

Week 1 Athlete of the Week: Lexi Hampton



Here is the Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Week for week one of the spring sports season, sponsored by Louisburg Family Dental.

Lexi Hampton, Freshman, Girls Soccer

Louisburg freshman Lexi Hampton made quite the impact for the Wildcat girls soccer team last week. In her first ever varsity competition, Hampton finished with a hat trick in Louisburg's season opening win over Lansing. She then followed it up with a two-goal performance in the Wildcats' win over Atchison last Thursday.

In all, Hampton finished the week with five goals and had 11 shots on goal as she helped the Wildcats to a perfect start to its season. Currently, Louisburg has a 3-0 record to start the year.

The athlete of the week award is announced every Wednesday morning during the spring season and the winner is selected by Louisburg Sports Zone with the help of nominations from coaches.

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Hampton's hat trick leads Wildcats past Lansing in opener



Freshman Alexis Hampton splits two Lansing defenders during

Louisburg's season opener Tuesday at Wildcat Stadium. Hampton scored three goals and led the Wildcats to a 6-0 win over the Lions.

Kyle Conley wasn't sure how his Louisburg girls soccer team was going to look in its season opener.

The Wildcats have a roster filled with young, inexperienced players, and for the first five minutes of their match with Lansing on Tuesday, they looked the part.

However, those nerves quickly went away and the Wildcats let their play shine through in a big way.

Louisburg scored five second half goals on its way to a 6-0 victory over Lansing at Wildcat Stadium and it was what the Wildcats were hoping for in their first time out.

"When you look at how we played from the first five minutes to the last five minutes, I think you saw us improve quite a bit," Conley said. "We were definitely having some accidents on the field for the first five minutes until we finally we realized that we were okay.

"The girls are just competitors and they were battling out there. We were able to get a lot of kids out on the field, I think like 20 or 22 of them, so that was good to get everyone out there for the first time. After the first half there was a lot less yelling and everyone seemed a lot more comfortable."

A bulk of those goals came from players who had yet to score a varsity goal, including freshman Alexis Hampton.

The Louisburg forward opened the game with a goal in the first half, and then found the back of the net two more times in the second. Not only were those her first varsity goals, but it was her first hat trick in her inaugural outing as a Wildcat.



The Louisburg team comes together to celebrate Olivia Barber's (10) goal to begin the second half Tuesday at Wildcat Stadium.

Freshman Lola Edwards and sophomore Tehya Harvey also had their first varsity goals in the second half. Senior Olivia Barber accounted for the other when she opened the second half with the score.

"For them those were their first varsity goals ever, so I thought they all did a good job," Conley said. "Lexi really pounded the ball and had some great finishes and I am excited to watch those girls go and improve. It always makes it fun."

Barber also had an assist on the day, as did sophomore Bree Gassman and junior Reese Johnson. It was Johnson who provided the Wildcats with many opportunities on their 10 shots on goal.

"Reese did a great job," Conley said. "As a junior, she is just torching it up and down the line and she just gets it. She knows her responsibility and she did exactly what we

wanted her to do from her outside-mid spot for this game. She executed to the fullest and gave us so many good chances."



Sophomore Tehya Harvey tries to settle the ball Tuesday against Lansing. Harvey scored her first varsity goal in the second half.

Louisburg had 23 shots against the Lansing defense, with five of those coming from Hampton. Barber, Johnson and sophomore Adyson Ross each had three, while sophomore Nova Ptacek, senior Emma Christy and Harvey each had two.

The Wildcat defense also did its job as they limited Lansing to just two shots and junior goalie Sierra Hahn was able to get the clean sheet.

The Wildcats will try for their second straight win at 5:30 p.m. tonight when they host Atchison at Wildcat Stadium.

"Obviously there are some things that we have to work on, but I thought it was good to see how the girls battled and competed," Conley said. "It was good to finally play someone other than ourselves. We are still trying figure some stuff out, but this was only the second day that I have actually had my entire roster here, so we are piecing it together as we go. We have one down and hopefully we can keep it going."

After a year away, Louisburg girls soccer ready to get back on the pitch



Louisburg junior Reese Johnson is one of three returning starters from the Wildcats' 2019 state runner-up team as they get back on the field for the first time in almost two years.

The last time the Louisburg girls soccer team was on the pitch, the Wildcats walked off with its second consecutive state runner-up finish.

That, unfortunately, was almost two years ago.

The Wildcat soccer team, along with every other spring program, is back at it after having its season cancelled last year due to the spread of COVID-19.

Last year was supposed to feature a team of 12 seniors that were trying to make their third straight state championship game. They never got that chance, and this year's team will look different.

Also, thanks to the success of the girls basketball team that finished third at state, head coach Kyle Conley didn't have his full regiment of players until yesterday's practice.

Louisburg opens its season at 5 p.m. today when it hosts Lansing.

"If last season taught us anything, it's never to take anything for granted," Conley said. "These girls are working incredibly hard and are focusing on maintaining the standard that the previous teams set. This team isn't last year's team, but they are going to leave their own legacy. The girls have done a nice job preparing and focusing on this team.

"This is a group of girls who are there for each other and play hard. With the crazy spring, spring break and girls basketball success, Monday was the first time I had my entire team at the field together. We have done the best we could to prepare for the season. This team is going to grow a lot throughout the season and it is going to be fun to watch."

The Wildcats return six seniors on this year's team – seniors that haven't played in a Louisburg uniform since they were sophomores. It is just one of the many things they have tried to work through.

"We did graduate 12 seniors in a season that never was last year," Conley said. "It was an incredibly gifted group of players that we are looking to replace. This group of young ladies are ready for the challenge, though. They have worked really hard and are a really young team with the majority of the players being sophomores and freshmen.

"This will be a year where more than half our team never

completed a high school season. We will have some growing pains, but this a smart and athletic group that will grow each and everyday.”



Louisburg senior Madi Quinn will be one of the leaders for the Wildcat defense this year.

Three Wildcats return from the state runner-up squad and will help guide the young team this season and it starts in the midfield.

Senior Olivia Barber and junior Reese Johnson will lead the Louisburg attack in the middle, while senior Madi Quinn will be one of the leaders in the back on defense.

Sophomores Bree Gassman and Adyson Ross will start also start in the midfield for Louisburg, and the Wildcats will look to a pair of freshmen up top in Lola Edwards and Alexis Hampton at the forward position.

Defensively, along with Quinn, will feature a back line of senior Melissa Meigs, junior Ruth Minster and freshman Hailey Sword.

Junior Sierra Hahn will be the team's starting goalkeeper after backing up Carson Buffington on the 2019 squad.

Even though they are young, Conley hopes his older players like Quinn, Barber and Minster, who were named team captains, can help guide the team through rough times.

"I think this team is going to be very dynamic," Conley said. "We are going to put up some goals and defend well. This group is determined with their play to be successful. They are pushing themselves for the greater good of the team.



Junior Ruth Minster was named as one of three team captains, along with seniors Madi Quinn and Olivia Barber.

"Our team is very even in regards to breaking down of classes on the varsity squad. This group is a good group of kids that are focused to get better. We also have solid leadership and that helps so much when they are willing to help teach, guide and lead."

The Wildcats will also have a deep bench as senior Emma Christy, sophomore Nova Ptacek, freshman Bronwynn Williams and juniors Catie Lemke and Sammy McDaniel will all play in the midfield.

Seniors Kennady Wilkerson, Liz Guzman, along with junior Bailey Hallas and sophomore Brianne Kuhlman will serve as back up defenders, while sophomore Tehya Harvey could see some time up top.

The team, which has been practicing since early this month, is ready to break out and see what it can do, and that starts today against Lansing.

"As a coach I love preseason, but it drags on," Conley said. "It's fun to line up against another team and just compete. We finally get to do that against Lansing. As a coach, you are always interested to see how your team measures up to other teams. The girls are excited and ready."

Top Louisburg Sports Stories of 2020



There hasn't been a year like 2020, and for most people, they are ready to put it behind them and forget it ever existed.

Still, with all the challenges that 2020 brought, there were still plenty of positives to talk about when it came to Louisburg High School sports. History-making state places and state medals were plentiful on this list, but it wasn't all positive. Louisburg had to say goodbye to a beloved town figure and athletes had to deal with the loss of spring sports.

Below are the top stories from 2020, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the explanation 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. Thanks to the cancellation of spring sports, I don't have the top 10 like I normally do, but I got close.

This year was a blast to cover, when I had the opportunity, anyway. Still, I am looking forward to what 2021 will bring. Thank you for everyone's support and can't wait for it all to begin again.



8. Ratliff-Becher wins state powerlifting title

After winning a state championship in 2019 Reilly Ratliff-Becher had every intention of backing up her performance during the Class 4A State Powerlifting Championships on March 7 at Piper High School.

In fact, the Louisburg senior wanted to improve it. Last

season, Ratliff-Becher took first in everything but squat, which she got runner-up.

This time around, she got the clean sweep.

Ratliff-Becher took first in bench, squat and clean and that led to her second straight state championship in the 180-pound class.

"It means a lot to me that I was able to win the state title again," Ratliff-Becher said. "I set a goal for myself to win first in everything since I had got second in squat last year and I achieved it. Even though it wasn't my best showing with the numbers I got on my lifts.

"The competition was very good this year, as it always is. But, fortunately with all the work I put in to at least maintain my numbers from last year, meant I was able to lift bigger amounts than my competition."



7. Conley named state and midwest coach of the year

After a third place finish to end the year, Louisburg boys

soccer coach Kyle Conley was recognized among the state's best.

Conley was named as the Class 4-1A Coach of the Year by the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association in November.

He guided the Wildcats to a 16-2 record on the season and the team's highest finish in program history when Louisburg ousted Rose Hill, 3-0, in the state third-place game.

Just a few weeks later, Conley was honored once again – this time on the girls' side.

Despite the lost season, the United Soccer Coaches wanted to recognize coaches for their past accomplishments and for what this past spring was supposed to hold.

Atop that list was Conley as he was named as the Small School Midwest Coach of the Year.

"I am absolutely honored to receive this award," Conley said. "There are so many great coaches in the Midwest, but to me this is a program award. None of this is possible without everyone involved; girls coming to work their tails off everyday, parents traveling and supporting us anywhere and everywhere, community helping with supporting the program, the school supporting the girls, etc. Without the support and buy in from the girls, parents and community none of this is possible."

The Wildcat girls program has had a successful start in its four years. Conley has a 54-22-2 record during that span, that included two state runner-ups and another state final four appearance.



6. Louisburg cheer places third at state

The Louisburg cheer squad had to do its postseason competition a little different this year thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It didn't seem to bother them much as the defending state champions found themselves right in the thick of things again.

Although they didn't repeat as champs, they were still among the state's best as the Wildcats cheerleaders finished third in the state back in November.

Unlike performing in front of judges like they did in 2019, the Wildcats had to video tape their performance and send it in to be judged. It fared well as they tallied 83.35 points to finish in the top 3.

Baldwin earned the state title with 88.85 points and Abilene was second with 85.25.

Members of the Louisburg cheer squad are Bella Feikert, Addison Drake, Brooklyn Harmon, Jayden Trester, Maddy Carpenter-Ross, Sophie Katzer, Sammy McDaniel, Julia Arriola, Andrea Gaza, JoJo Hendrickson, Sydney Dudzik, Abby Bradley, Anna Poe, Sienna Finch, Mable Graham, Audrey Anderson, Zoe Weers, Anna Morrison and Maggie Madison



5. Holtzen, Owens earn state medals for Wildcat wrestling

Ryan Owens and Cade Holtzen both had their own agendas going into the state wrestling tournament.

Owens, qualified for state last year, but left without a win and he vowed to fix that this time around. As for Holtzen, he came up short in his efforts for a second state medal as a

sophomore last season and had all the motivation not to come home empty-handed again.

Both wrestlers more than made up for their rough patches a year ago.

Owens and Holtzen left Salina with a state medal during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships on Friday and Saturday at the Tony's Pizza Events Center.



Owens made it to the semifinals and wound up earning a fourth-place medal at 120 pounds, while Holtzen finished fifth at 126 pounds.

It also marked the first time since 2016 that Louisburg finished the season with multiple state medalists, when Nathan Keegan and Mason Koechner each brought home medals.

The Wildcats nearly had three medalists as sophomore Brandon Doles finished one win shy of a state medal at 160 pounds with a 2-2 record.



4. Dennis steps down as LHS team doctor

Almost every day of the week, if you were looking for Damon Dennis, he could be found at his office on 11 S. Broadway St., helping treat those pesky aches and pains, taking X-rays, or mending those beaten up athletes after a game.

Doc D – as he his affectionately known – opened Louisburg Chiropractic Office 28 years ago and has served as the

Louisburg High School athletic team doctor for almost that same amount of time.

Dennis has seen it all. The walls in his office are lined with mementos from his years of service to both the community and the high school.

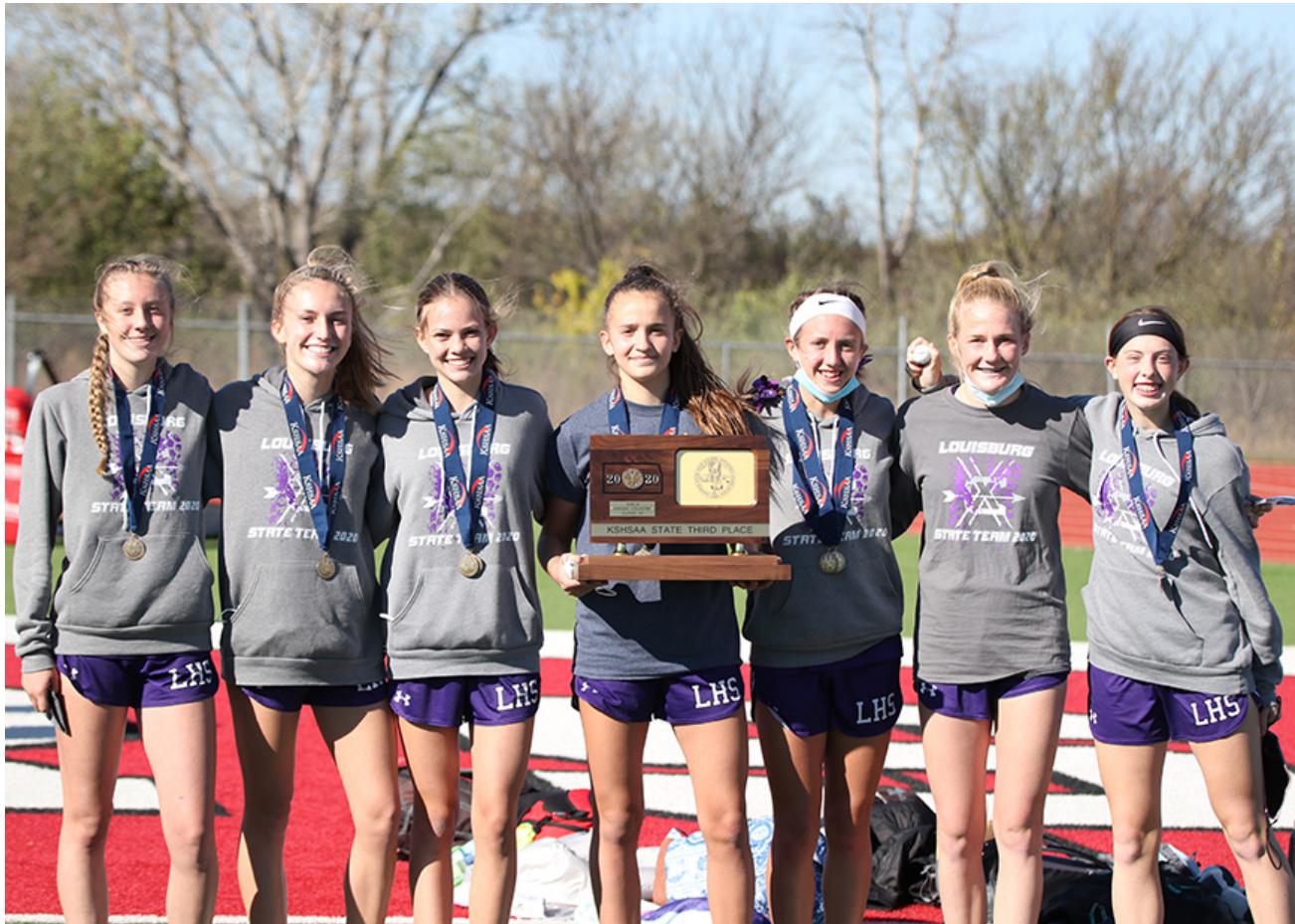
He has taped thousands of ankles, seen even more patients and has touched many lives during his time in Louisburg. That is why this week is one of the more emotional times in his life.

In May, he left Louisburg Chiropractic Office and handed the reins over to Dr. Jake Polzin. Add to that, Dennis also stepped away as LHS' team doctor and left an absence on the sidelines and behind the mic that many in Louisburg have come to know.

"My decision to step down and sell the practice has turned out to be the hardest thing I have ever done," Dennis said. "I have poured everything I have into my job and community. It has become my entire existence. I was taught from a young age to serve others and your community. I feel like the pressures I have put on myself have become unhealthy. I have put about 40 years work in to 28 and feel like there is never going to be a good time to make such a huge life change.

"That being said, I feel like I need to make changes while I am still able to do the things that will be best for my family. Dr. Polzin came along and I think he will carry on the work at the office wonderfully. We are a lot alike in many ways. I could not have found anyone better to replace me."

For many, Dennis has been a big part of people's lives, especially in the athletic arena. He has served as the LHS team doctor since 1992 and has treated many athletes in those 28 years.



3. Girls Cross Country Takes Third at State

For 23 years, the Louisburg cross country program has been chasing a top three finish at the Class 4A meet.

The Wildcats have had several teams qualify, especially in the last few seasons, but have always come up short of their goal. Following Saturday's race in Wamego, the Wildcats can finally stop running after it.

The Louisburg girls put together an historic performance at the Class 4A Kansas State Cross Country Championships at Wamego Country Club. The Lady Cats earned a state plaque with a third place finish as they surpassed Buhler by eight points to record the school's first top three state finish.

Junior Reese Johnson, sophomores Claire Brown, Bree Gassman and Nova Ptacek, along with freshmen Lola Edwards, Maddy Rhamy and Erin Apple, will all go down in school history as they became the first Wildcat team to bring home state hardware.

"It means the world to me to be a part of the first team ever to place at state," Rhamy said. "Coming into the state meet, I was just hoping our team would be in the top half, so you could imagine my excitement when our team placed third. I didn't even know we made school history until our coaches told us."

Rhamy was one of two freshmen who earned top 10 finishes individually, along with Edwards. Rhamy finished eighth overall in 20 minutes and 58 seconds, while Edwards was right behind her in 10th in 21:02.

Junior Reese Johnson also garnered a state medal as she was 15th in 21:28 to help the Lady Cats to an historic performance.

It was a proud moment for many in the Louisburg program, and included in that is John Reece. The longtime Wildcat head coach was all smiles following his team's performance.

"It is 23 years the making," coach Reece said. "You always have the plans and goals to get to state and then you get a group to go to state and do something great. This year was one of those. With the Frontier League as tough as it is, and then getting third there, put it in our heads that maybe we could do this. They all went out and ran their races, and that just shows their grit and determination and who they are."

A week earlier, the Wildcats also made history as it was the first time in school history when they qualified the entire boys team to the state meet as they took third at regionals.



2. Boys Soccer Finishes Runner-Up At State

As the Louisburg players huddled around their state plaque, many of them looked at it in awe and wonder.

“Hey guys, we won this,” a player shouted.

The statement was obvious at the time, but nonetheless, their excitement was more than warranted.

For the first time in program history, the Louisburg boys soccer team brought home a plaque from the state final four as the Wildcats defeated Rose Hill, 3-0, on Saturday in the third place match of the Class 4-1A state tournament at Stryker Sports Complex in Wichita.

It was only the second time in school history that the Wildcats had it made it this far, with the other being in 2016, when they finished fourth.

"There are only six teams in the entire state that get to end their year with a win and we wanted to be one of those teams," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "We want to be able to hang up a banner on our field and we wanted a plaque so that no one can forget what these kids earned and what they did this season. I am so proud of all of them."

It was a program defining moment for the Wildcats as they began the weekend searching for a state championship, but lost 2-0 to Bishop Miege on Friday in the semifinals. Still, recording the best finish in school history is nothing for someone to hang their head about, and the Wildcats came out Saturday wanting to make sure they brought some hardware home.

"It's absolutely crazy to think about what we have accomplished this year, partly because I have only played soccer in high school," senior captain Logan Faulkner said. "Bringing a state plaque back will just be a reminder of what we did and how we reached our goal."



1. COVID-19 Cancels Spring Sports

In March, Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly closed all schools for the rest of the 2019-20 school year due to the spread of COVID-19.

When most students hear school has been closed, especially in the winter, cheers erupt. In this case, however, the tone was much more somber – especially among the senior class.

Proms were canceled. Any plans they had for a graduation ceremony were put on hold, and for more than 30 seniors, their last opportunity at playing a sport at Louisburg High School was taken away.

In fact, close to 200 students were planning on participating in an activity in the spring, but with no school, the Kansas State High School Activities Association followed suit and canceled the spring season the day after Gov. Kelly's declaration.

Students, parents and coaches alike have had to come to grips that a season they had been looking forward to all year, was never going to happen. Tears flowed, walls were punched in frustration and some were left speechless.

There would be no game days, no Senior Nights and no postseason runs. Athletes had to figure out how to cope with this fact and it was a challenge for the Louisburg girls soccer, track and field, baseball, softball, golf and swim teams.

Many of those teams had big postseason aspirations after success in 2019 and were left wondering what could have been.

Conley named Girls Midwest Coach of the Year



The Louisburg girls soccer team had prepared for 2020 to be its year.

Instead, COVID-19 had something to say about that as spring sports were cancelled in Kansas and across the country. The Wildcats were one of the favorites in Class 4-1A to possibly win a state crown.

Despite the lost season, the United Soccer Coaches wanted to recognize coaches for their past accomplishments and for what this past spring was supposed to hold.

Atop that list was Louisburg girls head coach, Kyle Conley.

Last week, Conley was named as the Small School Midwest Coach of the Year. This came just three weeks after Conley was named the Class 4-1A Boys Coach of the Year by the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association.

"I am absolutely honored to receive this award," Conley said. "There are so many great coaches in the Midwest, but to me this is a program award. None of this is possible without everyone involved; girls coming to work their tails off everyday, parents traveling and supporting us anywhere and everywhere, community helping with supporting the program, the school supporting the girls, etc. "Without the support and buy in from the girls, parents and community none of this is possible."

The Wildcat girls program has had a successful start in its four years. Conley has a 54-22-2 record during that span, that included two state runner-ups and another state final four appearance.

Still, Conley would throw all the awards away to put his 2020 girls back on the field again.

"It has been an incredible first four years and I would give anything to give that 2020 team a chance to play and try to reach their goals," Conley said. "It was a special group."

"The first four years of our program were absolutely incredible and 54-22-2 in our first four years is unbelievable. We have had countless all league, all state and player of the years. The amount of buy in and dedication to all involved is fantastic."

Haight, Scholtz named to All-American team



Their high school soccer careers may be behind them now, but Ryan Haight and Mackenzie Scholtz got one final honor before they officially become college students.

Late last month, both Haight and Scholtz were named to the United Soccer Coaches Scholar All-American teams for their

performance on the field and in the classroom. A total of 121 players received High School Scholar All-America recognition, including 52 boys and 69 girls athletes across the country.

“It’s absolutely incredible to have two student athletes recognized for this tremendous honor,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “This is a credit to these two young adults’ work ethic in the classroom and on the field. Both have excelled on the field for their respective teams and also got it done on the field.”

Haight, who finished high school with a 4.0 GPA, was a key contributor on the Wildcat boys team that won 16 games and a Frontier League title last season.

He was second team All-Frontier League in 2017 and 2019 and was first team All-Frontier League in 2018. Haight was second team 4A-1A all-state in 2018 and first team 4A-1A all-state in 2019 and was named the Class 4A-1A Defensive Player of the Year.

In all, Haight had 43 starts in 46 appearances on defense. He also totaled nine goals and four assists in his career as well.

As for Scholtz, she holds nearly every offensive record for the Wildcats. She has the school record for goals in a season (39), goals in a career (98), assists in a season (18) and in a career (39), points in a season (84) and in a career (235), game winning goals in a season (10), hat tricks in a season (9) and in a career (18).

Scholtz was also a 3-time first team All-Frontier League selection, 3-time 4A-1A first team all-state honoree and 2019 4A-1A Co-Offensive Player of the Year. She also did work in the classroom as she finished up high school with a 3.76 GPA.

To be eligible for All-America consideration, players first must be selected by their respective state through a

recognized coaches' selection program. Each state is awarded a specific number of slots on the All-America team based on the number of high school coaches that are current United Soccer Coaches members.

2020 Athlete of the Year Nominees



For the past four years, Louisburg Sports Zone has given out Athlete of the Week awards during each of the three sports seasons. I do it to recognize special athletic achievements and to highlight the athletes.

For the third straight 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."

Obviously, 2020 has not been the typical year when the spring was cancelled due to COVID-19. However, I still want to make sure those athletes that were set to make an impact in the spring were recognized as well.

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 voted for their top male and female athletes and then I tabulated the results. I will release the results in the coming days.

Below are the nominees for this year's award in alphabetical order by last name. Congrats to all those who were nominated and best of luck!

Female Athlete of the Year Nominees



Haley Cain – Senior – Volleyball, Basketball, Soccer

Haley was a three-sport athlete during her time at Louisburg High School and recorded the rare feat of earning 12 varsity letters.

In the fall, she helped the Louisburg volleyball team to its third consecutive state tournament and was selected to represent Kansas in the Greater Kansas City All-Star Match. She was also named to the All-Frontier League second team as a middle hitter.

Cain was also a two-time team captain for the Louisburg girls basketball team and was a key player for the Lady Cats this past season. She was also set to be a big contributor for the Wildcat soccer team in the spring as well.



Trinity Moore – Senior – Cross Country, Soccer

Trinity made cross country history for the Wildcats this past season as she medaled third at state and broke her own school record in the process. The Louisburg senior also medaled at state all four years.

Moore was also a returning starter for the Wildcat soccer team and was a key factor in helping the Wildcats to three consecutive state final fours and two state runner-up finishes.

She started 43 games for the Wildcats and concluded her career with 18 goals and eight assists. She is fifth in school history with 44 points.



Erin Lemke – Senior – Volleyball, Soccer

Erin was another multi-sport athlete for Louisburg as she was a member of the volleyball and soccer teams. Lemke was an outside hitter for the Lady Cat volleyball team and was selected to represent Kansas in the Greater Kansas City All-Star Match.

On the soccer team, Lemke was a two-time team captain for the Wildcats and was a returning all-league and all-state player. She was also one of the team's top goal scorers.

Lemke had a very productive career for the Wildcats as she started 48 of her 59 games and earned all-league and all-state honors as a sophomore and a junior.

She finished her career with 29 goals and 27 assists and Lemke has the second-best assist mark for a season in program history with 17 and is third in career assists. She also added seven game-winning goals.



Reilly Ratliff-Becher – Senior – Volleyball, Powerlifting, Softball

Reilly was a multi-sport athlete for Louisburg High School as she competed in volleyball, power-lifiting and softball. She was an honorable mention all-league selection in volleyball as she served as the Lady Cat libero.

Ratliff-Becher was a big part of the Lady Cats' state tournament runs the last three years. She was also selected to participate in the Greater Kansas City All-Star game last November.

As a powerlifter, Reilly recorded her second-straight state championship and took first in each of the three individual events.

Ratliff-Becher was also a returning starter on the Lady Cat softball team after she helped Louisburg to a state tournament appearance a year ago as a catcher and outfielder.

Male Athlete of the Year Nominees



Garrett Rolofson – Senior – Soccer, Basketball, Golf

Garrett is a three-sport athlete for Louisburg as he was a member of the soccer, basketball and golf teams. In soccer, Rolofson served as the Wildcats' goalkeeper and helped Louisburg to a regional title and a school record 16 wins.

Rolofson was named to the All-Frontier League first team and to the all-state second team. He posted eight shutouts on the season and allowed only 17 goals, four of which came from penalty shots. He also finished with 78 saves on the season and allowed the second fewest goals in Class 4-1A.

In basketball, Rolofson was a starter on the Wildcat basketball team and this spring he was all set to help the Wildcat golf team to their second consecutive state tournament appearance. He was the team's No. 3 golfer a year ago.



Madden Rutherford – Senior – Football, Baseball

Madden was a multi-sport athlete for Louisburg as he was a key member of the Wildcat football and baseball teams.

Rutherford, who was a team captain on the football team, was selected as a first team All-Frontier League quarterback. Rutherford finished the year with 671 yards passing with eight touchdowns and he also added 245 yards on the ground and four more scores.

On the baseball team, Rutherford was also a returning all-league player and was slated to be the Wildcats' No. 1 starter this spring.

Wildcat athletes report back for summer conditioning



Almost 80 high school girls attended the first day of summer conditioning on Monday at Louisburg High School.

For the first time in almost three months, Louisburg High School and Louisburg Middle School athletes found themselves back on the field starting Monday at Wildcat Stadium.

It didn't include any balls, equipment, weights and wasn't indoors, but more than 300 athletes participated in the mandatory conditioning drills that were set by the Kansas State High School Activities Association.

"The turnout was exceptional, and considering the limit on group sizes, distance restrictions, and getting creative in using multiple spaces to accommodate the large numbers in appropriately sized groups allowed in phase three, these coordinators did a great job setting a standard," Louisburg activities director Michael Pickman said.

This was all following the cancellation of the spring season to the spread of COVID-19 and KSHSAA allowed school districts to begin conditioning exercises on June 1. The Louisburg school district started this past Monday and each athlete must participate in 10 sessions before being able to attend in any team activities or camps.

Several coaches were in attendance running athletes through drills in three separate stations that would allow some space between everyone. Football coaches Robert Ebenstein, Ty Pfannenstiel, Joel McGhee and Drew Harding were on hand to lead drills, along with other staff from within the USD 416 school district.

"There are many coaches who are volunteering and just want to be there to support their athletes," Pickman said. "It's what makes the LHS coaching staff stand out from others. However, I have encouraged coaches not directly coordinating weights to stay home as much as they can with numbers restrictions, but so far we haven't had that be an issue."

High school boys begin each morning at 6 a.m., for the hour-long workout and high school girls follow and then it all finishes up with middle school. To start there were 121 high school boys in attendance, 79 girls and 126 middle school students.



More than 120 Louisburg High School boys attended the first day of summer conditioning at Wildcat Stadium.

To start the day, each athlete is screened before the start of

conditioning with a temperature check and then they are divided into three groups. Each of them will participate in three stations that focuses on different workouts. There are no more than 45 athletes in a group and the coaches design workouts to promote the six feet of distance.

"There were temperatures that needed to be taken and protocol for sanitizing hands and checking in that went efficiently and smoothly overall," Pickman said. "A lot of planning went into this with the coaches to make sure it went well. And Mr. Holloway (LHS principal) volunteered his time to help take temps at the various sessions."

As far as cross country goes, interested runners instead attend running sessions held by coach John Reece that will take place throughout the summer and they do not have to attend conditioning.

Whenever the athletes have completed their 10 sessions, they are allowed to participate in team activities the rest of the summer. As of right now, everything is on track to allow athletes to begin attending camps after June 29.

"Everything is progressing so far to according to schedule," Pickman said. "Assuming the governor's phase out stage begins when it is supposed to, we will be ready to begin using the weight room, gyms, and sports equipment. Coaches will be able to have practices and then middle school and high school age camps after June 29. The younger kids who do not have to have the 10 days of acclimatization are able to run the week of June 22. With the schedule the way it is, kids should have no problem getting their 10 days of acclimatization needed to participate in camps."

Dennis leaves lasting legacy in Louisburg, LHS athletics



Damon Dennis, and his wife Karla, pose for quick picture during a timeout at a Louisburg High School basketball game Dennis was announcing. Dennis, who is better known as Doc D, is handing over his business at Louisburg Chiropractic Office to Dr. Jacob Polzin and is stepping away as the LHS team doctor after 28 years of service. His last day at the office is tomorrow (Saturday).

Almost every day of the week, if you were looking for Damon Dennis, he could be found at his office on 11 S. Broadway St., helping treat those pesky aches and pains, taking X-rays, or mending those beaten up athletes after a game.

Doc D – as he his affectionately known – opened Louisburg Chiropractic Office 28 years ago and has served as the Louisburg High School athletic team doctor for almost that same amount of time.

Dennis has seen it all. The walls in his office are lined with mementos from his years of service to both the community and the high school.

He has taped thousands of ankles, seen even more patients and has touched many lives during his time in Louisburg. That is why this week is one of the more emotional times in his life.

On Saturday, he will officially leave Louisburg Chiropractic Office and hand the reins over to Dr. Jake Polzin. Add to

that, Dennis is also stepping away as LHS' team doctor and will leave an absence on the sidelines and behind the mic that many in Louisburg have come to know.

"My decision to step down and sell the practice has turned out to be the hardest thing I have ever done," Dennis said. "I have poured everything I have into my job and community. It has become my entire existence. I was taught from a young age to serve others and your community. I feel like the pressures I have put on myself have become unhealthy. I have put about 40 years work in to 28 and feel like there is never going to be a good time to make such a huge life change.

"That being said, I feel like I need to make changes while I am still able to do the things that will be best for my family. Dr. Polzin came along and I think he will carry on the work at the office wonderfully. We are a lot alike in many ways. I could not have found anyone better to replace me."

For many, Dennis has been a big part of people's lives, especially in the athletic arena. He has served as the LHS team doctor since 1992 and has treated many athletes in those 28 years.



Dennis (left) and Dr. Jake Polzin pose for a picture in their office. Polzin will officially take over the practice from Dennis after this week, but both have been seeing the patients the last three months.

During the school year, Dennis would leave his place of business every day after 3 to go to the high school to tape up athletes from all different sports and made sure they were all ready to go for practice. After that was over, he would rush back to his office to finish the day treating his patients.

It would be hectic life for some, but it is one that he has treasured for the last nearly three decades.

"My time in practice has been a blessing," Dennis said. "I truly care about all of the patients and people in the community that I have been involved with. I have tried to be a positive impact on the town through my involvement in different organizations. As with any business, there are bumps in the road. I genuinely appreciate everyone who has had a positive impact on me through these years.

"I have poured my heart and soul in to every aspect of my business and involvement in the community, sometimes at the sacrifice of my wife, Karla. I am eternally grateful for her patience and love. Part of the reason why I am handing over the reigns is that I have a lot of making up for time to do."



Damon Dennis (middle) walks out of the locker room with the Wildcat football coaches prior to a game.

Dennis and his family have made a lot of sacrifices during his

time and many of the Wildcat coaches – both former and present – appreciate what he has done for them and their players.

“As far as what he has meant to the community, it is immeasurable,” longtime former coach Gary Griffin said. “He came in the first year and made himself available to all the coaches and was there for whatever the kids needed from the medical stuff, to a new pair of shoes, or money to go to a team dinner. He was even there to lend an ear to a kid that was having issues from girlfriends, teacher issues or problems at home.

“For me personally, he was a cheerleader when times were not good, he was an advocate for kids when I didn’t always know what was going on behind the scenes. I trusted Doc like he was a member of the coaching staff. I told him a lot of things in confidence so I could get his advice knowing it would not go any further. As far as the community goes, he is a pillar and he is involved in everything and is held in high regards by most. It is really hard for Doc to tell anyone no, so most of his days are longer than just his office hours. Doc is going to be missed in so many ways. He is a very humble man and he is very deserving of slowing down and enjoying the fruits of his labor.”

A Small Beginning

Back in June of 1992 is when Dennis began to plant his roots in the town he would begin to call home.

Dennis purchased the small satellite office from Dr. Larry Fulk, who at the time also had a practice in Paola. Dennis was less than a year out of school and was eager to get involved in the Louisburg community.

Two months later, Dennis reached out to then Louisburg High School administrator Doug Chisam and asked if he could serve as the team’s doctor – free of charge. Since August of 1992,

Louisburg High School would not be the same.

Dennis made trips over to the high school for treatment and would also follow many of the team's to their games after work was over. It was a life that would go on to create many memories.

"Jim Knox, Don Meek and Doug Chisam were all very supportive and I am forever in their debt," Dennis said. "I started out just going to all games, home and away, and every sport that I could. At that time I was in the office from 6 am to 7 pm and then off to games 3-4 nights a week. The things I have always enjoyed about being the team doctor was the kids and the coaches. High school athletes have not changed since day one. They want someone who cares about and shows interest in what they are doing. I am still close with a lot of the students who have come through the high school and will continue to be.

"My role evolved over the years. I began doing all the taping before practice and games, Impact testing, announcing basketball and other roles as the coaches requested. I enjoy helping others and that is how my role evolved in to so many other areas. Over the years, the coaches have included me and I will always be grateful to them for allowing me to be a part of the experience."



Damon and his wife Karla pose for a picture in front of his office back in the early 90s.

His role got even bigger when the new high school was built and Dennis was asked if he would like to announce basketball games. He certainly didn't mind having a mic in his hand and loved playing off the crowd and making sure the athletes felt a little extra special.

"We had a girls' tournament and Dave Tappan asked me if I would announce the game," Dennis said. "He thought it would be a nice touch to have an announcer. I am not sure he ever asked me to continue, I just did it. I had to be at games anyway and I like to talk, so it worked out. Dave never said to quit, so I just kept doing it.

"I really did enjoy that. I would try to throw in a little funny once and awhile just to see if people were listening. Dottie Cook had a birthday every game night for several years. Knowing the kids so well, it was fun to add their middle name or nickname at the game."

Tappan, who is currently the USD 416 assistant superintendent, worked as the LHS activities director and principal during many of Dennis' years in Louisburg and the two became quick

friends.

With that, Tappan is well aware of Dennis' work ethic and commitment to Louisburg athletics. In fact, he has seen it firsthand.



Doc D lets out a cheer on the sidelines following a big play during the Wildcats' 2010 state championship game.

"Most people know that Doc doesn't take vacations very often," Tappan said. "In fact, it usually takes a team of us to get him out of the office for more than a day. But in 2010, he and Karla scheduled a trip over Thanksgiving break to Chicago. Well, that was also the year of our run to the state football championship and there was no way he was going to miss it. In typical Doc D fashion, he lined things up to perfection. He takes a 5 a.m. flight from Chicago to Kansas City, has Karla drive him to the Legends off of I-70 and at about 6:30 I'm

picking him up and we beat the team to Salina. When the bus finally rolls in, he looks at Coach (Gary) Griffin with a grin and says, 'What took you so long?' About four hours later we were celebrating a championship.

"The commitment that Doc D has demonstrated over the years to the students of Louisburg schools is second to none. From the football sidelines on a Friday night in the fall, to being behind the mic in the LHS gym during basketball season, Doc always supported the students, the coaches and the administration of USD 416. I am proud to call Damon Dennis my friend."

Beyond The Call of Duty

Running a business can be difficult enough, but when you have other responsibilities on top of all that, it can be stressful at times.

The coaches at Louisburg High School never got that when working with Doc D. Veteran and young coaches alike were amazed at the dedication he displayed.

"Doc D is one of the most honest and honorable men I have ever met," Louisburg soccer coach Kyle Conley said. "He has donated countless hours and years for helping Louisburg student athletes. He always went out of his way to help anyone and everyone. He wasn't always just helping players. He would always check in on the coaches as well – checking on their well-being, their teams, and their families.

"Doc always went out of his way to make someone feel important and special. He was NEVER too busy for anyone. He will be greatly missed and he is irreplaceable. Thank you Doc D for everything that you have done for my teams, my family and for myself. You are someone I am lucky enough to call a friend."

That dedication would not only be found after school in the evenings, but even before the sun came up as well.



Doc D checks out Louisburg's Hallie Hutsell following an injury during last soccer season.

"Doc D will be greatly missed," Louisburg volleyball coach Jessica Compliment said. "He unselfishly devoted many hours to our athletes and was always a phone call or a text away. I can't count how many times he would meet myself and an athlete or two at the school at 5:30 a.m. prior to departure for a volleyball tournament. Not only was he a great role model and mentor for the athletes, but he served as a great mentor to a young coach for the past 14 years. He will be greatly missed by many."

However, where Dennis is most recognized was on the football sidelines. He did anything from tending to injured athletes, mentoring future trainers and handing out free food or candy to the student section before certain games.

It wasn't gone unnoticed as many around the school and

community know what Doc D has meant to the district.

"If Louisburg had a Mt. Rushmore, Damon would definitely be up there," Louisburg graduate and longtime coach Jeff Lohse said. "Doc is one of the most selfless people that I know. He was always more than willing to help anyone out and never expected anything in return. I consider Doc to be a great friend of mine and this is definitely bittersweet. I wish him and Karla nothing but the best as they open up this new chapter in their lives. Damon will be missed but his legacy in Louisburg will live on forever."

Dennis always made sure to welcome the new coaches to the district and made them feel a part of the family and that was the case with boys basketball coach Ty Pfannenstiel when he came to the school three years ago.



Doc D was presented with a team signed helmet following the team's award banquet two years ago.

"Doc D is the most selfless man I know," Pfannenstiel said. "What Doc gave to this school and community is unprecedented. He cared so much for all of our athletes, there's no way we are going to be able to replace what he brought to this school. I feel bad for whoever is going to come in and try to fill his shoes – he set the bar way too high."

Dennis has been on the sideline for many of Louisburg's greatest athletic achievements, including three state football appearances and has watched many athletes along the way achieve great individual accomplishments.

He knows that he has been blessed to be able to be a part of Wildcat athletics in one form or another the last 28 years.

"As for favorite memories, it is not always about the wins and losses," Dennis said. "The things I have most enjoyed is the time spent with athletes and coaches. The things that go on in the locker room, before and after games were the fun part. I have had a behind the scenes view of some pretty amazing people.

"Obviously the 2010 state football championship is at the top of the list. We had gone to the championship twice and come home in second on two occasions. It was a great group to be around and a great experience. If I had to choose a group of kids that really stand out the most, it would be the seniors my first year here (class of 1993). They welcomed me with open arms and made me feel like I was appreciated. I still speak to members of that class often and consider them friends. It was a really special group. I also loved seeing kids accomplish their dreams of success. Louisburg has had its share of champions and athletes that have gone on to do some amazing things."



Doc D was also good with equipment as he works on Madden Rutherford's helmet prior to a game.

In his last week at the office, Doc D has seen a lot of visitors that have come to thank him for everything he has done. Although Dennis won't be around as much as he used to, he wants people to know that this isn't a farewell – but more of a see you later.

"I want everyone to know how much I appreciate their kind words," Dennis said. "There has been talk of various activities surrounding my career change that have been proposed. While I genuinely appreciate this, I don't think I can handle the attention. My emotions have gotten the better of me and I am not sure that I can handle any celebrations publicly, unless everyone wants to see me cry."

"I am not going away. I just won't be at 11 South Broadway or at the high school every day. Thank you to everyone that has

supported me as I have made every effort to support my community."

No, Doc – thank you...

2020 Senior Spotlight: Haley Cain



Louisburg Sports Zone will be running senior spotlights through April and May everyday (Monday through Friday) in an effort to honor seniors who had their seasons taken away due to the spread of COVID-19.

Following her freshman season, Haley Cain made a goal for herself.

Cain, who was awarded a varsity letter in three sports her first year of high school, wanted to accomplish the rare feat of earning 12 varsity letters for her high school career. That means she would have earned a varsity letter in three sports in each of her four years of high school.

The last female Louisburg athlete to do that was Isabelle Holtzen in 2018, but before that, Louisburg Sports Zone was unable to find a record of that accomplishment. The closest before that was Krystal Bowes with 10 in 2001.

"It became clear to me after track season my freshman year, that I had the possibility of reaching that," Cain said.

There appeared to be no stopping her as she was sitting at 11 letters going into her final soccer season. Her goal was all but assured of becoming a reality.

Unfortunately, a lot of us know what happened next.

The spread of COVID-19 cancelled the spring sports season, and in turn, ended Cain's dream of making school history. There would be no shot at a 12th letter.

"When I found out that not only school was canceled but my soccer season was cancelled, I was upset," Cain said. "I was so close to accomplishing that goal and being able to say I earned a varsity letter in every season of every year of high school. But even though that will not happen now, I have to remember that I have had an amazing time playing high school sports and have made many friends and memories that I would not have otherwise. I can accept that and still be proud of myself for accomplishing what I did through these past four years."

Cain has played a big role on the Louisburg volleyball and basketball teams the last four years and earned her first spring letter in track. Then, she decided to make the switch from track to soccer.

That change turned out to be beneficial for Cain as she was a part of two second-place state teams in soccer to go along with two state runner-up finishes and a fourth place finish in volleyball.

"I played soccer when I was younger for LARA, but I wouldn't consider digging in the dirt or mud with your cleats as playing soccer," Cain said. "I didn't have many soccer skills when I started playing my sophomore year in high school. But I enjoyed team sports and thought it would be something I would

enjoy. I knew I would have to work extra hard to even get close to the level of play of some of the girls, but I liked the thought of trying something new and pushing myself to get better."



Louisburg senior Haley Cain was one season away from accomplishing the rare feat of earning 12 varsity letters in high school.

Louisburg soccer coach Kyle Conley definitely saw improvement from Cain since her sophomore year as she was all set to play a significant role for the Wildcats in the midfield this year.

"Haley is a good athlete with a great work ethic," Conley said. "She really didn't know much about soccer at first, but she worked hard to learn the game and the positions. She's a smart kid that picked up the game quickly. She was a tough kid."

"For a student athlete to be able to letter in every season and every sport they played in while in high school is pretty special. That is a credit to her work ethic and how competitive she is."

Cain was a part of a 12-member senior class that was all set to make a run at a third straight state championship game, and they were all hoping for a shot at the program's first state title.

"The senior class of girls this year were going to be one that everyone would remember," Cain said. "Every single one of us seniors have always supported and encouraged each other, even when times were tough and our coaches did the same. Having 12 seniors go out for a sport shows you how Coach Conley and Coach (Michael) Pickman have developed their program, making each girl feel important and needed. It never mattered to them if you were a star player or not, they always pushed you to be the best you could be, and I think that is what matters most."

With the difficult last two months, Cain has tried to focus on the positives and look back on the good times she had with the Wildcat soccer program.

"I was extremely excited about this soccer season, knowing that we were going to do great things on the field and all the memories we would make," Cain said. "That loss is devastating to me, my team and the coaches. We had a great possibility of making it to the state tournament again and with the talent we had this year we may have finally brought home the championship trophy. I really wanted that chance to see where we could go this year and end my high school sports career on a high note.

"My favorite memories are the ones where I bonded with my teammates at team dinners, on the buses to and from games, and on the field; either at practice or a game. These are my favorite because in 20 years I will not remember all the game

scores or stats, but I will remember the good memories I made and how I felt playing on a team with great friends and amazing coaches.”

Other than soccer, Louisburg Sports Zone also had a chance to catch up with Haley on how she has been coping with an early end to her senior year and some of her other interests. Here are his responses from the rest of our Q&A.

LSZ: What have you been missing the most during this time away from everyone?

HC: It seems to me that what I miss the most are the things I took for granted. I miss hanging out with my friends at Sonic, cruising around town, and having sleepovers on the weekends and asking that questions of “what do we want to do now?” I also miss walking into LHS at 11:00 (I had late start) to see teachers, friends, and peers “hating” their day because they have to sit through another class or teach a class to ornery students not wanting to pay attention.

LSZ: What is your most memorable moment as an athlete or in school, and why?

HC: The best memory I have as an athlete is state volleyball 2017. Our slogan was “believe the hype” and I truly think we did. The feeling I had knowing that our team made it to the state tournament was one I will never forget. The state tournament was a whole other feeling, walking into the arena as a team and knowing we had a good chance of becoming state champion was amazing and I will never forget that feeling or experience.

LSZ: What is your favorite activity/hobby outside of sports and why?

HC: One of my favorite activities is hiking. Hiking is something I can do to get away from the outside world. It also allows me to be able to spend quality time with my family.

Spending time outside in nature is something I have always enjoyed.

LSZ: What are your plans for after graduation?

HC: I will be attending Pittsburg State University and I am undecided on a major right now.

LSZ: What accomplishments that don't involve athletics are you most proud of and why?

HC: Maintaining a 3.7 GPA throughout high school is something I am proud of.

LSZ: What do you think would be something that a lot of people don't know about you?

HC: In July of 2017, my family and I hiked rim to rim of the Grand Canyon. It took four days and we had to hike in and back out with everything we would need including food, tents, sleeping pads, clothes, etc. Our packs weighed about 35 pounds each and the temperatures were unbearable. We did a lot of night/early morning hiking because of the heat, but it was an unforgettable experience.

Haley's Favorites

Pro athlete: Jackie Robinson

Pro team: Kansas City Chiefs

College team: KU Basketball

Movie: A Star Is Born

TV Show: One Tree Hill

Song: Home by Phillip Phillips

Band/Musician: Old Dominion

Pregame meal/snack: Cup of Noodles

Class/subject: Math, maybe lunch?

Teacher and why? Kyle Conley – because he not only pushed students to be great in the class room, but he made sure every one of his athletes excelled on the field.

Previous Senior Spotlights

Drake Varns – Golf

Trinity Moore – Soccer

Andrew Krause – Baseball

Kayla Willey – Softball

Anthony Davis – Track and Field

Garrett Rolofson – Golf

Shayla Aye – Swimming

Allie Boles – Softball

Michael Waldron – Track and Field

Avery O'Meara – Soccer

Ryan Haight – Golf

Andie Masten – Soccer

Lauren Cutshaw – Softball

Trent Martin – Track and Field

Erin Lemke – Soccer

Luke Wickersham – Golf

Skylar Bowman – Soccer

Gabby Dugger – Softball

Sydni Keagle – Track

Olivia Chase – Soccer

Colin Cook – Golf

Morgan Messer – Soccer

August Daniels – Softball

Carter Anglin – Track and Field

Hannah Straub – Soccer

Reilly Ratliff-Becher – Softball

Madden Rutherford – Baseball

Lily McDaniel – Soccer

Garrett Harding – Track

Mackenzie Scholtz – Soccer

Calvin Dillon – Golf

Kat Coolidge – Softball

Charlie Koontz – Track

Ashley Moore – Soccer

Carlee Gassman – Track

Purno Sangma – Track