Kansas. He did the kickoffs and was the team’s punter.

“It was my first time playing on a team and being able to focus on just being a specialist rather than playing defense too,” Ryals said “The coaching staff brought in coach (Spencer) Webb, a coach I have worked with in the past at Punt 21. He was able to coach me throughout the week and help me get ready for the game.”



***Nathan Vincent played left tackle for Kansas during the GKCFCA all-star game at Ray-Pec High School. (Photo courtesy of A.J. Hildreth)***

Vincent, on the other hand, saw a lot of time on the offensive line at left tackle. Even though, Kansas eventually lost a close contest, 16-8, Vincent learned a lot going up against some big talent.

“The whole experience was amazing,” Vincent said. “They had me play left tackle and it was some of the most fun playing football I’ve ever had. We were all just playing for fun and obviously we wanted to beat Missouri but it really let me enjoy football for different reasons than during the regular high school season.

“I really felt like I played some of my best football at the game. It felt amazing to pancake kids that have almost 100 pounds on me.”

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# 2023 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year Nominees



For the sixth consecutive year, Louisburg Sports Zone will be handing out an Athlete of the Year honor to a male and female athlete at Louisburg High School. I wanted the opportunity to recognize those who exemplify what it means to be an “athlete.”

Although I am giving out the award, I wanted the process to be subjective, so I asked the head coaches at LHS to help me out. I asked each coach to send me nominations of who they thought exemplified the Athlete of the Year honor. They will then vote for their top 3 male and female athletes and then I will tabulate the results and determine the winner. The winner will be announced in the coming days.

Below are the nominees for the Male Athlete of the Year award in alphabetical order by last name. Congrats to all those who were nominated and best of luck!



## **Kaven Bartlett – Senior – Wrestling and Soccer**

Kaven Bartlett competed on the Louisburg wrestling and boys soccer team, but Bartlett was a fixture on the mat for the Wildcat wrestling program.

Bartlett qualified for state at 138 pounds and became a 3-time state qualifier for Louisburg and was a state medalist in 2022. He finished with a 119-45 career record and was a two-time team captain and four-year letter winner. Those 119 wins are fifth in program history and he has 158 career takedowns and 726.5 career points, which is both third in team history. He was named the 2023 LHS Wrestler of the Year.

Bartlett was also a defender on the Wildcat soccer team his past season. The Wildcats advanced to the regional championship game.





## **Declan Battle – Junior – Football and Baseball**

Declan Battle had big seasons for both the Wildcat football and baseball programs.

Under the lights on the football field, Battle was the Wildcat starting quarterback as he led his team to an undefeated Frontier League championship. The dual-threat quarterback scored 23 total touchdowns and totaled more than 1,700 yards. That performance led him to a first-team All-Frontier League, along with all-state honors.

On the diamond, Battle was the Wildcats' starting centerfielder and leadoff hitter. He scored 32 runs on the year, which is a Wildcat program record. Battle also recorded a .429 average to go along with five doubles and three triples. He also stole 17 bases. His performance also earned him second team All-Frontier League and all-state honors.



## **Mason Dobbins – Senior – Football, Basketball and Track and Field**

Louisburg senior Mason Dobbins was a fixture for three Wildcat programs this past season. Dobbins was the starting wide receiver on the football field, starting forward on the basketball team and a state medalist for the track program.

Dobbins stood out the most in the track and field arena. He qualified for state in four events and medaled in all four as he helped the Wildcats to a state runner-up finish this past May.

Dobbins won the state championship in the high jump, and earlier in the year, broke the school record with a jump of 6 feet, 7 inches. He was a state runner-up in the 110-meter hurdles and also took third in the 200-meter dash. He was also a part of the 4×100-meter relay that also medaled third and set a new school record earlier in the year. In all, Dobbins has won nine state medals in his Wildcat career.

On the football field, Dobbins earned first team All-Frontier

League honors at wide receiver with 25 catches, 382 yards and four touchdowns. He also earned honorable mention all-state honors.

On the basketball court, Dobbins was named to the All-Frontier League defensive team. He led the Wildcats with 7.6 rebounds a game to go along with 1.5 steals and 1 block per contest.



## **Cade Gassman – Senior – Soccer, Basketball and Track and Field**

Cade Gassman was a starter, or key contributor, for three Wildcat programs during 2022-23 school year. Gassman was the starting midfielder and captain for the soccer team, starting guard on the basketball court and a jumper for the track and field program.

Gassman made his biggest impact on the pitch for Louisburg. As a midfielder, Gassman drew a lot of attention from the opposition as he finished with five goals and four assists on

the season to lead the Wildcats to the regional title match. In his career, he is one of the more prolific scorers in school history.

The Louisburg senior finished with 47 career goals, which is second in program history and was third in school history with 26 career assists. His 120 career points is also second in Wildcat history. He is a four-time all-state and all-Frontier League first team selection.

On the hardwood, Gassman was the starting guard for the Wildcats and he recorded 39 rebounds and had 22 assists to go along with 14 steals. On the track, Gassman was a state qualifier in the high jump for Louisburg and finished 11th overall at state.



## **Nathan Vincent, Senior, Football and Track and Field**

Louisburg senior Nathan Vincent played big roles for both the

Wildcat football team and track and field program. Vincent was a starting lineman for the Wildcat football team and a state medalist in track.

On the football field, Vincent started on both sides of the ball as he earned all-state and all league honors. He finished with 80 tackles as a defensive end to go along with 6.5 sacks and 8.5 tackles for a loss. Vincent was a key member of the offensive line as he helped the Wildcats to more than 33 points per game. He earned first team all-league offensive league honors and second team-defense. He also recorded first team all-state honors and was selected to play in the Kansas Shrine Bowl.

Vincent was the Wildcats' top thrower for the track and field program. Vincent recorded three state medals as he helped Louisburg to a state runner-up team finish. At state, Vincent medaled third in the shot put, fifth in the discus and sixth in the javelin. In all, Vincent has won five career state medals, with three coming in the javelin.



# **Colyer Wingfield, Senior, Basketball, Track and Field**

Louisburg senior Colyer Wingfield had a big season for both the Wildcat basketball team and track program. Wingfield was the leading scorer for the Wildcat basketball program, and was a part of two state relays in track.

Wingfield earned a lot of success on the hardwood as he was named to the All-Frontier League second team. He led the Wildcats in scoring at 17.4 points per game and pulled down nearly six rebounds a contest.

On the track, Wingfield helped the 4×100 relay and 4×400 relay to state medals as both finished third at the state meet last month. The 4×100 relay set a new school record in the process. He also did the long and triple jumps for the Wildcats.

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## **Pfannenstiel named new LHS AD; resigns boys basketball post**



*Louisburg boys basketball coach Ty Pfannenstiel will take over the school's activities director role next school year. He also resigned his basketball position after coaching the*

## ***Wildcats for the last six years.***

Beginning next school year, Louisburg High School activities will have a little different look to it – especially at the top.

Ty Pfannenstiel will serve as the school's new activities director and will take over for current AD, Michael Pickman, who will focus on his assistant principal duties and curriculum.

Pfannenstiel, who has been the boys basketball coach for the last six years, resigned his post to take on the activities director position. He also stepped down as an assistant football coach.

Currently the weight room instructor, Pfannenstiel will spend half his day teaching and the other half in the AD role.

All of the moves were approved during Monday's meeting of the USD 416 Board of Education.

"This is very exciting for me," Pfannenstiel said. "It's definitely going to be a change. I have been a teacher and a coach for 18 years. I still get to be a teacher half-time, and now I get to step into a new role as an administrator. It is going to be all sports and activities and I am looking forward to the new direction."

As for Pickman, he gets the opportunity to focus more on the academic side as a full-time assistant principal. He was hired as an assistant principal/ activities director in April of 2020.

"I am very excited to commit more fully to the assistant principal role as education and curriculum have always been my true passion," Pickman said. "Being able to support the teachers, students, and administrative staff by providing data, feedback, and assessing teaching and learning goals and

initiatives in the building and district aligns with that passion and the opportunity arose to allow for that. I hope to enable and promote continued growth in the various curriculums and initiatives and structures that make Louisburg a fantastic district in a supportive community.

“Ty has experience and is passionate about athletics and activities. As it is where his passion is, I have every confidence he will do a fantastic job in his new role and look forward to witnessing where he takes our programs moving forward.”

Pickman took over LHS activities at a difficult time as the school was coming back from COVID-19 and the all challenges it presented. As tough as that situation was, he appreciated the relationships he built.

“I have thoroughly enjoyed my role as activities director and was presented a fantastic growth opportunity and am grateful for being given it,” Pickman said. “I had a goal of being present for athletes and coaches and for the patrons, so I hope people saw that presence. I was blessed to have great leadership in place in our coaches and sponsors, and tried to support them best by advocating for their needs and supporting them to do their job of being great role models and passing on their passion and knowledge to students.

“Ultimately, I am most proud of our student athletes and activity participants and being part of their journey. I believe that sports are an extension of the classroom and I wanted to help ensure that character and sportsmanship were just as important and success, and I am overjoyed to have a wealth of memories where our fans, students, participants, and coaches and sponsors proved that to be true of LHS.”

While taking on the challenge of being a new administrator is one he is looking forward to, leaving his coaching roots behind was a difficult decision for Pfannenstiel.



In 2021, Pfannenstiel led the Wildcat boys basketball team to the Class 4A state championship game and finished as the state runner-up.

“That was definitely the biggest thing that was holding me back,” Pfannenstiel said. “I love basketball and the kids that I have worked with. There is a group coming up that I really enjoy coaching, and leaving that behind was one of the biggest challenges for me. Whoever takes over the program, I think it will be good transition for them because they will have a great group of kids to work with.

“Originally, I was going to be allowed to coach a sport and they didn’t want to take coaching away from me. The more I thought about it, if I want to do a good job at this, I need to focus on being the AD and that will be something that will benefit me and all the other activities.”

Pfannenstiel believes the move is a good one for the school in general as it will allow Pickman and principal Amy VanRheen to focus more on the academic side of things.

“This is something that is definitely needed,” Pfannenstiel said. “Our administrators are so busy with all the stuff they do during the school day, but they are also going to all the activities as well. Hopefully this will be a big help for Mrs. VanRheen and Mr. Pickman.”

Although he won’t official start his new position till next school year, Pfannenstiel is already starting to transition into his new role – one that is looking forward to.

“My job in the weight room and coaching has all been about sports,” he said. “That is what entices me about this job is that I am still going to be all about sports and activities. I just want to be a support for our coaches and our athletes and be advocate for our students.”

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# Newell excited to grow with South Dakota football program



***Louisburg senior Mack Newell recently signed his letter of intent to play football with the University of South Dakota. Newell was an all-league and all-state tight end this past season.***

During his sophomore and junior seasons, Mack Newell worked himself into one of the best goalies in the Class 4-1A for the Louisburg soccer team

However, in his final year of high school, Newell wanted to give football a try. So, he took his 6-foot-4, 250-pound frame to the gridiron to help the Louisburg football team.

As it turned out, Newell's gamble on himself paid off and he turned that into a Division I opportunity. During a signing ceremony last month, Newell signed his letter of intent to play football at the University of South Dakota.

Newell will join teammate Jase Hovey, who also signed with South Dakota, on the Vermillion (S.D.) campus this fall.

"Being able to play college football is an absolute blessing," Newell said. "College football wasn't always the ultimate goal of mine. For a while it was baseball, then soccer, but I fell in love with the football when I decided to come out my senior

year. There are so many people that helped me better myself throughout my senior season and I can't thank them enough.

"To be honest, it still hasn't really settled in that I'm able to play Division I football, it almost doesn't feel real. From the time I made my mind up I was playing football until now, so much hard work has been put in. It's amazing for me to see that the hard work has truly paid off."

The decision to leave a successful stint wasn't an easy one for Newell. He was an all-league and all-state goalie for the Wildcats, but wanted to try something different.

That came on the football field as a tight end and defensive lineman for the Wildcats as Newell worked his way to all-league and all-state status there as well. That eventually worked its way into several collegiate offers.

"Transitioning from soccer to football wasn't the easiest thing ever," Newell said. "There were many people who doubted me and didn't think I would be successful on the football field. That only fueled my fire and pushed me to work even harder. At times I questioned myself if the decision was right, but I stayed the course and trusted the process. I can't thank my teammates and coaches enough for welcoming me with open arms onto the team and helping me develop into a better player each and everyday. I know this wouldn't have been possible without them.

"This season was by far the most enjoyable season I've ever been apart of. Being able to be crowned Frontier League champs was a goal we were striving for all year. Being able to be recognized as an all league and all state player also helped me out a lot. I have learned so much through just one season and I can't wait to learn more and grow my skill set in the upcoming years."

During the team's Frontier League championship season, Louisburg head coach Drew Harding knows Newell was a big part

of the team's undefeated league season.



***Louisburg senior Mack Newell signed his letter of intent to play football at South Dakota. Sitting next to Mack is his mother Molly Strubbe and father Wesley Newell. Standing (from left) is Louisburg assistant coach Joel McGhee, head coach Drew Harding and assistants Kade Larson and Jake Hinson.***

“I am so glad Mack decided to come back out and play football his senior year,” Harding said. “We would not have had the success we did without Mack making that decision. Mack’s size and strength were noticeable right away on the football field. With his frame and his strength Mack also had a lot of interests from schools.

“I am so excited for Mack to continue his football career and it is awesome to see him have the opportunity to play at South Dakota after one varsity season. I am excited to see his development over the years and the type of player he turns himself into.”

Newell had different options to choose from when it came down where to play college football. However, when made the journey up to South Dakota, it seemed the best fit for him to take the next step in his growth.

He visited with Hovey in late January and both players offered their commitments up shortly after.

“The second I stepped foot on campus in Vermillion, I knew it was going to be home,” Newell said. “The facilities were absolutely amazing, and we also get 24/7 access to those as well. The campus itself was amazing because everything was very close to each other and that makes it very convenient to get to and from classes and practices. The university just did a multi-million dollar renewal to the football dome building. It was really cool to see and that was another aspect that attracted me to the university as well.

“Another thing that drew me towards the school was the fact that I get to play college football with Jase. Not many people can say they got to play Division 1 football with their best friend, and I truly think that is something special that I will hold onto for a long time.”

Newell also hopes to improve at the tight end positions and is excited to work under his new coaches.

“The coaches on the staff were amazing as well,” he said. “My position coach is a former coach at Cincinnati when they made it to the college football playoff. He was also a coach at West Virginia so I think him having that coaching experience is going to help me so much in growing my game throughout my time at South Dakota.

“They have been really clear about where they see me fitting in the program. I will be continuing playing tight end and they have told me that they think I can come in and compete right away. They don’t necessarily have a number one TE in the room right now, and that position is kind of up in the air. There is always a good chance that as a freshman I will redshirt, but I’m going into this year pushing as hard as I can to get playing time as soon as possible.”

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# Hovey ready to make his mark with South Dakota football



*Louisburg senior Jase Hovey made it official last month when he signed his letter of intent to play football at the University of South Dakota.*

Jase Hovey was all set to live out his college football dream at the University of Kansas.

Hovey committed to the Jayhawk program as a walk-on last December and the idea of playing Division I football was something he has always strived for.

“Playing college football has been a dream and goal of mine since i was a little kid,” Hovey said. “I always knew I wanted to play football at the highest level I could and it’s truly been a blessing to get the opportunities I have. It’s all because my coaches and teammates have pushed me to be my best all four years of high school football.”

While Hovey still gets to enjoy what Division I football has to offer, the destination has changed.

In late January, Hovey decommitted from the Jayhawks and committed to South Dakota instead. He made it official last month when he signed his letter of intent to play football for the Coyotes during a signing ceremony at Louisburg High

School.

Hovey will join Louisburg teammate Mack Newell in South Dakota as they begin their college football journeys.

“While I originally had committed to play at Kansas, South Dakota drew me in the very first time I stepped on campus,” Hovey said. “After meeting my position coach and defensive coordinator, I immediately knew how much they valued me and that they are going to give me everything they have to help me grow as a student athlete as well as trying to get me to the next level beyond college.

“I flipped my commitment because I knew this was the best decision I could make for myself. I get to join my teammate and best friend Mack Newell on the football field as well which is a vision we always had together and truly a dream come true.”

Hovey visited South Dakota with Newell in late January and the two Wildcats more than enjoyed their visits to Coyote program.



**Louisburg senior Jase Hovey signed his letter of intent in February to play football at the University of South Dakota. Seated next to Jase are his parents Jodi and Shane. Standing**

***(from left) Louisburg assistant coach Joel McGhee, Jase's brother Conlee Hovey, Louisburg head coach Drew Harding and Louisburg assistants Kade Larson and Jake Hinson.***

South Dakota, which plays in the Division 1 FCS level, provided Hovey all he needed to see.

"I knew South Dakota was the best fit for me immediately after taking my official visit," Hovey said. "The coaching staff was unbelievable in their efforts for me and were able to show me exactly what vision they had in place for me to succeed. They have excellent academics as well. I knew it was my home the second my official visit was over.

Hovey has been a big part of the Wildcat defense the last three years from the safety spot. He turned in a special season this past year as he led the Wildcat secondary with 58 tackles and two interceptions.

All that led to first team All-Frontier League and all-state recognition. He was also selected to represent Louisburg in the Kansas Shrine Bowl later this summer.

"Jase was huge for our defense over the years," Louisburg head coach Drew Harding said. "We switched defenses a couple years ago because we knew Jase could really run the alley well and make plays from his free safety spot. Jase is going to leave a big hole for us to fill and someone will need to step up and fill in his shoes.

"He had a lot of interest from a lot of schools and I am very excited for him to have made his choice in South Dakota. He has the size and the athletic ability to play big time college football so I am very excited to see what he does over the next few years."

With the change to the college level also comes a new position for Hovey. He will make the transition from safety to linebacker and it is one he is looking forward to learning more about.



“The coaches believe my frame and athletic ability will be best fit at linebacker for the college level and I couldn’t be more excited to learn a new position,” Hovey said. “I could be redshirting, but determined by my performance in camp and if the team has a role worth using a year of my eligibility on as the season goes on. I would prefer to redshirt to get my mind and body ready to compete at the next level, but I will do whatever is best for the team as the season goes on.”

As for what he wants to accomplish during his time at South Dakota, Hovey is ready to help the Coyotes reach the highest level.

“I have already set a lot of goals for when I get to step on campus in June,” he said. “My biggest goal would be winning a national championship and I can’t wait to start working towards it with my future teammates. Some personal goals I have set for myself is to eventually earn a starting role and become a first team all-conference and All-American linebacker.

“At the end of my college career if the opportunity presented itself to play at the highest level, it’s something I’ve always worked for and would love to pursue.”

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**Ryals ready to kick his way onto the college football stage at Missouri S&T**



***Louisburg senior Layne Ryals signed his letter of intent earlier this month to play football at Missouri S&T this coming fall.***

Kicking a football is nothing new to Layne Ryals. It is something he has done for most of his young life.

Ryals doesn't appear to stopping anytime soon, either.

During a signing ceremony on Feb.1, Ryals made it official in front of family and friends at Louisburg High School. Ryals signed his letter of intent to play football for Missouri S&T.

"It is a dream I have had since I started playing in the second grade," Ryals said of the opportunity to play college football. "It is really surreal and it has all happened really quickly."

The Louisburg senior was one of the top kickers – not only in the Frontier League – but in the state as well. Ryals earned all-league and all-state kicking honors following the Wildcats' season that ended with a Frontier League championship.

Ryals nailed 5 of 7 field goal attempts this past season, to go along with 38 of 39 extra point attempts. He made several big kicks for the Wildcats throughout the year.

"Layne was a huge part of who we were over the last few years," Louisburg football coach Drew Harding said. "Obviously, Layne was a really good specialist for us handling all kicking duties but he was also a really good defensive player for us. He was the brains of our defense a lot of times

and we will definitely miss him in that aspect for sure.

“I’m very excited for Layne to kick at Missouri S&T. This is something he has worked hard at for a long time and I know he was interested in going there from the start.”



**Louisburg senior Layne Ryals signed his letter of intent on Feb. 1 to play football at Missouri S&T. Sitting next Layne are his parents Jason Ryals and Janelle Ryals, along with his brother Grant, who videoed in. Standing (from left) is Louisburg assistant Joel McGhee, head coach Drew Harding, along with assistants Pete Skakal, Kade Larson, Jake Hinson and Ty Pfannenstiel.**

Kicking is something Ryals has worked at for years, ever since he was out practicing in his front yard with a pretty special coach.

“When I first got into football, my mom (Janelle) was also playing football at the time and she was the kicker for the team,” Ryals said. “I grew up in a soccer family and it has always been something that I have practiced and worked at.

“We used to practice kickoffs in the front yard. When we first started when I was little, they would go about 10 yards. Obviously, it went a little further as I got older.”

Ryals registered several touchbacks during the high school season and didn't give the opponent a chance to return kicks on a regular basis.

He hopes to do the same for Missouri S&T, a Division II program based out of Rolla, Mo.

"They said I had a good chance of playing as a freshman – kicking and punting," Ryals said "I definitely have to work at it because there is always going to be competition. I hope to be able to do something as freshman, whether it is just kickoffs, punting or just field goals. I know I need to put in a lot of work for that."

The Louisburg senior visited a few schools, and sent tapes to others in hopes of garnering interest following his junior season. He spent time attending camps, or just working on his own with his long snapper and holder – J.R. Rooney and Corbin Hamman.

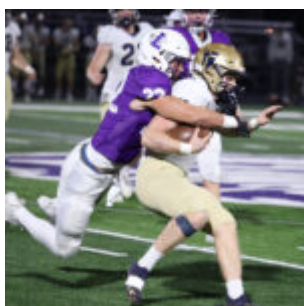
All that led to an opportunity with Missouri S&T, which seemed to be the perfect fit for Ryals and his educational career.

"I want to use my football skills to help pay for a good education that I can use in my future," Ryals said. "I wasn't looking for anything crazy. I knew that engineering is what I wanted to do so I looked at about every D-1 and D-2 engineering school in the Midwest. Went to camps all summer and Missouri S&T was the one that showed the most interest in me and believed in me.

"S&T is one of the top engineering schools in the United States. The campus is beautiful and all the buildings are super advanced. The coaching staff is great and they had a pretty good season last year. They have a lot of good players coming up too so it should be fun."

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# Hovey selected to Kansas Shrine Bowl



***Louisburg senior Jase Hovey was named to the Kansas Shrine Bowl this past Sunday and will represent on the Wildcats on the East squad later this summer.***

Jase Hovey has already received a lot of postseason accolades that include all-state selections by four different publications, including first team honors by the Kansas Football Coaches Association.

Hovey received another big honor last Sunday.

The Louisburg senior was selected to play in the Kansas Shrine Bowl and represent the Wildcats later this summer in the all-star game played at Fort Hays State.

“It is a huge honor and I am extremely blessed to have one last opportunity to represent Louisburg,” Hovey said. “This is not a personal award. It speaks volumes to how incredible my teammates, coaches, and community are and I wouldn’t have had the opportunity to do this without each and every one of them. This honor means everything to me and I hope I can make my teammates and community proud.”

Hovey, who was the Wildcats’ starting safety this past season, led the Louisburg secondary with 58 tackles to go along with

two interceptions, including one for a touchdown earlier in the year against Paola.

The last Wildcat player named to the Shrine Bowl was Andy Hupp in 2021. Garrett Harding (2020), Austin Moore (2019), Kiefer Tucker (2019), Mason Koechner (2017) and Anders Vance (2016) were also recent Louisburg representatives.



***Jase Hovey earned all-state honors by four different publications this past season before being selected to the Kansas Shrine Bowl.***

“To get selected to play in the Shrine Bowl is a huge honor,” Louisburg football coach Drew Harding said. “It’s a game played for a great purpose with the best football players across the entire state and all classes. I’m excited for, not only Jase to get the chance to play in the game, but for Jase to represent Louisburg football on this stage.”

All Shrine Bowl events are produced and presented to benefit Shriners Children's. In 2022, the Kansas Shrine Bowl donated \$125,000 to Shriners Children's. Shriners Children's offers care for a range of orthopedic issues, as well as care for burn injuries, craniofacial conditions, spine care and spinal cord injuries, colorectal and gastrointestinal care, and sports medicine.

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. The 50th Kansas Shrine Bowl Presented by Mammoth will be played at Lewis Field Stadium, on the campus of Fort Hays State University, on Saturday, July 15 at 7 p.m

The Kansas Shrine Bowl is an all-star high school senior, East vs. West, football game put on each year in Kansas, by the Kansas Shrine. It is a 501(c) 3 non-profit charity that produces annual events and related activities, with net proceeds benefiting Shriners Hospitals for Children, now known as Shriners Children's. The Kansas Shrine Bowl has donated over \$3.7 million to Shriners Children's.

The game has been played throughout Kansas each summer since 1974. Host cities have included Lawrence, Manhattan, Wichita, Topeka, Hays, Emporia, Pittsburg, Dodge City and Hutchinson. The West football team camp will be held at Fort Hays State University in Hays, Kansas, and the East team camp will be held at Ottawa University in Ottawa, Kansas.

Beginning in 1974, the flagship event has been the East/West All-Star Football Game. As of 2022, the West leads the series 30-17, and there have been two ties. Recent NFL alumni include Cody Whitehair (Chicago Bears). Additional notable alumni include former All-Pro wide receiver Jordy Nelson, former All-Pro NFL defensive back Terrance Newman, NFL Hall of Famer Barry Sanders, former Kansas State and Kansas City Chiefs linebacker Gary Spani, former Big 12 Defensive Player of the

Year and Super Bowl Champion linebacker Mark Simoneau and many others.

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## **Top 10 Louisburg Sports Stories of 2022**



It was a successful, and eventful, 2022 for Louisburg High School athletics and for those who are connected to the Wildcat program.

This past year created a lot of school history for LHS and a few programs brought back state hardware.

Below are the top stories from 2022, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the writeup is the link to the actual story from the event.

When putting the list together, I took a lot of things into account – whether it was team vs. individual, popularity of the sport, historical achievements and the interest it drew on the web site.

This year was a blast to cover and I am looking forward to seeing what 2023 will bring. Thank you to everyone for their support and can't wait for it all to begin again.





## 10. Louisburg golf qualifies for state

FORT SCOTT – As the scores were rolling in, the Louisburg golf team was a little worried.

The Wildcats were in jeopardy of not qualifying for state after a few of the golfers didn't have the scores they were hoping for in the Class 4A regional tournament in Fort Scott.

Chanute and Independence had already assured themselves of a spot, but the third place team was up in the air as the top three teams automatically qualify for state.

As it turned out, the Wildcats had nothing to worry about as they edged Paola by four strokes to finish in third with a 357 to secure their third consecutive spot in the 4A state tournament.

Seniors A.J. Arriola, Sam Wheeler, Ian Kirkpatrick, Johnny Thompson, along with juniors Jackson Olson and Nick Lancaster, advanced to the state tournament.

Arriola carded a 78 and finished as a regional runner-up, as he was just two strokes behind regional champion Drayton Cleaver of Chanute.

As for Olson, the Louisburg junior set a personal record by six strokes to shoot an 81 and took fourth overall. Those personal bests were enough to get the Wildcats into that third place spot.

At state, Arriola and Wheeler finished as the team's top two golfers. Arriola carded a 97 to take 59th overall, while Wheeler finished with a 98 and came in 66th.



## **9. Brueggen's earns school's first state swim medal**

LENEXA – Even though she is just a freshman, Sabra Brueggen is already putting a stamp on her high school swim career at Louisburg High School.

It all came to a rousing end on May 21 as Brueggen earned her first state medal at the Class 5-1A Kansas State Swim and

Diving Championships at the Shawnee Mission School District Aquatic Center.

Brueggen became the first swimmer in school history to earn a state medal as she finished fifth in the 100-yard backstroke in 1:00.58.

On the day before in the preliminaries, Brueggen also took fifth in a season-best time of 1:00.15.

“Medaling as freshman means the world to me, and it proves to me that all of my hard work for all of these years, has paid off,” Brueggen said. “I feel like I performed my absolute best at state, and I was very happy with the results. It gives me confidence that I will have a bright future representing OzPaLou at the state swim meets.”

She nearly had a second medal in the 50 freestyle. Brueggen put together a season-best time of 25.26 seconds, but finished ninth overall. It was the same finish she had the in the preliminaries.

The top eight in each event earn a state medal as she was just .06 away from earning another spot on the medal stand.



## 8. Harding takes over as Wildcat football coach

The Louisburg football program had a different leader on the sidelines this past season.

The USD 416 Board of Education approved the hire of LHS assistant coach Drew Harding to be the team's new head coach in January after the district decided not to renew the contract of former coach Robert Ebenstein.

Harding spent the last five seasons as a Wildcat assistant coach, including time as a defensive coordinator. He is a 2010 Louisburg graduate and was a big part of the Wildcat program during his time as a student-athlete at Louisburg High School.

However, Harding didn't see himself be a head coach of any sport coming out of college.

"It means a lot," Harding said. "When I got out of school, I didn't get into education right away and started somewhere else. I decided to get into education because of the impact my former coaches at Louisburg had on me. To come full circle and to be in the position that I am in now, is pretty surreal. I am really excited for the opportunity and hopefully I can have the same type of impact on student athletes as they come through the program."

Ebenstein has the been the head coach the last five seasons and helped the Wildcats to a 30-18 record during that time, including a Frontier League and regional title in 2018. He had a winning record three of those five seasons.

He was also named the KFCA Coach of the Year during that season and was selected to be an assistant coach for the Kansas Shrine Bowl. He was an assistant coach for the Wildcat program for five years before earning the head coaching job.



## **7. Conley resigns a Louisburg head boys and girls soccer coach**

Louisburg High School head boys and girls soccer coach Kyle Conley stepped down from his position after seven years.

He was recently hired to lead the boys and girls soccer programs at Blue Valley West, where he will serve as the head coach of both teams.

Conley, who also taught social studies at LHS, informed the players and parents of his decision on May 4. The Blue Valley Board of Education approved his hire on May 9.

“Making the decision to leave Louisburg was extremely difficult,” Conley said. “The players and parents, both past and present, made this decision tough. No parents or players caused this decision. I am very thankful to Mr. (Dave) Tappan and Mr. (Darin) Gagnebin for giving me this opportunity to coach and teach at Louisburg. The amount of support that my

teams, my family and I received from Louisburg soccer parents and the community was incredible.”

Bobby Bovaird was hired as the new boys head coach, while Ben York returned to the program as the new assistant. York was also named the girls head coach after serving 13 years as the boys head coach previous to Conley.

Conley has the been head girls coach at Louisburg since its inception in 2016 and has led that program to four consecutive state final fours.

Twice, the Wildcats made the state championship game and finished runner-up on both occasions. He has guided the program to an 82-34-3 record.

Conley took over the boys program in 2016 and finished with a 77-32-3 record. He led the Wildcats to two state final fours during that span, including a third place finish in 2020.

“I am so proud of the things that our student athletes in the soccer programs have accomplished both on and off the soccer field,” Conley said. “I will always cherish the memories that we have made here with the Louisburg soccer programs.”



## **6. Girls cross country qualifies for state, Vohs earns state medal**

WAMEGO – For the second consecutive season, Emma Vohs left the Class 4A state cross country meet with more than was she arrived with.

Vohs earned her second state medal at Wamego Country Club as she finished 10th overall with a time of 20 minutes and 51 seconds. The Louisburg junior did what she set out to accomplish.

“I was so excited to win another state medal this season and couldn’t be happier that I reached my goal for that race, which was placing top 10,” Vohs said. “The race was a tougher course, as was the competition this year, but I am blessed to run with such talented girls that push me to do better each race.”

Vohs led the Lady Cat team that qualified for state for the sixth consecutive season. As a team, Louisburg finished eighth overall with 208 points.

A week earlier at regionals, the team of Vohs, Maddy Rhamy, Lola Edwards, Nova Ptacek, Bree Gassman, Erin Apple and Madison Huggins finished third to punch their ticket to state

“It never gets old seeing the joy in the team’s eyes when they hear they qualified for state,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “The girls work hard to accomplish this goal each year, and because of their dedication to their sport, they achieve great things even if they might not make it, but they did.

“The program has built itself and I’m just glad to be a part of it. Yes, we put together a training plan to accomplish great things at the end of the season, but the runners do the work to get there. It takes self discipline, motivation and

guts to be there at the end of the season.”



## 5. Wildcat wrestling medals 3 at state

Louisburg wrestling has had its fair share of state medalists in its long history, but what the Wildcats accomplished in February at the Tony’s Pizza Events Center in Salina was something the program had never seen before.

The Wildcats left the Class 4A state tournament with three state medalists, the most for one year in program history.

Aiden Barker (195 pounds), Kaven Bartlett (126) and Elijah Eslinger (285) each finished in the top six in their respective weight classes and put together their best performances of the season. It was also the first time each of them earned a state medal.

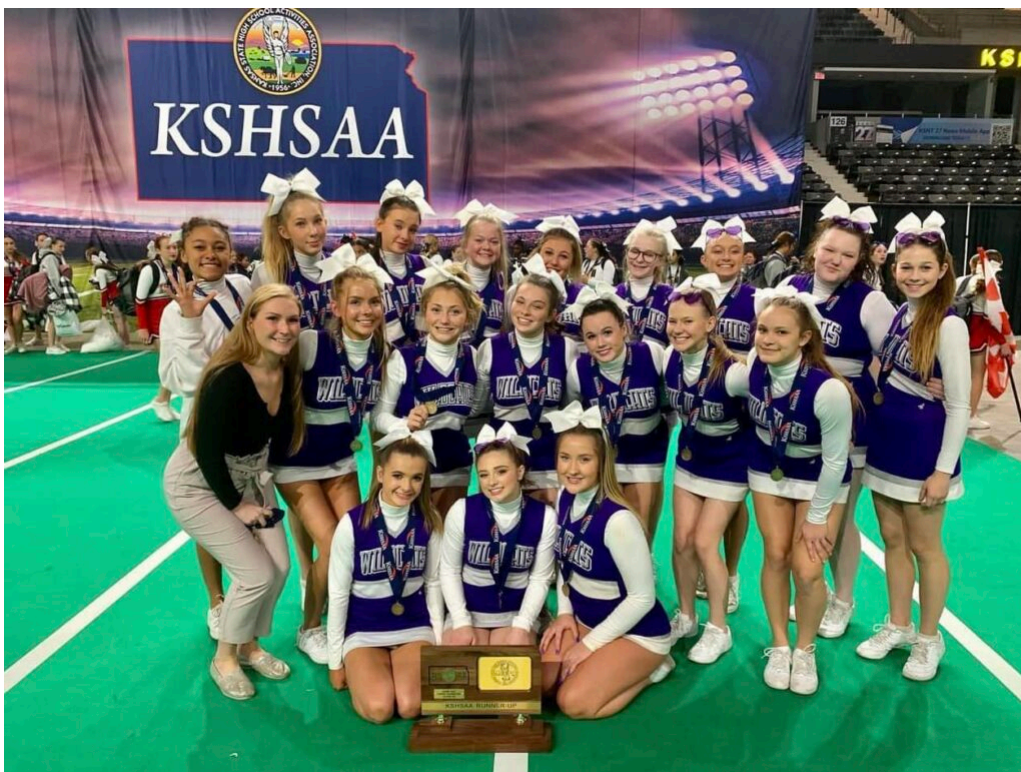
“This season was the most state placers we’ve had in a single year in program history,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Prior to 1992, KSHSAA only medaled the top 4 in each weight. In both 1988 and 1989, we had two top-4 placers and one top-6 placer, but this really shows how the program is progressing



and developing. We nearly had four medalists, too.”

Barker, a senior, was a favorite for a medal heading into Salina and finished fifth overall with a 13-1 major decision over Ottawa’s Jared Ferguson in the fifth-place match.

Bartlett and Eslinger also left lasting impressions on the Wildcat program as each medaled sixth overall after both nearly turned their brackets upside down as they advanced to the semifinals on Friday. They both guaranteed themselves a medal on the first day.



## **4. Louisburg cheer earns state runner-up performance**

TOPEKA – It has almost become commonplace to see the Louisburg High School cheer squad in the finals of the Class 4A Gameday Spirit Showcase.

However, that doesn’t mean the cheerleaders are any less excited about it.

For the second straight season, the Wildcats finished as the state runner-up in the Class 4A competition at the Stormont-Vail Events Center. They finished with a score of 79.45 and were one point behind champion Paola.

It is the fourth straight season that the Wildcats have finished in the top three, which included a state championship in 2019.

“I am so unbelievably and incredibly proud of this team,” Louisburg coach Marissa Morrow said. “This positivity and attitude that these girls have shown this year have been the key to our success. I had no doubt that the material and performances we brought on Saturday had the potential to do well, but it was the girls who made it possible to pull it together. They were all such competitors and left it all out on the mat, and I couldn’t ask for more. We also could not have done it without the support of our amazing cheer families.”

Members of the team are Sydney Dudzik, Bella Feikert, Zoe Cutshaw, Caroline Dugger, Elizabeth George, Addison Drake, Brooklyn Harmon, Adison Vargo, Maddy Carpenter-Ross, Sienna Finch, Alayna Stohs, Alaina Dudzik, Maddie O’Keefe, Liz Willming, Kayleigh Ramsey, Taryn Osborn, Anna Brizendine and Jocelyn Burk.



### **3. LHS football secures Frontier League title**

With just over a minute left in regulation, Louisburg was staring at the possibility of their first league loss and was watching an outright Frontier League title slip away.

Spring Hill scored a touchdown and took a four-point lead with 1 minute and 12 seconds left. Things were looking bleak for the Wildcats.

As it turned out, 52 seconds was all the Wildcats needed to pull off one of the season's most memorable moments. Louisburg quarterback Declan Battle found junior Caden Caplinger in the endzone on an 18-yard touchdown pass with 20 seconds remaining to give the Wildcats a 20-17 victory.

The win was the Wildcats' seventh straight on the season and clinched the team's first Frontier League championship since 2018.

“There weren’t a lot of people who thought we could be league champions,” Louisburg coach Drew Harding said. “I don’t think it was anything that people expected out of us, and the Frontier League is really good. For this group to come to work, get better every day and to see success is pretty sweet.”

The win was extra special for 16 Louisburg seniors as they were also able to celebrate that league title on Senior Night.

Jackson Kush, Nathan Apple, Carson Wade, Isaiah Whitley, Riley Van Eaton, J.R. Rooney, Will Hutsell, Brayton Brueggen, Christian Golladay, Nathan Vincent, Jase Hovey, Mack Newell, Hunter Moore, Mason Dobbins, Corbin Hamman and Layne Ryals all got to end their final regular season home game with a win.

“The Frontier League title means so much to me and this team,” Rooney said. “As a team before the season, the seniors wrote down our goals, and league champs was on everyone’s list. To clinch it on senior night was amazing. Going undefeated at home, to win it on our field in front of our town – it was an indescribable feeling.”



## **2. Wildcat volleyball finishes fourth at state**

HUTCHINSON – The state tournament ended the way it started for the Louisburg volleyball team – with a loss to Towanda-Circle.

Still, it was everything that happened in between that made for a lot of lasting memories for the Wildcat players.

Louisburg went 2-1 in pool play at the Hutchinson Sports Arena, which included a revenge win over Tonganoxie in the final match of the day. That gave the Lady Cats a spot in the state semifinals Saturday, where they finished fourth in Class 4A.

The Wildcats suffered a 2-0 loss to both Bishop Miege and Circle, but they still ended their season as one of the state's top teams.

“I am extremely proud of this team,” Louisburg coach Leanna Willer said. “Looking at how we started this season, and our ups and downs along the way, it is a huge accomplishment for them to have come together as a team at the end of the season and play our best volleyball yet. It was apparent in the last couple of weeks that they really started playing for each other and capitalizing on the strong team bonds they built throughout the year.”

It was all thanks to an upset the previous week. Louisburg defeated the state's No. 1 seed, Baldwin, in the sub-state championship match to earn the state berth.

The Wildcats, the No. 9 seed, knocked off No. 1 seed Baldwin, 25-18 and 25-19, at Baldwin High School in the finals of the Class 4A sub-state tournament. That win puts Louisburg in the state tournament for the first time since 2019.

Members of the team are Emma Prettyman, Adyson Ross, Claire

Brown, Allie Kennedy, Ashlyn Berck, Delaney Nelson, Izzy Moreland, Bronwynn Williams, Caileigh Kilgore, Megan Quinn, Hailey Sword and Madelyn Williams.



## **1. Wildcat boys take third at state track; Koontz, Caplinger win state titles; Lady Cats medal nine**

WICHITA – For the second consecutive season, the Louisburg boys track and field team brought home hardware from the Class 4A state meet.

After winning the state championship in 2021, the Wildcats once again found their way to the podium in Wichita as they finished third overall with 67 points.

Andale won the state championship with 101 points and Chanute was the state runner-up with 71.

Louisburg got points from a lot of different areas as the Wildcats medaled in 10 events and had 12 medalists overall, including all three of their relays.

Louisburg senior Tom Koontz won a pair of state titles in the hurdles, while sophomore Caden Caplinger captured the gold medal in the pole vault.



“I am not going to complain at all,” Koontz said. “I believe we came here with less people than we did last year and everyone did their best. Even though we didn’t get exactly what we wanted, third place is still a great achievement.”

What he couldn’t believe was he had just won his first state title in the 300 hurdles and Koontz did so by breaking a 14-year-old school record. Koontz ran a time of 38.98 seconds to break R.J. Saunders’ record of 39.16 set in 2008 to earn the gold.

It turned out to be his second state title of the day as he also earned the gold medal in the 110-meter high hurdles with a time of 14.61 seconds. Koontz won the state in that event last season as well.

Caplinger cleared a lot of his marks in the pole vault and did so in convincing fashion as he was able to win a state title in just his second year with the program.



Last season at state, Caplinger medaled eighth after he cleared 12-6. A year later, the Louisburg sophomore improved his mark by two feet and is a state champion.

It was an impressive showing from Caplinger as he didn't miss an attempt until he tried for 15 feet at the end. He entered the competition at 12-6 and had five straight successful clearances.

"At first I was really nervous, but then it just kind of turned into a routine thing," Caplinger said. "I started going over heights consistently and the rest just kind of fell into place. I cleared 14-6 earlier this week twice in a row, so I knew I could do it. I was still a little nervous though."

As for the Lady Cats, Delaney Wright left the state meet with three medals. Wright, who has been coming back from a severe injury for most of the season, finished as the state runner-up



in the 400-meter dash, third place in the 200 dash and fifth in the long jump.

A season ago, Wright was the state champion in all three events, but couldn't get the repeat she was hoping for.



“Going into state I knew I still wasn't where I want to be due to my injury a couple months ago,” Wright said. “But I wanted to attack it still and give it all I had. I am blessed I was there to compete and earn three medals cause in the beginning I didn't even know if I was going to compete my senior year.”

In all, the Lady Cats put together a strong state performance as they medaled in nine events and finished with 40 team points and took sixth overall. They were just eight points away from the third place spot, and a plaque.

“Once again the state qualifiers did an amazing job,” Louisburg girls coach John Reece said. “They all performed well and most beyond expectations. To leave the meet finishing in sixth place was outstanding. We left with lots of medals and great memories.”

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# Nine Wildcats earn all-state football honors



*Louisburg's Jase Hovey, Ashton Moore and Nathan Vincent were selected first team all-state by at least one publication earlier this month.*

Several publications spent the month of December releasing their respective all-state football teams and several Louisburg players made those lists.

Nine different Wildcats made at least one all-state team, while senior defensive back Jase Hovey was the lone Louisburg player to earn all-state honors from all four publications.

Hovey was selected the Kansas Football Coaches Association all-state first team after leading the Louisburg secondary with 58 tackles to go along with two interceptions, including one for a touchdown earlier in the year against Paola.

The Louisburg senior was an honorable mention selection in Sports in Kansas, the Wichita Eagle and KSHSAA Covered.

Senior Nathan Vincent earned two first team selections by both Sports in Kansas and the Wichita Eagle as an offensive lineman. Vincent also thrived as a defensive end as he finished the season with with 80 tackles, 8.5 tackles for a loss and 6.5 sacks.

Sophomore Ashton Moore also racked up several honors for the Wildcats. Moore was a first team selection by Sports In Kansas, along with KSHSAA Covered.

Moore was also an honorable mention selection by the Eagle and was also named to the All-Simone Team by 810 Varsity. He led Louisburg with 114 tackles on the season, including 12 stops for a loss and 59 solo tackles.



Junior Quarterback Declan Battle, senior running back Riley Van Eaton and senior lineman J.R. Rooney were honorable mention selections by Sports in Kansas, Wichita Eagle and KSHSAA Covered.

Senior kicker Layne Ryals was an honorable mention by Sports in Kansas and the Wichita Eagle, while Senior receiver Mason Dobbins, tight end Mack Newell were honorable mention selections by Sports in Kansas.

Offensively, Battle led the Wildcats as he finished the season with more than 1,700 yards of total offense. Battle threw for 1,027 yards and eight touchdowns and he also rushed for 709 yards and 10 touchdowns.

On the outside, Dobbins was one of Battle's favorite targets. Dobbins led the team with 25 catches, 382 yards and four touchdowns.

The Wildcats were also successful on the ground thanks to Van Eaton. He carried the ball 172 times for 1,043 yards and 15 touchdowns. He also had 188 yards receiving out of the backfield.

Rooney, along with his play on the offensive line, finished the year with 36 tackles, a sack and a forced fumble as a defensive tackle.

In his first year of varsity action, Newell was a big part of the Wildcat offense at tight end. Along with helping the offensive line, he also finished with nine catches for 93 yards.

As the team's kicker, Ryals converted 5 of 7 field goal tries this season, with his longest coming from 43 yards. He was also 38 of 39 on extra points.

## **ALL-STATE FOOTBALL**

### **SPORTS IN KANSAS**

First Team: Nathan Vincent, Offensive Line; Ashton Moore, Linebacker; Jase Hovey, Athlete

Honorable Mention: Riley Van Eaton, Running Back; Declan Battle, Quarterback; Mason Dobbins, Wide Receiver; Mack Newell, Tight End; J.R. Rooney, Lineman; Layne Ryals, Kicker/Defensive Back

### **KFBCA**

First Team: Jase Hovey, Defensive Back

### **WICHITA EAGLE**

First Team: Nathan Vincent, Offensive Line

Honorable Mention: Declan Battle, Quarterback; Riley Van Eaton, Running Back; J.R. Rooney, Defensive Line; Ashton

Moore, Linebacker; Jase Hovey, Defensive Back; Layne Ryals, Kicker

## **KSHSAA COVERED**

First Team: Ashton Moore, Flex

Honorable Mention: J.R. Rooney, Lineman; Nathan Vincent; Lineman; Declan Battle, Quarterback; Jase Hovey, Defensive Back; Riley Van Eaton, Running Back;

## **ALL-SIMONE TEAM**

Ashton Moore, Linebacker