2020 Senior Spotlight: Andie Masten



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.

The sport of soccer and Andie Masten never really crossed paths – that is until late in her junior year.

Louisburg head coach Kyle Conley asked her if she would be a team manager and she agreed. Then as the season got closer, plans started to change.

“The first day of tryouts, he convinced me to just give it a shot,” Masten said. “I borrowed some cleats and showed up the next day. It wasn’t a part of my life at all, until Conley pushed me to tryout. He has a way of convincing people.”

To this day, she doesn’t regret the decision.

Masten played on junior varsity, but was a part of the Wildcat team that finished as the state runner-up last year at the Class 4-1A tournament in Topeka. It was a great experience for her to be a part of something special – but her favorite memory came a lot earlier in the season.

“It is definitely the first time I’ve ever scored a goal in a soccer game,” Masten said. “It was last year, in a JV game at Tonganoxie. The coaches told me to pull forward and go play up

top. All of my teammates and coaches were cheering me on and it was just the greatest experience when I FINALLY kicked it in. Hearing all of them cheering and hollering was the best."

Masten played in three varsity contests in 2019, including the regional and state championship games and was more than ready for her final season.

"Andie is a fantastic young lady who started out wanting to be a manager, but we convinced to actually play," Conley said. "She started soccer her junior year and she worked as hard as she could to improve. She had a great attitude and always kept practice fun with her personality."

She was a part of a 12-member senior class that had played together for several years and were a big part of the Wildcats' three-straight state final four appearances. This year the Wildcats were ready for something special.

"I was very optimistic in what this season was going to hold for us," Masten said. "This year's team was something extremely special and I was looking forward to see how this season was going to pan out. Making it to state was always a goal and eventually a priority for us, and I was really eager to see how far we'd make it."

Unfortunately, a harsh reality set in for the Wildcats, and teams across the state, as spring sports were canceled due to the spread of COVID-19. The opportunity of winning the program's first state title was no more.

It was a crushing blow – not only to Masten – but to the rest of her team.

"I was extremely upset," Masten said. "It was my only sport and I was looking forward to making great memories with the other girls and win some games. But if I'm being honest, my heart really goes out to the girls who have been preparing for this season, and soccer is their whole world. For some, it was

their last season of soccer. Each day, it gets easier and we still have been reaching out to comfort one another.”



Louisburg senior Andie Masten received her state runner-up medal from coach Kyle Conley following the state championship game last May.

Even though Masten only got to play one official season of soccer, it was a time she will never forget and is thankful the Wildcat coaching staff gave her the opportunity to be a part of it.

“I’m not sure I can even put into words how special the soccer program is, none-the-less how fantastic the group of senior

girls are along with my coaches," she said. "When I decided to play last year, these girls were so welcoming and encouraging. I truly had no idea what I was doing, and still am unsure of how to actually play soccer. They were always patient and pushed me to be my best, as did the coaches, who are some of my all-time favorite people. I've never had a group of people truly believe in me like they have."

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

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

AM: It sounds so goofy, but truthfully I have been missing the silly things like water breaks with the team, and walking to and from practice. I miss talking to each and every one of the girls, making them laugh and working hard. It could've been the last time I will ever get to talk to and play with some of the girls.

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

AM: My most memorable moment as an athlete is definitely going to state for my first time, last year, and taking second. While the loss was disappointing and upsetting, it was one of the coolest experiences I have ever had.

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

AM: It is very boring but I love to read. Quarantine has put me in the position where I have lots of free time and I've been flying through books!

LSZ: What are your plans for after graduation?

AM: After graduation, I plan on attending Pitt State and hopefully pursue a degree in Occupational Therapy.

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

AM: I guess I would have to say that an accomplishment of mine would be my grades, as of right now. I try my best to take school seriously and work hard to maintain pretty good grades.

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

AM: I guess something a lot of people don’t know about me is that I’m ambidextrous. I write with my left hand but switch it up on other things or tasks.

Andie’s Favorites

Pro athlete: Patrick Mahomes

Pro team: Texas Rangers

College team: Pitt State

Movie: Step Brothers

TV Show: The Office

Song: Butterflies by Kacey Musgraves

Band/Musician: Khalid

Pregame meal/snack: Rice Krispie treats before every game!

Class/subject: Spanish

Teacher and why: Definitely Mr. Hinkle (assistant principal), although he isn’t technically a teacher. I was his T.A. this past year and he and I just built a great relationship!

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

2020 Senior Spotlight: Avery O'Meara



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.

Avery O’Meara has had more than her fair share of special memories when it comes to the Louisburg girls soccer team.

O’Meara has started for the Wildcats since her freshman season and has been a part of three Class 4-1A final four appearances and two state runner-up finishes. It has been a ride full of amazing moments.

“Honestly, I don’t think I can pinpoint a single memory that was the best because they are all amazing,” O’Meara said. “The whole experience has just been amazing.”

The Louisburg senior is coming off a strong junior campaign herself as she was named to the Class 4-1A all-state second team as a midfielder. She was hoping to use the momentum of that second place state finish to possibly go even further this season.

“I was really looking forward to this season because this season was supposed to be special, and not just because we are seniors,” O’Meara said. “We all worked so hard in the off-season and during conditioning to get better – underclassmen included – and this was the year that I truly believe we could’ve been a powerhouse of a team. I believe with all my heart that we would’ve made it to the state final four again and that we may very well have won.”

O’Meara was one of 12 Wildcat seniors that won’t get that final opportunity to reach the state’s highest prize as the spread of COVID-19 shut spring sports down across the state, along with the closure of schools.

The news was a shock to O’Meara and the rest of her teammates. It prevented one final run at a state title, but more importantly, a chance to play with a team and coaching staff that have played vital roles in her life the last several years.

“The senior class in general is so special,” she said. “I feel like we are all family, we all get along and support each other. The soccer senior girls are on a whole other level though. The majority of us actually grew up playing on the same team. We didn’t always get along, but we always supported each other no matter what. We got to know each other better than anyone else, and we could say one word or give one look and know the exact meaning behind it. Sure, some of us didn’t grow up playing soccer, but we were all sisters as soon as we hit the field. We were truly a family.

“As for the coaches, they are the best coaches a girl could ask for. They have really made me into the player and person I am today. They have some kind of superhero power that allows them to see what you can be and give you the confidence and direction needed to get you there.”

Head coach Kyle Conley appreciated what O’Meara gave to the team, especially with her presence as a holding midfielder. She was reliable player in critical moments for the Wildcats.

“Avery was one of the hardest working kids on the field each and every time we played,” Conley said. “She worked her butt off and never backed down or said she was tired. She never complained and always gave everything she had. Avery would have been a four-year starter for us and she played extremely hard each and every game.”



Louisburg senior Avery O’Meara was slated to be a four-year starter for the Wildcats in 2020.

With the cancellation, O’Meara will now put a sport behind her that she has competed in since she was little and will focus on her future. However, it was soccer that has helped her get to where she is today.

“I have been playing soccer since I was old enough to play on the Louisburg rec team,” O’Meara said. “My step dad played soccer most of his life and got my older sister to play, so I decided to follow suit. Soccer has been a huge part of my life. It has been my outlet my whole life. Practice was always the one place where I could just be me without feeling

judged.”

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

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

AO: The laughter. Both during school and soccer there was always someone who would make everyone laugh or, at least, lighten the mood. It made everything seem fun, and work felt a little less like work.

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

AO: This would definitely be the first time I was a varsity starter my freshman year. It was the second game of the season and I had finished the junior varsity game to go right in to warmups. During pre-game huddle with Conley he apparently told me to start, but I was not paying one lick of attention. It wasn’t until the national anthem that anyone realized I was not on the field with the rest of the starters so I had to run out to the middle of the field with everyone watching. According to the entire team during pre-game huddle, Conley had told me I was starting multiple times and every time I nodded my head to say that I had heard him but I don’t remember any of it.

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

AO: I really enjoy hiking. It gives me an escape from reality, fresh air, and likely a good view.

LSZ: What are your plans for after graduation?

AO: I will be attending Colorado State University with the

intent to earn a Bachelors in Equine Science.

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

AO: I am proud of my academic standings. My GPA, grades and ACT got me accepted into my dream college.

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

AO: That I absolutely hate running. As a soccer player, that sounds very counter intuitive.

Avery’s Favorites

Pro athlete: Beezie Madden

Pro team: USA Equestrian Team

College team: Colorado State Rams

Movie: The Sandlot or The Little Rascals

TV Show: Outlander

Song: I Hope by Gabby Barrett

Band/Musician: Luke Bryan

Pregame meal/snack: Pop Tarts

Class/subject: Either Math or Science

Teacher and why: All of them. They are all so supportive and fun.

Previous Senior Spotlights

Drake Varns – Golf

Trinity Moore – Girls 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

2020 Senior Spotlight: Trinity Moore



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

Trinity Moore was already having a senior year to remember.

Moore cemented herself as the most decorated cross country runner in Louisburg High School school history last fall when she finished third at the Class 4A state meet and broke her own school record in the process.

She ended her career with four state medals and later signed to run cross country and track for Pittsburg State University. Everything was falling into place.

Moore, along with the rest of the Louisburg girls soccer team, was preparing for another run at a state title after finishing the last two seasons as the Class 4-1A state runner-up. It was set up to be a season to remember and a perfect conclusion to her high school career.

“I was very much looking forward to this soccer season,” Moore said. “I’d been looking forward to it the entire school year and have been very hopeful for what it would’ve brought. To think we could’ve made it to the state championship for the third year in a row seemed so unreal, yet so achievable for our team.”

Then came the middle of March when Moore, and the rest of the Wildcats, were burdened with the news that spring sports across the state of Kansas were canceled due to the spread of COVID-19.

It was heartbreaking news for all of them, but especially for Moore and the other 11 seniors on the Wildcat team. Louisburg was supposed to take the pitch on March 17 for its season opener against Harmon, but instead, they are all forced to wonder what could have been.

“The cancellation of my senior soccer season and the other events I won’t get to have this year has been extremely difficult,” Moore said. “The first few days were the worst and I found myself crying multiple times because it felt so unreal. I got a little better after talking with teammates and friends.

“Then came the day that was supposed to be our first game. That made my heart sink, but I knew that I just needed to keep my head high. It is very heartbreaking that I won’t get to experience this season and many other things to end up my

senior year at LHS.”

Even though her athletic career will continue in a different sport, soccer has always been a big part of Moore’s life and the fact it has been taken away prematurely has been tough to handle at times. Still, she is grateful for the role soccer has played in her life.

“I have been playing soccer since I was 4-years-old,” Moore said. “My parents both played in soccer in college and they put me into the sport as early as possible. Soccer is one of the most important aspects of my life. It has turned me into a determined, hardworking and strong athlete I am today. It has shown me how much hard work goes into something you love and want to exceed at.”

Louisburg soccer has provided Moore with plenty of memories to look back on as well. Maybe none more than last year’s run to the state championship game after an exciting semifinal win against Topeka-Hayden that ended in penalty kicks.

“My favorite memory in all of high school soccer would probably be last season when we went into penalty kick’s to make it to the championship game,” Moore said. “I had to make my PK because we were tied and I had to score to get us to another round, and then Hallie Hutsell started the second round of the PK’s and scored the goal we needed to advance to the championship game. When this happened we all ran together and it was an amazing experience and created such an awesome memory.”



Senior Trinity Moore finished her Louisburg soccer career with 18 goals and eight assists over four years.

Moore played several different positions for the Wildcats over the years and was voted as a team captain for the upcoming season. She also earned first team All-Frontier League and all-state honors in 2019.

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.

“Trinity was a fierce competitor and played all out each and every game and practice,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “She never took a day off and was a player who would play anywhere to help the team. She has played multiple positions at the varsity level and excelled at all of them.”

Other than soccer, Louisburg Sports Zone also had a chance to

catch up with Trinity on how she has been coping with an early end to her senior year and some of her other interests. Here are her responses from the rest of our Q&A.

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

TM: I have really been missing soccer practice and getting to spend three hours every day with the best teammates and family. Practice is such a great part of my day that makes me happy and spend with other people doing what we love. I love to train and get better at the sport so it has been hard to not have it every day.

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

TM: My most memorable moment in high school as an athlete is being able to go to state multiple times with such great teams. In my time on the cross country and soccer teams I have got to create such amazing memories and experiences and accomplish going to state multiple times with them!

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

TM: My favorite hobby outside of school is probably cooking. I love to make homemade meals and spend time with my family in the kitchen. I'm very passionate about it and I can use my creative and fun side when I cook. It is another way besides working out that I can relieve stress, have fun, and do something for the people I love!

LSZ: I know you are going to Pitt to run next year, but how have you been trying to stay in shape during a time like this?

TM: To stay in shape during this time I have been following a very routine running/training program as well as many home workouts. It's time for me to start preparing to run at Pitt

next year, so I've been doing various long runs, workouts, and even taking my dog with me when I exercise every day to make sure I stay healthy, get outside, keep in shape and have fun!

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

TM: The accomplishments I am most proud of outside of athletics are probably my service work and success in school. I love to serve others in this, as well as other communities on mission trips or doing community service. I am also very proud of how hard I work in the classroom to get honors such as a 4.0 GPA every year and things like honor roll. These require the same passion, determination and drive as sports, so I am very proud of them!

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

TM: Something a lot of people might not know about me is I love to clean all the time. People know I am very organized at school and with all my work, but when I get home I spend hours cleaning. Even though my house and my room are very clean I like to organize and clean things because it's how I relieve stress. It's a very weird thing about me but I can stay up until 2 a.m. and not realize it because I love to be so organized!

Trinity's Favorites

Pro athlete: Carli Lloyd

Pro team: USA Women's Soccer

College team: Pitt State, of course!

Movie: 16 Candles

TV Show: Grey's Anatomy

Band/Musician: I love and listen to all different types of music such as rock, rap, pop, and country.

Pregame meal/snack: Any type of pasta the night before and homemade protein balls the day of.

Class/subject: AP Biology- it is a high level college class that pushes me to work and think more complex and prepare me for college. I am going into the science field so it is a very interesting class that I enjoy going to.

Teacher and why: I have so many to choose from because I have learned a bunch from them and they have rubbed off so much good in my life, but I am forever a Quinncredible!

Players, coaches mourn loss of spring sports season



Louisburg softball, along with the rest of the Wildcat spring sports teams, saw their season come to a close with the spread of COVID-19.

It has been almost a week since 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 in many cases – are still trying to do so.

GIRLS SOCCER

Mackenzie Scholtz didn't spend as much of her Spring Break relaxing with family and friends as she wanted.

Instead, she found herself focused on social media, constantly checking updates on what was going to happen with the rest of her senior year. She was scared that her final soccer season was going to be taken away from her.

Turns out, those fears became a reality.

“When I read it for the first time, I just couldn’t believe it,” Scholtz said. “I immediately broke down in tears. I think I cried for about four hours non-stop just thinking that I would never get to step on that field with my best friends ever again. I had such high hopes for this season too and had been so excited all year.”

Before this all came about, none of the 12 Louisburg seniors had any idea they had already played their last match as a Wildcat.

The senior class of Scholtz, Avery O’Meara, Erin Lemke, Lily McDaniel, Ashley Moore, Trinity Moore, Skylar Bowman, Haley Cain, Hannah Straub, Olivia Chase, Andie Masten and Morgan Messer provided Wildcat coach Kyle Conley with a lot of good memories, which left the news even harder to stomach.

Louisburg was looking for its fourth consecutive state final four appearance after earning second place finishes the last two seasons.

“The decision absolutely broke my heart,” Conley said. “I couldn’t in a million years fathom something like this could happen. I honestly felt the cancellation was harsh this early, but would have

rather like to have seen a postponement and then reevaluate at a later date.
This group of 12 seniors was going to be very special. If they would have returned to the state final four this season, they would have been one of only two 4A-1A teams to do this improbable feat. This group was 44-18-1 in their three years. I would be willing to bet this is the most successful program over those three years in regards to win percentage. Obviously, winning state championships would trump that, but we were extremely successful."

The one thing that has helped players get past this disappointment is that there are so many seniors to lean on and they have done a lot of that this past week.

"The amount of support from this team has helped me so much," Scholtz said. "As soon as we found out that we would no longer play, all of us seniors were sending nothing but love to one another as well as to the whole team. Individually, there were many messages sent showing how much we love each other and that this would get better. Coach Conley and the younger girls also shared a lot of great messages as well. Hearing positive words is really helping me get through this whole thing."



The 2020 Louisburg High School girls soccer team

Many of the 12 seniors and their parents were a part of the group that helped raise money to start the Louisburg program nearly five years ago. They had always dreamed of winning a state title, but the wondering what could have happened is the worst part for a lot of them.

“This group had three goals: they wanted to win a league title, to win a regional championship and finally win a state championship,” Conley said. “This would have been our program’s fifth year and everything was built for this season. I believed in this group and I felt we were going to compete for that league title and we were going to go back to the state final four. We wanted three banners: league title, regional championship, and a state championship. It’s so sad that we will never get the opportunity to show the state what this team is capable of accomplishing.”

BASEBALL

Kade Larson was all set to begin his first season as the head baseball coach at Louisburg High School.

Larson, who was hired late last spring, was looking forward to leading his alma mater and had high expectations for a group that was young, but returned experience from the year before.

Then came the news from KSHSAA to cancel spring activities, which left Larson, and the rest of the Wildcat program, speechless – including seniors Madden Rutherford, Andrew Krause and Kaden Oehlert.

“To say I am disappointed is an understatement,” Larson said. “I was very excited for this upcoming year. Being my first year as head coach I was more than ready to get the season underway and see what kind of team we had. I thought we could do some great things this year with the group that we were working with. For the short time we were able to practice, they had a great chemistry and worked super hard.

“I feel terrible for all the players having to lose a season like this, especially the seniors. Madden Rutherford and Andrew Krause were showing great leadership skills and I hate that they had their final season taken away. They are unprecedented times that I never thought would happen.”

Rutherford, who is a two-time All-Frontier

League player himself, was ready to make one final run with the Wildcats. Even
though he has signed to play baseball for Washington University in St. Louis,
he regrets not being able to have one final run in high school.

“Personally
I was just ready to just play ball again,” Rutherford said. “My football season
ended with an injury, and two surgeries later I was just starting to get back
into the swing of things. I was excited for the baseball team this season; we
had a different looking coaching staff and a different mentality which was
evident at practice. I’ll always be left wondering what could have happened.”



Senior Madden Rutherford, along with fellow seniors Andrew Krause and Kaden Oehlert, all saw their high school careers come to a close with the spread of COVID-19.

As difficult as it was for the seniors, the junior class will also have some obstacles to overcome – especially for those who are wanting to play at the college level.

“To go with the seniors, this is also horrible for the juniors,” Larson said. “Junior year is a big recruiting time and a lot of these guys are missing that. So all around this just is a bad time for an athlete, but I know they will work through it and come back next year ready to go.”

Even with all the hardships athletes are facing, including the loss of a season, several are trying to find the silver lining in it all.

“The whole COVID-19 situation has made me appreciate what I have,” Rutherford said. “It’s hard to truly recognize how nice you have things until they’re taken away. I just hope and pray that things don’t escalate further.”

TRACK AND FIELD

Carlee Gassman and Sydni Keagle were ready for the seasons of their lives on the track this season.

Gassman, who is a returning a state medalist in the hurdles, was considered one of the best returning 300-meter hurdlers in Class 4A. As for Keagle, she finished one spot away from a state medal last year in the 100 hurdles.

Both Louisburg seniors had high hopes, as did the rest of the Lady Cat track team that was ranked high in Class 4A in the preseason. That made the news of canceling spring sports all the more crushing.

“I honestly couldn’t believe it,” Keagle said. “At first I was in shock and then I was just incredibly sad at this loss of opportunity and it’s taken a while to come to terms with the fact that I won’t be able to compete in my favorite sport one last time.”

Gassman felt much the same way as she earned three state medals as season ago. Along with sophomore Delaney Wright, who garnered four state medals, the two athletes figured to score a lot of points for the Lady Cats this season.

“When I heard the last quarter of my senior year was cancelled and knowing track would be over as well, I found myself crying about not having school,” Gassman said. “I never thought I’d find myself crying over school. I am just trying to keep my head high – there are better things to come.”

Girls coach John Reece said there were 34 out for track before the team departed for Spring Break, which was one of the bigger groups the Lady Cats have had in several years.



The Louisburg 4×400 relay of (from left) Carlee Gassman, Rain

Pugh, Sydni Keagle and Delaney Wright were some of several returning Lady Cats trying for a big state performance.

“It is a huge bummer that everything got nixed,” Reece said. “We had a chance to do some great things this track season on the girls side. We could have been a top three team at state with a handful of very talented girls. My heart goes out to the girls and the missed opportunity for them.”

The same could be said for the boys as the Wildcats featured a big roster of 74 athletes and Louisburg would have been competitive in most events throughout the season.

“I am just extremely disappointed,” boys coach Andy Wright said. “We had 74 boys out, which is the biggest number we have had in several years. We had multiple state qualifiers returning as well as some newcomers that could have helped contribute to a successful year.”

One of those qualifiers was javelin thrower Michael Waldron. The Louisburg senior finished just a few feet away from earning a state medal a season ago, and now his attempt at getting there has been dashed.

“It’s really hard to describe the disappointment I had when I heard that I wouldn’t be able to throw javelin this year,” Waldron said. “It was tough and very hard to wrap my mind around, it’s tough

knowing that I had
about a week of practice under my belt and a lot of preparation for the first
meet of the year. Just finding out I wouldn't be competing at all was crushing."

The season was an important one, not only to Waldron, but to the rest of the track seniors as well. Anthony Davis (distance), Trent Martin
(pole vault), Charlie Koontz (sprints, relays), Carter Anglin (discus), Garrett
Harding (shot put) and Indy Strumillo (jumps) were all in their final year and
were excited with what lied ahead. A few of them had already made plans to work
out together over Spring Break to get some extra work in.

"I texted Carter Anglin and Garrett Harding about the fact that our season was over, since we all threw together," Waldron said. "It was
tough for Carter because I knew he was thinking about a possible state
appearance this year. For Garrett, it was his first year but he had some good
success in the first few weeks with throwing shot put, so I know he was
excited. It's just a bummer and we have texted each other, and comforted one
another. We are just still in shock – it
was like a slap in the face."

GOLF

Calvin Dillon has already had the best career in Louisburg High School golf history, and he accomplished that after his junior season.

Still, he wanted a lot more.

Dillon, who is a three-time state medalist, was looking for that elusive state championship this year and was considered one of the favorites going into the season. With the cancellation of spring sports it left Dillon, like many others, wondering ‘What if?’

“It was definitely hard to hear that the regular season, as well as postseason were canceled,” Dillon said. “It seemed like it happened all of a sudden. When you hear of professional and collegiate seasons being cancelled, you feel some remorse and disappointment for them, but when your own season gets cancelled, it becomes real.”

The remorse for his own season wasn’t what Dillon was feeling. It was the fact that he had hoped to lead a team – full of seniors – to its second consecutive state tournament appearance.

Seniors Drake Varns, Garrett Rolofson, Ryan Haight and Colin Cook all returned from that team, while other seniors like David Perentis, Deven Wieland and Luke Wickersham were also trying to vie for the final spots.



Five of the six golfers from Louisburg's state team returned in 2020 to try and make another trip to the state tournament. (From left) Colin Cook, Drake Varns, Calvin Dillon, Ryan Haight and Garrett Rolofson.

"We definitely had high expectations for this season," Dillon said. "With the heavy amount of seniors on the team, as well as our regional
and state experience last year, we were really excited. I think the most
disappointing thing for all of us is going to be the lack of closure. We were
all looking forward to one last go-around, and to have our season disappear in
a matter of days is devastating."

Like with every other conflict in life, the Wildcats are trying to make sense of it all and find a positive side to what has been a
forgetful week.

“One positive that comes from this situation is the gratitude we will now have for our everyday lives,” Dillon said. “You never know when something catastrophic like this can happen, and we need to be thankful for the life we do have.

Although this situation is disappointing for us, it was ultimately God’s plan. He is the one that is in control, and if we seek him in this time of discomfort, we will find the closure and satisfaction that we lost along with our senior season.”

GIRLS SWIMMING

It was an historic season before it even started as Louisburg would join the Osawatomie-Paola girls swim team for the first time this year.

Unfortunately, thanks to the pandemic spreading across the country, history will have to take a back seat for another year.

Head coach Maddie Carrigan was in her first year with the program after assisting with the boys team last winter, so finding out the news with everyone else was a little tough to take.

“It was really upset when I heard the news,” Carrigan said. “Obviously, I understand the reason for the cancellation of school and

sports season, so I completely back the decision. It was still a huge bummer for me because this was my first time having a high school head coaching role. It was a pretty big honor since I’m only 23 and I was super excited to try some fun new things I came up with for the girls. The first two weeks were already so much fun and the girls improved so much, so I can’t imagine how great the whole season would have been.”

Osawatomie-Paola-Louisburg had three seniors swimmers this season, including Shayla Aye from Louisburg and Brayden Hanf and Grace Shore from Paola.

In all, Louisburg had eight swimmers on the team including Aye, Claire Brown, Bailey Hallas, Sydney Keaton, Dana Mattison, Anna Morrison, Dagen Page and Reese Reitz.

“Everyone is really bummed, especially the seniors,” Carrigan said. “We had a lot of first time swimmers, as well, so I hope this doesn’t deter them from joining the team again next year.”

SOFTBALL

Last year was a special season for the Louisburg softball team as the Lady Cats made a run to a regional championship and a state tournament appearance.

It was a great last part of the season for several of the Lady Cats.

Unfortunately, with the news of COVID-19, this year's version of Louisburg softball team will never get another chance at a magical season.

"When I found out my season was canceled, I was devastated," senior Reilly Ratliff-Becher said. "It would be the last time I ever played softball and it's just taken away from me."

The seven Lady Cat seniors were excited to begin this season, as was their coach, Nick Chapman. Chapman was in his first year as head coach with the program after spending last season at the junior varsity level.

After a couple weeks of practices, Chapman had barely gotten a chance to get to know his new team. Then he had to deliver the news that no one wanted to hear.

"This was not easy news to get," Chapman said. "It was even harder to have to tell the girls and even worse that I had to do it over the phone. It's still not real. Next week, we were going to get back to work and prepare for a special season. The girls had bought into what we were trying to accomplish. Just in two weeks, the culture was changing and girls were understanding what it meant to play team softball and do what is best for the team. The end of last week we had our first team bonding night.

The seniors set their team expectations and goals for the year. I listened to each of them say how excited they were for this specific year and to make one last run at it.

“I was crushed to have to tell them they weren’t going to get that chance. All seven of them helped mold this team into something special and set the tone for what Louisburg softball should be. I was excited for the product we were going to put on the field game one. I thought this year was going to be a season full of success.”

The seven seniors consisted of Ratliff-Becher, Allie Boles, Lauren Cutshaw, Kayla Willey, Kat Coolidge, Gabby Duggar and August Daniels. Some of those seniors were a big part of the Lady Cats’ state run a year ago, while others were looking to make an impact on the varsity level this year.

“I had very good expectations for this year,” Ratliff-Becher said. “As much as I feel bad for myself, teammates and my fellow seniors, I feel especially bad for Chapman. He worked so hard once he found out he got this job. I was so ready to learn and make him proud this season.

“I tell myself is that I have to think of other people in this situation. This could all be much worse. We are just containing this virus and protecting the

ones at the most risk, although it’s going to be hard on everyone for a while.”

Messer excited to be a part of Highland’s inaugural soccer program



Louisburg senior Morgan Messer signed her letter of intent to play soccer at Highland Community College this fall.

Five years ago, Morgan Messer and her parents were one of several Louisburg families that helped raise money to begin the Louisburg High School girls soccer program.

Messer, along with many others, helped start something new that turned into a powerhouse program in Class 4-1A rather quickly that produced three state final four appearances and two state-runner-up finishes.

It was a time that was special to the Louisburg High School senior and she is hoping that same success translates to the college level.

In front of family and friends in a signing ceremony at Louisburg High School, Messer signed her letter of intent on March 11 to play soccer at Highland Community College. She will be a member of Highland’s first women’s soccer team as it begins its inaugural season this fall.

“I think it is kind of cool that my family was one of the ones that helped start Louisburg girls soccer and now I am going for the start of Highland’s program,” Messer said. “All of the players will be freshmen and it is cool to make history again like that.

“As I go in it is a brand new program. The thing that stuck out to me was the coach’s passion for the game. He pointed out some things that I didn’t see in myself and it really showed that he cared. It is cool to see how small their class sizes were and that you would have a lot more 1-on-1 time with professors. It all just seemed like a family.”



LHS senior Morgan Messer signed her letter on intent with Highland Community College during a ceremony on March 11. Seated next to Messer (from left) is her sister Brianna, and her parents David and Amee Messer. Standing is assistant coach Michael Pickman and head coach Kyle Conley.

Before this all came about, however, Messer wasn't even sure if she wanted to play soccer in college. She didn't know if the opportunity was going to be there, but decided to play in one last showcase tournament about a month ago.

That tournament changed Messer's future for the better. Highland coach James Ross got a chance to watch Messer during the tournament and offered her a spot if she wanted it.

"I told him I had to think about it and talk with my parents because I had already told myself that I wasn't going to play," Messer said. "I went to go visit the next week and I just fell in

love with the campus and the people.”

Shortly after her commitment, Messer began to connect with several other Highland players that would be a part of the school’s first women’s soccer team. She is not wasting time as she is already helping prepare for the historic season.

“I am hoping to be a leader on the team,” Messer said. “I have already started doing some of those leadership type roles in talking with the girls. I just want to try and have a positive attitude throughout the season as a team.”

Messer’s life changed in such a short time, and instead of preparing for life without soccer, she gets the chance to play her favorite sport a little bit longer.

“At first I didn’t think I would be playing college soccer,” Messer said. “I never had the mentality that I would be going to a big university or something like that, but my coach gave me this opportunity to pursue what I loved. He saw some different things that coaches usually don’t see in me, so it is very exciting.”

Scholtz looking forward to

opportunity at Missouri Southern



Louisburg senior Mackenzie Scholtz recently signed her letter of intent to play soccer at Missouri Southern this coming fall.

It had been a long time coming for
Mackenzie Scholtz and it was a day she thought would never arrive.

That day finally came last
Wednesday in front a room full and friends and family to celebrate her dream of
playing collegiate soccer, becoming a reality. During a ceremony at Louisburg
High School, Scholtz signed her letter of intent to play soccer at Missouri
Southern beginning this upcoming fall for the NCAA Division II program in
Joplin, Mo.

Scholtz, who has played soccer
since she was 4-years-old, will now get the chance to compete at the collegiate
level in a matter of months.

“Everyone coming just shows that I
have a lot of support, not just from my family, but my friends and coaches as
well,” Scholtz said. “I wouldn’t have been able to do this

with any of them. I got this offer from playing in a high school game, which means a lot to me and that wouldn’t have happened without the help of my coaches.

“I have always wanted to play soccer in college, so getting to continue that is great. Having a scholarship really helps and then I get to continue what I love when I get down there. It will be almost like a job for me, but I am really looking forward to it.”

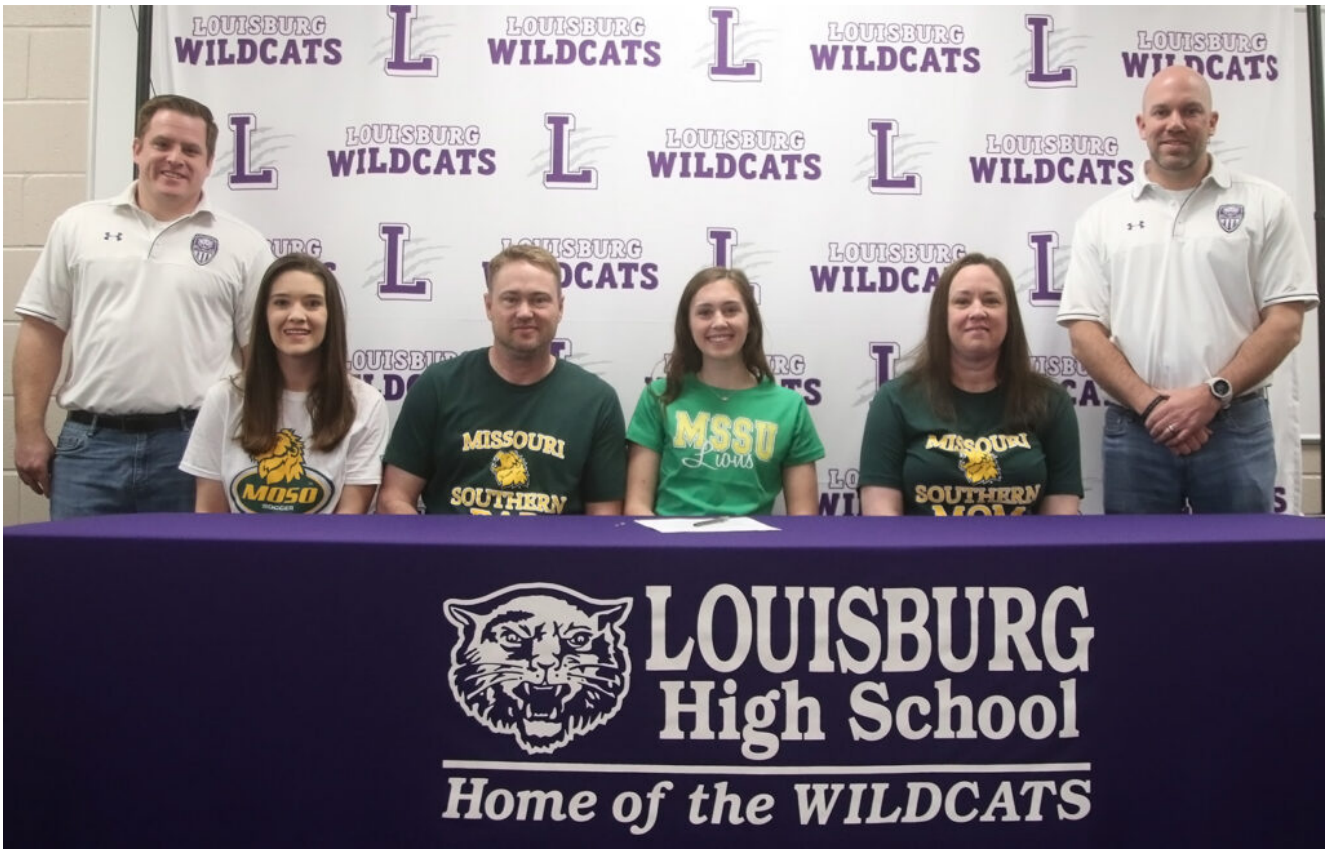
The story of her getting that offer is a good one and it happened partly because Scholtz was at the right place, at the right time.

The Missouri Southern staff came to Louisburg more than two years ago to watch then-standout Bailey Belcher play, but the Lions coaches also caught a glimpse of Scholtz. It wasn’t long after that the Lions offered both Belcher and Scholtz scholarship opportunities.

Belcher has spent the last two years with the Lion program and the two Louisburg standouts will reunite on the pitch soon.

“They were originally coming to watch Bailey, but then the coach liked how we played together and then he invited down to the campus to play,” Scholtz said. “I really enjoyed all the girls and the campus and everything. I had offers from schools in other states, but this is close to home and I get to play with one of my best friends. It just seemed liked the best option all-around.

“Bailey really helped me out during this whole process, about whether to accept the offer. I am so excited. I love playing with her and I think we play really well together. I am looking forward to see how we work together on the college level.”



Mackenzie Scholtz (middle) signed to play soccer for Missouri Southern during a signing ceremony last Wednesday. Seated next to Mackenzie (from left) her sister Ashton and her parents Christian and Samantha. Standing is Louisburg assistant coach Michael Pickman and head coach Kyle Conley.

However, it wasn’t always a given that Scholtz would go to Missouri Southern as there was a coaching change in the program last season. Scholtz wasn’t sure if the staff was going to honor her scholarship and what her other opportunities could be.

“It was a little up in the air for a while,” Scholtz said. “I hadn’t met the coach and he had

never seen me play,
so I wasn’t sure he was going to offer me still. Then he texted me and said he
still wanted me on the team and that was a good feeling and kind of a relief.
It was a breath of fresh air.”

Scholtz has a good high school
resume as she heads off to the college ranks. Last season, Scholtz was named
the Class 4-1A Co-Offensive Player of the Year by the Kansas Soccer Coaches
Association.

She also
had a record-setting season for the Wildcat offense as there were times during
the 2019 season that she couldn’t be stopped. She set school records for goals
in a season (39), goals in a career (98), hat tricks in a season (9), hat
tricks in a career (18), points in a season (84), points in career (235) and
game-winning goals (10).

Scholtz has also been named to the
All-Frontier League and all-state first team the last three seasons.

As for her college career has in
store for her, Scholtz knows it is going to be a lot of work between school and
athletics. Still, she is looking forward to the challenge.

“I want to try and be and starter,”
she said. “It is going to take a lot of hard work because there are a lot of
good girls coming in and there are already good girls down

there. I am just excited
for the opportunity.”

Louisburg girls soccer receives national award



The Louisburg girls soccer team were recently honored with the Pinnacle Award from the United Soccer Coaches Association. The award was handed out to just 36 high school across the country.

Kyle Conley ventured to Baltimore
earlier this month and made his way to the United Soccer Coaches convention,
and the Louisburg High School girls soccer coach was able to bring a little
something back with him.

Conley accepted the Pinnacle Award
on behalf of the girls soccer program for their accomplishments during the 2019
season.

The award is handed out to different programs throughout the country by the United Soccer Coaches and honors the athletes for their work on and off the field. Only 36 programs across the United States earned the honor.

“I was really fortunate to be able to receive the award for the team at the United Soccer Coaches Convention,” Conley said. “This 2019 girls team accomplished so much and I could not be prouder to be there on behalf of the school and our team to receive this honor.”

To be eligible for the Pinnacle Award, the team had to earn a certain GPA, display team ethics and sportsmanship and have high win percentage.

The Wildcats checked all those boxes as they had a team GPA of 3.73 and they were on the Bronze Level according to the United Soccer Coaches Association for the amount of yellow cards received. Louisburg also finished with a 17-4 record and had a win percentage of .805.

“These young ladies were so exceptional this past season and this only confirms that,” Conley said of the award. “These ladies were not just quality soccer player that made it to the state championship for the second year in a row, but fantastic students in the classroom and displayed exceptional sportsmanship throughout the season.

“Mike (Pickman) and I have set a high standard in our program to represent our school and community with our play and our actions and this group of young ladies did just that. We always want to do everything in our power to make the community and school proud, and the girls did just that. I

could not be proud to be this team’s coach.”

The 2019 team finished as a state runner-up for the second year in a row after losing to Bishop Miege and the Wildcats have built a history of winning as the program enters its fifth year.

Louisburg won a regional title in its first year of existence and they followed it up with a final four appearance in year two and took fourth, before finishing second the last two years.

Top 10 Louisburg Sports Stories of 2019

It was a successful, and eventful, 2019 for Louisburg High School athletics and for those who are connected to the Wildcat program. This past year created a lot of school history for LHS and several programs brought back state hardware.

Below are the Top 10 stories from 2019, 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. There were stories that I had to leave off that normally would easily make it. 2019 was that successful of a year for Wildcat athletics.

This year was a blast to cover and I was blessed to have the opportunity to go along for the ride with many of these. As much fun as it was, I can’t wait for 2020 to begin. Looking forward to it!



10. Tucker, Ratliff-Becher win powerlifting titles, Tucker breaks state record.

Two Louisburg High
School weightlifters made their way to the top of the podium in March during
the Class 4A State Powerlifting Meet at Basehor-Linwood High School.

Louisburg senior Kiefer Tucker and junior Reilly Ratliff-Becher both earned state championships in their respective weight class. Senior Jonathan DePriest finished third overall and several other Wildcats also earned individual medals.

Not only did Tucker win a state title in the 220-pound division, he also broke a 24-year state bench press record as he recorded a bench of 375 pounds to surpass the old mark of 365. He also won the squat competition at 505 pounds and had a total of 1,165 pounds to run away with the crown.

Tucker's total was the highest three-lift mark at the entire state meet in all weight classes.

"I had messed around with 375 and 385 before on bench, so I was confident that I could lift it if I had the chance," Tucker said. "I was more worried about my first lifts on bench at 345 and 365 because if I messed up on those attempts then I would not have had the change to even attempt 375. It was definitely a sigh of relief when I finally locked it out.

"It was a great feeling to beat the state record. To put Louisburg up on the record chart definitely brought a smile to my face."

Ratliff-Becher had a big day in the women's division as she won a state crown in the 180-pound weight class. She finished with a three-lift total of 575 pounds.



The Louisburg junior took first in bench press with 155 pounds,
first in clean at 150 pounds and second in squat with a 270-pound lift.

“Winning the state title
meant a lot to me,” Ratliff-Becher said. “I have put in a lot of time and

effort in weights class, so it’s nice to see it has paid off. But, also because
I feel as if I put out a message to girls that it’s cool to be strong
physically. I know that being sometimes the only girls in a class with a lot of
strong guys is intimidating. Weightlifting is all about your own personal
growth and seeing how far you can push yourself.

“I was honestly surprised I won because there are lots of very strong girls there and it’s good competition. It’s also fun to meet new people
that have the same interests and motivation as you.”



9. Golf qualifies for state, Dillon medals for third straight season

As the scores trickled

in to the clubhouse at Paola Country Club, the Louisburg golf team could hardly stand it.

The Wildcats were nervously waiting to hear if they had qualified for state, but they knew it was going to be close. Louisburg had to be in the top three of the team standings to earn a spot and the Wildcats had some tough competition amongst them.

As it turned out, the Wildcats had nothing to worry about.

Louisburg recorded a team score of 352 during the Class 4A regional tournament in May and finished third overall by nine strokes over fourth-place Ottawa. The Wildcat team of Calvin Dillon, Drake Varns, Garrett Rolofson, Ryan Haight, Noah Hill and Colin Cook all competed in the state tournament

Topeka-Hayden won the regional title going away with a 332 and Louisburg was just three strokes behind runner-up Tonganoxie, which had a 349.

“It feels great, especially with all the hard work we have put in the offseason and last few months,” Dillon said. “It was our goal coming in and we did it. I felt like we had a good chance. It was borderline with those four teams being as close as we are. I knew we had a chance, but it was nice to actually qualify. It was definitely a little nerve-racking waiting for the scores to come in.”

As impressive as that

feat was for the Wildcats, Dillon’s performance blew away the rest of the
competition.

The Louisburg junior
won his first individual regional title as he carded a 1-over 73 to win the
tournament by six strokes. Dillon’s 73 was his best score on the season and he
has now won all but one tournament on the year.

Dillon went on to record his third consecutive state medal and finished 11th overall in Dodge City after the tournament was postponed several times, and eventually moved due to weather.



8. Wildcat wrestling sends six to state, Moore earns first state medal

Back in early November of 2018, Austin Moore was in a sling with a broken collarbone and he wondered why all this was happening.

Moore suffered the injury during the regional football playoffs and he didn’t get to finish his final high school season. Not only that, his hopes of getting his first state wrestling medal was in serious jeopardy.

A little more than four months later, Moore was on the medal stand with some of the state’s best wrestlers in his weight class.

The Louisburg senior earned a fourth-place medal at 220 pounds during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in February at the Tony’s Pizza Events Center in Salina. It was his first high school state medal and it marked the end of a long journey for Moore.

“It was pretty special for me to get a state medal, especially because it has been a goal of mine ever since I started wrestling,” Moore said. “Overall, I felt like I wrestled pretty well, but I just wish I could’ve ended it on a win.”

The Wildcats qualified six wrestlers for state, had three regional champions and took third place in the team standings during the regional tournament in Paola – all while not being able to field a full team.

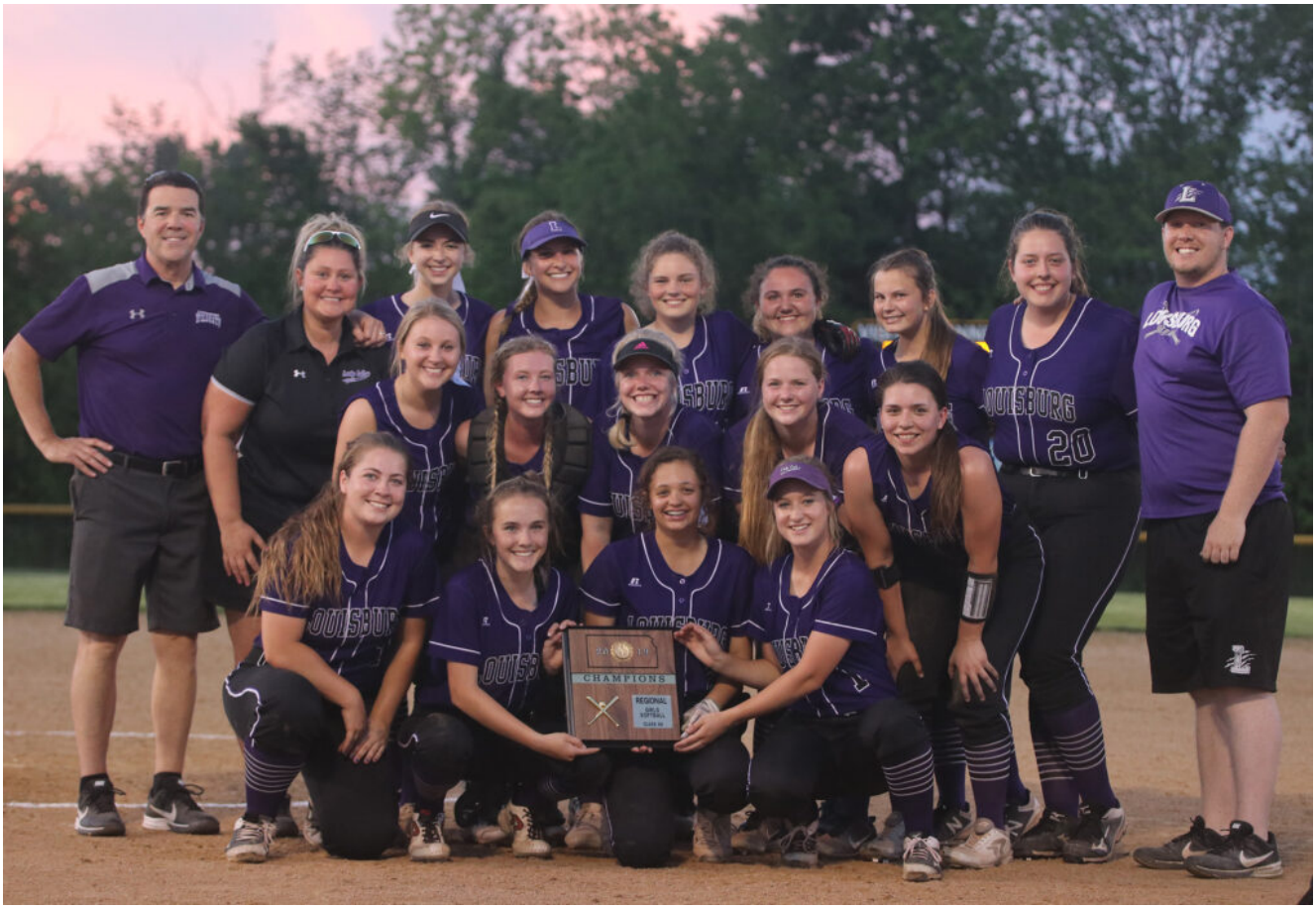
Louisburg’s talent was

certainly on full display during the two-day tournament. Brandon Doles, Blue Caplinger and Austin Moore won regional crowns, Cade Holtzen was a regional runner-up, while Gabe Bonham and Ryan Owens also qualified for state by placing third and fourth, respectively.

As a team, the Wildcats ended up with 138.5 points and was just 2.5 points out of second place. Ottawa won the regional with 149.5 points and Eudora was second at 141. It was the highest regional team finish for Louisburg since 1998.

“The way these guys wrestled this weekend shows that the program has been doing so many things right this season,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “We’ve had the obstacle of low numbers, which hurt us in our duals, but when it comes to tournament time, we have a bunch of guys who are placing high and that gives us a lot of team points. Taking six to state feels pretty encouraging, and finishing third at regionals is an awesome statement for this team.

“If a few things had gone the other way, we would have been in second as a team. On paper, we weren’t supposed to be in the race for a regional plaque. Almost all of our guys stepped up and scored huge team points for us.”



7. Louisburg softball captures regional title

OTTAWA – Madison
Svoboda could feel her heart starting to come out of her chest.

Karson Griggs was a
feeling a little nauseous.

Those are some of the
same feelings that were flooding the Louisburg softball's team dugout during the
final inning of the Class 4A regional championship game against Chanute on
Tuesday in Ottawa.

Louisburg held a one
run lead, but Chanute had the tying run on third, two outs, and a trip to the
state tournament was on the line. On the mound was sophomore

Brooklyn Diederich, and with two strikes, the Chanute batter fouled five straight pitches.

The tension was mounting.

Finally, on the 10th pitch of the at-bat, Diederich got what she was looking for – a swing and miss.

The strikeout sealed the Lady Cats' trip to state with a 6-5 victory over No. 7 seed Chanute and sent shockwaves throughout Class 4A softball.

"I want to cry, but at the same time I am just really happy," Griggs said. "It is exciting because I never thought something like this could happen, especially this year. It feels really nice and now maybe people will actually start taking us seriously."

Not many gave people gave the Lady Cats a chance as they entered the Class 4A regional tournament with just five wins and were forced to begin tournament action in the play-in game.

After a 17-2 win over Parsons last Monday in the play-in game, No. 15 Louisburg advanced to the regional semifinals and upset No. 2 seed Ottawa, 9-7, which helped set up the Lady Cats' first state tournament appearance since 2014.

"I think a lot of

other teams underestimated us," Diederich said. "The fact that we came out and
played our hardest ball showed what type of team we actually are. It is just
crazy."

At the state tournament in Salina a week later, the Lady Cats faced off against Andale and lost to the eventual state champion in the first round, 10-0.



6. Cross Country qualifies for state, Moore breaks school record and takes third at state

BALDWIN CITY – One by one,
members of the Louisburg girls cross country team crossed the finish line and
coach John Reece was unsure whether or not his team did enough

to qualify for
state.

The Lady Cats had made
school history by qualifying the last two seasons, but the third time was a
little bit in jeopardy – that was until the results were released.

As it turned out,
Reece didn’t need to be so worried.

Louisburg finished third overall with 96 points in October at the Class 4A regional meet at the Baldwin Golf Course, and beat out Bishop Miege by six points to earn a spot at the state meet this weekend in Wamego.

The team of Trinity
Moore, Carlee Gassman, Reese Johnson, Claire Brown, Ruth Minster, Kennady
Wilkerson and Bree Gassman competed for the Lady Cats at state.

“This group of girls runs
well, they race well and they train well together,” coach Reece said. “They are
a good group and this is just as exciting as the other two times. The
competition was a lot tougher than the previous two times. We had to run our
races and we did. From our third to fifth runners was about an eight point
spread.”

Trinity Moore has left a
lasting impression on the Louisburg cross country program over the last four
years, but she saved the best moment for her final act.

Moore broke her own school record with a time of 19 minutes and 39 seconds to finish third overall at the Kansas Class 4A State Cross Country Championships at the Wamego Country Club a week later.

The Louisburg senior recorded the program's best ever state finish as she eclipsed her fourth-place state medal from a season ago.

"It meant so much to me to finish with such a great race for my high school career," Moore said. "Going into the race, I didn't know how well I would finish. This race had the best competition that I have ran against all year and I think that is what really pushed me.

"When I saw my time crossing the finish line, I was ecstatic. I felt great the entire race and was able to control everything I did. Finishing third was icing on the cake. I was surprised but so incredibly happy to be able to place in such a great spot, but I also knew that this what I had worked for all year."

This made the fourth state medal for Moore in her high school career and she improved on her state finish every year. Last season, she took fourth overall and bested her state time from a year ago by more than 30 seconds.



5. Boys Soccer wins league, regional titles to earn No. 1 seed in playoffs.

For more than 70
minutes, the goals for Louisburg were hard to come by and it started to leave
an eerie feeling on Halloween night.

However, the Wildcats
got their treat when it was all over.

Louisburg scored two goals in the final seven minutes of the match to earn a 2-0 victory over Kansas City Christian in the Class 4-1A regional championship game Thursday. The Wildcats (16-2-1) earned their third regional title in the last four years and advanced to the state quarterfinals.

“This group is
special,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “It is going to be tough when it is

all over. This group has changed our culture. They came back to what this program believes and they have bought in to what we are teaching them. They have worked so hard since June. For these seniors, this is their third title in four years and I think it is a lot of fun for them.

A school record 16 wins, a Frontier League championship and a regional title are all something worth celebrating, but following the state quarterfinal match with Bishop Miege, all Louisburg could think about was the finality of it all.

Despite all those accomplishments, the Wildcats fell one win short of their main goal – a spot in the state final four.

Louisburg saw its season come to a close with a 3-0 loss to Bishop Miege at the Wildcat Sports Complex. The Wildcats lost to the eventual state champion, as Miege went on to defeat Wichita-Trinity on Saturday, 3-1, for the Class 4-1A state championship – the Stags' fourth in a row.

As difficult as the loss was for Louisburg, there was no forgetting how big of a jump the Wildcats made from the season before as they went from a 6-win team to one that earned the East's No. 1 seed in the state playoffs.

"Going 6-11 last year and seeing this Miege team almost mercy-ruling us in the regional championship last year in the rain, was a program changer," Louisburg coach

Kyle Conley
said. “After that was over, we talked about how things needed to change and it
starts now. For our first practice in June, I told them that they are the ones
that has to change them. Since day one, they have played for each other, played
hard in practice and it was a total mindset change. When someone got hurt, it
was the next guy up. We missed two starters for half of the year and it was
always the next guy up taking advantage of his opportunity to fill in. The
freshmen stepped up huge for us.

“This team is special.
16 wins is a school record and only two losses is probably a school record.
This team is incredible, played so hard and did everything I asked them to do.
They were always there to pick each other up and that is what this soccer
family is all about. It will be tough to say goodbye to these kids.”



4. Volleyball knocks off Miege to win regional title, takes fourth at state

ATCHISON – The
sub-state semifinal game between Louisburg and Bishop Miege had all the feels
of a state tournament match.

Partially because a
year ago, it was.

Louisburg met Miege in
the state championship match only to see the Stags send the Lady Cats to a
runner-up finish in two sets. Then three weeks ago the two teams met again, and
like before, Miege dispatched of Louisburg in two sets.

However, Bishop Miege
saw a different Louisburg team during the sub-state tournament at Atchison High

School – one they didn’t expect.

The Lady Cats came out on fire and never let up in a 25-18 and 25-22 win over Miege to end the Stags’ season. It marks the first time in at least 12 years, if not longer, that Miege will not be at the state tournament.

Since the state tournament began in 1971, Bishop Miege has made 39 state appearances during that time in either Class 5A or 4A and is the most in Kansas history.

“Our energy was going to be the difference in that match, so we knew we had to bring it,” Louisburg senior Erin Lemke said. “We knew we had the same skill set as Miege, but our energy was what was going to pull us through there in the end. To get there, we just had to believe in ourselves and work hard this past week to give us the confidence that we needed.”

However, even after pulling off a big revenge win that expended a lot of energy, the Lady Cats still had a sub-state championship match to play against No. 2 seed Atchison.
The No. 7 seed Lady Cats took care of business as they won in straight sets, 25-12 and 25-15, at Atchison High School.

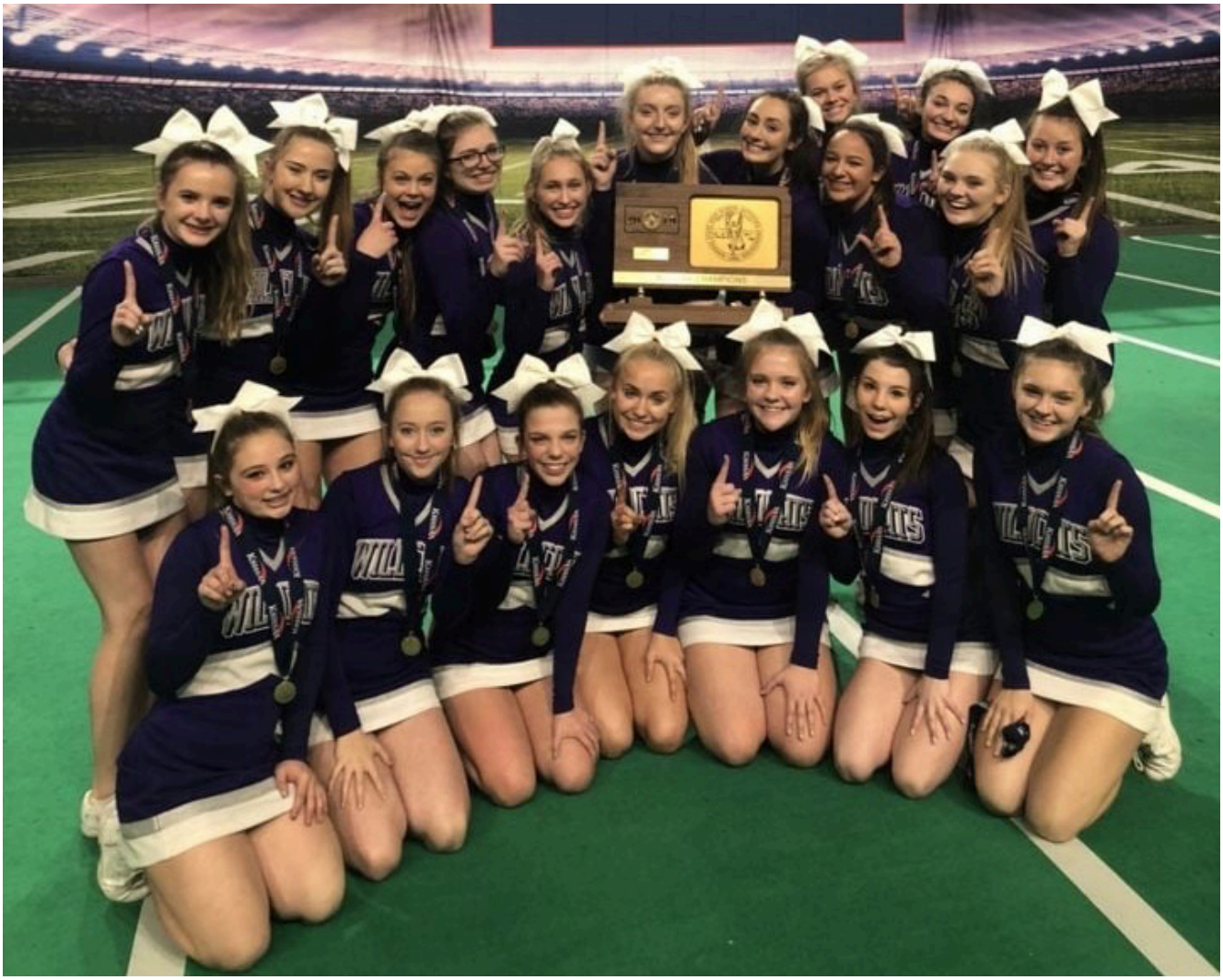
Louisburg lost its final two matches of the season, but those setbacks didn’t take away from what the Lady Cats accomplished during the Kansas Class 4A State Championships.

For the third straight season, the Lady Cats were among the last four teams playing

and brought home a
little hardware for their efforts. Louisburg took fourth overall after losing
its third place match to Towanda-Circle, 2-1, in October at Hutchinson Sports
Arena.

“Every season our goal
is to put ourselves in the best position to qualify for state and then to
hopefully advance to bracket play on Saturday,” Louisburg coach Jessica
Compliment said. “Leading up to state, we talked about how nothing is
guaranteed and in order to make it to bracket play, we have to show up and play
our best from the first whistle to the last whistle. If we play our game, then
hopefully the winning will take care of itself and we’d advance.

“The eight teams at
state this year were all very talented. I was happy that we qualified for the
semifinals because that put us one step closer to the championship. Even though
we didn’t reach the championship match and finished fourth, I was still very
proud of how the team played throughout the tournament.”



3. Louisburg cheer wins first state championship

The Wildcat
cheerleaders competed at the Class 4A KSHSAA Game Day Spirit Showcase
Competition on Nov. 23 at the Stormont Vail Events Center in Topeka and came
back home with a big trophy in tow.

Louisburg edged out runner-up Augusta with a point total of 82.25 to 81 in the finals to secure what is just the third athletic team state title in school history.

“I was so nervous at
the awards,” Louisburg senior Lauren Vincent said. “We were all holding hands
and had our heads down. We thought that we would get second

place at best, most likely third. We were content because we put everything out on the mat and did the best we could. But when they called out second place and it was Augusta, we screamed, cried, and hugged each other because we knew that we had just won.

“When our name was called for first, we jumped up and hugged each other. Then I ran out onto the mat and grabbed the trophy and we held it up and jumped around victoriously. It was the best feeling in the entire world. Knowing that all of our hard work had finally paid off was indescribable feeling of joy.”

The Louisburg cheerleaders that competed are Lexi Pena, Lauren Vincent, Ashlyn McManigal, Brooklyn Mitchell, Gabby Tappan, Andrea Gaza, Eleanor Willming, Jayden Trester, Lacie Kallevig, Sammy McDaniel, Mable Graham, Anna Morrison, Bella Feikert, Audrey Anderson, Sydney Dudzik, Kaitlyn Vest, Jolie Hendrickson, Abby Bradley and Zoe Cutshaw. Louisburg’s head coach is Jayna Guerra.

Not only were the Wildcats the third team to win a state title in school history, they were also the first female squad to win a team crown as well. All the history just added to what was a special day for the program.

“It means so much to me and all my teammates,” Tappan said. “As someone who’s been a part of a variety

of sports my entire life, I know how hard each of our teams work to do their
very best in whatever sport they’re a part of. We are so thankful that we got
to make history for Louisburg and it is something that I can guarantee that
each and every one of us will remember it for the rest of our lives.”



**2. Girls soccer
takes second at state, Conley named coach of year and Scholtz, Buffington awarded
players of year.**

When it was all said and done, the Louisburg girls soccer team held its 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.

“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.”

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 Miege 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.

Coming off its second consecutive state runner-up appearance, Louisburg had some positive repercussions from its historic season.

However, none bigger came when the all-state teams were released by the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association. Not only did six Wildcats earn all-state selections, but they were honored with some of the highest awards out there.

Junior Mackenzie Scholtz was named as the Co-Offensive Player of the Year in Class 4-1A with Bishop Miege's Sophia Stram after she led the Wildcats in scoring.

Louisburg was also recognized on the other side of the ball as senior Carson Buffington was named the Class 4-1A Goalkeeper of the Year.

"Seeing Mackenzie and Carson recognized for their positional player of the years was fantastic," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "They both had incredible years."

The Wildcats weren't done, as for the second consecutive season, Conley was named as the Class 4-1A Coach of the Year as he guided Louisburg to a 17-4 record. He also led the Wildcats to three consecutive final four appearances.



1.4×400 boys wins state championship, Wright wins four state medals and team breaks six school records at regional meet.

Three days after
arriving in Wichita for the Kansas State Track and Field Championships, Justin
Collins, Blue Caplinger, Ben Wiedenmann and Chris Williams finally got the chance
to get on the Cessna Stadium track.

The four Wildcat
runners had the top time in Class 4A going into the 4×400-meter relay, but
weather threw a little wrench into their plans. The meet, which was supposed to
end on a Saturday, was postponed to Sunday morning and all

races were judged by
times with no preliminaries.

It wasn’t the ideal
situation, but they made it work – and it worked well.

Collins, Caplinger, Wiedenmann and Williams won the state championship in a time of 3 minutes and 25.39 seconds as they edged Chapman at the finish line, which ran a 3:25.61. It was the first state track championship for Louisburg since 2015 when Connor McMullen won the discus.

That was just one
event in what was an historic week for Louisburg track.

Louisburg freshman Delaney Wright earned four state medals, while junior teammate Carlee Gassman finished with three as the Lady Cats went on to finish 10th in the team standings. The Lady Cats earned several other medals at the state meet coming off an impressive performance at regionals.

During the Class 4A
regional meet at Paola High School, Wright qualified for state in four events,
broke two school records and earned a regional title in her first postseason
track meet.



Wright won a regional title in the long jump and finished second in the 200 and 400-meter dashes. She also helped Carlee Gassman, Rain Pugh and Sydni Keagle to a second place finish in the 4×400-meter relay.

“I am so grateful for everything,” Wright said. “I had been having trouble with my hip this week and I just wanted to come out and make state in at least one event. I didn’t realize I would make it in four. It is an unbelieveable feeling.”

Wright’s day was just one of the many positives for the Lady Cats as they broke four school records, had four regional

champions and qualified for state in 10 events.

As a team, the Lady Cats nearly earned the regional runner-up trophy as they racked up 86.5 points and finished a half a point behind second place Baldwin and Bishop Miege, who tied for second. Paola won the regional title with 107 points.

The Wildcat boys also broke two school records and would end up qualifying for nine spots at the state meet.

Belcher earns athletic, academic All-MIAA honors



Missouri Southern sophomore, and Louisburg graduate, Bailey Belcher had another successful season with the Lions soccer program on and off the field.

JOPLIN, Mo. – Bailey Belcher faced
a big transition more than a year ago when she graduated from Louisburg and
joined the Missouri Southern soccer program.

As a freshman, Belcher seemed to
settle right in as she earned All-MIAA honors in her first year. It was a big
step for Belcher at the time, but several months later she faced another

transition.

Missouri Southern hired a new coach and Belcher saw a lot of new players enter the program. She wasn't quite sure what to expect in her sophomore campaign, but she more than held her own.

Belcher earned All-MIAA honorable mention honors for the second consecutive season at the forward position for a Lions team that finished with a 3-14-1 record.

She led the Lions with 50 shots on the season, 27 of which were on goal after she started all but one match in 2019. She was second on the team in points and finished the year with three goals.

"It meant a lot to get all-conference recognition again this year and I was really happy with it," Belcher said. "I wasn't expecting anything this year with half the girls on the team being new and a new coach. There is a lot of transitioning that's still in the process, but I am really grateful that I was recognized again."

The awards didn't stop there for Belcher as she also earned a spot on the All-MIAA Academic Honor Roll. On top of that, Belcher was one of 15 student athletes to be named an Academic Excellence honoree, which goes to student-athletes that achieve a 4.0 grade point average and had attended their current institution for at least two terms.

Belcher, who is majoring in biology, also qualified for the Scholar-Athlete Award after

making the All-MIAA
team as an honorable mention and earning a GPA of 3.5 or higher.

“The academic honors makes me so
happy,” Belcher said. “I’ve put so much into school and getting all my work
done since I’ve got here, and being an athlete, makes it so much harder to stay
on top of school because of the commitment we put into soccer and everything
else we have going on in our lives.

“It’s really hard to keep up depending on how far you’ve gotten into school and I’ve made my class load pretty difficult to make sure that I graduate a year early. I’m right on track to graduate two springs from now, and as long as I keep putting in the work that I have been, I have no doubt I’ll achieve my goal.”

Conley notches 100th career victory as Wildcat head coach



Louisburg head coach Kyle Conley earned his 100th career win Tuesday in the Wildcats’ overtime victory over Tonganoxie.

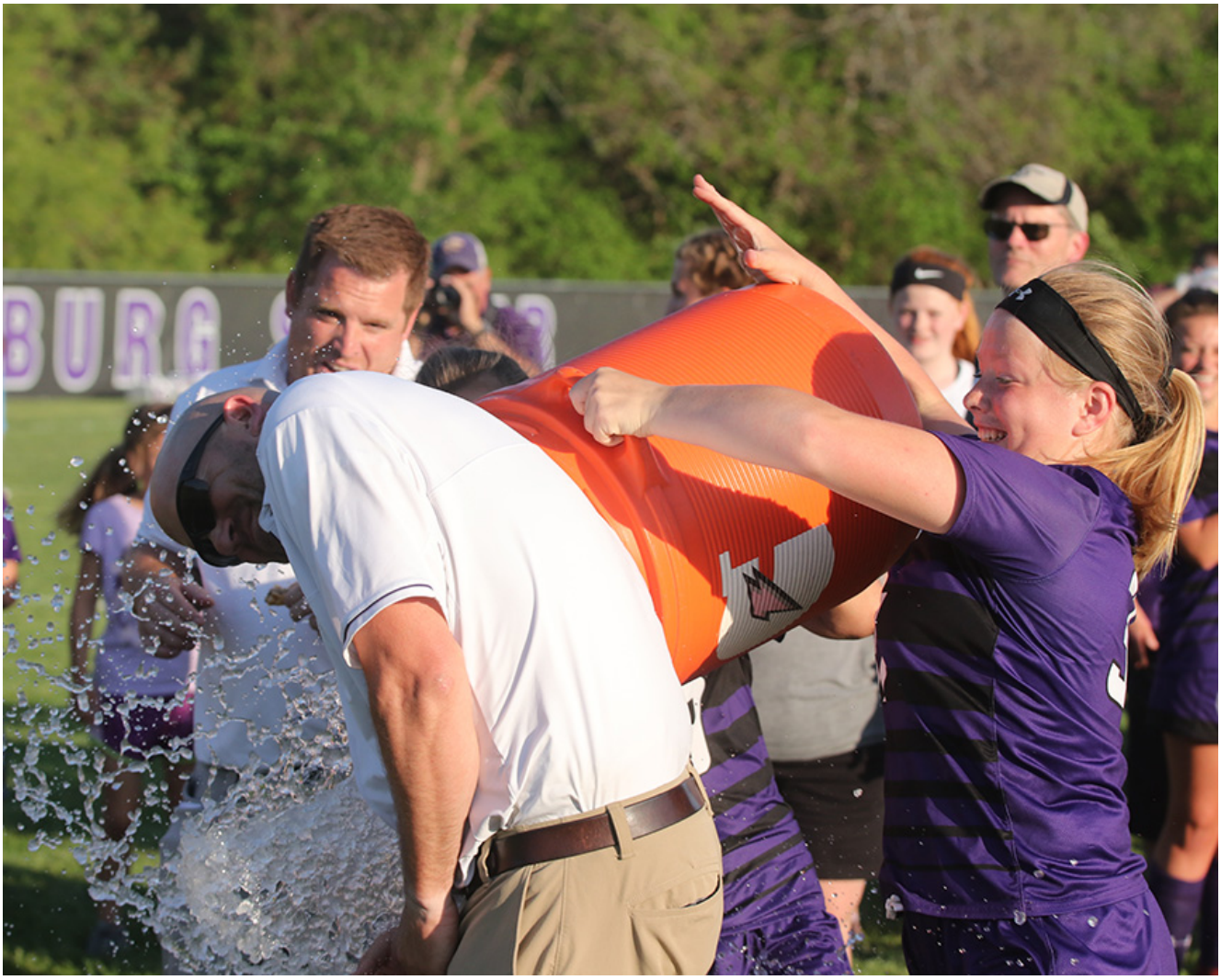
Kyle Conley has been a part of

many close matches during his time as the Louisburg boys and girls head soccer coach.

Conley has pulled out his fair share of wins during his four years between the two programs, so it only seemed fitting that his milestone victory would come with a little excitement.

Louisburg rallied for a 3-2 overtime win over Tonganoxie, and as a result, the Wildcats gave Conley his 100th career victory. Following the match, Conley was recognized in front of the crowd and presented with a banner from his players commemorating the special moment.

“I have been blessed with great kids,” Conley said. “They play their tails off and they work hard, boys or girls, it doesn’t matter. If you don’t have kids that play hard, then none of this is possible. Having quality kids who do the things you ask and work so hard, makes it fun to coach and positive things happen. I am really lucky to be in Louisburg right now.”



LHS girls soccer coach Kyle Conley has had a lot of things to celebrate in four seasons, including back-to-back state runner-up finishes.

In his four years as head coach, Conley has posted a 100-46-4 record and has helped the Wildcats to several big time wins.

On the girls side, Conley was named the girls' first-ever coach when the program started in the spring of 2016. He led them to a 14-win season that first year and they reached the state quarterfinals.

From there, the Louisburg girls would go on to a fourth place state finish in 2017, followed

by back-to-back
state runner-up finishes in 2018 and 2019 – losing to Bishop Miege in the both
state championship games. Conley has also been named the Class 4-1A Coach of
the Year the last two years.

In his first season as the boys
head coach in the fall of 2016, he guided Louisburg 14-6-1 record and its first
appearance in the state final four. The Wildcats went on to finish fourth in
Class 4A, and then would reach the state quarterfinals the following year with
a 13-win campaign.

Currently, the Wildcats are 9-1-1
this season and have the best record in Class 4-3-2-1A.



As the head boys soccer coach, Kyle Conley has led the Wildcats to two regional championships and a fourth place finish at state.

"Starting the girls program and going 14-4-1 that first year and have a chance to go to state was a wonderful memory, but losing to De Soto in the quarterfinals on this field that same year kinda sticks with me," Conley said. "You know, 100 wins is great, but I probably dwell more on those 46 losses more than I do the wins. There are so many of those games that could have went either way. When you have kids that have heart and passion, it makes it fun to coach.

"Then you have the first boys team to make a state final four in 2016 was a great one, and I will remember the team that played McPherson at home in the state quarterfinals and lost a close 2-1 game that had two shots go off the post in the final five minutes. That was a special team as well. Just honored to

be able to coach all of them.”

With so many highs and lows that teams encounter throughout a season, Conley realizes the people are what makes his job enjoyable – not necessarily the wins.

“There are so many memories and I have been able to coach so many good kids,” he said. “I am just blessed to be in Louisburg and have the opportunity to interact with these student athletes and hopefully have a positive impact on them. It is an awesome place to be.”