

OPINION: Wildcats' journey a more impressive feat than state title



Members of the Louisburg girls soccer team break it down shortly before the Wildcats' state championship game Saturday against Bishop Miege.

On the surface, Bishop Miege's string of four straight state girls soccer titles is an impressive one. Anytime a program can win the final game of the season in four consecutive years is an admirable feat.

The Stags have a great program, with very talented players and a tradition that is second to none as far as Class 4-1A programs go. They are the crème of the crop.

However, if you dig a little deeper, you see a program – during the same four year period – that you could say has made even bigger strides without ever winning a state title. I think you all can take a guess where I am going with this.

A little more than four years ago, a group of soccer parents helped raise \$39,000 in less than 12 months in order

to have a girls soccer program at Louisburg High School. That, in itself, is an achievement worth celebrating.

Those parents and community members would immediately see a return in their investment.

In the program's first season, the Wildcats would go on to win a regional title and finish one game short of a state final four appearance.

Louisburg wouldn't have to wait long as it would win its first state quarterfinal game in 2017 and went on to finish fourth at state. It was one of those improbable beginnings to a program that are rarely seen.

As it turned out, the Wildcats were just getting started. In the last two seasons, they have advanced to the state championship game only to come up short both times thanks to the big obstacle of Bishop Miege.

What makes it all the more impressive is the Wildcats have done this in a small town setting. The Louisburg school district probably has an estimated population of 4,000 (give or take a few hundred) from which it can draw students.

Miege, a private school, can draw athletes from both sides of the state line and all over the Kansas City metro area. They aren't breaking rules, but they are using a system to their advantage (which is a different column for a different day).

So, I ask, what is the bigger accomplishment here?

Since the program's inception, everything has seemed to have gone right for Louisburg. The school made the right coaching hires in head coach Kyle Conley and assistant Michael Pickman.

Both coaches have been invaluable to the growth of the team and they have helped create a connection with the town that I couldn't have imagined when it all began. They have great relationships with their players, and the respect is mutual.



Louisburg senior Hallie Hutsell gets a hug from head coach Kyle Conley as she comes off the field for the final time, while fellow senior Leia Shaffer goes to hug teammate Mackenzie Scholtz.

It was all the more evident Saturday as time was winding down and Conley began to sub his

seniors out of the game – one at a time – giving them one final farewell. Carson Buffington, Hallie Hutsell, Kaitlyn Lewer, Leia Shaffer and Julianne Finley all left the field knowing what they had accomplished.

After it was all over, senior Camdyn Clark – a four year starter – who was forced to sit out with an injury midway through the season, also said her goodbyes to her coaches and teammates.

Clark was in the starting lineup four years ago at Harmon High School when the Wildcats played their first-ever game, and it all came full circle when it was all over last weekend.



This was the first starting lineup for the Louisburg girls soccer team when the program began in 2016. Clark (No. 7) was a four-year starter for the Wildcats.

“I think what makes our program so unique is that every year it’s different,” Clark said. “The dynamic changes, the chemistry is new, but through our coaching and hard work that each girl gives, we are successful. Our amount of skill, numbers and talent has varied every year,

but our determination and hard work is what makes our team so hard to beat.

“I knew our team would do big things from the start because we had things to prove and we wanted to make our community proud. They fought for this program and everyone who is on our team knows we couldn’t have done it without them.”

They were the first group of seniors who had the opportunity to stay with the program all four years. All of them played roles on a team that won 17 games this season, but also helped contribute to the team’s past successes.

“It was extremely hard to step off the field,” Hutsell said. “I couldn’t believe it was our last time playing together. Everyone was hugging and crying – it was a bittersweet moment. I cannot express how proud I am of everything the program has accomplished in four short years. That is more than my freshman year self could have dreamt of at my first high school practice.

“I remember the first game in program history and being so unsure about the season. But the past four years has wiped away any doubt about the LHS girls soccer team. I think we have showed everyone that we should never be underestimated and we have earned the respect of other teams in the state. It wouldn’t have been possible though without Coach Conley and Coach Pickman and I can’t imagine a

better pair to run
a program.”

It is that bond between players,
coach and community that has helped the Wildcats rise to the
level where they
are today. Sure, a few good players certainly help the cause,
but the belief in
each other is what carries the load.

“When you look at our community,
they raised \$39,000 to start a soccer program four years ago
and that is what
we do,” Conley said. “We are playing for all of those people.
We are playing
for the town, we are playing for all the people on Facebook or
Twitter that are
trying to follow along because we know that without those
people that this
doesn’t happen. We want to try and honor them the best way we
know how, and
that is playing hard and doing things the right way. It is
unbelievable. The
community is everything to us and everything to me.”

So as the clock hit zero, their season was officially over. It
didn’t take long for realization to set in that this was it
for the Wildcat seniors



Louisburg coach Kyle Conley huddles his team up following their state quarterfinal win earlier this month. Conley has guided Louisburg to a 58-22-2 record since the program's inception.

"Every year I looked forward to soccer season to start and this year my season was cut short, so it was kind of over before everyone else's," Clark said. "Having to accept that my knee would render me from being out there with my girls, made me feel so guilty and helpless. I was supposed to be there for my team and I wasn't.

"The hardest part, however, was watching them earn their second place state medals. It hit me then that that I wouldn't be doing this again. I wouldn't have another chance to fight for a plaque at state, I wouldn't huddle with my team before each game and I wouldn't be with these girls next year. My fellow seniors and I were done and this was our final mark on Louisburg girls soccer history."

So to recap, in four years time the Wildcats started a program from scratch, captured four straight regionals titles, made it to the state quarterfinal in its first season and then rattled off three consecutive state final four appearances and two state runner-up finishes.

But for some that isn't the bigger story. Winning it all ultimately trumps everything in our society.

Not for this group, though. Sure, winning a state title will be great, but it is the family atmosphere that is the Wildcats' biggest asset – starting with their coaches.

“We are a family and we will always be there for each other,” Clark said. “That is my favorite part of the whole thing. The coaches have made a lasting impact on me and will always be a reason I am who I am today. Both of them have pushed me to be the best I can be and have helped me through more than they know.

“From the start, I credit a lot of our success to them. People who have never played soccer in their life have become varsity players because of what Conley and Pickman have done. I had no idea how to play soccer coming into the program and they have taught me everything I know. They have been incredible influences on me and our team. They're what make us a family.”

Because when it comes down to it,
family is what truly matters.

Louisburg girls soccer finishes second at wild state tournament



Louisburg captains Erin Lemke (left) and Carson Buffington hold up the Class 4-3-2-1A state runner-up trophy Saturday following the Wildcats 4-0 loss to Bishop Miege in the championship game at Hummer Sports Park in Topeka.

TOPEKA – When it was all said and done, the Louisburg girls soccer held its team trophy high in front of the Wildcat faithful and the tears were easy to spot.

After nearly 200 minutes of soccer in a nine-hour time period, including one match that ended in penalty kicks, the Wildcats were spent. They gave everything they had.

For the second consecutive season, Louisburg earned the Class 4-3-2-1A state runner up trophy after a wild victory over Topeka-Hayden in the semifinals and then were shutout by Bishop Miege in

the championship game, 4-0. It was the third consecutive state final four appearance for Louisburg.

Frustration and sadness was easy to see following the Wildcats' loss to the defending state champion, but the team realizes what they have accomplished in just four years of existence is to be celebrated.

"Being in this situation two years in a row is something that doesn't happen very often," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "There are a bunch of teams that haven't been to a state final four and we have been to three in three years. It is pretty cool and it is special."

It was a wild 24 hours for the Wildcats. Louisburg was supposed to play Hayden on Friday in the semifinals, but severe weather forced the postponement to early Saturday morning.

The Wildcats battled Hayden through four overtimes and eventually led to penalty kicks. After an intense first five penalty kicks that left the match still tied, senior goalie Carson Buffington recorded a big save and then senior Hallie Hutsell converted the sixth penalty kick to break the tie and give Louisburg a 2-1 win over Hayden.



Trinity Moore battles a Bishop Miege player for a 50-50 ball Saturday during the state championship game in Topeka.

“We usually play 80 minutes, but this time we had to play 110 minutes and we were gassed,” Conley said. “We were holding on and had some chances at the end to win it, but then we went to overtime and then to penalty kicks. It was all about to see if we could survive.

Emotionally it was just a high for us and an unbelievable response and a great finish. Carson making a big save, Hallie putting it in for the win – it was just a great game.”

The two teams battled to a scoreless first half, but Louisburg junior Mackenzie Scholtz changed all that as she found the back of the net with 28 minutes left in the match to give the Wildcats a 1-0 advantage.



Junior Mackenzie Scholtz tries to beat the Bishop Miege defense Saturday in Topeka.

In what was a physical contest on both sides, Hayden eventually found a crack in the Wildcat defense and tied it all up with 10 minutes remaining in regulation. Neither team could get a score in the first two 10-minute overtime periods, and then played two five-minute overtimes with the game still tied at 1-all.

“Each side really wanted to win for a chance to play in the championship,” Hutsell said. “Hayden had not forgotten that we beat them for that chance last year and it showed throughout the entire game and four overtimes. Everyone was exhausted, but the team kept pushing and motivating each other and I think that’s what helped us eventually win.”

It all forced penalty kicks as Scholtz, Trinity Moore and Morgan Messer helped Louisburg make three of its five opportunities. On the other end, Buffington recorded two pivotal saves to keep the Wildcats' hopes alive.

"We were not very effective in taking PK's in practice so I was a little worried," Conley said. "We talked to Carson on how to do things the right way, what to prep for, how to read it and what is going on. She made three huge saves and there aren't many goalies in the state that will make two of those saves in the bottom corner. It was a great opportunity and a lot of fun."



Photo courtesy of Bryan Frank

The Louisburg girls soccer team celebrates on the field after Hallie Hutsell converted the final penalty kick in the Wildcats' 2-1 win over Hayden.

Both teams chose their next five players to take the next set of penalty kicks, but Buffington recorded her third save on Hayden's first try on the second round of kicks.

Hutsell ended it all as her shot found the upper left corner of the net to end it for Louisburg and the Wildcats were onto the championship match.

"When my name was called I was so nervous," Hutsell said. "I actually had no idea my kick was for the win. I was just worried that I would miss the shot. When I stepped up to the ball though, some of my nerves went away because I knew the team had my back no matter what.

"When I made the shot I was confused because the team stormed the field. I remember thinking, 'We still have four more kickers.' But when the ref blew his whistle I knew and started freaking out. I was so proud of my team for battling it out and earning a place in the championship."



Louisburg goalie Carson Buffington runs in front of a Bishop Miego player for a save Saturday in Topeka.

Bishop Miego went on to defeat Buhler, 4-0, in the next semifinal match and the Wildcats had a little break before meeting the defending state champion.

In the championship match, the Stags were just too much for the Wildcats and junior Sophia Stram provided a big spark. Stram scored all four goals for Miego in the title game, all of which came in the first half, and the Wildcats didn't have an answer.

"They are just so freaking good," Conley said. "I think the girls were mentally ready, but I don't think their legs were quite ready, but we lost to one of best teams in the state of Kansas. They have great players, they are well-coached, but our girls played their butts off.

“(Stram) is a Division 1 kid and she is special. They have a team full of kids who understand how to play and they are good.”



The Louisburg girls soccer team poses with its state runner-up trophy following the state tournament Saturday in Topeka.

Louisburg had won 10 straight matches going into the championship game and the Wildcats finished their season with a 17-4 record. Other than the final result, it was a season to remember for the Wildcats, but they know they can take pride in what they have accomplished.

“It was a fantastic season, but it stinks right now,” Conley said. “I hate losing, the kids hate losing and I hate saying bye to kids who aren’t going to be a part of our program anymore. Once I have time to reflect on how everything transpired with 10 straight wins to basically end the season, there will be a lot of positives. We broke a lot of records this year that are going to be really, really tough to beat and this is

a really special group.”

Wildcats advance to state semis for third straight year



The Louisburg girls soccer team celebrates its 3-0 win over Kansas City Christian on Tuesday at Wildcat Stadium. The Wildcats' win in the state quarterfinals puts them in the state semifinals for the third consecutive season.

The celebration was a little more muted this time around.

For the third straight season, the Louisburg girls soccer team earned a spot in the Class 4-3-2-1A state semifinals after the Wildcats' 3-0 victory over Kansas City Christian on Tuesday in Louisburg.

The finish was anti-climatic, unlike the past two years where the Wildcat secured a semifinal berth with golden goals. Tuesday's match might not have had the same excitement, but Louisburg is thrilled to be able to reach the state's final four for the third year in a

row.

“It is a lot of fun,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “This was our goal, and that is what the kids wanted, which was to get back and try and do better than they did last year. I appreciate the kids and their effort and it is really cool. It is powerful and it is a tribute to the kids and how hard they play.

“The kids just go at it every day and it is just an incredible run they have been on. There aren’t many teams in the state that can say they have been to the state tournament three years in a row.”

Louisburg, which defeated Kansas City Christian 6-0 earlier in the season, went up against a more determined Panther team this time around. The Panthers got the first shot on goal and nearly had the game’s first score, but goalie Carson Buffington got the save.

It also took a little time for the Wildcat attack to get going, but Louisburg was able find the back of the net 13 minutes into the match.

Junior Mackenzie Scholtz scored her first of two goals after junior Avery O’Meara sent a long pass over the Panther defense and Scholtz raced to the ball and beat the Panther goalie for the score.

Ten minutes later, the Wildcats

struck again. Junior Erin Lemke sent a through ball to fellow junior Morgan Messer, who found the back of the net and the Wildcats took their 2-0 lead into halftime.



Junior Mackenzie Scholtz races down the field on Kansas City Christian on Tuesday at Wildcat Stadium.

Despite the lead, it wasn't the type of play the Wildcats were looking for.

"The first half we had no purpose and we were just kicking the ball," Conley said. "The second half, we moved the ball and were attacking a lot more. We had plenty of good chances, we just couldn't bury one. The second half was much better and we did a good job to get back on track."

Defensively, the Wildcats were stingy in giving the Panthers opportunities to score. Buffington recorded her eighth shutout in the last nine matches.

“I know we came out with a win, but I know we could have done a lot better,” Buffington said. “We probably could have beaten them by a little bit more, but we are just going to have to keep our heads straight, especially with the semifinals coming up.

“We were just more focused last time around when we played them. I think we were playing hard this time, but I don’t think we played as smart as we could have like coach said.”



Louisburg defender Kaitlyn Lewer clears the ball out of the back Tuesday at Wildcat Stadium.

Louisburg controlled possession in the second half and had several opportunities on goal. One of those found the net as sophomore Olivia Barber played a through ball to Scholtz and she put the shot away for the game’s third goal.

The Wildcats also had the

opportunity to play on the new turf at Wildcat Stadium, and while the team had been practicing on it, it still took some getting used after playing on grass most of the season.

“It was nice,” Conley said of the turf. “It was fast, actually it was really fast. I think our girls struggled a little bit with it. When we are playing on grass, the ball likes to hold up a little bit and we are ok to go. On here the ball just takes off and it is a really quick surface. I think it will be good for us moving forward and help us prepare for the surface out at state.”



Sophomore Olivia Barber (10) wins a 50-50 opportunity with the help of teammate Trinity Moore on Tuesday.

Louisburg (16-3) will square off with Topeka-Hayden (13-4-2) in the state semifinals at 5 p.m. today at Hummer

Sports Complex in Topeka.

The Wildcats knocked off Hayden, 1-0, in last year's state semifinal game and the Wildcats realize nothing is going to be easy from here on out.

"We have our work cut out for us," Conley said. "They are a really good group of teams and the ones in the West are pretty solid. We are just going to have to bear down and hopefully our experience kicks in and we understand what it is expected.

"Hopefully their heads are right in regards to our expectation and what the state atmosphere is like. We are experienced enough where I don't think we will have that deer in the headlights look anymore. We have to play a much better game and be more aggressive."

The winner of that match will play the winner between Buhler (15-4) and Bishop Miege (11-7-1) at 2 p.m. on Saturday in the championship match. The loser of each game will play for third at noon.

"I want to play in the championship game and win state and the other girls feel the same way," Buffington said. "It would be amazing to win a state title, but we are going to have to play well."

REGIONAL CHAMPS: Wildcats knock off Piper to advance to state



The Louisburg girls soccer team celebrated its fourth straight Class 4-3-2-1A regional title Thursday with a 2-0 victory over Piper in Louisburg.

The Louisburg girls soccer team is one of the youngest tenured programs in the state, but at the same time, it is one of the more accomplished.

Louisburg added to its list of accolades Thursday when it hosted Piper for the Class 4A regional championship.

The Wildcats' 2-0 victory over the Pirates, not only avenged a loss from earlier in the season, but gave them their fourth consecutive regional title.

Add to the fact that the Wildcats are currently just in their fourth year of existence, makes each of these regional titles special in their own way.

"The feeling is amazing," junior

Mackenzie Scholtz said. "Winning a regional title shows everyone how much work we have put in all season and lets us prove to everyone that we work hard all of the time.

"The feeling hasn't really changed over these three years. It's so much fun getting to win in front of half of the town and seeing everyone so proud of us. I don't think it will ever get old because it is so exhilarating every time."

Louisburg finds itself in familiar territory as the Wildcats (15-3) host Kansas City Christian (9-6-1) on Tuesday for the Class 4-3-2-1A state quarterfinals. The Wildcats have advanced to the state semifinals the last two seasons, including a state runner-up finish last year.

Although the Wildcats have had plenty of success in past seasons, they realize they should celebrate the journey, and the win against Piper was no less special than the three previous regional titles.



Junior captain Erin Lemke puts a shot on goal Thursday against Piper.

“It is absolutely incredible what the young ladies within this program has created in our first four years as a program,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “I could not be happier with how hard these girls play and how they play for our community. The girls in our program acknowledge how much we owe the community for creating this opportunity for these young ladies. We have been very spoiled here at Louisburg with the success we have had. Four straight regional championships is unbelievable.

“We have our goals as a program and playing for a regional championship is on our list every year. These girls understand the importance of the work it takes to achieve something like this

and to not take it for granted. The girls were ecstatic with our win over a really quality team in Piper. We felt that we had something to prove after losing to them earlier in the year.”

The Wildcats used that loss earlier in the year to the Pirates as motivation and it was evident early in the match that Louisburg wasn't going to let the same result happen this time around.

Louisburg was aggressive on the attack as the Wildcats had several early opportunities on the Pirate defense, but couldn't find the net in the first 20 minutes. From there, things opened up for Louisburg.



Louisburg senior Julianne Finley pushes the ball up the field against Piper.

Junior Morgan Messer got a pass from

midfielder Erin Lemke near the top of the box and Messer took the shot and found the right corner of the net to put the Wildcats up 1-0.

Late in the first half, the Wildcats struck again as Scholtz had a breakaway opportunity down the left side of the field and beat the Piper goalie for an open net and the Wildcats led 2-0 at halftime.

“It was nice to get some goals early, but 2-0 is the worst lead to have because as you get up two, you start to get comfortable and stop playing as hard or as aggressive,” Conley said. “We did a nice job of playing pretty well in the second half, but the last 10 minutes was a little nerve-racking. We made some adjustments but struggled to stay aggressive in the midfield. The girls played hard and did a really nice job with having pressure and cover all over the field.”



Junior Trinity Moore takes a shot in the second half of the Wildcats regional title matchup against Piper.

Piper did put some shots on goal in the second half to try and get back in the match, but the Wildcat defense held firm as goalie Carson

Buffington recorded her seventh shutout in her last eight matches.

The Louisburg defense of Kaitlyn Lewer, Madison Quinn, Skylar Bowman, Avery O'Meara and Hallie Hutsell has been a stabilizing force in recent weeks and that includes senior captain Camdyn Clark, who was recently lost for the season due to an injury.

"Our defense has been fantastic," Conley said. "Those young ladies all have played incredible. The defense has posted 12 shutouts and a .882 goals against average. The girls are playing aggressive and being fundamentally sound. I love how hard they are playing and the intensity they

are playing with. They have been fantastic all year.”

Before the Wildcats’ match against Piper, they were just coming off an upset win over Spring Hill at home and they believed that helped them against the Pirates and will continue to do so moving forward.

“We played a really good first half against Piper and our win over Spring Hill before that gave us momentum,” Lemke said. “Both teams beat us earlier in the year, so to pull off wins so late in the year, and in the postseason, is exciting.

“The win against Piper was huge. We went into that game feeling like we had something to prove. We wanted the regional title, and another shot at state to motivated us through the game.”



The Louisburg girls soccer team poses with the Class 4-1A regional title trophy following its 2-0 win over Piper.

Louisburg will have its shot at the state semifinals Tuesday against Kansas City Christian. The Wildcats, who will host KCC at 5 p.m., defeated the Panthers, 6-0, earlier in the season.

“It is going to be a big game,”
Conley said. “Kansas City Christian is a very dangerous team
and have some
really talented players down the middle of the field. We will
need to play our
game and play well to win. They are very fast up top as well.”

Wildcats down Spring Hill to cap off emotional Senior Night



Louisburg players celebrate a 2-1 victory over Spring Hill last Thursday that ended their season with a 13-3 record and a No. 4 seed in the upcoming regional tournament.

The Louisburg girls soccer team has experienced an immense amount of success in the program's short history.

However, the one team that has been a thorn in the side of the Wildcats has been Spring Hill. Louisburg has beaten Spring Hill just one time in its four years of existence and the Broncos have caused the Wildcats fits.

On Thursday, the Wildcats got rid of the thorn.

Louisburg ended its schedule on a high note as the Wildcats upset Spring Hill, 2-1, and gave their seniors a send-off to remember. The Wildcats honored their six seniors during a Senior Night ceremony after the game and it was a fitting way to wrap up the regular season with a 13-3 record.

“Everyone stepped up and did their job and played as hard as they could,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “When a team believes and plays for each other, this is what could happen. Spring Hill is the best team on our schedule, and for us to get a win on Senior Night, just doesn’t happen very often.”

Seniors Camdyn Clark, Kaitlyn Lewer, Carson Buffington, Julianne Finley, Hallie Hutsell and Leia Shaffer played in their final regular season home game for the Wildcats, and for most of them, they were the first group of players to play all four years with the program.

“Our seniors have done a great amount to put our program where it is today,” Conley said “This group of young ladies are exactly what our program looks create. They are all responsible, dependable, dedicated young ladies. They are fantastic young ladies not just on the soccer field, but in the classroom as well. I could not be prouder of this group.”

It was also special night for Clark, one of the team's best defenders, as her season was cut short due to an injury she suffered earlier in the year and will be unable to play in the postseason. That didn't stop her from suiting up for a few minutes and was taken out of the game one final time early in the first half.

"It was really nice to see Camdyn out there again," Conley said. "She had a fantastic career for us and played her heart out each and every time she got on the field. She is a great young lady and leader."

The Lady Cats' defense was certainly tested all night as the Spring Hill attack kept pressure on the Louisburg back line, but they all passed the test – including goalie Carson Buffington.

Buffington turned away several Spring Hill opportunities as the Broncos had nearly 10 shots on goal and Buffington saved all but one opportunity. The Louisburg senior had a couple tip saves in the first half that kept the game scoreless at the time.



Louisburg goalie Carson Buffington dives in for a save last Thursday against Spring Hill.

Late in the second half, when the Wildcats had the lead, Buffington did much of the same and she also got some help from her defense.

Avery O'Meara moved to the sweeper position due to an injury and cleared the ball away that was near the line and Kaitlyn Lewer also cleared away several Bronco attempts.

Seniors Hallie Hutsell and Julianne Finley, along with junior Skylar Bowman and sophomore Madison Quinn, provided a lot of help for the Wildcat defense.

"Our defense played amazing," Buffington said. "They didn't back down and they were so confident and played so well. I was very confident in that game and I really wanted to win and get revenge on Spring Hill. My teammates just made my job easier."

Junior Mackenzie Scholtz broke open a scoreless game for the Wildcats midway through the first half as she took the ball down the left side, beat the Spring Hill goalie and put it in the open net for a 1-0 lead and it stayed that way at halftime.

Spring Hill tied it up early in the second half, but a few minutes later, the Wildcats struck again and this time it was thanks to the feet of Erin Lemke. The Louisburg junior had a breakaway opportunity and took advantage as she sailed it over the goalie's head for what turned out to be the game-winning goal.



Louisburg's Emma Christy heads the ball away Thursday against Spring Hill.

"It was a hustle goal, just like Mack's was to start the game," Conley said. "We talk a lot about pressing up top and I think Spring Hill was struggling a little to adjust

to the ball
moving around in the mud. I told them to challenge everything
in the middle. It
was good to see the kids play so hard and it was a big goal
for sure.”

Following the score, the Broncos
increased the pressure even more as they had a few
opportunities to tie it up,
but the Wildcat defense and Buffington held on.

“We got up a goal and then we changed formations a little due
to injuries and shore some things up in the middle,” Conley
said. “We were a little helter skelter there in the second
half, but about halfway through we got comfortable in that and
you could see that the girls start to figure it out. Then we
got a little tired toward the end and we had to just hold on.

“Spring Hill had plenty of good
chances, but Carson made massive save after save. Avery saved
one off the line
and everyone was just all hands on deck. Carson did really
well and was on her
game. They tried to get her four or five times up top and
Carson did a good job
of covering it up and tipping it away. Normally those are
goals for most people
and she didn’t allow it. She was phenomenal.”

Following the game, it was a bittersweet feeling
for the Wildcat seniors as they realized the end of their
careers is near as
postseason play begins later this week.



Louisburg seniors (from left) Hallie Hutsell, Camdyn Clark, Kaitlyn Lewer, Carson Buffington, Julianne Finley and Leia Shaffer were all honored on Senior Night last Thursday.

“Senior Night was very emotional and really sad,” Buffington said. “Knowing that this is my last Senior Night really got to me. I love my team so much and I don’t want the season to end.”

Louisburg earned the No. 4 seed in the regional tournament and earned a first-round bye. That sets up a match with Piper in the regional championship game at 5 p.m. on Thursday in Louisburg.

Piper defeated Louisburg, 2-0, earlier in the season and the Wildcats are hoping for some revenge, although they realize it won’t be easy. Piper, the No. 5 seed, defeated Tonganoxie, 6-0, on Tuesday.

“The regular season only matters for your seed and this is when the season actually starts,” Conley said. “Piper is a

team that has already beat us, so we will have our hands full. We will prepare and play like we have something to prove.”

Wildcats have won 7 straight after victories against Tonganoxie, Ottawa



Louisburg junior Erin Lemke sneaks a shot past the Tonganoxie goalie Monday in Tonganoxie. Lemke scored two goals in the Wildcats' 6-0 win.

The Louisburg girls soccer team didn't let a little wet weather get to them earlier this week – in fact – the rain did little to cool off a Wildcat team that has been on a hot streak.

Louisburg picked up a pair of road wins Monday and Tuesday and now have seven consecutive victories as the Wildcats have just one game left on the regular season.

The Wildcats scored 14 goals in two games as they defeated Tonganoxie, 6-0, on Monday and then turnaround to play Ottawa on Tuesday and came away with an 8-0 victory.

Bad weather forced the Wildcats to move their game with the Cyclones from Ottawa High School to Ottawa University and they were able to play on turf. That move certainly didn't slow the Wildcats down as they jumped out to a 3-0 halftime lead and scored five more times in the second half to complete the shutout.

"The girls came out playing very aggressive and dominated the game start to finish," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "The defense played very well for the most part only allowing one shot. Offensively, we struggled to get a shot on net the first half, missing on four extremely good opportunities.

"The second half, our movement was much better and we were able to play our game. I was very excited with how hard we played and how well we possessed. The girls played hard and did a nice job.

Junior forward Mackenzie Scholtz continued her torrid scoring streak as she added a hat trick to her line to lead the Lady Cats. Fellow junior Erin Lemke added two goals, including the match's first score.

Midfielder Trinity Moore put the Wildcats up 2-0 with a goal that was assisted by Leia Shaffer. Scholtz then added a goal shortly before halftime to make it 3-0.



Junior Haley Cain heads the ball away from an Ottawa player Tuesday in the Wildcats' 8-0 win.

Scholtz found the back of the net to open the second half thanks to an assist from Olivia Barber and then scored again after an assist from Lemke made it 5-0. Lemke made it a six-goal match less than two minutes later.

Sophomore Emma Christy scored her first varsity goal as she converted a penalty kick late in the second half and then

Louisburg got its final score on an own goal from Ottawa that was knocked in

after a corner kick from Lily McDaniel.

Against Tonganoxie, the Wildcats got out to a slow start but picked it up in the second half after a goal from Scholtz

and another from freshman Reese Johnson. Scholtz, Lemke, Moore and Morgan

Messer each added scores to put the game away.

Goalie Carson Buffington recorded shutouts in both matches, while the defense of Kaitlyn Lewer, Julianne Finley, Avery O'Meara, Hallie Hutsell and Madison Quinn helped limit the opportunities.

"Tonganoxie played a very packed-in style," Conley said. "We absolutely dominated start to finish, but struggled to put the final pass together. We made some adjustments at halftime and made much better passes and possession.

"I was very happy with our execution in the second half and our level of play. They girls played much quicker and executed much more efficiently. We possessed and moved the ball very quickly and were able to break down their 6 girls on their back line. I was very proud of their second half performance."

Louisburg will try and make it eight wins in a row Thursday when it hosts Spring Hill for Senior Night. The match is set for 4:30 p.m.

"The girls will come out and be ready to play a really, really good Spring Hill team to honor their senior teammates," Conley said. "Our games with Spring Hill are always action-packed and quality games. They are extremely well coached and will come ready to play."

Buffington's first goal seals rout of Bonner Springs



Louisburg senior Carson Buffington finds the back of the net Thursday on this shot to record her first varsity goal. Buffington also earned the shutout as the Wildcats' goalie in the 10-0 win over Bonner Springs.

Carson Buffington knew this could be her last shot.

The Louisburg goalie had a chance to play in the field earlier this season against Ottawa in hopes of scoring her first-ever goal. Buffington came up short in her one opportunity and Wildcat head coach Kyle Conley was going to give her one final chance.

"Carson doesn't have a lot of soccer experience, but she mentioned to me that she wanted to try and score a goal," Conley said "We tried against Ottawa and couldn't get it to work. I told her she would get one more chance, but I didn't know when it would be."

That chance come on Thursday and Buffington took full advantage.

With the Wildcats up nine goals on Bonner Springs at halftime in Louisburg, Buffington battled through the Bonner Springs defense as she forced her way into the box and put a shot in the back of the net early in the second half to give Louisburg a 10-0 win.

“She was like a bull in a china shop,” Conley said. “Carson was just running through kids and bulldozing her way in there. She is a kid who just started playing her sophomore year and was scared to death of it at first. We got her some reps last year and has taken full advantage of being the starting goalkeeper this year.

“Obviously this game got to the point where we could give her a shot at it. It is a really cool moment for her and the girls got all excited for her. It is always good to see the kids play for something that is bigger than themselves and playing for their teammates. That is the stuff that our program is all about.”

It was an offensive explosion for Louisburg as it started with Mackenzie Scholtz. The Louisburg junior had a hat trick 20 minutes into the contest and finished with a game-high five goals as she ripped through the Bonner Springs defense.

Junior Morgan Messer also had her best game on the varsity level as she recorded a hat trick and the two players accounted eight of the team’s 10 goals.

“The kids have been busting their butt,” Conley said. “We talk all the time if you are the bench that you are paying attention to what is going on and what to do, so when you get your opportunity, you take advantage of it. Morgan took full advantage of what they gave her. It is good to get her going again and it is a pretty

good time to do
it.”



Junior Morgan Messer celebrates with her teammates Thursday after the first of her three goals against Bonner Springs.

Bonner Springs opened the game by playing a high line and tried to frustrate the Wildcat attack by forcing them offsidess. It worked for the first few minutes of the contest, but the Wildcats quickly figured it out.

Scholtz scored the first three goals of the match on assists from Erin Lemke and Skylar Bowman. Messer then answered with a goal thanks to an assist from Olivia Barber, and Trinity Moore won a 50-50 ball in the box for a score that led to a 5-0 advantage.

Messer answered with two more goals late in the first half on assists from Emma Christy and Moore, Scholtz added two more to make it a 9-0 halftime advantage.

“Bonner had kind of a jail break on their high line that they played,” Conley said. “They would run everyone up and it took a little while for the girls to read it and understand it. They just needed to give four of five more yards, so when they come running up, then we just run right back at them. We have enough speed on top where we probably left five or six on the board in the first half. The girls played hard and I was pleased with the adjustments they made.”

Buffington’s goal early in the second half ended the match with the mercy rule and gave the Wildcat keeper another shutout. Louisburg’s defense didn’t give up many opportunities as Kaitlyn Lewer, Julianne Finley, Madison Quinn, Avery O’Meara and Hallie Hutsell all played strong in the back.

The Wildcats (10-3) have one final week of regular season play remaining and it is a big one as they are scheduled to play three times this week. Louisburg will begin that gauntlet at 3:30 today when it travels to Tonganoxie.

“It is a big week and there is a lot of spots to gain or lose, Conley said. “Looking at the seedings, we are probably going to be a top four seed regardless of what happens but we could slide into the two spot or just stay at a three or four and just go from there. Hopefully we can play well.”

LOUISBURG ROUTS BASEHOR-LINWOOD FOR

PROGRAM'S 50th WIN

The duo of Erin Lemke and Mackenzie Scholtz proved to be too much for Basehor-Linwood last Monday in Louisburg.

Lemke had a career night as she finished with four goals, and Scholtz added a hat trick for herself as the Louisburg girls soccer team rolled Basehor-Linwood, 7-0, in Louisburg.

It was also an historic showing from the Wildcats as they recorded the program's 50th win in just their fourth year of existence.



Junior Erin Lemke puts a shot on goal last Monday against Basehor-Linwood.

“The girls came out and played pretty well,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “We worked on

our inside runs a lot because the week before was just brutal. We just spent a lot of time in practice on where to be and where to cut and it just really paid off. It was really a big night and the girls played hard.

“Between Mackenzie, Erin and the two outside midfielders, we just pressed all the time. We caught defenders on their heels and we were able to play balls through. It is funny because when you get two steps on your defender, they just aren’t going to catch you. We worked on that timing and worked on when to get to that run instead of standing with that last defender. It gave us a head start.”

The Wildcats didn’t need much of a head start with the speed they have up top as Scholtz and Lemke each scored two goals to put Louisburg up 4-0 at halftime. The Wildcats didn’t slow down much as Lemke opened the second half with a pair of scores to all but seal the win.

Wildcats get pair of shutouts to continue winning streak



Louisburg defender Madison Quinn tries to dribble past an Ottawa player Tuesday in Louisburg. The Wildcats picked up a pair shutout victories last week, including a 1-0 win Thursday in Eudora.

The Louisburg girls soccer team had to deal with two different opponents Thursday when the Wildcats traveled to Eudora.

Not only did the Wildcats have to contend with the Cardinals, but they also had to go against a blustery wind that didn't give them many chances in one half of Thursday's match. Despite that, Louisburg found a way to get a big road win.

The Wildcats used a second-half goal from Erin Lemke to leave Eudora with a 1-0 victory and they have now won three consecutive matches.

"It was a game of two halves against Eudora," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "The wind was blowing 25 miles-per-hour in our face and we did a nice job of handling their pressure. We were able to have 3 or 4 fantastic opportunities but struggled to capitalize in the first half.

"The second half the wind died down compared to the first half, but we controlled the game and had tons of chances, but just couldn't find the back of the net. I think the girls did a nice job of limiting their offensive chances, but we struggled at times with our execution."

Early in the second half, Louisburg (8-3) was awarded a corner kick and Lemke was in the right place at the right time as

she put the attempt away and found the back of the net.

The Wildcats had plenty of other opportunities throughout the match, but the Cardinals (4-7) packed their defense in and didn't allow many good looks at the goal.

Still, Louisburg was able to leave with Eudora with a victory as it put together a solid defensive effort, including a second consecutive shutout from goalie Carson Buffington.

"I like how hard we played and the amount of energy we played with," Conley said. "I think it was a wake-up call to our girls not to take anything for granted. We didn't play our best game, but we were able to survive. Sometimes you need to win ugly games and we did just that."

Louisburg has a busy week ahead of itself as it hosts Basehor-Linwood at 4:30 p.m. today and then will travel to Tonganoxie tomorrow for a match. The Wildcats will conclude their week with another home game Thursday when they will host Bonner Springs.

"It is a big week for us," Conley said. "We have three games with teams that play really hard, with a lot of energy. I think this week will show us where we are at and what we are made of. It is going to be a challenging week, and I think that it will help us for a playoff run."

Wildcats blank Ottawa

It truly was a team effort Tuesday when Louisburg hosted Ottawa at Wildcat Sports Complex.

The Wildcats scored six times and never looked back in what was a 6-0 victory over the Cyclones. Although the Wildcats were dealing with some injuries, Louisburg head coach Kyle Conley was able to get all 22 players into the game at one point and a lot of them saw significant minutes.

“We played pretty well and moved the ball very nicely for a majority of the first half,” Conley said. “We worked on some things and put some players in positions we do not usually play, but the girls played hard. I felt we got a little complacent at the start of the second half, but the girls played pretty well for from about the first five minutes of the second half and on.

“We were able to get all 22 kids into the game and let them continue to get varsity experience. The defense did a great job limiting them to just one shot, while the offense had 47 shots.”



Junior Trinity Moore tries to beat the Ottawa goalie to the ball Tuesday in Louisburg.

Juniors Mackenzie Scholtz and Trinity Moore were a problem for the Cyclones all night as the two combined for five of the six Louisburg goals.

Moore scored the game's first and final goals, while Scholtz had three straight scores as she had a hat trick in the first half. Sophomore Olivia Barber also had a nice goal for the Wildcats late in the first half to give them a 5-0 lead at halftime.

Goalies Carson Buffington and Sierra Hahn combined for the shutout and Buffington nearly got her first career goal late in the match. Buffington had three shots on goal, including a penalty kick opportunity, but was turned away by the Ottawa goalie.

Wildcats snap losing skid with win over Heritage Christian



Louisburg junior Erin Lemke (right) battles a Baldwin defender during the Wildcats' April 15 home match. The Wildcats bounced back with a win over Heritage Christian on April 16.

The Louisburg girls soccer team was in the midst of a frustrating two-game losing skid in which it saw one missed opportunity after another.

So when the Wildcats traveled to Heritage Christian on April 16, they took full advantage of all their chances and they had plenty of them. Louisburg scored the first three goals and didn't look back in a 4-3 victory that provided the Wildcats with the positive momentum they were looking for.

That didn't mean it wasn't without some drama.

Heritage Christian scored two late goals in the match to cut the Louisburg lead to one after the Wildcats had to change their lineup due to injuries.

"I thought for 60 or 65 minutes we played really, really

well,”

Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “We passed and moved the ball pretty well. We were aggressive and played very hard.

“We had several kids hurt/ sick and had to make adjustments. We had to move kids around in the last 20 minutes or so and put kids in positions that they usually don’t play to sort of plug holes. They scored two goals rather quickly and we were just holding on. I think Heritage is a quality side and it was a good win for us. It was a stressful ending, but a positive result nonetheless.”

The Wildcats (6-3) got out to big lead early and junior Leia Shaffer got the scoring started for Louisburg. Shaffer scored her first goal of the season on an assist from Emma Christy to put the Wildcats up 1-0.



Junior Avery O'Meara passes the ball up to teammate Leia Shaffer at home against Baldwin on April 15.

Junior Trinity Moore maneuvered past the Heritage defense later in the first half and she found the back of the net to give Louisburg a 2-0 advantage and it stayed that way until halftime.

Moore added another goal early in the second half to put Louisburg up 3-0, but Heritage Christian didn't back down. The Chargers followed with their first goal, before Louisburg junior Mackenzie Scholtz found the back of the net on an assist from Moore to give Louisburg a 4-1 lead.

Heritage answered with two quick scores late in the first half, but the Wildcats were able to hold on and snap their losing skid.

Louisburg returns to action tonight when it hosts Ottawa in a

varsity-only matchup. The match is set to begin at 5 p.m.

Wildcats fall to Baldwin, Piper

On April 15, the Louisburg girls soccer team had a chance to hand Baldwin its first loss of the season when it hosted the Bulldogs on their home field.

In what was an up and down match, it was Baldwin that was able to take advantage of its chances as it gave Louisburg a 5-2 loss. Baldwin took a two-goal lead into halftime, and despite a couple quick scores from Louisburg in the second half, the Bulldogs kept adding onto its lead.

Baldwin scored four minutes into the contest to jump out on top and later scored again before halftime to take the 2-0 lead.



Senior Camdyn Clark clears the ball away against Baldwin last week.

Louisburg responded with an early second half goal from Trinity Moore to try and give the Wildcats some momentum. Baldwin didn't waste any time as it scored another goal a minute later.

The Wildcats didn't back down as Lily McDaniel scored her first varsity goal to make it a 3-2 match, but Baldwin was able counter on several different occasions and that led to two more Bulldog goals and Louisburg couldn't come back.

"We had the possession, we had more chances, but they just counter attacked every time and just got us," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "The girls played hard and played well. We did a good job of doing what we needed to do. We just missed our chances. We hit the post three times, had a breakaway and their keeper barely gets to it and just nicked it away. It could have easily went the other way, but it just didn't this time. I think they had like six shots on goal and they got five to go in."

It was the same type of match against Piper on April 11 as the Wildcats also fell on the road in a 2-0 defeat.

"We had two games like this back-to-back with Piper too," Conley said. "We had the better of play, better chances, had four or five breakaways and just couldn't get one to go. We go through these, and it stinks to go through them right now, but it is a

learning lesson and we will get better.”

Wildcats bounce back with shutout of Eudora



Louisburg junior Morgan Messer pulls back on the ball to beat a Eudora defender Tuesday during the Wildcats’ 7-0 victory over the Cardinals.

Coming off its first loss of the season, the Louisburg girls soccer team made sure it didn’t turn into two Tuesday when the Wildcats hosted Eudora.

Louisburg had four different players score and the Wildcats took care of business in a 7-0 win over the Cardinals. Despite being up just one goal at halftime, Louisburg dominated the second half as it scored six times and recorded its fifth shutout in six games.

“I though the girls played well,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “The first half was a little rough because we weren’t executing or getting things done. The second half they

started
executing and doing what we asked them to do. They played the
ball, had some
give-and-go's and played off each other.

"They were struggling a little early
because we had nine kids gone the last few days and it was a
little tough to
get things done at practice. The second half, they executed
and figured out
what I was asking them to do and they looked pretty good."

Junior Mackenzie Scholtz got
things started for the Wildcats with a goal midway through the
first half and
the Wildcats took a 1-0 lead into halftime. In the second
half, the flood gates
opened for Louisburg as it dominated possession.

Scholtz, who finished the match
with a hat trick, scored shortly after halftime and then
assisted on the Wildcats'
next goal when junior Erin Lemke found the back of the net.

The combination of Scholtz and
Lemke struck again. Midway through the second half, Scholtz
took a shot on
goal, which was knocked out by the Eudora goalie, but Lemke
was there for the
rebound near the net and put it away for a 4-0 advantage.



Junior Haley Cain goes up for a header Tuesday during the Wildcats' home match with Eudora.

A few minutes later, Scholtz completed her hat trick thanks to an assist from junior Morgan Messer. Junior Trinity Moore followed with a goal of her own late in the second half.

With under a minute left, the Wildcats sealed the win as senior Hallie Hutsell scored her first goal of the season and the celebration was on.

"For Hallie, we just played the ball down the middle and she was able to just beat the girl and it worked out pretty well," Conley said. "Hallie hasn't had one for a while, so that was a

good to see her get one there.”

Eudora didn't have many chances of its own as the Louisburg defense turned away whatever runs the Cardinals tried to make. It was also the fifth shutout for Wildcat goalie Carson Buffington on the season.

The large second half lead allowed Conley to move players around to different positions and give his bench players more varsity time – something he has been able to do in several matches this year.

It is something that he hopes pays off in the long run on both levels of the team.

“I think we were able to get 20 kids into the game and that is great,” Conley said. “We are able to get kids in and getting them used to being out there and what to expect. I think it also helps them on the junior varsity level because the game is faster up here. I hope it pays dividends because you never know what injuries we might have later in the year. We are just trying to put kids into different spots and see what they can do.”

Louisburg (5-1) will face a tough road test today when the Wildcats travel to Piper for a 6 p.m. match. The Pirates are 7-1 on the season and Conley knows his team is going to have to be ready to play.

“They have a new coach so it is going to be vastly different from last year,” Conley said. “They are very talented up top and on the outside and we are going to have to

deal with that.

I think it is going to be a really good game. They have a really talented

centerback and a solid goalkeeper, so it will be another dogfight. It should be

another great game and hopefully we will be ready to go.”