

Gagnebin steps down as LHS activities director



Louisburg High School activities director Darin Gagnebin presents the Wildcat girls soccer team with their regional championship trophy last month. Gagnebin resigned his post earlier this month to take a similar position in Paola.

Darin Gagnebin has a fondness for Louisburg High School, his coaches and students.

That made it all the more hard to say goodbye.

Gagnebin resigned his post as LHS assistant principal and activities director earlier this month to tentatively take the same position at Paola High School. His last day in Louisburg was last week.

Gagnebin spent a total of 17 years in the Louisburg school district, with the last six spent as activities director. He was also a teacher and coach for 11 years.

Family was the biggest reason he decided to make the move. Gagnebin and his family currently reside in Paola and his two children attend schools in Paola.

"People have come and gone, but it is still family here," Gagnebin said. "I am comfortable here and Louisburg has done a

lot for me. I just can't pass up an opportunity to be where my kids are at. I know I could have brought my kids here, but my wife and I made that decision a long time ago of where we were going to live because of where she taught and I taught. I never thought back when we first moved to Paola and when we had kids, that we would be in this position."

It was a difficult decision for Gagnebin as he leaves behind a group of coaches, several of whom he recently hired. The Louisburg district had a number of new coaches come on board for the upcoming school year.

"We have gone through some trials in the last couple of years and that is with any school," Gagnebin said. "I told my wife, that if this was going to happen the way it did and I could pick the time, I wish the timing would have happened two years down the road. I would have loved to see what this young group of teachers and coaches are going to do coming in.

"I told my wife that I was really excited about coming back next year and I felt we made some good hires. We have a passionate coaching staff coming on and they are great people with new ideas. It just happened out of the blue."

The opening came when former Paola High School principal Phil Bressler took the new principal job at Pittsburg High School. Paola assistant principal and activities director Jeff Hines was elevated to the Paola principal position, which left the Panthers needing an activities director.

It can be traced back even further when the Pittsburg High School journalism class wrote an investigative piece that ousted its newly hired principal, which forced the school to reopen the position and eventually hired Bressler.

"Had Pittsburg's journalism class not done their job, we wouldn't be sitting here talking right now," Gagnebin said.

The Paola position was an opportunity Gagnebin just couldn't

pass up as he will have an opportunity to watch more of his children's events and work closer to home.

"I have missed a lot of my own kids' stuff," he said. "But the people here have been really great, (Principal) Tammy (Thomasson) now and Dave (Tappan) before her, to let me try to get to as much stuff as I can. I still miss things. These opportunities don't come around very often and I just figured this would be a great fit for me and my family.

"But I couldn't ask for a better group of coaches here in Louisburg. They are good and passionate about what they do. I really have developed some good bonds over the years. I know some have left and some have stayed on, but the coaches and staff I have had has been great."

Wildcat girls soccer back to work after state finish



Louisburg's Leia Shaffer works on a passing drill during the Wildcats' team camp on June 15. Approximately 20 kids attended the team camp and the Wildcats have been working hard this month in hopes of improving off their fourth place finish at state.

Sure, the Louisburg High School girls soccer team may have just had its best finish in program history less than a month ago, but the Wildcats were quickly back to work in preparation for next season.

A fourth-place finish at the Class 4-1A state tournament didn't buy the Wildcats much time off as they started their summer conditioning less than two weeks following their final state game and they ramped it up even more when took part in their week-long team camp that began on June 12.

"Camp went well for us," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "We worked on a lot of technique that week. We focused on trying to clean up technique and speed of play. I was pleased with how hard the girls worked and how focused they were. We had anywhere from 18-22 kids there all week."

The Wildcats would have had more, but they had several players out due to injury that they either suffered during the season or shortly after.

All-league defender Camdyn Clark was out with a bad knee injury she sustained in the third-place game at state at the end of May. The team's leading scorer, Bailey Belcher, was also dealing with an injury.



Louisburg coach Kyle Conley goes over a drill during the Wildcats team's camp on June 15.

In all, Louisburg has about five or six players that missed time due to ailments, which left the numbers a little down than Conley would want for the other summer workouts.

"Our numbers have been all over the place," he said. "For camp, we had great numbers, but practices we have had 12 to 20-plus. It creates some creative coaching situations, but the kids do not complain and just work on getting better. The attitude has been extremely productive regardless how many kids we have had come out."

Throughout the month of June, the Wildcats hit the weight room three times a week and had practices two to three times a week. It is also a good opportunity for Conley to get to know his incoming freshman and vice versa.

“Summer also helps a lot of the newer players and/or freshmen to learn what we do and what our expectations are,” Conley said. “These practices also help our team chemistry come together and develop a bond that will help carry us moving forward.

“This past season was extremely special. It is one for the history books, but we need to always try to keep getting better. Some people question why we have summer practice, but a majority of my kids do not play club soccer and literally play only March 1 to May 27. They do not play other than that. So it is essential that we keep up with everyone else in the state and work on some things. Summer for us is a lot of technique and speed of play. We use this time to clean up some things and improve. We cannot get better sitting on the couch.”



Bria Jensen was one of approximately 20 kids who attended

the Wildcats team camp.

Conley hopes the hard work over the summer pays off for what the Wildcats believe could be another special season next spring. Louisburg returns most of its team that finished with a 13-7-1 record, including five of its six players that earned all-Frontier League honors.

They hope to turn that fourth-place state medal into something a little bigger next May.

“I am extremely excited when looking ahead to the girls season,” Conley said. “I personally feel we did not play our best soccer the last three games of the year. I feel that we had a great opportunity, but we did not execute as well as we should have. I feel that the girls were a little nervous, but I think it started a fire underneath them and next year could be just as special as this year.

“After all of the adversities and injuries we dealt with this past season, it gave a lot of kids an opportunity to get experience at the varsity level. I expect this season to be extremely competitive and intense.”

Changes to classification system will impact Louisburg



Member schools in the Kansas State High School Activities Association sent ripples across the state last week when they passed two proposals that will affect high school athletics beginning in the 2018-19 season.

For football, the two 4A divisions and Class 2-1A have been eliminated. They have been replaced with 32 team classifications in 4A, 5A and 6A, while 3A and 2A will have 48-team classifications. The remaining schools will play in 1A.

The second proposal was for all other sports. Other than football, classes 4A, 5A and 6A will have 36 teams in each division. Classes 3A and 2A will have 64 schools each, while the remaining schools will be in 1A.

The football proposal passed with a vote of 215-73 and the all-sports proposal passed with a 207-145 majority. All of the classes, except 6A and 1A, were in favor.

With those new proposals comes a different playoff system for many of the sports.

Louisburg High School, which is a Class 4A school, will see changes in five sports programs – football, basketball, baseball, softball and volleyball.

In football, Louisburg will no longer have district play as the playoffs will begin in week nine. Class 4A will play an eight-game regular season and then each side of the state will be seeded in a bracket from 1 through 16, based on their record.

Given the fact the Frontier League currently has nine teams after recently adding three schools in Tonganoxie, Bonner Springs and Piper, the Wildcats will no longer have to play a non-league opponent. De Soto recently chose to leave the Frontier League following the 2017-18 season to join a new league made up of 5A schools.

"Normally we go out in October to Salina, we would redistrict for 2018 and 2019," Louisburg activities director Darin Gagnebin said. "I don't even know that we will have to go cause our league has nine teams, so we would play eight league games and the ninth game gets assigned to you for the playoffs. As of right now in football, we will no longer have any out of conference opponents as long as we maintain nine in the league."

Another change will be in basketball. For the postseason, there will no longer be substates, instead the 18 teams on each side of the state will be bracketed out by record beginning with two play-in games.

From there, the bracket will be sized down to four-team pods, with the higher seed hosting the game. Teams will have to win two games to reach the state tournaments. Pods will be 1-16-8-9 seeds, 4-13-5-12, 2-15-7-10 and 3-14-6-11. The eight pod winners will advance to the state tournament.

"Depending on where we fall, it could increase travel depending on where we are seeded," Gagnebin said. "We could have to drive down to Coffeyville or drive up to Atchison, you just don't know until the end of the year."

Basketball schedules will also be different with the addition of the new league teams in 2018-19. There will no longer be double round-robin schedules. There will be eight league games, six tournament games and athletic directors will have to find a way to fill the other six.

"We will start in August about building the new league schedule and it will be tough," Gagnebin said. "One thing you will see is we won't have double round-robin's anymore because we can't play everyone twice. I think there will be traditional rivalries that are held to where we would play those twice due to proximity. Quite frankly, it wouldn't be smart for Louisburg not to play Paola, Ottawa or Spring Hill

twice due to higher attendance numbers and proximity. It will probably increase travel costs because you are playing more non-conference opponents.”

Baseball and softball will be similar as there will no longer be regionals. Like basketball, there will be two play-in games with the same pod structure. The top four overall seeds will each host all games in their pod on the same day.

In volleyball, there will be four substates across the state, broken into eight brackets. There will also be nine teams in each substate, which will require a play-in game. Teams will need to win two games to qualify for state.

Postseasons for wrestling, track, soccer, cross country and golf will remain the same.

However, even with the new changes, the proposals don’t address the competitive balance issue between public and private schools that many members have been talking about for the last several years.

Although he likes the new playoff system, the fact these changes don’t address the problem is one of the reasons Gagnebin voted no on the new proposals.

“It was a shock because I didn’t think it was going to pass,” Gagnebin said. “Other than the playoff system, in my opinion, it doesn’t do anything for Class 4A. All the work that went into splitting 4A into two divisions is now gone. I feel bad for those schools because they put in a ton of work. It doesn’t really affect us because we are locked into 4A and we are right in the middle of the pack.

“I didn’t see how it benefited Louisburg or 4A, other than the playoffs system where it should ensure you have more competitive teams at state. Since you are seeding them out now, you shouldn’t have a substate of teams with losing records. They could have done that without this.”

Although private schools like Bishop Miege, which have won several state titles in the last few years, could find itself moving up a classification with the new measures, it isn't a permanent solution according to Gagnebin.

"Enrollment could bump some private schools up a class, but that doesn't fix the problem," Gagnebin said. "Private schools can control enrollment. According to (Miege) they are losing enrollment and could be back in 4A. It doesn't impact the private issue at all and that is why I didn't vote for it. It is not fixing what the 80 percent of athletic directors polled in Kansas asking what the biggest problems in classifications are. It doesn't address the real problem."

Wildcat girls soccer earns six all-league spots



Louisburg's Madisen Simpson (left), Bailey Belcher (center) and Mackenzie Scholtz were each selected to the all-Frontier League first team. The Wildcats earned six selections overall.

In just its second season, the Louisburg High School girls soccer team took it to the next level as it earned a spot in the Class 4-1A state tournament and finished fourth overall.

So it didn't come as a surprise to anyone that the Wildcats were well-represented when the all-Frontier League teams were released.

Louisburg earned six spots on the all-league team, including three first-team selections as it finished the season with a 13-7-1 record, including a 5-3 mark in the league.

"I think we got a fair representation overall on the all-league team, but as a coach you always want more and feel more kids deserve to be recognized," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "I feel that the kids that received this honor deserved this and earned it. It is nice to have that many kids recognized and to have other coaches tell me how much they like this player or that player. These meetings have been a lot of fun, but the girls' success on the field is a result of that."

Senior Madisen Simpson, junior Bailey Belcher and freshman Mackenzie Scholtz were each named to the first team. Sophomore Camdyn Clark and junior Savannah Reinhart earned second team honors, while junior goalie Shay Whiting was an honorable mention.

For the second year in a row, Belcher found a spot on the first team and for good reason. Belcher led the Wildcats with 29 goals on the season and also had 12 assists from the midfield spot.

"Bailey had a slow start to the year, but she really caught fire in the middle two-thirds of the year," Conley said. "She was hampered by a leg injury throughout the later part of the season. She did a very nice job with her pace and vision. She had a little bit of a tough time down the stretch because she was the part of the opposing team's game plan to try to take her away."

As a freshman, Scholtz made a big impact on the Louisburg attack opposite of Belcher. Scholtz was just behind Belcher

with 27 goals on the year and also had a team-high 18 assists.

“Mackenzie really came on strong and she really worked well with the midfielders with give and go’s,” Conley said. “She struggled to learn the expectation of the position at first, but after about the first five games or so she really dominated. She took full advantage of the space teams gave her.

“I honestly do not think teams towards the end of year respected her ability to make plays. She really came on strong and absolutely dominated teams.”

Simpson was a team captain along with Belcher and showed why with her play in the midfield. Simpson was all over the place with her position as a holding midfielder and often marked up against some of the opposition’s best players. She also had a goal to go along with six assists on the year.

“Madisen was our team leader,” Conley said. “She was an absolute workhorse in the middle of the field and at times was everywhere. She did a fantastic job of leading by example and playing at a very high level the entire season. She is an unbelievable young lady that is going to do great things in life because of her work ethic.”



Camdyn Clark (left) and Savannah Reinhart (middle) were named to the all-league second team and goalie Shay

Whiting was an honorable mention.

Clark was the highest honored defender on the Louisburg team. The Wildcat outside back made things difficult on the opposition and earned second team honors for the second consecutive season.

Reinhart made her way to the all-league squad for the first time in her career as she contributed nine goals and 10 assists from the midfield spot.

"Camdyn is a lock down outside back," Conley said. "She has only been responsible for three goals all season. She has a great motor and work rate. She has quality skill to be able to connect with our midfielders. She has definitely excelled in this role. Camdyn is an individual who never takes a day off, she is extremely coachable and truly loves the game."

"Savannah had some ups and downs this season, but she really turned the corner after we lost to Basehor. She responded and became an offensive threat and her execution was fantastic. She is undersized, but compensates by working hard and doing the best she could to hold her ground."

Whiting was a big part of the Louisburg defense as she finished with nine shutouts on the season in goal, which was good enough to garner honorable mention honors.

"Shay is a hard-nosed kid that never gives in," Conley said. "She is undersized at 5-2, but she did record nine clean sheets."

League champion De Soto led the way with 10 selections overall, including five first team honors. Baldwin tied Louisburg with the second-most selections with six.

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE GIRLS SOCCER

FIRST TEAM

Tarah Phongsavath, De Soto, senior

Bailey Belcher, Louisburg, junior

Aly Hargrove, De Soto, senior

Taylor Cawley, Baldwin, senior

Tanith Beal, De Soto, senior

Mackenzie Scholtz, Louisburg, freshman

Sara Watson, Spring Hill, junior

Madisen Simpson, Louisburg, senior

Josie Boyle, Baldwin, freshman

Maddie Plake, De Soto, senior

Goalie: Taylor Rogers, De Soto, junior

SECOND TEAM

Carmen Rush, De Soto, senior

Kaylen Dawson, Spring Hill, freshman

Anna Burnett, Baldwin, freshman

Mackenzie Mohl, De Soto, freshman

Caitlyn Countryman, Baldwin, sophomore

Anna Watson, Spring Hill, junior

Camdyn Clark, Louisburg, sophomore

Mallory Smith, Spring Hill, sophomore

Morgan Laplante, De Soto, sophomore

Savannah Reinhart, Louisburg, junior

Goalie: Emery Mounce, Spring Hill, freshman

HONORABLE MENTION

Ashley Panagakis, De Soto, sophomore

Amanda Wray, Ottawa, junior

Clara Cowden, Baldwin, senior

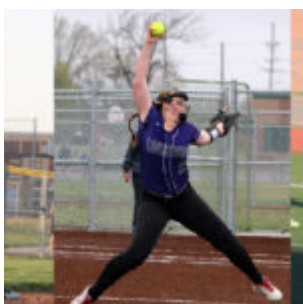
Alex Schemmel, De Soto, junior

Goalie: Shay Whiting, Louisburg, junior

Goalie: Riley O'Rourke, Baldwin, senior

Goalie: Sutton Jung, Ottawa, junior

All-Frontier League baseball, softball and girls soccer



Here are all-Frontier League teams for baseball, softball and

girls soccer for the 2016-17 season. Congrats to all the recipients who earned the honors.

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE GIRLS SOCCER

FIRST TEAM

Tarah Phongsavath, De Soto, senior

Bailey Belcher, Louisburg, junior

Aly Hargrove, De Soto, senior

Taylor Cawley, Baldwin, senior

Tanith Beal, De Soto, senior

Mackenzie Scholtz, Louisburg, freshman

Sara Watson, Spring Hill, junior

Madisen Simpson, Louisburg, senior

Josie Boyle, Baldwin, freshman

Maddie Plake, De Soto, senior

Goalie: Taylor Rogers, De Soto, junior

SECOND TEAM

Carmen Rush, De Soto, senior

Kaylen Dawson, Spring Hill, freshman

Anna Burnett, Baldwin, freshman

Mackenzie Mohl, De Soto, freshman

Caitlyn Countryman, Baldwin, sophomore

Anna Watson, Spring Hill, junior

Camdyn Clark, Louisburg, sophomore

Mallory Smith, Spring Hill, sophomore

Morgan Laplante, De Soto, sophomore

Savannah Reinhart, Louisburg, junior

Goalie: Emery Mounce, Spring Hill, freshman

HONORABLE MENTION

Ashley Panagakis, De Soto, sophomore

Amanda Wray, Ottawa, junior

Clara Cowden, Baldwin, senior

Alex Schemmel, De Soto, junior

Goalie: Shay Whiting, Louisburg, junior

Goalie: Riley O'Rourke, Baldwin, senior

Goalie: Sutton Jung, Ottawa, junior

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE BASEBALL

FIRST TEAM

Catcher: Chandler Bloomer, Ottawa, junior

Pitcher: Blaine Hanf, Paola, senior; Zach Curry, Ottawa, senior

Infield: Donovan Sutti, Paola, senior; Keegan Finch, Ottawa, senior; Adam Carlson, Baldwin, senior; Dalton Rankin, Paola, senior

Outfield: Blaine Ray, Ottawa, senior; Josh Craig, Baldwin, senior; Max Barger, De Soto, senior

Utility/DH: Jack Barger, De Soto, junior

SECOND TEAM

Catcher: Trevor Boehm, Paola, senior

Pitcher: Conner Mackey, De Soto, junior; Trenton Ferguson, Ottawa, senior

Infield: Nash Dreiling, Paola, junior; Kaleb Shaffer, Ottawa, junior; Chance Montgomery, De Soto, senior; Cody Lucas, Spring Hill, junior

Outfield: Khalil Thrasher, Eudora, junior; Peyton Garvin, Eudora, junior; Jackson Burell, Spring Hill, junior

Utility/DH: Garrett Caldwell, Louisburg, junior

HONORABLE MENTION

Catcher: Caleb Ostronic, Eudora, junior; Garrett Borth, Baldwin, junior; Tony Slaughter, De Soto, junior

Pitcher: Peyton Garvin, Eudora, junior; Connor Quick, Baldwin, freshman; Caden Bressler, Paola, freshman; Nathan Patterson, De Soto, senior

Infield: Dalton Stone, Louisburg, senior; Grant Harding, Louisburg, senior; David Hornberger, Eudora, senior

Outfield: Korbin Hankinson, Louisburg, senior; Ty Kempf, De

Soto, senior; Sean King, Spring Hill, senior; Monti Enriquez, Eudora, senior

Utility/DH: Brock Huddlestun, Ottawa, senior; Dylan Sanderson, Spring Hill, senior

ALL FRONTIER LEAGUE SOFTBALL

FIRST TEAM

Pitcher: Jordan Johnson, Paola, junior; Sarah Brown, Spring Hill, senior

Catcher: Sierra Sanderson, Spring Hill, senior

Infield: Allison Daggett, Paola, senior; Jordan Flakus, Eudora, senior; Kamryn Shaffer, Ottawa, junior; Matti Morgan, Paola, senior

Outfield: Audrey Flowers, Baldwin, sophomore; Sieana Hall, Baldwin, sophomore; McKinley Markley, Baldwin, sophomore

DH/Utility: Regan Smith, Spring Hill, junior

SECOND TEAM

Pitcher: Kayla Etter, Eudora, sophomore; **Allyssa Griggs, Louisburg, senior**

Catcher: Amayah LaTessa, Baldwin, senior

Infield: **Madison Svoboda, Louisburg, sophomore;** Rian Geere, Baldwin, freshman; Mackenzie Smith, De Soto, senior; Betsy Parmeley, Baldwin, senior

Outfield: Elizabeth Hays, Spring Hill, junior; Devon Purcell, Eudora, junior; Jordan Diehl, De Soto, sophomore; Jasmine

Thevarajoo, Eudora, senior

DH/Utility: Payton Faddis, De Soto, sophomore

HONORABLE MENTION

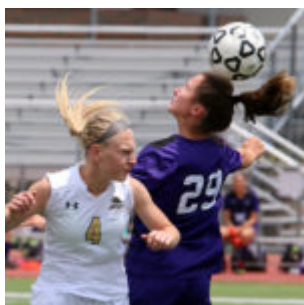
Pitcher: Kinley Burton, Baldwin, senior; Mary Kate Hale, Spring Hill, senior

Catcher: Sydney Igert, Paola, junior; **Emalee Overbay, Louisburg, senior**

Infield: Jenna DeVore, Ottawa, junior; Kelsey Kroutch, Spring Hill, senior; **Molly Rison, Louisburg, sophomore;** Kellee Wiggins, Baldwin, sophomore; Lydia Brown, Eudora, freshman

Utility/DH: **Karson Griggs, Louisburg, sophomore;** Peyton Weatherbie, Paola, senior

Wildcats take fourth at Class 4-1A state tournament



Louisburg sophomore Kaitlyn Lower heads the ball away from a Maize South player Saturday during the Class 4-1A third-place game at Friends University in Wichita. The Wildcats fell 8-0 and finished fourth in the state.

WICHITA – One by one, the Louisburg High School girls soccer players received their state medals and cemented the best finish in school history.

Despite all that, the Wildcats had hoped for more.

In its first Class 4-1A state tournament appearance, Louisburg ended its season with a pair of losses, including an 8-0 defeat to Maize South in the third-place game Saturday at Friends University in Wichita.

It was hard for the Wildcats to think of the positives in what was a rough, couple days. Still, there were plenty there for the second-year program.

“A second-year program getting fourth in the state is incredible,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “You can’t fathom that. Getting 13 and 14 wins in consecutive seasons is unbelievable and that almost matches the top teams in the state, no matter what class you are.

“I hope we can use this experience to move forward and hopefully we will be good enough to make another run in the next couple of years so we can remember this and know what it is like and build on it.”

The Wildcats (13-7-1) opened the tournament with a 1-0 loss to Thomas More Prep on Friday before facing a Maize South team that fell to Bishop Miege in overtime. Miege went on to beat TMP 1-0 to win the Class 4-1A state championship.



Senior Bryn O'Meara races to beat a Maize South to a 50-50 ball Saturday in Wichita.

Maize South seem inspired from the get-go as it scored six goals in the first eight minutes to jump on the Wildcats. Louisburg junior Bailey Belcher and senior Bryn O'Meara each had a shot on goal, but Louisburg couldn't get much going against a strong Maize South defense.

Louisburg trailed 6-0 at halftime, but it made things a little more difficult in the second half for Maize South as it managed just two goals.

"The girls kept fighting," Conley said. "They got on us early and we kind of put our heads down and they put four in really quick. The girls recovered and got mentally strong. I think they held their own in the second half and it was good to hear

the opposing coach yelling to tell his players to work. I just wish we could have started that way, but it is what it is. That is the best team in the state in my opinion.”

The loss also meant the Wildcats had to say goodbye to seniors Lily Cook, Bryn O’Meara, Quincy Rice and Madisen Simpson, who played their final game with the program.

“Bryn, Madisen, Quincy and Lily – those four kids did a heck of a job,” Conley said. “Whether it was their leading by example attitude, or their demeanor and how they carried themselves and set a great example for what we want this program to be looked upon. If you look at our crowd, we had more fans than anyone else, and that includes road games. That truly is a tribute to the girls on how hard they work and how much they mean to this town. The girls truly love it.”

After coming up one loss short of the state tournament last season, the Wildcats took another step forward this year by making the state semifinals and getting that fourth-place finish.

It was a finish many in the program didn’t expect with such a young group, especially early in the season on a team that started seven freshmen and sophomores.



Members of the Louisburg girls soccer team are (front row, from left) Bailey Belcher, Savannah Reinhart, Quincy Rice, Bryn O'Meara, Madisen Simpson, Skylar Bowman, Morgan Messer, Shay Whiting, Hallie Hutsell, Avery O'Meara, (back row) assistant coach Michael Pickman, Camdyn Clark, Leia Shaffer, Bria Jensen, Hayli Detherage, Trinity Moore, Mackenzie Scholtz, Kailtyn Lewer, Hannah Straub, Lily Cook, Erin Lemke and head coach Kyle Conley.

"When you make the final four, I think that exceeds your expectations. For us, our goal was to play for a regional championship and go from there. I think there were some games in the regular season that we gave away, but the best four teams in the state are here. We have to keep that in mind no matter how upset or frustrated we get. We literally just got fourth in state and that is incredible.

"It stinks to lose twice, and I will probably be pouting about it for a couple weeks, but when you look back at it, how can you ask for any more? This experience is something the kids are going to remember for the rest of their lives and I hope they truly understand how special it was."

Wildcats come up short of state championship game

In the Class 4-1A state semifinals against Thomas More Prep, Louisburg had its eyes set on a spot in the state championship game.

The Wildcats were just one score away from reaching their goal.

After a scoreless first half, TMP dashed the Wildcats' hopes as it got a goal from Kayla Vitztum five minutes into the second half and that was all the Monarchs needed in their 1-0 win Friday over Louisburg.



Louisburg junior Bailey Belcher heads the ball away from a TMP player Friday in the Class 4-1A state semifinal game.

"You could tell the girls were really nervous," Conley said. "They were nervous in the first 15-20 minutes in the semifinal game and then we got on our heels. We were just too anxious and were trying to do too much. We were not in our element and we were playing on turf, but that is not an excuse because we have to show up and play. When you start seven freshmen and

sophomores it is tough sometimes to be mentally strong.”

TMP had the ball on its side of the field most of the game, but when the Wildcats did have possession, the Monarchs made it difficult for them to get many shots on the goal with their defensive alignment as TMP had several players back protecting the goal.

The Wildcats did have one good chance in the finals minutes as Bailey Belcher had a good look at the goal, but her shot was saved by the TMP goalie.

“We struggled to adjust to pressure,” Conley said. “Against TMP, that was the ugliest formation you are ever going to see, but they do it effectively. That is a team that won eight straight games I think and had six shutouts during that time. They don’t give up many shots and they have a good goalkeeper. They just frustrated us tremendously and we couldn’t rebound from it.”

Lemke’s golden goal puts Wildcats in state semifinals



The Louisburg bench runs onto the field to mob Erin Lemke after she scored the game-winning goal in double overtime to

give the Wildcats a 2-1 win over Piper Tuesday in the Class 4-1A state quarterfinal game in Louisburg.

Louisburg freshman Erin Lemke loaded up for the most important shot of her short soccer career.

The Wildcat coaches kept preaching to Lemke, that if she got the opportunity, to strike the ball as hard as she could. So when her opportunity came in the second overtime of the Class 4-1A state quarterfinal game – Lemke did what she was told.

In fact, Lemke hit the ball so hard she ended up face first on the turf.

“I didn’t even know if it went in,” she said.

The crowd’s reaction told her everything that she needed to know.

Lemke’s shot found the back of the net and gave Louisburg a 2-1 victory over Piper in double overtime Tuesday in Louisburg. The goal put the Wildcats in the state tournament for the first time in their brief history as they are currently in just their second year.

“Going to state in only our second year is incredible,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “This a tribute to the young ladies in this program. All their hard work and dedication has paid off. I could not be more proud of these ladies and how much work they put into achieving such a fantastic feat. As I coach, I feel very fortunate to have such unbelievable kids to work with. I take great pride in being able to coach these young ladies.”



Erin Lemke is all smiles after she realized she scored the game-winning goal Tuesday against Piper.

Following Lemke's goal, the Wildcat bench emptied out onto the pitch to celebrate their historic victory – a hard-fought one at that.

Louisburg, which beat Piper 4-0 earlier in the season, got a much tougher match from the Pirates as both teams had chances to take control of the game.

After a scoreless first half, the Wildcats struck first when freshman Mackenzie Scholtz scored on an assist from junior Bailey Belcher with 32 minutes left in the second half and Louisburg had all the momentum.

About eight minutes later, it all changed.

Louisburg was called for a foul in the box and Piper was awarded a penalty kick. Piper's Emily Wilson snuck the ball

past Wildcat goalie Shay Whiting to tie the match.

Although Whiting missed the penalty kick, the Louisburg junior came up big in several situations for Wildcat defense. Whiting had five saves on the day.

She also got some help from her defense as Bryn O'Meara, Camdyn Clark, Kaitlyn Lewer and Hannah Straub all cleared the ball away at big moments or contested the Piper attack.

"I always have to be ready," Whiting said. "There was a never a moment where they weren't going to shoot because they can shoot from midfield so you have to be ready. The defense did a good job covering them so they didn't get many shots, but when there were, we had it covered."



Louisburg goalie Shay Whiting knocks away a Piper shot on goal Tuesday in the state quarterfinal game.

It appeared Louisburg had taken the lead a few minutes later as junior Savannah Reinhart put a shot into the back of the net off a rebound and the celebration began. It was short-lived though, as the Wildcats were called for off-sides and

the goal was disallowed.

"The girls did a good job of keeping a level head there and not getting down," Conley said. "They did a lot better job than I did, but we had tons of momentum and we didn't give up. I think fitness was a problem for (Piper) because they had a shorter bench than we did and I think eventually it paid dividends."

Piper had a direct kick opportunity just outside the box just before the end of regulation that would have given them the win, but the shot sailed just over the crossbar.

Belcher and Scholtz each had shots on goal in the first overtime that would have given Louisburg the win, but those shots were just wide of the net.

All that led up to Lemke's heroics halfway through the second overtime.

Scholtz played a through ball into the box as Lemke was cutting toward the middle. With a Piper defender on her back, Lemke ripped a shot past the Piper goalie and the rest was history.

The Wildcats made it to the state quarterfinals last season before falling to De Soto, but now they have taken the next step as they prepare to play in the state semifinals.

"It was a tough battle and we knew it would be," Whiting said. "Having that pressure of being better than last year was always there, but we pulled through and we got it and that is what we wanted. It was all about who wanted it more at the end and we pulled through."



Louisburg junior Bailey Belcher heads the ball away Tuesday against Piper.

Louisburg will now travel to Wichita on Friday for the Class 4-1A state soccer championships. The Wildcats (13-5-1) will meet Thomas More Prep (13-4-1) at 7 p.m. at Friends University.

If the Wildcats advance, they will play the winner of Maize South (17-1-1) and Bishop Miege (11-7-1) in the championship game at 2 p.m. on Saturday. If Louisburg loses, it will play in the third-place game at noon Saturday.

"The game is going to be on turf so we are going to see if we can find some turf fields to practice on this week so we can get ready for the speed of the game," Conley said. "It will be a faster game and now we are going to play some really good teams. We just have to get there, play one game at a time and see what happens."

Wildcats hope to make program history tonight



Louisburg senior Bryn O'Meara (left) and the rest of the Wildcats will host Piper at 5 p.m. today in the Northeast quarterfinal game. A win would put Louisburg in the state semifinals for the first time in its history.

The last time the Louisburg girls soccer team faced off with Piper was more than a month ago.

It wasn't much of a match as the Wildcats shutout the Pirates, 4-0, in a game that had to be settled over two days as it was postponed midway through due to the weather.

The Wildcats will welcome Piper back to Louisburg at 5 p.m., today when they host the Pirates in the Class 4-1A Northeast quarterfinals. Everyone on the Wildcat team is fully aware it won't be as easy this time around as they face the Kaw Valley League champion.

"When we played them the first time, they were missing a couple players and when they came back they were all here and was a much tighter game," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "Any given day, anything can happen. If we take an opponent lightly, then it will come back to get you and I think we saw

that with a couple teams at the beginning of the year. Hopefully we are ready to exert a lot of energy."

One more win and Lousiburg will find itself in the state semifinals for the first time in team history. Considering the Wildcats are just in their second year of existence, they are making bigger strides than many in the community thought possible and the players are ready to give back.

"I think it is really important because it shows our community that we have been putting in the effort," senior captain Bryn O'Meara said. "They raised a lot of money for us that we could become a program and now it is our turn to give back to them. We want them to come watch us so they can support us again. We want to win for us and for them."

The Wildcats (12-5-1) will have to contain a Piper team that currently has a 11-6 record and defeated Baldwin, 2-0, in its regional championship game.

"They have three really good kids in the middle," Conley said. "They will take it at you and they are physical. They have some kids that shoot from way outside and send a lofted chip ball in. For us, we have to stand them up and make them take contested shots. We just have to outwork them. They are a scrappy team and will keep working. We have to match that intensity and take it even further. They are the Kaw Valley champions and that is not an easy league to win. We will have our hands full."

On the other side, the Louisburg offensive attack has been playing well as it has scored 19 goals in its two regional games, including a 9-0 victory over Bonner Springs in the regional title game last week.

Freshman Mackenzie Scholtz and junior Bailey Belcher provide the Wildcats with a bulk of the scoring up front, but junior Savannah Reinhart, senior Quincy Rice and freshman Trinity Moore will also look to provide some scoring punch.

Defensively, the Wildcats have posted shutouts in three of their last four matches led by goalie Shay Whiting and defensive back line of O'Meara, Camdyn Clark, Hannah Straub and Kaitlyn Lewer. Midfielders Avery O'Meara, Madisen Simpson and Erin Lemke will also look to provide some protection in the middle.

"It is really exciting because we are a second-year program and we are getting a chance to go to state for a second year in a row," Simpson said. "Like coach said, a lot of teams don't get this chance to go this far or even to make it to the regional championship.

"Making it to state in just our second year would just show a lot of teams that we aren't just small-town Louisburg, but we can succeed in anything that we put our minds to."

Twice As Nice: Wildcats win second regional title



Louisburg senior Madisen Simpson (13) gets mobbed by teammates (from left) Bria Jensen, Morgan Messser, Mackenzie Scholtz, Skylar Bowman, Bailey Belcher and the rest of her Wildcat teammates following their 9-0 win over Bonner Springs Wednesday in the Class 4-1A regional championship game in Louisburg.

As 40-plus mph winds gusted over the Wildcat Sports Complex, the Louisburg High School girls soccer team blew right past Bonner Springs in its most important game of the season.

Louisburg took all the suspense out of the Class 4-1A regional championship game as it scored a pair of early goals and rolled to a 9-0 victory over the Braves. The win gives the Wildcats their second regional title in as many seasons – not too bad since the program has only been around for two years.

“Last year was amazing to win it in our first year,” Louisburg junior Bailey Belcher said. “This year, we just wanted to capitalize on it to show that we are still here and not going to let it go.”

The Wildcats (12-5-1) proved they weren’t going anywhere as they scored two goals in the first two minutes and picked apart the Bonner Springs defense to a tune five first half goals. They now find themselves one victory away from reaching its first state semifinal.

Louisburg has had quite the two-year run as it has now totaled two regional championships and 26 victories in the first two years of its existence.

“It feels good,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “Winning a regional title is always a goal, or at the very least to play for one, and I think that puts our program in a good spot. When the kids get a taste of it, they just get fired up and we are a different team. We played 10 times better this time than our last game and the girls get into it.

“It is fun and doesn’t happen very often, especially for a second-year program. Now to win 26 games and counting in our first two seasons is incredible. Some teams don’t win that in six or seven seasons.”



Louisburg's Savannah Reinhart (left) battles a Bonner Springs player for position Wednesday in Louisburg. Reinhart had three assists in the win.

Bonner Springs had a difficult time slowing down the Wildcat attack – more specifically Mackenzie Scholtz. The freshman forward had her best day of the season as she tallied a game-high five goals and also had three assists.

Belcher added a pair of goals – both coming in the first half – and freshman Erin Lemke accounted for the other. The Wildcats also scored on an own goal to start the second half.

"It is really cool, just being a part of this as a freshman," Scholtz said. "We have worked as a team all season, and we knew we could do this and we did. We just want to keep going and fight to the end.

"I feel like I had a lot of energy for the most part, but I

had no idea that I could do that. It was a good feeling to be able to help the team like that.”

The Wildcats did a good job moving the ball around as they broke through the Bonner Springs defense with ease. Junior Savannah Reinhart was on the starting end on some of those goals as she tied Scholtz with a team-high three assists. Senior Madisen Simpson and sophomore Hallie Hutsell also had an assist in the win.

“We figured we would have good runs and be able to cut them down the middle with Bailey and Scholtzy,” Conley said. “I told them they were going to get tons of looks and that they just have to pick a corner and bury them. We just had breakaway after breakaway and that is a credit to their teammates. If it wasn’t for those outside midifelders, or Bailey playing it wide, (Mackenzie) might not have those wide open lanes. She just took full advantage of it.”

Within the first minute, Scholtz put the Wildcats on the board with a goal and then Belcher followed with another to give Louisburg a quick 2-0 advantage.

Bonner Springs didn’t back down at that point as the Braves moved the ball up the field and were awarded a penalty kick when senior defender Bryn O’Meara was called for a foul in the box.



Goalie Shay Whiting dives to save a penalty kick early in Wednesday's regional championship game.

Louisburg goalie Shay Whiting came to the rescue with a diving save to stop the penalty kick and kept the Braves off of the board. More importantly, it kept the momentum on the side of the Wildcats and they were able to use that to get an even bigger lead.

"That was huge," Conley said. "Shay made a great save there. You know, I thought that was a good stick by Bryn and not sure there was a foul there. Still, Shay came up big and did her job. That is the thing with Shay now, she is just ringing the bell and going to work. She has been really good the last couple of weeks."

It was Whiting's ninth shutout of the season as she got help from the Wildcat defensive back line of O'Meara, Camdyn Clark, Kaitlyn Lewer and Hannah Straub as they limited Bonner Springs' shots on goal.

The scoring onslaught continued in the first half for Louisburg as Belcher scored to make it 3-0 a few minutes later. Scholtz then scored two more times to give Louisburg a 5-0 halftime lead and herself at hat trick.

Louisburg scored on an own goal to start the second half, followed by two more goals from Scholtz and another from Lemke to secure the championship.



Defender Camdyn Clark (right) knocks the ball out of the back Wednesday.

“Bonner Springs ran that high line quite a bit and ultimately we just shredded it,” Conley said. “We did a good job of finding feet, playing the through ball and off to the races we went. It is something that was going to be key in this and that it was going to help us a lot.

“The way we play, we look to counter a lot. I think that helped when they got four high, then we could just push and go. Even with the wind, we had a ton of space to run and that was very beneficial to us. We just worked really hard. We started subbing about every eight minutes just trying to push

them and try to wear Bonner Springs down a little bit. We looked a lot fresher than they were.”



The Louisburg girls soccer team gathers under the scoreboard for a team picture following their regional championship win over Bonner Springs.

Louisburg will try for a spot in its first state tournament Tuesday when it hosts Piper in the state quarterfinals. The match is set to begin at 5 p.m.

The Wildcats fell in the state quarterfinals last season and they are ready to take another step forward.

“Last year’s loss definitely gives us motivation,” Belcher said. “We have to capitalize on it. We need to push farther than what we did last year and show everyone that we can do more.”

Wildcats roll Ottawa en route to regional title game



Louisburg freshman Mackenzie Scholtz dribbles past the Ottawa goalkeeper Tuesday during the first round of the Class 4-1A regional tournament in Louisburg. The Wildcats won 10-0 and will face Bonner Springs in the regional title game at 4 p.m., today in Louisburg.

Following its 10-0 win over Ottawa on Tuesday in the first round of the Class 4-1A regional tournament, the Louisburg High School girls soccer team had a chance to celebrate a little.

The jubilation was short-lived – and for a reason.

Louisburg will host Bonner Springs in the regional championship at 4 p.m. today with the opportunity to win their second straight regional title. So, to make sure the Wildcats are ready, the team got together for a practice immediately following the win over Ottawa.

It was not your typical way to spend a postgame evening.

“This gave us a chance to work on some things that we weren’t able to work on in the game,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “We really need to get some more work in so that we are ready to go for (today).”

The game was called early in the second half when the Wildcats

scored the 10th goal and invoked the mercy rule.

Six different players scored for the Wildcats as junior Bailey Belcher and freshman Mackenzie Scholtz each recorded a hat trick to lead the way in a game where Ottawa never took a shot on goal.

Louisburg opened the scoring on a goal from Belcher seven minutes into the contest, but the Wildcats struggled to get going early. However, once they found success, there wasn't much Ottawa could do to stop them.



Louisburg sophomore Hallie Hutsell passes the ball up the field Tuesday against Ottawa.

"We played alright," Conley said. "Going into the wind, I think that is going to help us a little bit with our next

game. Playing feet was the big thing for us. They (Bonner Springs) are going to play a high line just like Ottawa did, so this was a good warm up.

“The first 15 minutes I think we got a little frustrated because we couldn’t figure it out even though we talked about it Monday, then before the game. Once we solved the puzzle, it got going pretty quick.”

Scholtz responded with back-to-back goals to make it 3-0, then senior Quincy Rice and junior Savannah Reinhart each followed with a score. Belcher made it 6-0 with 17 minutes left in the first half, then sophomore Hayli Detherage found the back of the net.

Belcher and Scholtz each scored again to make it 9-0 at halftime. Then just a couple minutes into the second half, Morgan Messer clinched the win with a goal to improve the Wildcats’ record to 11-5-1 on the season.

“This win gives us confidence so that we can get things going,” Conley said. “Quincy was able to get a goal, and she hit a rocket off the post, so this was good for her to get things going. I think if we would have a more competitive game it might help us for our next one, but it is a give and take, and I think we can take a lot of positives out of this one.”



Freshman Erin Lemke (left) celebrate with teammate Quincy Rice following Rice's goal in the first half Tuesday.

Goalies Shay Whiting and Carson Buffington combined to earn the shutout and this was Whiting's eighth clean sheet of the season.

The Wildcats will face a stiffer challenge today against Bonner Springs (8-9), who defeated Basehor-Linwood, 7-0, on Tuesday. Both teams will be playing on back-to-back days.

"It will be tough because we have such young kids," Conley said. "We have a lot of freshmen and sophomores, so that might be different for some of them. We are going to have to be mentally tough against a good Bonner team and we are getting better at it. We will just see what happens.

"We will need to play to the best of our ability and execute to win a regional championship. I think the excuse that we are

a young team is no longer relevant. These young ladies have a full season under our belt and we will play like it here in the playoffs. The weather is going to cause some adversities, but it's nothing we have not dealt with this season. I am really excited how this group of girls have grown over the season and how they have overcome so many adversities and injuries. This is going to be fun!"