Wildcat defense comes up big in shutouts of Harmon, Eudora



Louisburg defender Trinity Moore looks to dribble past a Harmon player Wednesday during the Wildcats' home contest at Wildcat Sports Complex. Moore and the rest of the Wildcat defense shut out Harmon in a 5-0 victory.

A year ago, the Louisburg High School girls soccer team walked off its home field feeling a little deflated after losing to Harmon.

The Wildcats made sure it wasn't going to happen a second time.

Louisburg scored three first half goals and the Wildcat defense took care of the rest as they shutout Harmon, 5-0, on Wednesday at Wildcat Sports Complex. It was the second consecutive victory for the Wildcats after they defeated Eudora, 3-0, on the road Monday.

"The first half we were a little hesitant and we were going through the motions a little bit and starting to figure it out," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "In the second half, I think we just dominated them. I know they had some wind-aided long balls, but I thought we just killed it out there. We had some really good opportunities, but we just couldn't quite execute. Still, we were really good and did some nice things."

A lot of those nice things came on defense where the Wildcats entered the game shorthanded as starter Hannah Straub had to sit out with an injury. Junior Kaitlyn Lewer moved from her outside back spot to fill in at centerback and sophomore Skylar Bowman played Lewer's outside back spot.

It all seemed to come together for Louisburg as Bowman, Lewer, sophomore Trinity Moore and junior Camdyn Clark frustrated the Harmon offense in the back and allowed for the Wildcats to dominate possession. Goalies Shay Whiting and Carson Buffington then combined to earn the clean sheet.

"Kaitlyn played centerback and filled in for us there with Hannah being out," Conley said. "That is where she played all last year so I think it worked out alright. She filled a void there and helped us out. With her and Trinity back there, I don't think anyone is going to run by those two. Skylar shifted over to help outside and she did a good job. It is all about when someone goes down, who is going to be the next one to step up? That is the way we have been playing. I don't think we have had our full squad at all this year except for maybe one game.

"They are doing a good job staying marked up for the most part. They are playing hard and playing pretty well back there. We are not gambling on things and playing as unit. Avery Barber stepped in a little bit for us tonight as did Skylar. They are a good group and they feed off each other. The chemistry is starting to come together."



Junior Kaitlyn Lewer heads the ball away Wednesday against Harmon.

Offensively, the Wildcats got on the board quick thanks to senior Bailey Belcher, who returned after missing a week due to injury. Belcher scored the game's first two goals, including one five minutes into the match off a rebound.

Belcher then took a shot from close to 20 yards out that found the back of the net and gave Louisburg a 2-0 lead. Sophomore Mackenzie Scholtz added to the Wildcat lead with a goal late in the first half.

A pair of other Wildcats got into the scoring in the second half as sophomore Erin Lemke took a shot in the box that hit off the top of the post and crossed the line to give the Wildcats a four goal lead.

Moore iced the game for Louisburg (6-3) as she took a penalty

kick, but after the shot was saved, scored off the rebound to put the Wildcats up five goals. Lemke and Leia Shaffer each added an assist in the Wildcat victory.

Louisburg will try for its third consecutive win at 6 p.m. tonight when it hosts Basehor-Linwood.

“Basehor is a good team,” Conley said. “They are offensive minded and it will be hard for us. We need to move and defend as a unit and organization is going to be key for us. They have some really good players up top and we just have to do a good job of feeding the ball through and keeping the pressure on them and attack. We need to make it a high intensity game and see where it goes from there.”

Louisburg blanks Eudora on the road

It was slow-going at times for Louisburg when it visited Eudora on Monday for the team’s first ever meeting as Eudora is competing in its first season.

The Wildcats took a one-goal lead into halftime, but created a little more cushion for themselves in the second half as they came away with a 3-0 victory.

Sophomore Mackenzie Scholtz opened the scoring for Louisburg with a goal in the first half, and then followed it up with another goal in the second half. Fellow sophomore Erin Lemke also notched a goal to help seal the win for Louisburg.

Scholtz, Lemke and freshman Olivia Barber each had an assist in the win, while senior goalie Shay Whiting earned the shutout.

Wildcats fall in close match to Spring Hill



Louisburg sophomore Avery O’Meara knocks the ball away from a Spring Hill player Thursday in Spring Hill. The Wildcats came up just short against the Broncos in a 1-0 loss.

SPRING HILL – If playing one of best teams in the state isn’t difficult enough, the Louisburg girls soccer team had to do it without one of its leading goal scorers.

The Wildcats ventured to Spring Hill for a Frontier League match with the Broncos and more than held their own against the 1-loss team. Louisburg couldn’t find the back of the net, but played stingy defense against Spring Hill in a 1-0 defeat.

Louisburg didn’t have many scoring chances throughout the night and it didn’t help that the Wildcats were without their all-state player in Bailey Belcher. Despite that, Louisburg coach Kyle Conley liked what he saw out of his team.

“The girls played their butts off,” Conley said. “Losing Bailey, who is a main goal scorer for us, in the middle is a game changer. We had girls step up in her spot and I thought they did pretty well. We played hard and our work ethic really came through in this game and it showed.”

Defense was a big positive for the Wildcats as they limited the Broncos’ shots on goal. The back line of Trinity Moore,

Hannah Straub, Camdyn Clark and Kaitlyn Lewer turned away several Spring Hill opportunities.

Louisburg (4-3) also had a big game from senior goalie Shay Whiting, who recorded several saves. Junior goalie Carson Buffington replaced Whiting with 10 minutes left in the match and made a jump save of her own to keep it a one-goal deficit.

“I think Trinity played really well in the back and Hannah played really well too until she had to leave a couple times due to an injury,” Conley said. “Cammy and Katie were really good too and have been all year, so I thought we played pretty well back there against what is a pretty talented team. I am very proud of them. That is the best team in 4A right there.



Louisburg defender Hannah Straub (21) clears the ball away Thursday against Spring Hill.

“They only had like two dangerous chances and I am not even going to count the corner kick that went in. I think kind of crowded it in to limit their chances and I think Carson had one big save and Shay had the other. We changed the formation at the end to see if we could get lucky, but unfortunately it just didn’t work out.”

Midway through the first half, the Broncos were able to get on the board as they used a corner kick that went into the box, and after a little scrum, Spring Hill’s Anna Watson snuck the ball just over the line for a goal.

It would be all Spring Hill needed as it dominated possession for much of the match and limited the Wildcats’ opportunities.

“Part of our formation is we sit in, let you possess the ball, take a bad ball and then we counter,” Conley said. “Unfortunately that last counter is the one we are missing right now. We are close, but we are not used to playing turf so the ball moves a little faster, but that is no excuse, we just have to be better. We need to do a better job of just controlling and finding feet.”

Louisburg will try and get back on the winning track in what looks to be a busy week for the Wildcats. They begin play today when they travel to Eudora for a 5 p.m. start.

The Wildcats will then host Harmon on Wednesday and Basehor-Linwood on Friday in what they hope will be a successful five day period.

“It will be huge,” Conley said. “We should be in each of these three games and if we can get a few wins I think that would do a lot for us, especially if we can get Bailey back for one or two of those. We will just have to see.”

Wildcats roll Ottawa for second straight win



Louisburg sophomore Morgan Messer settles the ball Monday during the Wildcats' home match with Ottawa. The Wildcats scored seven first half goals on their way to a 10-0 victory.

Even with the cloudy, cold weather, the Louisburg High School girls soccer team had no problems heating up the nets Monday against Ottawa.

The Wildcats exploded for seven first half goals on their way to a 10-0 victory over the Cyclones at Wildcat Sports Complex, and earned their second straight win in the process.

"We did a good job executing," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "Sometimes when we play a team that likes to play a high line, it is tough to stick at what we are good at and what we do. We broke down a little bit, and weren't very disciplined at times, but it is good to get a lot of kids involved and try kids in new spots. Now we have to focus on the next one."

Sophomore Mackenzie Scholtz had another big night for Louisburg as she finished with four goals and added two assists to lead the Lady Cats. It is the second four-goal game of the season for Scholtz.

Freshman Olivia Barber also came through for the Wildcats with two goals and an assist and sophomore Erin Lemke also scored a pair of goals.

Sophomore Avery O’Meara and senior Bailey Belcher added a goal each, while sophomore Trinity Moore and senior Savannah Reinhart also had assists on the night.

The Wildcats (4-2) didn’t waste a lot of time getting on the board when Belcher scored the game’s first goal two minutes into the contest. Louisburg did suffer a setback when Belcher had to leave the game with an injury and didn’t return.

“It stinks because Bailey and Mackenzie were just starting to get their chemistry together by running off each other and it was all good, but then Bailey had to sit a little bit,” Conley said. “But the girls who were in there did a good job of finding where they needed to be and doing our jobs. It was a good win.”

Scholtz more than picked up the slack as she reeled off three of the next four Wildcat goals. Barber also scored on an assist from Scholtz to make it 5-0 just 15 minutes into the match.



Sophomore Erin Lemke tries to make a move toward the goal Monday against Ottawa.

Barber and Scholtz each finished the first half with a goal to give the Wildcats a 7-0 halftime lead and they never looked back.

O’Meara ripped a hard shot in the box to put Louisburg up by eight in the second half. Lemke then followed with back-to-back goals to end the game with 13 minutes remaining.

Although they didn’t have many chances, the Wildcat back line of Camdyn Clark, Trinity Moore, Hannah Straub and Kaitlyn Lewer turned away Ottawa’s advances. Goalies Shay Whiting and Carson Buffington combined for the clean sheet.

“I thought the backs really played well and Shay only had like one shot in the first half,” Conley said. “Defensively we played with a lot of intensity, and even though it was really

cold out, we did a good job of moving the ball and finding feet.”

The schedule will get much tougher tonight as the Wildcats will travel to Spring Hill today for a 6 p.m. start. Spring Hill has just one loss on the season and Conley knows it will be a challenge.

“It should be a big game for us,” Conley said. “It is a huge game for league and Spring Hill is playing really well right now. They have four or five really good freshmen that are playing well, plus they have their returners that are just exceptional. We will be playing on their new field, which is big and spacious, and hopefully we are at full strength. We will have our hands full.”

Louisburg shuts out Heritage Christian for home win



Louisburg defender Camdyn Clark clears the ball away from the Heritage Christian attack Thursday in Louisburg. The Wildcats defeated Heritage Christian 8-0 to improve their record to 3-2 on the season.

Since it has returned from Spring Break, the Louisburg High

School girls soccer team has faced a difficult schedule.

The Lady Cats have suffered losses to defending Frontier League champion De Soto, and Piper, which is currently undefeated to start the season. It has been and up and down start to Louisburg’s season so far, but it went on an upswing Thursday.

Louisburg responded from a loss to Piper the day before to blank Heritage Christian in an 8-0 victory at the Wildcat Sports Complex. The Lady Cats (3-2) used five first half goals to get out to a big lead and the Louisburg defense preserved the shutout.

Senior Bailey Belcher and sophomore Erin Lemke led the Wildcat attack with a pair of goals each, while four other Wildcats would find the back of the net as well.

Sophomore Mackenzie Scholtz put Louisburg on the board early with a goal four minutes into the match. Belcher followed with back-to-back goals to give Louisburg a 3-0 advantage with 23 minutes left in the first half.

Savannah Reinhart put together two big plays to give the Wildcats even more momentum going into halftime. Reinhart scored her first goal of the season with a lazer shot in the box with four minutes left in the first half.



Sophomore Skylar Bowman settles the ball Thursday against Heritage Christian.

The Louisburg junior was on the other end of a goal just a couple minutes later as she crossed the ball to freshman Olivia Barber, who scored and gave the Wildcats a 5-0 halftime lead.

Lemke kept it going in the second half as she recorded two goals and added an assist. Sophomore Morgan Messer also got into the action as she found the back of the net to help secure the win for the Wildcats.

Louisburg dominated possession as it outshot Heritage Christian 16-5 and earned five corner kicks. Even with Heritage's five shots on goal, the Wildcats weren't in danger of losing their shutout.

Goalie Carson Buffington got the start for Louisburg and

recorded all five saves as the Wildcat junior earned the clean sheet.

Louisburg returns to action today when it hosts Ottawa and will hit the road Thursday when the Wildcats will face undefeated Spring Hill.

Rally comes up short in loss to Piper

Louisburg put itself in a big hole Wednesday on the road at Piper High School.

The Wildcats found themselves down three goals early in the second half and were forced to try and dig out of it. They almost got there.

Louisburg recorded a pair of late goals, and almost got the game-tying score, but came up short in a 3-2 loss to the Pirates.

In a rematch of the state quarterfinal game, in which the Lady Cats won in overtime, Piper scored a goal in an evenly played first half. The Pirates took control of the match after halftime with two quick goals to go up 3-0.

With 20 minutes left in the game, Bailey Belcher recorded Louisburg’s first goal on an assist from Mackenzie Scholtz and then Scholtz added one of her own thanks to an assist from Kaitlyn Lewer.

Louisburg had several looks at the goal in the final five minutes, but couldn’t get the tying goal past the Piper defense.

Louisburg bounces back to blank Sumner Academy



Louisburg freshman Olivia Barber pushes the ball up the field Thursday during the Wildcats' home contest with Sumner Academy on Thursday. Barber scored her first high school goal as she helped Louisburg a 7-0 win over the Sabres.

A good way to get rid of the bad taste in your mouth after getting shutout is to return the favor yourself.

The Louisburg High School girls soccer team found that out firsthand Thursday against Sumner Academy.

Just two days after getting shutout by De Soto for their first loss of the season, the Wildcats got back on the winning track against the Sabres and left the Wildcat Sports Complex with a 7-0 victory to improve their record to 2-1 on the season.

Although it didn't show on the scoreboard, Louisburg had a difficult time battling – not only Sumner Academy – but the wet and cold conditions as well.

"The conditions were soggy, but the crew at the school did a fantastic job having the field ready and prepped for us," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "The girls were ready and came out with something to prove. We were motivated and still bitter about how the De Soto game went. We worked really, really hard Wednesday to clean up some issues and I think that

showed.”

Despite the sloppy conditions, the Wildcats were able to get plenty of shots on goal, especially from forward Mackenzie Scholtz. The Louisburg sophomore led with way with four goals and had a hat trick in the first half to give the Wildcat a four-goal lead at halftime.

“Mackenzie had a fantastic game,” Conley said. “We have been working on her movement a lot, and her hard work is paying off. Honestly, she actually could have had a couple more. She really did a nice job getting in the right position and making the correct runs. I am excited to see how much her movement improved over the past two games.”



Louisburg sophomore Mackenzie Scholtz scored four goals in the Wildcats’ 7-0 win over Sumner Academy.

Senior Bailey Belcher opened the scoring for Louisburg as she

found the back of the net nine minutes into first half. Scholtz then scored three straight goals to give the Wildcats a 4-0 halftime lead.

Olivia Barber got into the scoring for Louisburg to start the second half. The Louisburg freshman scored her first high school goal to make it a five-goal advantage.

The Wildcats continued the onslaught when Skylar Bowman passed it into the box and Belcher headed the pass into the back of the net for her second goal of the night. Scholtz sealed the win for Louisburg with her final goal with 14 minutes left in the match.

Louisburg's defense didn't have many opportunities to turn away the Sumner Academy attack, but the back line of Kaitlyn Lewer, Camdyn Clark, Hannah Straub and Trinity Moore prevented the Sabres from getting any good looks at the goal.

Junior goalie Carson Buffington, who was in for injured starter Shay Whiting, saved the few shots that made it through the Wildcat defense as she earned the shutout.

"The back four did a nice job against Sumner Academy," Conley said. "Honestly, we are trying to find the right combination that helps us, but doesn't make us deficient elsewhere on the field. Injuries are also something we need to adjust too. The girls are doing well and played well. The best part about our team, is that any given night someone can step up and fill a role.

"Carson did a very nice job. She was communicating with the back line effectively and did a nice job on the limited chances they had. As wet as it was, she was very sure handed."

The Wildcats have a busy week this week as they will play back-to-back days on Wednesday and Thursday. Louisburg will travel to Piper on Wednesday for a 6 p.m. start and then will host Heritage Christian at 5 p.m. on Thursday.

De Soto blanks Louisburg to hand Wildcats their first loss

Louisburg had a couple different setbacks during its March 27 road match with De Soto at De Soto High School.

De Soto jumped out to a four goal lead in the first half and never looked back in the 6-0 shutout over Louisburg. However, during the match, the Wildcats lost something else as well.

Senior goalie Shay Whiting had to leave with an injury and was unable to return. Whiting is scheduled to return later this week.

“I feel that the girls realize that we did not play very well at all against De Soto,” coach Kyle Conley said. “We understand how good they are, but we did not play to our level at all. I think we were nervous for the game. Then when they saw Shay go down it, we started to play on our heels and maybe even played a little scared. It was a difficult game in the first place, but we didn’t do ourselves any favors.”

Caitlin Walton and Mackenzie Mohl each had two goals to lead De Soto, while Jordan Zade and Jasmine Diaz added the other two scores.

Wildcats roll Tonganoxie in season opener



Louisburg junior Kaitlyn Lewer clears the ball away from a Tonganoxie player during the Wildcats' season opener Thursday in Louisburg. The Wildcats rolled to a 6-0 win over the Chieftains.

The Louisburg High School girls soccer team has made it a mission to try and get back to the state tournament this season.

Louisburg took a step in the right direction Thursday as the Wildcats picked up a win in their season opener and did so in convincing fashion.

The Wildcats used four second half goals and shutout Tonganoxie, 6-0, at Wildcat Soccer Complex and avenged a 0-0 result in last year's season opener.

"It was really nice that we got off on the right foot," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "It was an incredibly physical game and it took us a while to adjust. I felt the girls got better as the game went on and we started to play like I expected us to in the second half. I really like the amount of grit and toughness our kids showed and how we didn't back down. We were about as ready as we could have been and I think that we showed what our potential could be."

Physical play was the common theme throughout the contest as Tonganoxie was called for multiple fouls that included three yellow cards and a red card late in the match.

Those fouls didn't seem to bother the Wildcat players much as

they were able to put away two penalty kicks and didn’t let the emotions of the game affect their play.

“For the most part, the girls played extremely hard and were pretty focused,” Conley said. “I am glad that no one seriously got hurt and that we didn’t back down from the challenge. It was a great first match and I think opened some of our girls’ eyes to what playing high school soccer is all about. I would like our speed of play to improve and if we played the ball faster, we could have avoided a lot of that contact.”

Senior Bailey Belcher appeared like she was in midseason form for the Wildcats as she recorded a hat trick in her first game of the season and scored two of her three goals in the first half to give Louisburg a 2-0 halftime advantage.

Belcher opened the scoring in the first 10 minutes of the contest with a free kick from 20 yards out, then midway through the first half, converted a penalty kick after being fouled in the box.



Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher puts a shot on goal Thursday. Belcher had three goals in the victory.

The Wildcats were able to maneuver through the Tonganoxie defense through most of the night as they put 20 shots on goal, but struggled a little in the first half to find a rhythm offensively.

“Offensively in the first half, I felt we wasted a lot of opportunities,” Conley said. “We struggled to put the ball on frame, as well as the timing of our runs. The second half we were much more successful with our timing and how we moved the ball. We could have been better, but for the first game, we responded and played well.”

Louisburg blew the match open in the second half as sophomore Skylar Bowman struck a ball from close to 20 yards out to give the Wildcats a 3-0 lead with 17 minutes remaining.

Three minutes later, Belcher dribbled the ball into the box and had a 1-on-1 with the Tonganoxie goalie, but the Chieftain keeper tripped Belcher while she was going in to score and was given a red card, forcing her to leave the game.

Sophomore Mackenzie Scholtz took the penalty kick and found the back of the net for a 4-0 advantage. Belcher and sophomore Erin Lemke each put away goals in the final minutes to help seal the win.



Sophomore Hannah Straub (left) beats a Tonganoxie player to a 50-50 ball Thursday.

The Wildcats dominated possession for much of the contest, but the Louisburg defense didn’t give Tonganoxie many good looks when they had the ball on their side.

Louisburg’s back line of juniors Kaitlyn Lewer and Camdyn

Clark, along with sophomores Hannah Straub and Avery O'Meara, freshman Olivia Barber and senior Avery Barber gave up just three shots on goal.

Senior goalie Shay Whiting saved all three opportunities and earned the shutout in the process.

"Defensively we tried some new things and worked hard," Conley said. "We did a fairly nice job standing up our opponent and did a really good job of having support of players on the ball. All of the girls did a nice job of marking and communicating. I think the communication was really good between our defensive group."

The Wildcats will have this week off for Spring Break, before returning to action Mar. 27 when they travel to De Soto for their first Frontier League game of the season. Varsity is set to begin at approximately 6 p.m.

LHS girls soccer hopes for another state appearance



The Louisburg High School girls soccer team hopes to have more celebrations like this one for the 2018 season after finishing fourth at the Class 4-1A state tournament last year. The Wildcats open their season Thursday when they host Tonganoxie.

It wasn’t exactly the finish it was looking for to end last year, but despite losing its final two matches, the Louisburg High School girls soccer team had its best season in school history.

The Wildcats made the Class 4-1A state semifinals in just its second year and went on to finish fourth. As good of an accomplishment as that was, the ending to last season was more disappointing than celebratory for many of the players.

“It is not the fondest memory I have, but unfortunately for me it is the predominant memory of that season,” senior goalie Shay Whiting said. “I think it is something that everyone thinks about and we are all coming back with that fresh in our minds and have a state of revenge.”

Louisburg suffered a 1-0 loss to Thomas More Prep in the state semifinals and then fell 8-0 to Maize South in the third-place match the following day that ended Louisburg’s season with a 13-7-1 record.

“To be quite honest, we can look at it glass half empty and say we gave up nine goals in two games and we think about that,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “On the other hand, you can look at it half-full and say we are one goal away from playing for a state championship. It was a huge feat for a second year program, but that was last year, so it is our motivation now to prove that it wasn’t a fluke. These girls are pretty motivated. We are returning a strong core of kids and the sky’s the limit for them.”

Yes, the Wildcats are entering the 2018 season with high aspirations and will be considered one of the top returning 4A programs in the state. Louisburg graduated just four seniors from a season ago and brings back several all-league and all-state players.

At the top of that list is senior Bailey Belcher, who will anchor one of the strengths for the Wildcats in the midfield. Belcher is a two-time first team all-Frontier League and all-state player, who has provided a bulk of the Wildcats' scoring the last two years.

"Honestly, we have a chance to go to state just like we did last year," Belcher said. "Last year at this time, it seemed a little far-fetched that we could go to state, but we did it. I feel like this year that we are going to be even better than we were and state is something we need to strive for."

Last season, Belcher finished 29 goals and 12 assists to lead Louisburg. As a team, the Wildcats scored 82 goals last season and they return more than 90 percent of that scoring.



Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher led the Wildcats in scoring last season with 29 goals.

“We only saw one dimension of Bailey’s game the last two years,” Conley said. “I would like to see her play with a little more finesse and move the ball a little bit quicker. She just uses her God-given ability to just run by people and next year (in college) she won’t be able to do that. We are going to push really hard for her to be a better player and let the ball do most of the work for her.

“At the same time, she is just like a bulldog out there and you have to let her go out and make plays. She needs to take her game to another level and she can. I don’t think she has peaked at all and I think she can have an unbelieveable year.”

Sophomore Mackenzie Scholtz was also a big scoring threat for the Wildcats last season as she added 27 goals and a team-high 18 assists from the forward spot.

Another sophomore, Erin Lemke, will also be a fixture at the midfield/forward spot and both players have had big offseasons. Lemke scored the program’s most historic goal to date as her golden goal in the state quarterfinals against Piper propelled Louisburg to the semifinals.

“Mackenzie and Erin and going to take huge bounds,” Conley said. “They had really solid freshman years. Mackenzie had more of the stats, but Erin scored the most important goal in our program’s history. I think both are going to take off and have huge years. It has been fun to see them improve so much.”



Sophomore Mackenzie Scholtz is one of the Lady Cats' top returning scorers as she finished with 27 goals last season to go along with 18 assists.

Senior Savannah Reinhart, who earned second team all-league honors last season, returns in the midfield for Louisburg. Sophomores Trinity Moore, Avery O'Meara, Morgan Messer, Lily McDaniel and juniors Hallie Hutsell, Hayli Detherage and Leia Shaffer could all see time in the midfield.

As strong as the Wildcat attack seems to be, they also return a strong defensive core, starting with Whiting. The Louisburg senior earned first team all-state honors last season and hopes to have a big year.

"I am pretty comfortable back there now, especially when it comes to talking to my defense," she said. "I know more about the game, so I am able to help them in that regard of where they need to be it. Skill-wise, I have some great goalies

behind me and we push each other every practice. It is very competitive, but at the same time we are all there for each other and we are all friends."

One of those goalies is junior Carson Buffington, who is in her second year with the program and both have provided a lot of competition in practice.

"I think both are poised to have good years," Conley said. "I could dabble with splitting time or we could just give it to just to Shay to start. Both have been so incredibly good and it has been a good competition and is a good problem to have. It is Shay's spot to lose, but Carson is pushing hard and I think competition just brings out the best in players. They are huge supporters of each other and they encourage each other tremendously. We are going to be really solid there."

Louisburg also returns three of its four defenders from last year, including junior Camdyn Clark, who earned second team all-league and all-state honors for her work in the back. She will be joined by junior Kaitlyn Lewer.



Junior Camdyn Clark returns to lead an experienced Louisburg defense after she earned all-league and all-state honors last season.

Straub, who played back last season, could be there again, while another spot is up for grabs. Senior Avery Barber, freshman Olivia Barber, Moore and sophomore Skylar Bowman could all find time on defense.

“I think attacking wise we are going to be incredibly fast and will be incredibly talented,” Conley said. “We will be really tough to defend against. In the back, we are still kind of playing with that a little bit. Last year we started a freshman and two sophomores, and now we have a sophomore and two juniors back there. To be quite honest, it is musical chairs back there. We have the talent to do it, it is all about who is going to step up and fill the void.”

Louisburg will kick off its season Thursday when it hosts

Tonganoxie at the Wildcat Soccer Complex. The two teams battled to a 0-0 tie to start last season, despite the Wildcats outshooting the Chieftains 34-4.

They hope to get off to a better start this time around.

“I am excited to show the town just how talented this team is and everything that we are bringing,” Avery Barber said. I think it is going to be a good season.”

A season they want to get started with a win.

“Our biggest thing is we need to come out with everything that we have,” Reinhart said. “We can’t let our guard down and we have to give it all we have and pull out a win to start the season.

“We always have higher expectations for ourselves. Our goal is that we make it to state, but we don’t want to just get there, we want to win it. We have some really good underclassmen coming up that will keep our program strong, not only for this year, but for years to come.”

Belcher excited for opportunity at Missouri Southern



Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher made it official Wednesday when she signed her letter of intent to play soccer at Missouri Southern, a Division Ii program in Joplin, Mo. Belcher has scored 62 goals in her two seasons with the Wildcat program.

When it comes to choosing a college, it can be one of the more stressful decisions in a student athlete's life.

They want to find the right home, the perfect team and the best fit possible. Sometimes, those decisions won't be made until Signing Day approaches.

That wasn't the case for Bailey Belcher.

"I actually made my decision in September so I have been waiting awhile," Belcher said. "I told the coach and he was like well you can't sign until February, which surprised me a little bit. I just wanted to get it out of the way then, but I am glad the time is finally here."

The Louisburg High School senior made it official Wednesday when she signed her letter of intent to play soccer at Missouri Southern, a Division II program in Joplin, Mo. With that signature, Belcher is excited for what her future holds.

"It was a pretty hard decision," Belcher said. "I went to a lot of camps over the summer and a lot of schools started looking at me and giving me offers. It was easy to weed out the ones that didn't have what I needed for school. Then when I narrowed it down, Missouri Southern just had the best offer for me. The class sizes were where I wanted them to be and I feel I have a better chance to play there."

Belcher drew a lot of interest from other programs and for good reason. She has scored 62 goals over the last two seasons for Louisburg, to go along with 16 assists.

She has also earned first team all-Frontier League honors the last two seasons and has also been named to the all-state first team twice during that span.

“Bailey has an incredible work ethic and determination,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “She creates a goal and wants to achieve it. Her hard work and dedication do not just show on the pitch, but the classroom as well. One of her biggest assets is her ability to lead by example. She has her senior season left to play, but it’s nice to see her have her future taken care of.”



Bailey Belcher signed her letter of intent Wednesday to play soccer at Missouri Southern. Seated next to Bailey are her parents Tera Brooks and Jimmy Belcher. Standing (from left) is Louisburg head coach Kyle Conley and assistant coach Michael Pickman.

Missouri Southern, which finished with a 5-9-4 record in 2017, felt like the right fit for Belcher when she made her visit to the campus. Belcher, who also had offers from schools like Rockhurst, saw early on that Southern was the place for her.

“The campus itself is super nice and they have a bunch of new facilities and the people there were just overly nice and I just felt that I could fit in there,” Belcher said. “All the girls in the soccer program were really great as well and they were pretty laid back and very welcoming.

“Both of the coaches seemed to work well with the players better than what I saw with the other schools I visited. They care about what happens to you and want you to be successful no matter what you want to do.”

It became evident to Belcher early on in her life what she wanted to do in college – play soccer.

“I have been playing since third grade,” she said. “I have always liked it and soccer has been my favorite since I was little. I have tried other sports, but it is just not the same. Playing in college has been a dream for me.”

Her passion for the sport was evident the last two seasons with the Louisburg girls program. She has helped the Wildcats to back-to-back regional titles and a fourth-place finish at state last year.

For Belcher, her time with Wildcat team has meant a lot to her and she is looking forward to one final run this spring.

“Honestly it is the best team I have played for,” Belcher said. “Sure, it is not a club team or one that plays in a lot of big tournaments. A lot of the teams up in the city, they are not close. The team we have here is a family and we will do anything for each other. It has always been that way no matter what and that is what I enjoy the most.”

OPINION: 2017 was a banner year for Louisburg



Having the opportunity to cover Louisburg High School athletics, for what has been almost 10 years now, I have seen a lot of different highs and lows.

I have been lucky enough to cover state championship teams and watched several athletes perform at the highest level. However, this last year has to be one for the record books when it comes to success at Louisburg High School.

For Wildcat athletics, 2017 was a banner year for many reasons.

Louisburg qualified for the state tournament in three different sports – volleyball, girls soccer and boys basketball – and the first two each placed in the top four.

The volleyball team was just a point away from winning the school's first state title after the Lady Cats finished second to defending state champion Rose Hill, and tied for the best finish in school history.

The Wildcat girls soccer team qualified for the state semifinals in just its second year of existence and suffered a heartbreaking 1-0 loss in the semifinals to eventually take fourth overall.

In boys basketball, the Wildcats qualified for the state tournament for the first time in 12 years despite getting

knocked out in the first round by defending state champion Bishop Miege.

Most schools would love to have that success with their athletic programs, but for Louisburg, that was just the tip of the iceberg. As special as the seasons were for those three programs, the Wildcats also thrived in a few other sports.

Louisburg's cross country program, which has been around for 19 years, had the best season in its history – by far. Not only did the Wildcats have three state medalists for the first time ever, but it had a year that featured the school's first female league champion in Trinity Moore and the best league finish by a male, Wyatt Reece, who took second.

Tim Smith continued the Wildcat success as he became the school's first regional cross country champion, and Moore, Reece and Smith each went on to win a state medal. Moore and Smith also set school records for the fastest time.

The Wildcats also qualified the girls team for the first time in school history as Moore, Carlee Gassman, Reilly Alexander, Isabelle Holtzen, Kaitlyn Lewer, Payton Shaffer and Emily Williams took third at regionals and eventually 10th at state.

The Wildcat wrestling team tied a program best by qualifying eight for the state tournament and came back with a medal by Ryan Adams, who finished sixth.

Louisburg's track and field team persevered and qualified for state in 10 events and had two regional champions in Quinn Rigney and Chris Williams. Isabelle Holtzen and T.J. Dover each brought home their first state track medals.

The boys soccer team was one goal away from making its second consecutive trip to the state semifinals, but their run was halted by a loss to McPherson in state quarterfinals. Still, the Wildcats won a regional title, which was the seventh in team history.

Freshman Calvin Dillon led the Wildcat golf team this past year and recorded the program’s first state medal in more than decade as he took 10th overall.

All these things and more I described in detail when releasing my top 10 stories of the year and what a year it was.

Obviously, I haven’t had a chance to look through all the results, but I can’t imagine a more successful year for LHS when you are talking about athletics. There may have been years in the 70s, 80s and 90s that I don’t know about, but I find it hard to imagine one that tops 2017.

Sure, the 2010-11 school year featured two state championship teams in football and boys track and field and that was a fantastic time to be Wildcat, but as far as calendar years go, 2017 was one to remember.

Even outside the sports world, Louisburg High School put together many great accomplishments as the Wildcat Marching Band was selected to participate in the Tournament of Roses Parade and put on a great show for the nation on New Year’s Day.

Then in October, the FFA Food Science team of Hallie Hutsell, Faith Seuferling, Addie Katzer and Hattie Harris won a national championship, while Hutsell and Seuferling placed second and third in the nation, respectively.

I don’t get a lot of opportunities to cover programs or groups outside the sports world, but these are fantastic accomplishments and deserved to be recognized.

For me, 2017 was a whirlwind. It seemed around every corner, school history was being made and there aren’t many schools around the state that can boast about the successes Louisburg has experienced.

It was an honor for me to cover many of these historic runs in

Wildcat history and I hope you all realize how lucky you have it. Louisburg is a school filled with great coaches who care about the student athletes.

Believe me, I know how fortunate I am to be able to be a part of something special and this place is it. If 2018 is half of what 2017 was, it will be a fun ride.

I can’t wait for what 2018 has in store and hopefully you all will follow along to see what these Wildcats can accomplish.

Top 10 Stories of 2017

It was a successful, and eventful, 2017 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 2017, 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 2018 to begin. Looking forward to it!



Louisburg's Calvin Dillon earns his first state golf medal as a freshman as he took 10th at the state meet.

10. Dillon medals at state golf

Louisburg freshman Calvin Dillon certainly didn't play like a first-year varsity player as he led the Wildcat golf team all season. Dillon finished 10th at the Class 4A state tournament in Wamego and became the first Wildcat golfer to earn a state medal in several years.

Dillon made the state tournament alongside senior Ty Martin, who finished in 28th place overall after he earned his second straight state appearance.



Isabelle Holtzen earned her first state medal in the pole vault as she took seventh back in May.

9. Holtzen, Dover earn first state track medals



T.J. Dover finished eighth

in the discus at the Class 4A Kansas State Track and Field Championships in Wichita.

Junior Isabelle Holtzen and senior T.J. Dover both ended their track and field seasons on a good note as they earned state medals in late May at the Class 4A state meet in Wichita.

Holtzen had a big season in the pole vault as she ended seventh in the state after she cleared 10 feet. Earlier in the year, Holtzen broke a 15-year old school record in the pole vault as she topped 11-1.

Dover made his second consecutive trip to the state meet and finished strong in his final high school performance. He took eighth with a throw of 143-4.

The Wildcats qualified for the state meet in 10 events and had two regional champions in junior Quinn Rigney (100-meter dash) and sophomore Chris Williams (400 dash).



8. Frontier League adds three schools, says goodbye to another

For the Frontier League, 2017 brought a lot of changes to a league that has featured seven schools for the last several years.

Starting in the 2018-19 season, the Frontier League will add three new schools. Piper, Tonganoxie and Bonner Springs each accepted invitations to join the league last April to create a 10-team league.

It is didn’t stay 10 teams for long as De Soto will make the move to a different league during the same season. The current league will be made up of nine schools: Louisburg, Paola, Ottawa, Spring Hill, Baldwin, Eudora, Piper, Tonganoxie and Bonner Springs.



7. Louisburg boys soccer wins regional crown

The Louisburg High School boys soccer team was trying to make its second consecutive trip to the state tournament this past season and the Wildcats almost got there.

Although the Wildcats fell to McPherson in the state quarterfinal game in late October, Louisburg put together another successful season that included a 1-0 victory over Independence in the regional championship game.

The Wildcats finished the season with a 13-6 record and earned the school’s first Frontier League championship since 2010.



Junior Ryan Adams celebrates after he earned a state medal at 138 pounds.

6. Wildcat wrestling qualifies eight for state, Adams picks up medal

The Louisburg High School wrestling team had an historic season as it qualified eight for the Class 4A state wrestling tournament, which tied for the most in school history, during the regional tournament in February at Frontenac High School

Thad Hendrix (106 pounds), Nathan Keegan (120), Kyle Allen (126), Ryan Adams (138), Dylan Meyer (145), Austin Moore (170), Austin Raetzel (195) and Mason Koechner (285) all competed at the state tournament in Salina.

Adams earned the school's lone state medal on the season as he finished sixth overall at 138 pounds.



Louisburg head football and boys track and field coach Gary Griffin retired from the district after 32 years. It was one of many changes for the LHS athletic department.

5. LHS goes through staff/coaching changes

The 2017-18 school year looked a lot of different than in previous years for Louisburg High School athletics.

LHS saw a lot of changes in its coaching staff and in the administration as well. Activities director Darin Gagnebin stepped down and was replaced by current director Jeremy Holloway.

In the coaching department, former head and assistant football Gary Griffin retired from the district after 32 years with the high school and Louisburg promoted assistant Robert Ebenstein

as the new Wildcat head football coach.

Jason Nelson resigned his post as the Wildcat head boys basketball coach and he was replaced with Ty Pfannenstiel. Griffin and Greg Darrington also resigned as the boys and girls track and field coaches, and were replaced by Andy Wright (boys) and John Reece (girls).



Louisburg cross country runners (from left) Tim Smith, Trinity Moore and Wyatt Reece each ended the season with a state medal.

4. LHS cross country earns three state medals, qualifies girls team

The Louisburg High School cross country team might have had

its best season in its 19-year history in 2017.

The Wildcats thrived against some of the state's best competition as seniors Wyatt Reece, Tim Smith and sophomore Trinity Moore all earned state medals at the Class 4A meet in Wamego.

Moore recorded the highest finish for a female runner in school history as she finished fifth in the state and broke her own school record in the process with a time of 19 minutes and 47 seconds.

In the boys race, Reece picked up his first state medal with a time of 17 minutes and finished 11th overall. Smith, who won a regional title the week before, came in 15th with a time of 17:05. Smith was the first Wildcat to win a regional title in school history.

Louisburg also made history as the Wildcat girls team qualified for the state meet for the first time after they finished third at their regional in Burlington. Moore joined Isabelle Holtzen, Reilly Alexander, Carlee Gassman, Kaitlyn Lewer, Payton Shaffer and Emily Williams to make up the seven-member squad that finished 10th in the team standings at state.

Earlier in the year, Moore became the school's first Frontier League champion, while Reece recorded the highest league finish in boys history as he took second at the league meet.



3. Louisburg boys basketball earns first state tournament berth in 12 years

The season may not have started out the way the Louisburg boys basketball team would have liked, but it certainly finished on a positive note.

Louisburg knocked off rival Paola in the sub-state semfinals and then defeated Fort Scott in the championship game in early March to earn its first sub-state championship since 2005.

The Wildcats earned the No. 6 seed and squared off with eventual champion Bishop Miege at the Class 4A state tournament in Salina. The Stags ended the Wildcats’ season with an 81-47 loss.



2. LHS girls soccer finishes fourth at state tournament

Louisburg’s girls soccer program has only been around for two years, but the Wildcats have set high expectations from the beginning and that continued in 2017.

The Wildcats advanced to the Class 4-1A state semifinals for the first time in school history as they defeated Piper with a 2-1 victory in overtime. This victory came off their second consecutive regional title as they knocked off Bonner Springs.

At the state tournament, Louisburg faced off with Thomas More Prep and suffered a heart-breaking 1-0 loss in the semifinals. The Wildcats moved on to the third-place game against Maize South and eventually finished fourth overall.



1. Lady Cat volleyball ends season as state runner-up

The Louisburg High School volleyball team was just one point away from not only becoming the school's first state volleyball champion – but also the first female team to win a state title in Louisburg history.

As close as the Lady Cats got, they came up just short against defending state champion Rose Hill in late October at the Class 4A-Division I state championship. Louisburg fell 23-25, 25-10 and 29-27 in heartbreaking fashion to finish as the state runner-up.

Still, it was an impressive season for Louisburg volleyball as it finished with a 34-10 record. The Lady Cats reeled off wins over Basehor-Linwood, Bishop Miege and Rose Hill in pool play and then downed Wellington in the state semifinals.

The Lady Cats received several accolades as junior Anna Dixon

and senior Sophie McMullen earned first team all-state and all-league honors. Dixon was also named as the Co-Player of the Year in Class 4A-Division I.

Junior Carson Buffington was also named to the all-state tournament team with Dixon and McMullen.