

Wildcats roll Baldwin to pick up third straight victory



Louisburg linebacker Ashton Moore (right) brings down Baldwin quarterback Jack Harvey with the help of teammates Brayden Yoder and Wyatt Holland on Friday in Baldwin City.

BALDWIN CITY – From the the opening kickoff, everything went the way of Louisburg.

Louisburg quarterback Declan Battle went over 100 yards rushing in the first half and added four touchdowns to his already impressive early season start.

Junior running back Ashton Moore did the same as he added three touchdowns. The Wildcats also had a chance to empty their bench as everyone contributed in their 62-7 win over the Bulldogs on Friday at Baker University.

Add in a dominant performance by the Wildcat defense that forced three turnovers, and it was smooth sailing for Louisburg as it improved its record to 3-0 on the season.

“I was happy to see us come out and play well early,” Louisburg coach Drew Harding said. “We talked about taking

advantage of the opportunity that was in front of us and making the most of that opportunity, and I thought they came out early and did exactly that. Started with a turnover defensively right away and that got the offense moving.”

Louisburg’s defense set the tone early with a stop on Baldwin’s opening possession on an interception by senior Hunter Heinrich. The Wildcats forced a couple more turnovers on fumble recoveries by Brady Hickey and Garrison Bloustine, in what turned into a rainy content between the two teams.

Moore and Hickey were in attack mode from the start on defense. Moore finished with a team-high 13 tackles. Hickey finished with 10 to go along with a forced fumble and fumble recovery.

Hickey added to his already strong start to his season that includes two interceptions and a sack.

“Defense played well overall,” Harding said. “We preached turnovers to them this week and we forced three so that was good to see. There were times that we would like to see a little more urgency in not giving up a couple first downs before getting the ball back.

“Brady and Ashton have both been playing well. They are both solid tacklers and pursue the football really well. We need them to continue to playing well as we move forward in the season.”



Wildcat linemen Ben O'Bryan (right) and Jaymes Melton open up a hole on the offensive line Friday against Baldwin.

Offensively, Battle once again led the Wildcats from under center. The dual-threat quarterback amassed 133 yards rushing on just five carries and threw for another 128, before ending his night early with four touchdowns.

Moore went on to record 109 yards of total offense to go along with his three scores. Junior running back Darby Van Eaton came off the bench in the second half to finish with 120 yards rushing, including a 69-yard touchdown run to ice the game.

A lot of that offense was thanks to the offensive line, including starters Ben O'Bryan, Miles Meek, Jaymes Melton, Brayden Yoder and Johnny Hendrickson.

"Offensively we had a lot of big plays," Harding said. "I think up front we did a good job opening up some holes and then our skill players were able to make plays after that. I thought we were pretty effective in the passing game as well.

Declan and Ashton played well. They didn't have a ton of touches but were effective with the touches they got."

After Heinrich's interception to open the game, Battle and the offense responded when he broke free for a 65-yard touchdown run. Later in the first quarter, Moore took a little shovel pass from Battle that resulted in a 10-yard score.

The Wildcats put up three more scores in the second quarter, including a 50-yard run from Battle, a 1-yard plunge from Moore and a 10-yard touchdown pass from Battle to Blake Amren. After all that, Louisburg took a 34-0 lead into halftime.



Louisburg's Blake Amren (9) celebrates his touchdown with teammate Brock Vohs Friday at Baldwin.

Louisburg nearly doubled that in the second half. Moore broke free for a 61-yard touchdown, then backup quarterback Alex Saad found the endzone on 13 and 15-yard runs.

From there, Harding was able to empty his bench as every player on the roster earned varsity minutes.

“That was awesome and probably my favorite part of the game,” Harding said. “Those guys work hard all week and provide the first team with a scout look. So for them to get rewarded with Friday night playing time was awesome. When they were in there they played well both offensively and defensively, and we had lots of guys making plays.”



Louisburg senior Jack Anderson wraps up a Baldwin player for a tackle Friday.

Louisburg will try to make it four straight wins to start the season this Friday when the Wildcats travel to Bonner Springs. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m.

LOU 12 22 20 8 – 62

BAL 0 0 7 0 – 7

SCORING SUMMARY

First quarter

L: Declan Battle 65 run (kick failed)

L: Ashton Moore 10 pass from Battle (kick failed)

Second quarter

L: Battle 50 run (Moore run)

L: Moore 1 run (Moore run)

L: Blake Amren 10 pass from Battle (kick failed)

Third quarter

L: Moore 61 run (kick failed)

B: Jack Harvey 64 run (kick good)

L: Alex Saad 13 run (Saad run)

L: Saad 15 run (2-point failed)

Fourth quarter

L: Darby Van Eaton 69 run (Rickey Giles run)

STATISTICS

RUSHING – Declan Battle 5-133; Darby Van Eaton 7-120; Ashton Moore 5-74; Alex Saad 4-24

PASSING – Declan Battle 7-8-128; Alex Saad 4-5-50

RECEIVING – Conlee Hovey 2-71; Ashton Moore 3-35; Brock Vohs 1-29; Caden Caplinger 1-17; Myles Vohs 1-16; Blake Amren 1-10;

Declan Battle 1-0.

TACKLES – Ashton Moore 13, Brady Hickey 10, Wyatt Holland 9, Brayden Yoder, 7, Darby Van Eaton 6, Caden Caplinger 6, Lucas Swartz 5, Conlee Hovey 4, Jack Anderson 4, Russell Wiseman 3, Jimmy DeVary 3, Declan Battle 2, Logan Henry 2, Jackson Howard 2, Drake Crooks 2, Josh Holtzen 1, Hunter Heinrich 1, Reid McCaskill 1, Brody McGreer 1, Martin Alicea Soto 1, Nate Capuro 1, Miles Meek 1, Wyatt Crooks 1

SACK – Jack Anderson 1

INTERCEPTION – Hunter Heinrich 1

FORCED FUMBLE – Ashton Moore 1, Brady Hickey 1, Conlee Hovey 1

FUMBLE RECOVERY – Brady Hickey 1, Garrison Bloustine 1

Harding named Kansas City Chiefs Coach of the Week



Louisburg head football coach Drew Harding was named the

Kansas City Chiefs Coach of the Week on Wednesday and was presented the award by Chiefs Hall of Famer, Gary Spani.

After starting the season 2-0, including a win over rival Paola last week, Louisburg head football coach Drew Harding saw a big honor come his way.

Harding was named as the Kansas City Chiefs Coach of the Week for week two following the Wildcats' 35-20 victory over Paola.

Kansas City Chief Hall of Famer Gary Spani presented Harding with his award prior to practice Wednesday in front of his players and coaching staff. The Chiefs partner with PrepsKC to honor a Missouri and Kansas coach each week.

"This is definitely a program wide award," Harding said. "The players are the ones on the field executing the game plan and assistant coaches are implementing the game plan. Those things have a far greater impact than anything I do individually.

"As a program we are excited to receive the award. It is a result of everyone's hard work within the program and we are excited to receive this award to showcase everyone's efforts to start the season. Thank you to PrepsKC and the Kansas City Chiefs for their community involvement and supporting high school football."

Harding, who is in his second year as head coach of the Wildcats, also won the award last season during their run to an undefeated Frontier League title.

As a result of this honor, Louisburg High School will receive a \$500 grant from the Hunt Family Foundation. Additionally, Harding was presented a congratulatory commemorative Super Bowl LVII coin and a certificate recognizing his selection.

Harding is now eligible for the Eric Driskell Coach of the Year Award, which will be voted on later this fall. The Eric

Driskell Coach of the Year Award is selected by a panel comprised of the Missouri and Kansas Boards from the Greater Kansas City Football Coaches Association.

In its 27th season, the 2023 High School Coach of the Week is a joint initiative of the Kansas City Chiefs and the National Football League. This program is designed to recognize and reward Kansas City area high school coaches for superior performance on a weekly basis while honoring individuals who are shaping today's youth and tomorrow's leaders.

Wildcats down rival Paola to earn second straight win



Louisburg quarterback Declan Battle stretches out toward the pylon for one of his two rushing touchdowns Friday against Paola.

It has been 13 years since Louisburg had gotten a chance to celebrate a win over rival Paola on its home turf.

Louisburg ended that drought Friday at Wildcat Stadium.

The Wildcats got another five touchdown performance from quarterback Declan Battle, and the Louisburg defense came through with big stops in the second half as it picked up the 35-20 victory.

“It is your rival, so you always want to win,” Louisburg coach Drew Harding said. “We haven’t beaten Paola on this field since 2010, so it has been a long time. I guess it makes it a little more sweeter for sure.”

Battle did a little bit of everything as he put together his second straight five touchdown performance. He finished the game with two rushing scores and two more through the air, but it all got started on defense.

On Paola’s opening drive of the game, Battle intercepted a pass and returned it 40 yards for touchdown. Louisburg had a quick 7-0 lead in the first couple minutes of the game.

“When you can start the game like that, it is pretty sweet,” Harding said. “We worked on that specific route quite a bit in practice. Declan made a great read on the ball and scored. It was nice to see for sure.”

Paola, which had the size advantage on its offensive line, marched down the field and scored a touchdown in 13 plays. The Panthers did it by running up the middle and getting gains of 3-plus yards, but scored when Paola quarterback Triston Katzer hit Clayton Younger for a 31-yard touchdown on what was a fourth down play.

Louisburg senior Wyatt Holland blocked the extra point to keep it a 7-6 game.



Louisburg cornerback Hunter Heinrich breaks up a pass Friday against Paola.

The Panthers used that same recipe to keep themselves within striking distance of Louisburg throughout the contest. In fact, the Wildcat offense only had the ball twice in the first half as Paola controlled the time of possession.

Still, the Wildcats were able to score on both of those possessions. Battle ended the first quarter with a 10-yard touchdown run to put Louisburg up 14-6.

Paola answered with another score in the second quarter, but a failed 2-point conversation kept it a 14-12 game.

Right before halftime, the Wildcats extended their lead when Battle found a diving Caden Caplinger, who made an over-the-shoulder catch in the endzone for a 35-yard touchdown. Louisburg took a 21-12 lead into the locker room.

“That was a huge catch,” Harding said. “We talked to Caden before the game and told him that when the ball was in the air, that it was your ball. He went and got it, and was able to keep his feet in bounds. It was a heck of a catch.”



Caden Caplinger hauls in a diving catch in the endzone late in

the first half of Friday's win over Paola.

The Wildcats opened the second half with the ball to try and put some more distance between themselves and Paola, but the Panthers got an interception, which set up a Paola score. After a successful 2-point try, it was a one-point game again.

Paola's defense got another stop and forced Louisburg to punt, but it was the Wildcats' defense turn to step up. Louisburg stopped Paola on a 3-and-1 on the Panther 24-yard line, and instead of punting, decided to use their size advantage and went for it.

Louisburg got the biggest stop of the night as linebacker Ashton Moore and Caplinger stopped the Paola runner at the line of scrimmage and forced the turnover on downs.

Momentum quickly changed as Louisburg used the short field. Battle hit Moore for a 22-yard touchdown pass and took a 28-20 lead.

"Stopping them on that fourth and 1 was just a huge play for the defense," Harding said. "It can be very disheartening for a defense when they are getting chunk yardage and converting on third and shorts with long drives. We only had the ball twice in the first half, so the defense was on the field a lot. Those guys really grinded and they were big for us."



(From left) Brady Hickey, Brock Vohs and Brayden Yoder team up for a tackle Friday against Paola.

In the fourth quarter, the Wildcats salted the game away as Battle broke free for a 24-yard touchdown run, which all but sealed the win for Louisburg. Sophomore kicker Blaise Vohs was perfect on the day with five extra points.

Moore led the Wildcat defense as he finished with 14 tackles. Senior Brady Hickey, who had two interceptions last week, put together another strong performance with 13 tackles and a sack.

Battle finished with nine tackles to go along with his interception and senior Brock Vohs also recorded a sack.

Offensively, Battle recorded 182 yards of total offense to go along with his four touchdowns. Moore had 68 yards on the ground, while Caplinger led the team with 68 yards receiving.

It was big early season win for the Wildcats and one that was able to answer some questions in the process.

“Coming into the season, the question mark for us was if teams just line up and try to mash us, could we hold up,” Harding said. “That is exactly what we got with Paola. They are a big physical team, that got 3 or 4 yards on rushes and put together long drives. There was a lot momentum going against us, but we answered and it was a good win for us.

“It is fun to start 2-0. We are going to see some things on film against Paola that we need to improve upon. We really needed a game like this and we can certainly get better from here.”

LOU 14 7 7 7 – 35

PAO 6 6 8 0 – 20

SCORING SUMMARY

First quarter

L: Declan Battle 40 interception return (Blaise Vohs kick)

P: Clayton Younger 31 pass from Triston Katzer (Kick blocked)

L: Battle 10 run (Vohs kick)

Second quarter

P: Katzer 2 run (2-point failed)

L: Caden Caplinger 35 pass from Battle (Vohs kick)

Third quarter

P: Cooper Stanchfield 1 run (JD Troutman pass from Katzer)

L: Ashton Moore 22 pass from Battle (Vohs kick)

Fourth quarter

L: Battle 24 run (Vohs kick)

STATISTICS

RUSHING – Declan Battle 11-86; Ashton Moore 14-68; Darby Van Eaton 1-2

PASSING – Declan Battle 7-10-96

RECEIVING – Caden Caplinger 5-68; Ashton Moore 2-29

TACKLES – Ashton Moore 14, Brady Hickey 13, Declan Battle 9, Brayden Yoder 7, Conlee Hovey 6, Brock Vohs 6, Brody McGreer 5, Jackson Howard 4, Wyatt Holland 3, Lucas Swartz 3, Darby Van Eaton 3, Jack Anderson 2, Logan Henry 1, Hunter Heinrich 1

SACKS – Hickey 1, Vohs 1

INTERCEPTIONS – Battle 1

Battle's five touchdowns lift Wildcats in rout of Heritage



Louisburg senior quarterback Declan Battle celebrates in the endzone with linemen Miles Meek and Johnny Hendrickson following one of his five touchdowns Friday against Heritage.

It may have been just the first game of the season, but Louisburg senior Declan Battle left a lasting first impression Friday.

The Wildcats hosted Rogers Heritage (Ark.) in their season opener in what was a return game following last year's close loss on the road. Battle and the Wildcats made sure history didn't repeat itself.

The Louisburg quarterback scored five touchdowns and led the Wildcats to a 48-14 victory over the War Eagles. It was exactly the start to the season the Wildcats wanted.

"It was a very fun win for us," Louisburg coach Drew Harding said. "We have preached all week in doing our jobs. In the first game, sometimes you go kind of brain dead and do some really weird things, but (Friday) we went out and got a stop our first time out and then we just went to work from there."

Battle led the Wildcats with 235 total yards, including 135 on the ground to go along with his five scores.

In all, Louisburg tallied 449 yards of total offense against the War Eagles. It also marked the end of a three-game losing streak against regular season non-league opponents, something Battle and his teammates have remembered.

"It feels really good," Battle said. "Every year I have been in high school, we have always lost these non-league games like Smithville, Rock Creek and last year to Heritage. We wanted to finally win one of those games and we were able to get it done and it feels great."

Louisburg was able to get a lot of that accomplished thanks to a new-look offensive line that had to replace four starters from a season ago.

Along with returning center Jaymes Melton, the Wildcat line of Jackson Howard, Miles Meek, Brayden Yoder and Johnny

Hendrickson provided a lot of running room to help account for their 340 yards on the ground.



Louisburg senior linebacker brings down a Heritage player Friday at Wildcat Stadium.

“We will know for sure when we watch film, but in the moment I thought the line played really well out there,” Harding said. “They came out and established themselves and I thought they executed pretty well for the most part. We had a few mental errors here and there, but it was a good night for them.”

Battle was the recipient of a lot of those yards and he liked what he saw from his new group.

“Coming into the season, I don’t know that anyone really knew how the line was going to shape up since we lost a lot of seniors last year,” Battle said. “The first game is really when you see what it will be like and I thought they did

really good. They performed really well.”

Defensively, the Wildcats held the War Eagles to just one touchdown for much of the contest until they were able to add a late score with a running clock.

Louisburg didn't give up many big plays and it started at the linebacker spot. Senior Wyatt Holland led the way with a team-high 12 tackles, including two for a loss, while junior Ashton Moore finished with nine stops and one tackle for a loss.

Senior cornerback Brady Hickey also had his best game as a Wildcat as he was third on the team with six stops – but more importantly – came away with two interceptions.



Louisburg senior Brady Hickey goes in for one of his six tackles Friday against Heritage. He also pulled down two interceptions.

“They were flying around out there,” Harding said of his defense. “Coach G(Gentges)really preached 11 hats to the ball all night and I felt like that is what we did. We had a really good week of preparation, came out and played well.”

After the Wildcats forced a punt to start the game, they were able to score on their first possession. Moore found the end zone on a 26-yard touchdown run, and after a Blaise Vohs extra point, made it 7-0. Moore finished the game with 87 yards on the ground on 11 carries.

Battle then added touchdown runs of 6 and 12 yards to put the Wildcats up 20-0 going into the second quarter.

Heritage scored its first touchdown of the game to begin the second quarter, but the Wildcats responded with two more scores from Battle. After a 9-yard score put the Wildcats up 20 again, Battle broke free for his fourth touchdown on a 52-yard run on what was a 4th and 2 for Louisburg near midfield.

Battle added another 17-yard touchdown run to begin the third quarter and wrapped up a memorable night for the Wildcat senior.



Louisburg junior Conlee Hovey grabs on to the Heritage quarterback for a sack Friday.

“Last year we felt like we needed to limit his carries a little bit, but he is going to run the ball for us this year,” Harding said of Battle. “He is a really good runner and he has good speed and strength. When you add something like that to the offense, it is nice to have.”

The Wildcats will try for back-to-back wins this Friday when it hosts Paola for their Frontier League opener.

“Paola is always the biggest week,” Battle said. “From Monday on, everyone is just super excited and there is just a whole different energy at practice. Then on Friday night, it is just go time.”

LOU 20 14 14 0 – 48

RH 0 7 0 7 – 14

SCORING SUMMARY

First Quarter

L: Ashton Moore 26 run (Blaise Vohs kick)

L: Declan Battle 6 run (Vohs kick)

L: Battle 12 run (kick failed)

Second Quarter

R: Amere Dingle 1 run (kick good)

L: Battle 9 run (Vohs kick)

L: Battle 52 run (Vohs kick)

Third quarter

L: Battle 17 run (Vohs kick)

L: Darby Van Eaton 2 run (Vohs kick)

Fourth Quarter

R: Cohen Smith 37 pass from Domenic Castaneda (kick good)

STATISTICS

RUSHING – Declan Battle 9-135; Ashton Moore 11-87; Darby Van Eaton 9-73; Blaise Vohs 5-27; Alex Saad 2-18. Totals: 36-340

PASSING – Declan Battle 11-15-100; Alex Saad 2-3-9. Totals: 13-18-109

RECEIVING – Conlee Hovey 5-49; Caden Caplinger 3-40; Brock Vohs 1-14; Ashton Moore 2-10; Hunter Heinrich 2-(-)4.

TACKLES – Wyatt Holland 12, Ashton Moore 9, Brady Hickey 6, Conlee Hovey 4, Caden Caplinger 3, Brayden Yoder 3, Declan Battle 2, Russell Wiseman 2, Myles Vohs 2, Lucas Swartz 2, Darby Van Eaton 1, Jackson Howard 1, Brock Vohs 1.

INTERCEPTIONS: Brady Hickey 2, Logan Henry 1

Week 1 Athlete of the Week: Declan Battle



Here is the Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Week for week one of the fall sports season, sponsored by Edward Jones-Craig Holtzen.

DECLAN BATTLE, SENIOR, FOOTBALL

Louisburg senior Declan Battle had a game to remember last Friday during the Wildcats' 48-14 victory over Rogers Heritage. The Wildcat quarterback broke loose for five of the team's seven touchdowns on the night as he led Louisburg to victory in the season opener.

Battle combined for 235 yards of total offense, including 135 yards on the ground. He accomplished all that in just two-and-a-half quarters of action.

The athlete of the week award is announced every Wednesday

morning during the fall season and the winner is selected by Louisburg Sports Zone with the help of nominations from coaches.



Wildcat football hoping to run it back for another league title



Louisburg senior quarterback Declan Battle returns for this third year under center after earning all-league and all-state honors last season.

Last season was a memorable one for the Louisburg football team.

The Wildcats ran through Frontier League with an undefeated record and finished with their first league title since 2018. Although it ended with a loss to St. Thomas Aquinas in the playoffs, it was a successful run.

Louisburg hopes to have that same type of success, if not more, this season but the Wildcats will have a little different look to them. They said goodbye to a 16-member senior class, including several all-league and all-state players.

Still, that success and confidence has bled over into the 2023 season and the Wildcats are hoping it can continue what it started a year ago.

“I think it gave us some confidence and also helped establish the standard for where we want to be,” Louisburg coach Drew Harding said of last year’s finish. “The Frontier League is tough, so in order to compete for the league title you have to be ready week in and week out.

“Honestly, without having played anyone else I’m not sure if we have an identity just yet. We were hoping to get an idea with the jamboree, but with the heat we obviously had to change course. I think we will find ourselves over the first few weeks of the season.”

Even though the roster will look a little different in 2023, there are still plenty of familiar faces on the Wildcat sideline and it starts under center.

Senior Declan Battle returns for his third season as the starting varsity quarterback and is coming off an impressive junior campaign. He finished with more than 1,700 yards of total offense and had 18 touchdowns.

That all led to a first-team all-league selection and was also named honorable mention all-state.

“Declan had a really good year for us last year,” Harding said. “I was very proud of the way he picked up a new offense and really played well in the run game and passing game for us. We are hoping he continues to develop, feels more confident in our system, and puts together another really good season for us.”

Battle also has a lot of his offensive weapons back from a season ago in junior tailback Ashton Moore and senior running back Wyatt Holland. He also returns a pair of all-league players at receiver in seniors Caden Caplinger and Hunter

Heinrich, while junior Darby Van Eaton will see time at running back.



Louisburg junior Ashton Moore returns after leading the team in tackles last season and earned first team all-league and all-state honors.

Seniors Brody McGreer, Blake Amren, along with juniors Myles Vohs, Reid McCaskill and Josh Holtzen, could all see time at wide receiver throughout the year.

A big difference this season for the Wildcats will be on the line of scrimmage where they have to replace four of the five starting linemen from last year. Senior center Jaymes Melton is back to lead the group.

Seniors Jackson Howard, Ben O'Bryan, along with juniors Brayden Yoder, Miles Meek, Nate Capuro and sophomore Johnny Hendrickson could all see time on the offensive line.

Louisburg will also feature new players at the tight end position in senior Brock Vohs and junior Conlee Hovey.

“You know I think we have the bodies to help replace those guys up front from last year but we will find out for sure here in the first few weeks,” Harding said. “There is still some competition that is taking place along the lines and we will probably be playing several guys as we start the season at some spots.”

The defensive line will also feature a lot of new faces in Vohs, Hovey, Howard, Yoder, O’Bryan, Hendrickson, Meek and senior Drake Crooks.

However, the defensive leadership for Louisburg will come at the linebacker position. Moore and Holland will help anchor the defense after a strong 2022 season.

Moore, who was a first team all-state and all-league selection as a sophomore, returns for his junior season after leading the Wildcats in tackles last season with 114, including 12 for a loss.

Holland tallied 89 tackles last season, which earned him second team all-league honors and Harding likes what he has in his veteran linebackers.



Senior Wyatt Holland returns as a starting linebacker and was named a second team all-league player last season.

“Ashton and Wyatt I believe were both in the top three of our team in terms of tackles, so that kind of experience is nice to have back,” Harding said. “The nice thing about those guys is they can both really run. They can both make plays sideline to sideline. Last year was Wyatt’s first year ever playing linebacker and it was Ashton’s first year playing linebacker on the varsity level, so they both should feel much more confident this year. We need them to step up vocally on the defense and get everyone lined up and so far they have been doing a good job.”

In the secondary, the Wildcats return just two starters in Caplinger (safety) and Heinrich (cornerback). Battle, Caplinger, senior Brady Hickey and junior Lucas Swartz are all competing for a starting safety spot, while Heinrich, McGreer,

Vohs, McCaskill and junior Alex Saad will be the team's cornerbacks.

It will be a different type of season for the Wildcats, but the goals are still the same and that is to finish atop the league standings.

"Our expectations are that we will need to get better every week," Harding said. "We have a lot of new players along both sides of the line of scrimmage, so we hope to see big strides for both of those groups throughout the season. We want to put ourselves in a position to compete for another Frontier League title, and in order to do that we have to improve and play well each and every week."

That starts today as the Wildcats host Heritage High School from Rogers, Ark. The War Eagles are making the return trip this season after the Wildcats suffered a close loss at their place a season ago.

However, with a new season comes a clean slate and the players are excited to get the season going.

"Practices have been going well," Harding said. "The guys are extremely excited to get the season going and there was a boost in energy once we started a game week. I think everyone is ready to go against somebody other than ourselves."

Wildcat fall teams underway with successful first week of

practice



Louisburg senior Wyatt Holland takes a handoff from backup quarterback Alex Saad during a practice last week.

Before the record setting heat and humidity that is currently smothering Louisburg and the surrounding areas came in, the Wildcat fall sports teams got in a solid first five days of practice last week.

The first day of practice opened the fall season on Aug. 15 as the Wildcat football, boys soccer, cross country and volleyball programs officially kicked off the season.

Participation numbers were up for most of the sports, while football, soccer and cross country had a good week's worth of practice outdoors. With heat and humidity at record levels this week, all outdoor sports will be forced to hold practices early in the morning.

It was a successful season for all four teams last year and it started with the Wildcat football program as they ran through the Frontier League with an undefeated record and earned its first league title since 2018.

The Wildcats currently have 76 players out for football under second-year coach Drew Harding, which is about 10 more than a year ago.

"First couple days of practice have been going well," Harding said. "There is a lot of energy on the field during practice, which is great to have. You can tell they are happy to be

back playing football again.”

Harding kept his players busy over the summer to help prep them for the season. The Wildcats took part in several scrimmages, 7-on-7 and skill sessions, to go along with their normal team camp and weights.

“This allowed everyone to get on the same page and be ready to roll once we started practice in the fall,” Harding said. “The goal is that everything over the summer carries over and we can just continue to get better at what we do once the season starts.

“We want to continue to come together as a team and continue to build camaraderie. We also want to make sure we have the base schemes in all three phases installed and understood before we start putting in opponent specific plans. We want to see athletes compete and separate themselves from one another to show who is ready to play on Friday nights.”



Louisburg sophomore Caileigh Kilgore goes through a hitting drill last week during tryouts.

The Louisburg volleyball program is coming off another state tournament run that saw the Wildcats finish fourth at the Class 4A tourney. That success brought a lot of interest as 39 players tried out, and 32 are currently rostered between the three teams.

“The first three days of the season with tryouts were pretty great,” Louisburg coach Leanna Willer said. “Everyone came with positive attitudes and high energy to push through the challenges of tryouts. After the team was finalized, we got to work right away on Thursday. The energy in the gym is great, and everyone is aware of the high expectations we have for ourselves heading into the season. Both the girls and the coaches are excited to be back in the gym getting better every day.”

Wildcat volleyball also had a busy summer schedule the held a team camp to start, before competing in a summer league and held several open gyms in June and July.

Varsity level players traveled to the University of Nebraska team camp and also competed a tournament in Andale.

“While summer is busy with all kinds of activities, vacations and summer jobs, we appreciate the time and effort all of the girls put in to dedicate themselves to the team and the sport of volleyball,” Willer said. “It also gives us coaches more time to get to know them heading into the season and to develop relationships earlier on so we can get right into volleyball here in August.

“During these first few weeks we hope to foster a culture of competition in our gym where the girls are all challenging each other every single day. We are all on the same page with where we want to be at the end of the season, so during these first few weeks we are focused on building a strong foundation

that will help us get there with an emphasis on team bonding/connections, fundamentals, and conditioning.”



Louisburg senior Emma Vohs is a returning state medalist for the Louisburg cross country team.

The Louisburg cross country team also had a big season last year, especially on the girls side. The Wildcat girls qualified for state and Emma Vohs left Wamego with a state medal.

As far as numbers go, the cross country group is a little down this year with 22, but they still have high aspirations again.

“The runners are excited for the season,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “The girls team is planning for big things again this year and the ‘young’ boys team is looking great.”

Many of those runners have taken to the streets over the summer to get their work in as they prepare for another difficult slate of meets in 2023.

“We had a consistent group of both LHS and LMS runners all summer,” Reece said. “Because of the good turnout, we can get going on the harder workouts earlier in the season.

“The beginning of the season always creates a challenge with runners being at different points of their base building. We look to build base for all and start working on racing skills and workouts as the weeks progress.”



Louisburg junior Emmett White goes through a drill last week at practice.

The Louisburg soccer team will have some rebuilding to do this season as the Wildcats had to say goodbye to 15 seniors from a year ago.

There will certainly be several players to help fill the void as 41 athletes came out for soccer this fall.

“There’s been a huge precedent set with the program, and it’s definitely something that’s been instilled in the players for

quite some time,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Since I’ve joined the program, the junior and senior leaders have been outstanding at organizing summer workouts and activities for the team. It’s been great seeing that sort of self-motivation and leadership from them. We’ve had enough time together as a program over the summer that the first days of tryouts have been smooth as can be. Very little instruction needed, and the guys have been able to jump right in with what we’re asking from them.”

The Wildcats opened their summer hosting a youth camp and then went right in to summer workouts. Louisburg also held its annual team camp to go along with weights sessions.

“With only two returning starters from last year, we’re going to have some growing pains for sure,” Bovaird said. “The first couple of weeks will need to be spent getting in match shape and gelling as a team with so many players being in new positions or at a new level. We open our season with Leavenworth, who was our final regular season game last year. Back then, both varsity and JV had awesome games, but those were totally different teams. We’ll see how well we’ve reloaded for this year, but I’m feeling pretty good.”

**In his final football game,
Vincent shines for East in
Shrine Bowl**



Louisburg's Nathan Vincent started for the East defense in the Kansas Shrine Bowl last month at Fort Hays State University and had a big tackle late in the contest.

HAYS – Nathan Vincent said goodbye to the sport he loved and did so going up against some of the top seniors in the state of Kansas.

He started playing football in elementary school and loved it ever since. Still, Vincent was taken on a different path as he signed with Iowa State to join the track and field program.

Vincent was selected to play in the 50th annual Kansas Shrine Bowl on July 15 at Fort Hays State University, in what turned out to be his last-ever football game.

“Being able to represent Louisburg one more time at the Shrine Bowl will be an experience that I will be forever grateful for,” Vincent said. “It’s something I’ve seen great players do for years, and to be able to play in it myself was surreal.”

Another Louisburg graduate, Jase Hovey, was also selected to play in the game but was unable to attend to due football obligations at South Dakota.

Although Vincent’s East team lost a close one to the West, 21-20, he played a big role on the East defense and helped keep his team in the game.

Vincent, who played on the offensive line during another all-star game earlier this season, wasn’t expecting much playing time when he got there, but he got more than he bargained for.

“I loved playing defense for the East squad and I prefer it over offensive line almost always,” Vincent said. “I felt I played some of my best football, honestly. I came into the camp thinking that I would maybe play in the fourth quarter, but I ended up starting and playing almost the entire game. Playing that well against that caliber of players was so much fun and I felt very proud after the game.”

Late in the fourth quarter, the West side was trying to run out the clock and faced a 4th-down and 1. With the game on the line, Vincent came through for the East.

On a run to the outside, Vincent read the play and shot through to make a game-saving tackle that gave the East offense one more shot to win it. It turned out to be his last-ever tackle.

“We knew we needed a stop right there if we even had a chance to win and they loaded up my side of the line with an extra three guys and I knew right where the ball was going to go,” Vincent said. “It reminded me of when we played Tonganoxie either last year or two years ago, when they would do a heavy set and run right at it. I just read the play well and filled the open lane and stopped them. That being my last tackle is something I’ll never forget.”

As memorable as the game was for Vincent, it was his time preparing for the Shrine Bowl that left a lasting impact on him. The Shrine Bowl is 501(c) 3 non-profit charity that produces annual events and related activities, with net proceeds benefiting Shriners Hospitals for Children. The Kansas Shrine Bowl has sent over \$3.7M to Shriners Hospitals for Children.

In the days prior to the game, Vincent and the rest of the Shrine Bowl players had a chance to meet with some of the patients and he quickly realized what this game was all about.

“The Shrine Bowl experience overall was one of the coolest and

most memorable things I have ever gotten to be apart of," Vincent said. "They always say that the Shrine Bowl is so much more than a game but I never knew how true that was until I got there. We were educated on what the Shriners hospital is and even got to meet and listen to some of the patients.

"I never knew how much of an amazing organization and group of people the Shriners organization is. Everyone I met there was kind and extremely passionate about what they do. It was just awesome."

Van Eaton signs with Dodge City Community College football



After a big senior season, Louisburg's Riley Van Eaton will look to make an impact with the Dodge City Community College football this fall.

Riley Van Eaton was one of the smaller players on the Louisburg football team this past season, but he made a big impact for the Wildcats.

Van Eaton was the team's starting running back, and even at 5 feet, 7 inches, was a load to bring down for the opposition. He put in the work and translated that into a first team all-

league player and also earned all-state honors.

As happy as he was with that season – Van Eaton wanted more. He wanted the opportunity to play college football.

Van Eaton will get his chance this fall as he signed with Dodge City Community College and he is ready to make an impact with the Conquistadors program.

“I started falling in love with football in eighth grade and just kept growing into a running back type,” Van Eaton said. “Signing to Dodge is a blessing and I plan to prove myself and see where the future takes me.”

The 2023 Louisburg graduate will join the Dodge City team and compete in the Jayhawk Conference, which is one of the toughest conferences in the country.

Van Eaton knows he still has work to do to improve, but he is hoping to get playing time at the running back spot this season.

“Dodge is a good school and I really think they will help me get better,” Van Eaton said. “Dodge will also help me find some good options in the future. It will definitely be a challenge, but I am looking forward to it.

“Terry Karg (head coach) is a very nice person and seems very organized. I will be fighting for a starting spot, and I like a challenge. I am just looking forward to the opportunity.”

Van Eaton was one of the Wildcats’ top offensive weapons this past season. He earned first team All-Frontier League honors at running back and was also an honorable mention all-state selection.

He carried the ball 172 times for 1,043 yards and 15 touchdowns. He also had 188 yards receiving out of the backfield as he helped the Wildcats to an undefeated Frontier League title under first-year head coach Drew Harding.

“I had a great senior year and I just want to thank all the coaches,” Van Eaton said. “Harding is the best coach you can ask for. He is very patient, understanding and gives people chances. He really taught me a lot.”

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.”