Top 10 Stories of 2018



It was a successful, and eventful, 2018 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 to Louisburg.

Below are the Top 10 stories from 2018, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the explanation is the link to the actual story from the event.

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 2019 to begin. Looking forward to it!



10. Dillon medals at state golf for second straight year

EMPORIA – All season,
Calvin Dillon had been atop or near the front of leaderboard and that didn't
change in what was his biggest tournament of the season.

The Louisburg High School sophomore went up against the state's best during the Class 4A state golf tournament on May 19 at the Emporia Municipal Course and did more than old his own. Dillon earned a state medal as he finished 11th overall with a 3-over par 74.

It was the second consecutive state medal for Dillon
after he finished 10th overall last season at
Wamego as a freshman.

"It is a real honor
to earn another state medal, especially with the quality players that were at

the state tournament," Dillon said. "There were lots of good players and lots
of good teams."

It
was another notch on Dillon's list of accomplishments that included a Frontier
League title and six straight tournament victories during the 2018 season.



Louisburg football coach Robert Ebenstein



Louisburg girls soccer coach Kyle Conley

9. Conley, Ebenstein named Class 4A Coach of the Year

Louisburg
girls soccer coach Kyle Conley and Wildcat football coach Robert Ebenstein both
led their respective teams to special seasons.

Those seasons were special enough for both coaches to earn two big awards.

Conley was rewarded for all his hard work in June when it was announced that he was named as the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association’s Girls Coach of the Year for Class 4-1A.

He guided the Wildcats to a 14-7 record and a spot in the state championship match, where the Lady Cats finished second overall. The

finish was something to remember for Wildcat fans as that was accomplished in
just the program’s third year of existence.

He has posted a
41-18-2 record during his time as the Wildcat girls head coach and also guided
the Louisburg boys soccer team to its best finish in program history in 2017
with a fourth place finish at state.

As for Ebenstein, he
guided the Wildcats to 10 straight victories and a regional championship to
start the 2018 season, before getting knocked out in the sectional round
against eventual state champion, Bishop Miege.

Following the season, the Kansas Football Coaches Association named Ebenstein as the Class 4A Coach of the Year. Ebenstein, who is just in his second season as head coach, has a 16-4 record with the Wildcats as he guided his team to a Frontier League championship this year.



8.
Holtzen finishes Louisburg career with 12 varsity letters

Once Isabelle Holtzen
received her diploma and walked out of Louisburg High School for the last time
as a student, she officially became one of the most decorated female athletes
in school history.

No, she doesn’t have any individual state championships, or even
one as part of a team. Holtzen’s decorations aren’t ones in the form of
trophies or all-state honors, but instead, they can be found on the front of

her letter jacket.

Holtzen became the first female athlete in at least 20 years to earn 12 varsity letters, which means she lettered on the varsity level in three sports in each of her four years of high school.

In research done by Louisburg Sports Zone, it was unable to find
the last athlete to accomplish the feat, which could mean Holtzen could be the
first Lady Cat to do so. She competed in cross country, basketball and track
and field

The last athlete to come close was in 2001 when Krystal Bowes earned 10 varsity letters before moving on to a collegiate track career at
Wichita State.

“The biggest thing that it means to me is to just have an opportunity to participate in three sports at a school like Louisburg,” Holtzen
said. “The bigger the school that you go to, the harder it is to play multiple
sports at the varsity level and I think Louisburg is unique in that fact. The
best part of this whole journey was I think my freshman year because there was
no pressure and no one was expecting anything from me. It was surprising and
exciting to be able to letter in all three sports.”

Holtzen is currently at
Northern Iowa, where she received a scholarship to pole vault for the Panther
Track and Field Team.



7.
Dixon earns All-American, Player of the Year honors, signs with Kansas State

Louisburg
senior Anna Dixon led the Lady Cat volleyball program all season and she was recognized
for her play on the court.

Dixon was named to the Under Armour Volleyball All-American team as she received a spot on the honorable mention squad when the list was released in November.

Dixon, the 6-foot-3 outside hitter, was recently named the Class 4A Player of the Year by the Kansas Volleyball Association, and along with that was also selected to the all-state first team.

It was the second year in a row Dixon was named player of the year, as she had to share the honor last season with Rose Hill’s Gracie Van

Driel.

The honors certainly didn’t stop there as Dixon was all named to the All-Frontier League first team as she helped guide the Lady Cats to an undefeated league season.

Dixon led the Lady Cats in kills with 584 in 105 sets played. She also finished with 325 digs, as she played all six rotations and also had 50 aces and 42 blocks.

In her four years with the program, Dixon finished with 2,003 kills, which would place that total among the best the school has ever seen.

All that success resulted in a dream come true for Dixon as she made it official last November when she signed to play volleyball at Kansas State.

“I have always known Kansas State was going to be my home,” Dixon said. “Even since I committed as a sophomore, I always wanted to go up to Manhattan and see the girls and spend time with the team. K-State is where I need to be.”



6. Louisburg wrestling sends six to state, Holtzen earns first state medal

SALINA – As the final whistle sounded in his blood round match, Cade Holtzen looked up into the rafters of the Tony's Pizza Events Center and smiled.

He had finally reached his goal.

Holtzen defeated Columbus' Gabe Porter by a 6-0 decision Saturday during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in Salina and secured his state medal.

"It is one of the best feelings that I have had in my life," Holtzen said. "Just knowing that I'm going to place – you just can't match that with anything else."

It certainly wasn't

easy for the Louisburg freshman as he faced a win or go home with nothing scenario heading into his match with Porter. Holtzen pulled out the victory and eventually finished sixth overall at 113 pounds to give Louisburg a state medalist for the third consecutive season.

“It is pretty cool,” he said. “I have been working for this all season, so to get a state medal is great. It may not have been as high as I wanted, but any state medal is pretty amazing.”

Holtzen had a special year for the Wildcats as he finished with a 45-6 record and broke the school record for most wins in a single season. He won four different tournaments and was a Frontier League and regional tournament runner-up.

To add to his resume, he became only the second freshman in school history to earn state medal – second to only Austin Hood, who would go on to with three state titles.

Austin Moore finished one victory shy of earning his first state medal, while Ryan Adams, Thad Hendrix and Blue Caplinger also picked up wins at the state tournament.



5. Moore, Johnson finished in top 10 at state cross country, girls qualify for second straight year

WAMEGO – It was going to be hard for the Louisburg High School girls cross country team to duplicate its magical season of 2017.

Not only did the Lady Cats qualify their team for state for the first time in program history, but they also had a top five finisher in Trinity Moore.

Fast forward to 2018, Louisburg wasn't able to match that successful run – the Lady Cats took it a step further.

Moore, along with freshman Reese Johnson, each had a top 10 finish during the Class 4A Kansas State Cross Country Championships at Wamego Country Club, and it is the first time

in school history that two female runners had medaled at a state meet. Louisburg added on to that as the girls finished fifth in the team standings with 154 points, which is also the highest finish in school history.

Moore, who finished
fifth at state a year ago, bested her performance by one place as she took
fourth with one of her better performances of the season. Johnson was right
behind her as she crossed the finish line in sixth.

Shaylor Whitham, Carlee Gassman, Kaitlyn Lewer, Delaney Wright and Kennady Wilkerson were also members of the Lady Cats' team to run at state. Emily Williams was a member of the regional team that finished second overall.



4. Louisburg track earns six state medals, Gassman state runner-up in

300 hurdles

WICHITA – Carlee Gassman had broken the Louisburg High School 300-meter hurdle record three different times in 2018 prior to the state track meet.

She picked the perfect time to make it a fourth.

Gassman broke her own school record in the 300 hurdles in May at the Class 4A Kansas State Track and Field Championships in Wichita as she ran a time of 45.68 seconds to earn a silver medal as she was the Wildcats' top performer on the weekend. Andale's Abby Smarsh, who is a senior, won the event in 44.73.

It was the Louisburg sophomore's first time competing at the Kansas meet as she transferred in from Iowa last year, where she qualified for
the state meet there in the 400 hurdles.

Gassman's medal in the 300 hurdles was just one of six the Wildcats were able to bring home following the two-day meet. Those six medals
were the most Louisburg has earned since 2011, when the Wildcats combined to
medal in 10 events and the boys won their first team state title.

The 300 hurdles wasn't the only event Gassman found success in as she also medaled in the long jump. Gassman, who hadn't competed in the event
prior to this year, finished fifth with a mark of 17 feet, 0.25 inches.

Isabelle Holtzen
would go on to finish sixth in the pole vault, the boys 4×400 team of Chris
Williams, Blue Caplinger, Ben Wiedenmann and Justin Collins went on to take
seventh. Williams finished eighth in the 400-meter run and

Trent Martin medaled
eighth in the boys pole vault.



3. Louisburg volleyball takes runner-up at state for second straight season

HUTCHINSON – The
feeling was much of the same.

The pride of finishing as a state-runner up was a popular one among the members of the Louisburg volleyball team. At the same time, the
frustration of taking second in state in back-to-back seasons was just as
prevalent.

Louisburg wasn’t quite sure what to feel following its 25-13 and 25-14 loss to Bishop Miege in the championship game of the Class 4A state tournament Saturday at Hutchinson Sports Arena.

In 2017, the Lady
Cats fell to Rose Hill by two points in the championship

match, and fast forward to the present, they were in the same spot – holding the state runner-up trophy. It was the 15th time in program history that Louisburg finished in the top four at state.

The Lady Cats rattled off four straight wins to start the tournament, including knocking off No. 1 seed Independence, and defending state champions Rose Hill and Topeka Hayden. Louisburg then battled back to defeat Andale in the state semifinals.

“The loss was tough,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “To come so close to a state title two years in a row, only to come up short is tough. But with that being said, it is a huge accomplishment for this team to get back to the state championship and make it two years in a row. Finishing second is nothing to hang our heads on. Last year’s finish fueled the fire for the team this year, and I challenged the returning players to use this loss and feeling to fuel them for next year.”

Louisburg has been one of the more dominant teams in Class 4A in the last decade as the Lady Cats have made the state tournament seven out of the last nine years and have finished as a state runner-up on three different occasions, along with several third and fourth place finishes. They finished 2018 with a 36-9 record.



2. Louisburg girls soccer advances to title game, has best finish in program history

NORTH NEWTON – The obstacle seemed insurmountable – and it was.

The Louisburg High School girls soccer team found itself in the Class 4-1A state championship match in the program's third year of existence, but if they wanted to take it another step further, the Wildcats were going to have to knock the defending state champion of its perch.

Unfortunately, Bishop Miege wasn't about to be moved.

In a state title game that was played in the sweltering heat in late May at Bethel College, the Wildcats couldn't stay with the Stags in a 5-0 defeat. It was the third consecutive title for Bishop Miege, while Louisburg earned a state plaque for the first time in its short history.

It was special season for the Wildcats as the night before they knocked off Topeka Hayden, 1-0, in the state semifinals to secure the program's first state plaque. In 2017, Louisburg

both games in its state tournament appearance and finished fourth.

The road to this state championship appearance has been an interesting one for the Wildcats. More than three years ago, a group of Louisburg parents and citizens raised enough money to begin the girls soccer program and fund it for three years.

Louisburg was in the final year of that funding, and while the program isn't going away, the team realized they needed to play for more than themselves.

"We played for the community tonight," Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher said after the Hayden win. "We have to remember that when they raised money for this program, it was just through this year, so I think we owed it to them to play well. I really think it might have helped with how we played and I think it was one of the best games we played all season."

"It is a third-year program with 41 wins, three regional championships, two state final fours and now a state runner-up," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said after the title game. "We just have kids who come in and work their butt off. They are not soft, they aren't weak and from top to bottom they are going to work hard.

"We worked hard, but we just played Miege. That is one of the best teams in the state, and that stinks, but our kids played hard, worked

their tail off and it was a great year. We had people criticize us for how we
got there, but we won games and that really motivated the kids. It got them
fired up to go do something bigger than themselves. I couldn’t be more proud of
they stuck together and what they accomplished.”



1. Football wins 10 straight, takes Frontier League title and regional championship

It had been almost two
months since Louisburg and Piper squared off on the football field in what was
one of the more entertaining games on the Wildcats’ schedule.

Back in early
September, Louisburg left Piper High School with a seven-point win – a victory
that would help propel them to a Frontier League championship and a perfect
regular season.

The two teams squared off again and the stakes were a bit higher. The game, at least for Louisburg anyway, was even more exciting.

The Wildcats dominated action from the opening kickoff and never looked back in a 48-0 win over the Pirates. In the process, Louisburg won the school's first regional championship since 2016 and are off to a 10-0 start for the first time since 2010.

Louisburg advanced to the sectional round where it fell to eventual state champion Bishop Miege, 55-21, and finished its season with a 10-1 record.

It was as season marked with special moments, including a 28-7 victory over then-undefeated Paola late in the year to secure a league title.

"Being 10-0 and then having that first loss of the season was very disappointing," Louisburg coach Robert Ebenstein said. "Losing always sucks, but losing in the playoffs and having to wait until next August is the worst. At the end of the day, Miege is a very good team and we did some good things. We got them to fourth down on multiple drives in the first quarter, we just couldn't make the plays on those big downs. Then we got behind a little and started pressing.

"Overall it was a great year. I am very proud of our guys and excited for them that they were able to get double digit wins for only the third time since 2000, and

there was a
lot of really good football played during that time period. It was a lot
fun to be a part of.”



Austin Moore was named to the Kansas Shrine Bowl and was a first-team all-state player for the Wildcats. Moore was also named as the Kansas Small-Class Player of the Year by 810 Varsity.

With all that success, honors
started to roll in for its players as running backs Austin Moore and Blue
Caplinger, along with linemen Brayden White and Kiefer Tucker all earned
all-state honors.

Moore and White went on to be
semifinalists for the Simone Awards and Moore was also selected to participate
in the Kansas Shrine Bowl in the summer of 2019. Ebenstein was also named as
coach of the year by the football coaches association.

Most recently, Moore was
named the Kansas Small-Class Player of the Year and Running Back of the Year by
810varsity.com, while White was named the Small-Class Lineman of the Year.
Ebenstein was also named Kansas Small-Class Coach of the Year by 810 Varsity.

Belcher earns All-MIAA honors for Missouri Southern



Missouri Southern freshman, and Louisburg graduate, Bailey Belcher had a big season for the Lions as she led the team in five statistical categories. For that, Belcher was recognized on the All-MIAA honorable mention team.

JOPLIN, Mo. – In her three seasons with the Louisburg High School girls soccer team, Bailey Belcher could score some goals.

She scored a lot of them on her way to a program record 90 goals for her career as a midfielder. Belcher hasn't slowed down much as she has taken on a new challenge in college.

Belcher, who is a freshman for the Missouri Southern women's

soccer program, was named to the All-MIAA honorable mention team as a forward as she helped the Lions to a 7-8-3 record in a difficult MIAA schedule.

“I was extremely surprised and I wasn’t expecting any type of honors, especially because it is my freshman year,” Belcher said. “Still, it is really exciting.”

The 2018 Louisburg graduate moved from her midfield spot in high school to the forward position for Missouri Southern. Belcher took the new role head on as she led the Lions in points (13), goals (6), shots (43), shots on goal (24) and game-winners (3).

Belcher also finished in the top 10 in three MIAA categories to wrap up what was a successful season. As rewarding as it was, it took Belcher a little time to get adjusted to the college game.

“I feel like my season went really well, especially coming in as a freshman where I wasn’t expecting very much playing time at all,” Belcher said. “But my constant hard work helped get me time on the field. My transition was a little difficult at first, just because I went from play in the middle to up top. Not being able to drop down very much, and making certain runs was an adjustment, but I caught on pretty quick.”

Belcher was a key cog for the Lady Cat soccer team in her three years with the program, including the team’s state runner-up finish last season. Along with her 90 goals, she also finished with 30 assists, 210 points, 21 game-winning shots, 16 hat tricks and 278 shots on goal.

She earned first-team All-Frontier League and all-state honors all three years. Belcher was also named to the United Soccer Coaches 2018 All Central Region Team.

Hinkle ready to take on role as LHS activities director



Walking into Scott Hinkle’s office, it doesn’t appear he started a new job two weeks ago.

The moving boxes are mostly gone. His desk is organized with everything in its place, along with a calendar crammed full of upcoming events.

Hinkle is not shy to tell people about his love for the Boston Red Sox. Sitting on one wall are two older chairs from Fenway Park, along other memorabilia.

The one thing that Hinkle hasn’t caught up on is his efforts to get some purple gear. An avid Kansas Jayhawk fan, he hasn’t had need to purchase any purple flair in the past. Seems like that will change shortly as he was hired as the new activities director and assistant principal at Louisburg High School earlier this summer.

“I have been a Jayhawk fan all my life,” Hinkle said. “It will be a little weird to wear purple that is for sure, but I am sure I will get used to it. Before I left my old job, people found out where I was going so they started giving me little gifts with purple on it, like markers and stuff like that. They definitely got a kick out of that.”

Hinkle takes over for Jeremy Holloway, who was promoted to principal at LHS and becomes the third activities director in as many years to take over that spot.

“My wife has family in Kansas City and I have family in Wichita and so we were looking to come this way,” Hinkle said. “I had a couple friends that told me that the Louisburg position had opened up. I had heard of Louisburg a long time ago. I actually coached at Ottawa University in the early 90s and was familiar with the area. I came up, interviewed and here I am. It has obviously worked out well.

“Everyone has been so helpful and friendly and it is a good time to be coming to Louisburg. I am excited to be here.”

Before taking the job in Louisburg, Hinkle had spent the last 22 years in the Liberal school district in a variety of roles. He served as the boys high school basketball coach, along with nine years as an activities director, a year as the head girls basketball coach at the local community college and last year he served as assistant principal at the high school.

Hinkle graduated from Valley Center High School, and went on from there to earn his bachelor’s degree from Friends University, where he played basketball, and his master’s from the University of Kansas.

Basketball has always been a passion for Hinkle, but during his time as activities director at Liberal, he had a chance to learn the life of other sports as well.

“Liberal changed a lot from when I first got there in the mid 90s when they were a football and track powerhouse,” Hinkle said. “There were just athletes galore, but the culture kind of changed. We were really good in soccer and decent in track and volleyball. We still had good kids and good athletes, but it was a big transition as far as sports go when I first got there. My kids grew up there and being involved and being able to watch their events was something that has always appealed

to me.

“Basketball has always been in my blood. Other than my nine years as athletic director, I have coached in some capacity and I am a big basketball fan. Obviously, being an athletic director I am just a big sports fan in general.”

Still new in town, Hinkle is still trying to get to know his coaching staff, but he is excited about the situation he is walking into with the Wildcats finishing as state runner-ups in volleyball and girls soccer last season. Several cross country, golf, wrestling and track athletes also earned state medals.

However, if there is one thing he wanted to relay to everyone is that he wants to give his coaches the freedom to run their programs.

“I want to let the coaches, coach,” he said. “I am not going to be the guy that says this is how we did things in Liberal and I am not that type of leader. If it comes to the point where they need some advice, I want to be a resource for them. I don’t want to be someone that is looking for something.

“I have met a few of the coaches. I have let them know that I am here if they need anything. I have stopped by the weight room to speak to a few coaches and some have stopped by to introduce themselves. I am still learning names and faces. We have a coaches meeting on the 10th and I will see and learn a lot more about them then.”

With all the success the Wildcats had last season in the sports arena, Hinkle is happy to be a part of the LHS family and is learning new things about the town every day.

“I have heard all types of things,” he said. “I have heard they take football pretty seriously here. I know they were state runner-up in volleyball and girls soccer last year and that is an exciting thing to walk into. I think expectations

are obviously high in those sports, but I think everyone always has high expectations. I am not going to do anything different than normal and I am just going to sit back and observe for a while and take it all in."

Hinkle will experience some different things along with his new position. This season, the Frontier League will welcome three new teams – Bonner Springs, Piper and Tonganoxie – and will say goodbye to De Soto.

Another big change will be the postseason formats with several sports as the Kansas State High School Activities Association reshuffled their classification system, eliminating Class 4A-Division II.

"With the changes in the league, the classification system and being a new AD, it is probably a good time to be coming on," Hinkle said. "The learning curve is going to be the same for all of us.

"I walked into a good situation for scheduling because (Holloway) already had everything all taken care of," he said. "I think the dynamics of the league are going to change. Liberal's former girls basketball coach is the coach at Piper and I know a little bit about them. As far as the programs and rivalries, that is something that is going to come with time."

Even with all the changes in his life – moving, starting a new job, getting to know new faces – Hinkle is ready for what lies ahead and the staff at Louisburg has helped with that transition.

"It has been a whirlwind and it has been information overload," he said. "It is a lot of the same things I did in Liberal as athletic director, I just haven't done it for the last five years. Being an assistant principal at Liberal last year, I think, helped me prepare for the principal side.

"People have just gone out of their way to be helpful. From

the administration to the custodial staff to the secretaries, everyone has been super helpful. When I was out around town, people have welcomed me and it has been a friendly feel everywhere I have been."

Wildcats get back to work after state runner-up finish



Senior goalie Carson Buffington goes through a drill with assistant coach Michael Pickman during the Wildcats' week-long team camp that ended on June 15.

Two weeks after advancing to the state title game, and finishing its 2018 season with a state runner-up trophy, the Louisburg High School girls soccer team was back to work.

After a little time to relax and celebrate their accomplishments, the Wildcats came back focused for their team camp that started on June 11 in an effort to do what it takes to end their season with a win in 2019.

"It is quick, but ultimately their bodies need to shut down for a little bit," Louisburg head coach Kyle Conley said. "We gave them about a week off, but the last couple of years we started the first day that we could. I think their heads are

right though. Last season, we got a little bit unfocused, weren't as dedicated as we could be and that was frustrating. We are starting from the top down and refocusing our dedication and why we are here."

Focus was a big emphasis for Conley in his week-long camp as he tried to get his team to reach even higher goals. Along with the camp, the players will have weight sessions throughout the summer in an effort to get in better shape.

Conley had 28 players out for camp, and even with some players out of town, he believes he has just the right numbers.

Going into next season, Conley sees anywhere from 8 to 10 new players joining the team and that is where summer workouts provided an added benefit.



Head coach Kyle Conley speaks to his team during the Wildcats' team camp earlier this month.

“This week really helps a lot with the new ladies that we have coming in to give them an idea of what to expect and what it is going to be like,” Conley said. “That way when we get into the season, they will know what to do and we don’t have to spend as much time teaching and can get more work done.

“It is a lot of the same fundamentals. We are going to institute some new stuff, but our girls are a creature of habit. They like doing things that they are comfortable with, at the same time we need to stretch them out of their comfort zone a little bit. The first three days were a lot of the same stuff we’ve done, but we did some new stuff and introduced some new formations. The main thing is we just want them to be focused and be prepared.”

It is also a good possibility that the Wildcats will use different formations next season due to the departures of four seniors to graduation, including the program’s all-time leading scorer in Bailey Belcher, and all-league players in Shay Whiting and Savannah Reinhart.

“It is going to take a lot of work to get back to where we want to be,” Conley said. “We are going to have to replace a lot of offense with Bailey leaving, the stability that Savannah put up on the side, Shay in goal and Avery (Barber) providing depth in the back. We only lose four, but it is going to look quite a bit different. We are going to move some kids around and try them in new spots. We need to make it to where we are not so easy to scout. All these kids are coachable and hopefully we can fill those voids as best we can.”



Junior Trinity Moore settles a ball during a drill while teammates Madison Quinn (left) and Ashley Moore look on.

Earning a spot in the state championship game gave the Wildcats a lot of confidence heading into the offseason, especially considering they did it in just the program's third year of existence.

Still, the Wildcats faced a lot of up and downs in 2018 and Conley hopes to eliminate the roller coaster ride for next season.

"I think it was the expectation for us when we were coming into last season was to play for a state championship," he said. "When we got fourth two seasons back, we had a lot of offense coming back and I though on paper that our team should be better. I thought second place is where we deserved to finish, but that whole season was just a roller coaster. We weren't consistent and that is on me. That is what we are

talking about here is being mentally prepared, being a team leader and a good example.”

Conley named Class 4-1A Coach of the Year



Louisburg High School girls soccer coach Kyle Conley was recently named the Class 4-1A Coach of the Year by the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association. Conley led the Wildcats to a state runner-up finish in May.

Kyle Conley has spent the last three seasons guiding the Louisburg High School girls soccer team and grooming the Wildcats to be able to compete against some of the best in the state.

It all came to fruition this year when Louisburg advanced to the Class 4-1A state championship match and went on to finish second overall. The finish was something to remember for Wildcat fans as all that was accomplished in just the program’s third year of existence.

Conley was rewarded for all his hard work earlier this week when it was announced that he was named as the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association’s Girls Coach of the Year for Class 4-1A.

“It was definitely a shock,” Conley said. “It typically automatically goes to the state champion, but for whatever reason this year it did not. For me, it is, and always will be, about the kids. As long as they are progressing, improving and are challenged, I am doing my job. I am extremely humbled to receive this award.”

Conley led the Wildcats to a spot in the state championship match after they defeated Topeka-Hayden, 1-0, in the state semifinals. Louisburg would go on to fall to Bishop Miege in the state championship match to finish its season with a 14-7 record.

It was the second consecutive season the Wildcats earned a spot in the state tournament. Louisburg finished fourth at state a year ago and have also captured regional titles in all three seasons under Conley.

He has posted a 41-18-2 record during his time as the Wildcat girls head coach and also guided the Louisburg boys soccer team to its best finish in program history in 2017 with a fourth place finish at state.

Although Conley is happy with the selection, he realizes he has had a lot of help along the way.

“It is a great honor and I am beyond excited to receive such an award,” Conley said. “I couldn’t have accomplished this if it wasn’t for the kids and for all the help that (assistant) coach (Michael) Pickman has given me these last three years. He works a lot with the girls and he is a great asset to our program.

“There are a lot of worthy candidates that could have received this award, but I am very honored to have been chosen.”

Belcher, Scholtz lead Wildcats on all-league, all-state teams



Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher (4) and sophomore Mackenzie Scholtz (32) were each recently named to the all-Frontier League and all-state first teams. Both players were among the team leaders in goals and assists.

It was a season to remember for the Louisburg High School girls soccer team and the Frontier League coaches, and others from across the state, thought so as well.

Louisburg had five players earn all-state honors from the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association when it was released Sunday. Last week, seven Wildcats were selected to the All-Frontier League team after they finished their season with a 14-7 record and Class 4-1A state runner-up finish in just the program's third season.

"I felt with as good as our league was this past year we had a decent representation," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "Obviously, I would have liked a few more kids to be recognized, but I shouldn't complain. We went 5-5 in league and I think that getting two first team players is accurate.

Personally, I felt we could have had a few more players get second team honors. They girls were a little inconsistent this year and I think that is when some of the league schools saw us.

“Our state ballot was nice and well represented. I think the girls that received that honor were deserving. These young ladies were key contributors for team this past year. They are what we are looking for within our program to keep excelling. I am hoping this motivates others to strive to accomplish these goals. I am very proud of these young ladies.

Senior Bailey Belcher and sophomore Mackenzie Scholtz were each given high honors for their play this season. Belcher and Scholtz were named to the all-state first team and were also first-team All-Frontier League selections.

Belcher finished the season with 28 goals and 14 assists in 18 games, while Scholtz led the Wildcats with 32 goals and 15 assists in 21 games.

“Bailey and Mackenzie did a fantastic job for us this past season,” Conley said. “They seemed to feed off of each other and excel at the right time. They made it very difficult for teams to defend us, because as soon as you took one player away, the other would take advantage of the available space. Both are extremely talented young ladies and the future is very bright for both of them.”



Sophomore Erin Lemke finished her season with second team all-league and all-state honors.

Sophomore Erin Lemke and junior Kaitlyn Lewer each earned second team all-state recognition, while Lemke was named to the all-league second team and Lewer was an honorable mention.

Lemke finished the year with 12 goals and five assists from her midfield spot. Lewer played a vital spot on the Wildcat defense as she made the move from center to the outside spot.

“Erin has a fantastic work ethic,” Conley said. “She works and continues to work nonstop. She does not give up on any plays and she is extremely coachable. She was frustrated in herself a little bit this year, but she came on at the end of the season, scoring and making plays for us. I think Erin receiving this honor is strictly because of her work ethic and her attitude to get better each and every day.

“Kaitlyn played nearly every minute of every game for us. She was a shutdown defender for us and played extremely hard for us. Her work ethic is second to none. She handled the move from center back to outside back extremely well and excelled at it.”



(From left) Shay Whiting, Savannah Reinhart, Kailtyn Lewer and Trinity Moore each earned honorable mention all-league honors. Lewer was also a second team all-state selection and Whiting was named as an honorable mention all-state goalie.

Shay Whiting had a solid season in goal for the Wildcats and she was rewarded for her efforts. Whiting earned honorable mention all-state and all-league honors.

Whiting, a senior, started 18 games for the Wildcats and recorded 75 saves on the season to go along with six shutouts.

“Shay got banged up this summer and again against De Soto in the second game of the year,” Conley said. “It took her several weeks to get back to her aggressive and tough self, but when she did she was fantastic, especially during the playoff run.”

Senior Savannah Reinhart and sophomore Trinity Moore were also awarded honorable mention all-Frontier League honors for their play this season.

Reinhart finished the season with four goals and five assists

from the midfield spot in 21 games, which included nine starts.

Moore started all 21 games for the Wildcats and was a fixture for the Louisburg defense as she provided a lot of help from the sweeper position.

“Savannah worked hard to overcome her knee injury before the season,” Conley said. “It slowed her down, but she changed her game and adapted to her situation by playing the ball quicker and reading the game to anticipate the next play.

“Trinity had an up and down year, but she played well overall. She had a fantastic middle of the season and was extremely aggressive. On free kicks, her service was extremely good as well. Unfortunately, we didn’t finish very many of the chances she created with her service.”

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE GIRLS SOCCER

FIRST TEAM

Caitlin Countryman, junior, Baldwin

Josie Boyle, sophomore, Baldwin

Mackenzie Mohl, sophomore, De Soto

Jordan Zade, freshman, De Soto

Morgan Laplante, junior, De Soto

Bailey Belcher, senior, Louisburg

Mackenzie Scholtz, sophomore, Louisburg

Sara Watson, senior, Spring Hill

Mallory Smith, junior, Spring Hill

Anna Watson, senior, Spring Hill

GOALIE: Taylor Rogers, senior, De Soto

SECOND TEAM

Anna Burnett, sophomore, Baldwin

Caitlin Walton, senior, De Soto

Alexa Rosetta, senior, De Soto

Alex Schemmel, senior, De Soto

Kate Erpelding, freshman, Eudora

Alex Pascua, freshman, Eudora

Erin Lemke, sophomore, Louisburg

Amanda Wray, senior, Ottawa

Jasmine Diaz, senior, De Soto

Kaylen Dawson, sophomore, Spring Hill

GOALIE: Emery Mounce, sophomore, Spring Hill

HONORABLE MENTION

Lauren Russell, freshman, Baldwin

Samantha McKinney, senior, Baldwin

Ashley Panagakis, junior, De Soto

Krista Rush, junior, De Soto

Nicole Whitten, senior, Eudora

Kaitlyn Lewer, junior, Louisburg

Trinity Moore, sophomore, Louisburg

Savannah Reinhart, senior, Louisburg

Lexi Dillon, freshman, Spring Hill

GOALIE: **Shay Whiting, senior, Louisburg**; Britney Smith, senior, Ottawa

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2018 Female Athlete of the Year Nominees



For the past two years, Louisburg Sports Zone has given out Athlete of the Week awards during each of the three sports seasons. I do it to recognize special athletic achievements and highlight them a little bit. So this year, I wanted to take it a step further.

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

Although I am giving out the award, I wanted the process to subjective, so I asked the head coaches at LHS to help me out. I asked each coach to send me nominations of who they thought

exemplified the Athlete of the Year honor. They will then vote for their top 3 male and female and then I will tabulate the results and determine the winner. In the next couple of weeks, I will announce this year recipient.

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

2018 LOUISBURG SPORTS ZONE

FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR NOMINEES



Bailey Belcher, Senior, Basketball and Girls Soccer

Belcher led the Wildcat girls soccer team to a state runner-up finish this past season as she was among the leading scorers on the team with 28 goals and 14 assists, which included five hat tricks. She is a three-time all-Frontier League and all-state first teamer, and has been a team captain for the last two seasons.

She holds the Louisburg record for most goals in a season with 33 and in a career with 91. She is will continue her soccer career at Missouri Southern next season.

Belcher was also a starter on the Lady Cats' basketball team and earned honorable mention all-league honors after averaging eight points, four rebounds and two steals a game.



Carson Buffington – Junior – Volleyball, Basketball and Girls Soccer

Buffington helped the Louisburg volleyball team to a state runner-up performance in the Class 4A-Division I state tournament as the team's setter. She finished the season with more than 1,100 assists and had 30 aces. She also helped out defensively with 244 digs.

She earned second team all-Frontier League honors and was also placed on the Kansas Volleyball Association's (KVA) all-state second team. Buffington was also selected to the KVA all-state tournament team.

On the basketball court, Buffington earned second team all-Frontier League honors and led the league in rebounding for the third straight season. She averaged 11.6 rebounds a game

to go along with 9.2 points and 2.7 steals from the forward spot.

Buffington also served as the back-up goalie for the Wildcat soccer team and saw action in several varsity games.



Anna Dixon – Junior – Volleyball

Dixon played a big role in the Lady Cats' state runner-up volleyball team this past season. As an all-around player, Dixon led Louisburg with 613 kills and 61 blocks on the season. She was also third on the team with 58 aces and 329 digs.

She earned first team all-Frontier League and all-state honors. Dixon was named as the Kansas Volleyball Association's Class 4A-D1 Co-Player of the Year and was selected to the KVA

all-state tournament team.

Dixon also earned Best of Kansas Preps selection by the Topeka Capital-Journal, which is a new award this season. She has committed to Kansas State University to play volleyball in the fall of 2019.



Carlee Gassman – Sophomore – Cross Country, Basketball, Track and Field

Gassman had a record-breaking season for the Louisburg track team. She broke a 29-year old school record in the 300-meter hurdles in early April and then broke her own school record several more times this season, including at the Class 4A state meet where she ran a time of 45.68 to finish second in the state.

It was her first of two state medals on the season as she also finished fifth in the state in the long jump with a mark of just more than 17 feet. She also won a regional title in the 300-meter hurdles.

Gassman was also a consistent runner on the Wildcat cross country team that qualified for the state meet for the first time in school history. She served as the No. 2 runner for most of the season.

On the basketball court, Gassman saw a lot of varsity time for the Lady Cats as well as one of the team's point guards.



Isabelle Holtzen – Senior – Cross Country, Basketball, Track and Field

Holtzen had a record-breaking season in the pole vault this past season for the Lady Cats' track and field team. She broke her own school in the event with a vault of 11 feet, 6 inches

and went on to finish sixth at the Class 4A state track meet with a clearance of 11-0.

She was also a league and regional runner-up, while also running on legs of the 4×100 and 4×400-meter relay teams.

On the cross country team, Holtzen was a consistent runner on a varsity team that qualified for state for the first time in school history.

On the basketball court, Holtzen served as a team captain and was a full-time starter for the Lady Cats at the guard spot.

At the end of the school year, Holtzen became the first Lady Cat in several decades to earn 12 varsity athletic letters and did so while earning a 4.0 GPA, which is first in her class.



Sophie McMullen – Senior – Volleyball

McMullen was another key piece to the Lady Cats' success this past season on the volleyball court. She made the switch from setter to outside hitter and defensive player to help Louisburg to a state runner-up campaign.

She was first on the team with 114 aces to go along with 437 digs defensively. As an outside hitter, McMullen added 381 kills.

McMullen was selected to the all-Frontier League and all-state first team and was named to the Kansas Volleyball Association all-state tournament team. She was also selected to the Greater Kansas City Coaches Volleyball Association all-star team.

McMullen signed to play volleyball at Northwest Missouri State this coming fall.

All-Frontier League Baseball, Girls Soccer and Softball teams

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE BASEBALL

FIRST TEAM

INFIELD: Darren Winans, senior, De Soto; Kurt Golubski, senior, Paola; Chad Bones, junior, Ottawa; Kaleb Shaffer, senior, Ottawa

OUTFIELD: Khalil Thrasher, senior, Eudora; Jackson Burrell, senior, Spring Hill; Nick Modes, senior, Paola

CATCHER: Chandler Bloomer, senior, Ottawa

PITCHER: Conner Mackay, senior, De Soto; Jared Parenti, senior, Ottawa

UTILITY: Anthony Slaughter, senior, De Soto

SECOND TEAM

INFIELD: Bryce Mohl, senior, De Soto; Cody Lucas, senior, Spring Hill; Nash Dreiling, senior, Paola; Chris Wilks, senior, Baldwin

OUTFIELD: Jack Barger, senior, De Soto; Peyton Garvin, senior, Eudora; **Madden Rutherford, sophomore, Louisburg**

CATCHER: Evan Peuser, sophomore, Paola

PITCHER: Tyler Barkemeyer, junior, De Soto; Jake Schrock, senior, Baldwin

UTILITY: Michael Daggett, sophomore, Paola

HONORABLE MENTION

INFIELD: Conner Mackay, senior, De Soto; Bryce Towles, senior, Spring Hill; Luke Angermayer, senior, Paola; Owen LaMar,

senior, Ottawa; Jake Schrock, senior, Baldwin; **Garrett Caldwell, senior, Louisburg**

OUTFIELD: Connor Strouse, senior, De Soto; Zade Barker, sophomore, Spring Hill; Wyatt Johnston, senior, Paola; Garrett Owings, senior, Baldwin

CATCHER: Corbyn Meyers, sophomore, Spring Hill; Garrett Borth, senior, Baldwin

PITCHER: Jayden Pierce, junior, Eudora; Garret Trimmer, junior, Paola; Chance Crowley, senior, Ottawa

UTILITY: Cameron Reynolds, junior, Ottawa; Ty Bennett, junior, Baldwin; **Garrett Harding, sophomore, Louisburg**

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE GIRLS SOCCER

FIRST TEAM

Caitlin Countryman, junior, Baldwin

Josie Boyle, sophomore, Baldwin

Mackenzie Mohl, sophomore, De Soto

Jordan Zade, freshman, De Soto

Morgan Laplante, junior, De Soto

Bailey Belcher, senior, Louisburg

Mackenzie Scholtz, sophomore, Louisburg

Sara Watson, senior, Spring Hill

Mallory Smith, junior, Spring Hill

Anna Watson, senior, Spring Hill

GOALIE: Taylor Rogers, senior, De Soto

SECOND TEAM

Anna Burnett, sophomore, Baldwin

Caitlin Walton, senior, De Soto

Alexa Rosetta, senior, De Soto

Alex Schemmel, senior, De Soto

Kate Erpelding, freshman, Eudora

Alex Pascua, freshman, Eudora

Erin Lemke, sophomore, Louisburg

Amanda Wray, senior, Ottawa

Jasmine Diaz, senior, De Soto

Kaylen Dawson, sophomore, Spring Hill

GOALIE: Emery Mounce, sophomore, Spring Hill

HONORABLE MENTION

Lauren Russell, freshman, Baldwin

Samantha McKinney, senior, Baldwin

Ashley Panagakis, junior, De Soto

Krista Rush, junior, De Soto

Nicole Whitten, senior, Eudora

Kaitlyn Lewer, junior, Louisburg

Trinity Moore, sophomore, Louisburg

Savannah Reinhart, senior, Louisburg

Lexi Dillon, freshman, Spring Hill

GOALIE: **Shay Whiting, senior, Louisburg**; Britney Smith, senior, Ottawa

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE SOFTBALL

FIRST TEAM

INFIELD: Kamryn Shaffer, senior, Ottawa; **Molly Rison, junior, Louisburg**; Betsy Parmley, senior, Baldwin; Sierra Smith, sophomore, Eudora

OUTFIELD: Sienna Hall, senior, Baldwin; Audrey Flowers, junior, Baldwin; Elizabeth Hays, senior, Spring Hill

CATCHER: Gaige Pinkerton, freshman, Spring Hill

PITCHER: Jordan Johnson, senior, Paola; Kyla Etter, junior, Eudora

UTILITY: Regan Smith, senior, Spring Hill

SECOND TEAM

INFIELD: Jenna DeVore, senior, Ottawa; Hannah Menefee, junior, Paola; Paige Cooper, sophomore, Spring Hill; Kennedy Doherty, senior, Eudora

OUTFIELD: Justine Kennington, junior, Ottawa; Aubrey Weatherbie, sophomore, Paola; Devin Pucell, senior, Eudora

CATCHER: Emma Grossoehme, freshman, Baldwin

PITCHER: Layney Steging, junior, Spring Hill

UTILITY: Hannah Pearce, senior, Paola

HONORABLE MENTION

INFIELD: Halle Schindler, junior, Paola; **Kayla Willey, sophomore, Louisburg**; Avery Karlin, freshman, De Soto; Kellee Wiggins, senior, Baldwin; Megan Kennedy, junior, Eudora

OUTFIELD: Alli Kerns, junior, Ottawa; Jordan Diehl, sophomore, De Soto; McKInley Markley, senior, Baldwin

CATCHER: Jocelyn Woods, senior, Ottawa; Josie Bedford, senior, De Soto; Alaina Howe, senior, Eudora

UTILITY: **Karson Griggs, junior, Louisburg**

Bishop Miege halts Wildcats' shot at a state title



Louisburg senior Savannah Reinhart battles a Bishop Miege player for the ball during the Class 4-1A state championship match Saturday at Bethel College. The Wildcats fell to Miege, 5-0, and finished second overall.

NORTH NEWTON – The obstacle seemed insurmountable – and it was.

The Louisburg High School girls soccer team found itself in the Class 4-1A state championship match in the program's third year of existence, but if they wanted to take it another step further, the Wildcats were going to have to knock the defending state champion of its perch.

Unfortunately, Bishop Miege wasn't about to be moved.

In a state title game that was played in the sweltering heat Saturday at Bethel College, the Wildcats couldn't stay with the Stags in a 5-0 defeat. It was the third consecutive title for Bishop Miege, while Louisburg earned a state plaque for the first time in its short history.

"Miege is a team full of club kids that play year-round and they literally have 22 club kids, and I have like six," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "Trying to explain and adjust things, it is hard to do when our soccer experience isn't what everyone else's is.

"That is what our work ethic does, being blue collar, is it keeps us in games like this and allows us to make it this far. We ran into a great Miege team. The kids held their heads high and they played hard and did things the right way. It stinks now, but for the next 30 years or so that plaque is going to be in that case and no one can ever take that from us. I'm just really proud of the kids."



Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher heads the ball away from Bishop Miege player Saturday in Newton.

It was an historic playoff run for the Wildcats as they put together their best finish in school history and cemented its legacy with a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Topeka-Hayden on Friday in the state semifinals.

Louisburg was guaranteed a plaque after just missing out on one the year before after it took fourth overall. The Wildcats were thankful for their fourth place medals at the time, but they wanted something a little bigger.

“It is a third-year program with 41 wins, three regional championships, two state final fours and now a state runner-up,” Conley said. “We just have kids who come in and work their butt off. They are not soft, they aren’t weak and from top to bottom they are going to work hard.

“We worked hard (Saturday), but we just played Miege. That is one of the best teams in the state, and that stinks, but our kids played hard, worked their tail off and it was a great year. We had people criticize us for how we got there, but we won games and that really motivated the kids. It got them fired up to go do something bigger than themselves. I couldn’t be more proud of they stuck together and what they accomplished.”

Bishop Miege (14-6-1) broke open a scoreless game in the 10th minute when Sophia Stram scored to give Miege a 1-0 advantage and then doubled it in the 25th minute with another goal from Stram.



Louisburg goalie Shay Whiting slides in for a save Saturday in the Class 4-1A championship match at Bethel College.

Miege scored off a corner kick with 13 minutes left in the first half and then found the back of the net with another shot in the box late in the first half and the Stags took a 4-0 halftime lead.

Louisburg (14-7) had just one good look at goal in the first half as sophomore Mackenzie Scholtz broke through the Stags defense for a one-on-one with the goalie, but the Stags keeper stopped the attempt.

As time ticked off in the second half, the four Louisburg seniors realized their time was coming to an end. Seniors Bailey Belcher, Savannah Reinhart, Shay Whiting and Avery Barber all played their final game as a Wildcat.

Belcher was one of the team's leading scorers from the midfield spot, while Whiting served as the team's starting goalkeeper the last three seasons. Reinhart was a part-time starter in the midfield and logged a lot of minutes, while Barber gave Louisburg good minutes in the back.

"They were an unbelieveable group," Conley said. "It is a good thing that we are only losing four kids, but we lose four really incredible kids. They have great personalities, great team leaders and they are players in key positions with great work ethic. They are fantastic kids who are always looking out for others. They were always putting the team before themselves and I couldn't be more proud of that group."



Members of the Louisburg girls state runner-up girls soccer team are (front row, from left) Hayli Detherage, Savannah Reinhart, Camdyn Clark, Shay Whiting, Bailey Belcher, Morgan Messer, Skylar Bowman, Olivia Barber, Leia Shaffer; (back row) head coach Kyle Conley, Avery Barber, Madison Quinn, Carson Buffington, Erin Lemke, Julianne Finley, Haley Cain, Trinity Moore, Mackenzie Scholtz, Hannah Straub, Hallie Hutsell, Kaitlyn Lewer, Avery O'Meara and assistant coach Michael Pickman.

The Wildcats had an up and down season that featured some tough losses, and one where they had to deal with key injuries throughout the season. Still, the team came together at the right time.

"Our team is really young," Conley said. "Hoping to see them make a jump from a freshman to playing like a junior or senior is unrealistic. At the same time, we also thought some things are going to get handed to us and be super easy. We had to work pretty hard and eventually figured out we need to go to another level. The girls realized that they are going to have to play stronger and harder and once the tournament started we got going pretty good. I'm really proud of them."

Louisburg girls soccer advances to championship match



Members of the Louisburg High School girls rush the field to celebrate the Wildcats' 1-0 win over Topeka-Hayden on Friday at Bethel College. The Wildcats will play in the state championship match tomorrow for the first time in the program's third-year history.

NORTH NEWTON – The Louisburg High School girls soccer program is now just one win away from accomplishing something the school has yet to see.

Louisburg defeated Topeka-Hayden, 1-0, in the Class 4-3-2-1A state semifinals Friday at Bethel College in Newton and advanced to its first state championship in program history. It can make even more history on Saturday.

The Wildcats will square off with Bishop Miege in the state championship match at 2 p.m., and has the chance to win the program's first state title. It would also be the first girls state championship in Louisburg history.

"For a third-year program, making it to state two years in a

row and just the things these girls have done is amazing," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "I don't have a ton of club kids. I have kids that just bust their butt every day and that is just what we do. We play hard, grind, we don't give up and we just keep fighting and keep working. All the people that said we didn't deserve to be here, all teams that said we had an easy path to state and we didn't do anything – just look at us now."

It was an evenly played state semifinal match against Hayden, and both teams had their chances to find the back of the net early on. Wildcat goalie Shay Whiting made a couple big stops against Hayden to keep the game scoreless.

With 18 minutes left in the second half, Louisburg finally broke through.

Senior Bailey Belcher played a through ball down the heart of the Hayden defense and hit a running Mackenzie Scholtz in stride and Scholtz put it in the back of the net to give the Wildcats the lead.

"This feels amazing," Belcher said. "When I played that through ball to Mack and it went in, I was like 'Oh my gosh, we have a chance.' We just had to keep it going. We are pretty lucky, but we have to be ready to go tomorrow."



Sophomore back Trinity Moore heads the ball away from the Hayden attack Friday.

Last season, the Wildcats lost both games in their state tournament appearance, but no matter what happens Saturday, they have already recorded the best finish in the program's short history.

"Our goal was to get back here, but we still aren't satisfied with what we have accomplished," Whiting said. "We are going to go out and try to get that trophy. Being a public school, from a small town, people said we didn't deserve to be here, but we are here and we are here to win."

The road to this state championship appearance has been an interesting one for the Wildcats. More than three years ago, a group of Louisburg parents and citizens raised enough money to begin the girls soccer program and fund it for three years.

Louisburg is the final year of that funding, and while the program isn't going away, the team realized they needed to play for more than themselves.

"We played for the community tonight," Belcher said. "We have to remember that when they raised money for this program, it was just through this year, so I think we owed it to them to play well. I really think it might have helped with how we played and I think it was one of the best games we played all season."



Senior Savannah Reinhart (right) battles for the ball against Hayden on Friday during the state semifinal match.

All that hard work has put the Wildcats in a position to be named the best team in the state. However, they have one final road block – and it is a big one.

Bishop Miege, which defeated McPherson 2-1 in the other state semifinal, is the defending state champion and perennial power in Class 4A and the Wildcats know they will have their hands full.

“They are the best team in the state,” Conley said. “I don’t care what level you are, but year in and year out they are the best team. I will probably stay up half the night trying to figure it all out. If you want a chance to get a state championship, you are going to have to play the best team in the state and they are. We are going to have to be really good.”



Junior defender Camdyn Clark was one of several on the Wildcat defense who who helped with the shutout of Hayden on Friday.

Despite the big obstacle standing in their way, the Wildcats won’t mind playing the underdog role.

“We figured we would probably play Miege one way or another,” Whiting said. “It has all fallen into place to where we wanted. We are the underdogs and we know it. It is going to be David versus Goliath, but we are going to go out and do our jobs.”