

# Louisburg girls soccer rallies to tie Piper



Louisburg sophomore Isabella Ford heads the ball in for a game-tying goal with five minutes left in regulation against Piper on Tuesday in Louisburg. Ford and the rest of the Wildcats tied Piper 3-3 to move their record to 3-1-1 on the year.

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There was 21 minutes left in the contest and the Louisburg High School girls soccer team had a comfortable two goal lead over Piper.

It took only 12 minutes for the game to be completely flipped on its head.

In those 12 minutes, Piper stormed back with three goals of its own to steal all the momentum. For a program in its first year, it could have been easy for the Wildcats to back down.

Instead, Louisburg came right back as Isabella Ford tied the game on a header off a corner kick with five minutes left in regulation. The match went into two overtimes, but it ended in a 3-3 tie Tuesday in Louisburg.

“It was like a roller coaster,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “Having a 2-0 lead in soccer is the hardest lead to hold. It is enough of a lead to just get a little comfortable

and relaxed, but teams need to do the opposite. We left some girls in the midfield or didn't mark up quiet as well as we normally do. Once Piper got that first goal they went to a whole other level.

"Then getting down 3-2 with eight minutes left it was crazy. We showed posse and confidence. I was very impressed how level headed the girls stayed through those 30 minutes."

For a game that was scoreless for the first 50 minutes, the last 30 minutes and two overtimes did provide quite a bit of drama.



**Junior Lily Cook (right) tries to hold off a Piper defender Tuesday in Louisburg.**

After both teams had their fair share of shots on goal, the Wildcats converted in the 51<sup>st</sup> minute when Ford found the back of the net thanks to an assists from senior Maddie McDaniel to put Louisburg up a goal.

It took less than a minute for Louisburg to double its tally when sophomore Bailey Belcher hit a shot from 25 yards away, which caught the Piper defense out of place and scored to

quickly put the Wildcats up 2-0.

It was then when Piper became more aggressive, and in the 59<sup>th</sup> minute scored a goal off a corner kick. Nine minutes later, Piper tied it up and in the 71<sup>st</sup> minute took the lead.

Louisburg (3-1-1) didn't let up as it continued to push the ball up the field and put together one of its more impressive goals of the season. In the 75<sup>th</sup> minute, McDaniel took the corner kick and placed it near the goal, which found the head of Ford who knocked it in.

"Izzie Ford played very well," Conley said. "She was getting frustrated with not finishing like she wants to, but she did a great job of finishing and being our target up top.

"It was incredible how well the girls played to get that last goal back. They were incredibly focused and gave everything that they had to get that goal. Our formation is really coming together. We have focused a lot of practice time recently to improving our attack and being more balanced both offensively and defensively. That goal directly was created with how hard the girls are working at practice. It was an awesome goal and lifted our team spirits. It gave us belief again."

The goal also lifted the spirits of the Louisburg defense which came together to turn away several Piper opportunities in the final minutes of regulation and in the two overtimes.



**Senior Rylee Bergh clears a ball out of the back during the first half of Tuesday's home contest with Piper.**

Senior Rylee Bergh led the Wildcat defense from the centerback spot as she, along with juniors Madisen Simpson, Bryn O'Meara, sophomore Georgia Wilde and freshman Camdyn Clark rose to the occasion to help keep the game tied.

Junior goalie Shay Whiting also made a couple of big saves late in the match, including one in the final minute of the second overtime.

"Piper did get those three goals, but they were due to minor things that can be fixed easily," Conley said. "Communication lacked a little and we broke down, but overall I am very proud of how well the back line is playing. They really do a great job working with each other and complementing each other with their abilities and skill sets. I could not be more proud of them as a unit.

"Rylee is our leader back there and has accepted that role very well, especially since she has not really played centerback before. She is a very good leader and gives everything she had every night. Georgia and Madisen have working really hard and are great assets in the back. Bryn and Cammie are also working hard to improve every game and to anchor our back line. I am just proud how they work together

and play so hard. Shay has played very well. She is doing a great job of working with Coach (Michael) Pickman and improving every day.”

The Wildcats return to action Thursday when they host Heritage Christian Academy for a varsity contest only. The match is set to begin at 4:30 p.m.

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## **Wildcats use big second half to beat Sumner**



Louisburg senior Lilly Scott reaches out with her leg to knock the ball down during the Wildcats’ 3-2 victory over Sumner Academy on Thursday in Louisburg. Scott her first goal of the season in the second half.

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On one night, the Louisburg High School girls soccer team put together a strong performance against one of the state’s best teams, but unfortunately left with its first loss on the season.

Two days later, the Wildcats didn’t have their best game but came away with a victory.

Go figure.

Although it was a wacky week, it marked a step forward in the progress of the Louisburg program as it defeated Sumner Academy 3-2 on Thursday in Louisburg. The Wildcats were able to put a team away despite not having their best performance.

“We struggled to play our game and I think some of that could be because of such an emotional game on Tuesday (against De Soto),” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “I was worried there might be a little let down. We showed in that second half how much heart and energy can play with. The girls showed their true character and responded very well after a lackluster first half.

“The girls do a fantastic job of picking each other up and being a great support system for one another. I am very proud of how this team is growing each and every game.”



**Sophomore Savannah Reinhart (right) battles for a 50-50 ball Thursday against Sumner Academy.**

The Wildcats (3-1) had their backs against the wall in the first half after Sumner Academy scored the game’s first goal and the Sabres eventually took a 1-0 lead into halftime.

Louisburg had its chances early as Maddie McDaniel, Isabella Ford and Bailey Belcher all had shots on goal, but their chances just missed. The Wildcats didn't miss many opportunities in the second half.

Those shots started to find the back of the net as the Wildcats scored three goals in the final 40 minutes to secure the win.

Early in the second half, Ford found herself 1-on-1 with the goalie and put the shot away to tie the match. Ford then found herself on the other end of the Wildcats' second score.

Ford crossed the ball into the box and senior Lilly Scott knocked it in to give Louisburg the lead, and in the process, Scott scored her first goal on the year.

"Lilly's goal was awesome," Conley said. "She got a great ball served to her and she attacked it and scored it. It was a big time goal and a goal we needed. She has played incredibly well the past two games and I couldn't be happier for her."

The scoring continued a few minutes later when Belcher attacked the middle of the field and put a shot away for the Wildcats' third goal. It was an important one as Sumner would score a second time, but Louisburg was able to hold on for the win.



**Sophomore Bailey Belcher**

**(left) knocks the ball up the field at home Thursday. Belcher scored one of the three goals in the win.**

“It was clearly not our best game but they dug deep to find a way to win,” Conley said. “I was proud of how we responded at halftime. They are learning on the fly. We have a goal to never get out-worked in a game and I feel that we did in the first half, but they knew they were not out of the game.

“They increased their pressure and energy level and worked their tails off. I was worried because we did expend a massive amount of energy to come back, but we were able to hold on. We talk a lot about bending but not breaking and I think that fit how that game went for us.”

Louisburg will try for its fourth win of the year Tuesday when it hosts Piper. The game was originally scheduled to be played at Piper High School, but the game has been moved to Louisburg. Varsity is set to begin at 4 p.m. and junior varsity at 5:30 p.m.

### **JV rolls Sumner for third win**

The Louisburg junior varsity had no problems scoring against Sumner Academy in its contest Thursday in Louisburg.

The Wildcats scored six goals in the first half to pull away for a 6-0 victory over the Sabres. The win improves their record to 3-1 on the season, with their lone loss coming to De Soto last Tuesday.

Five different players scored goals for Louisburg. Madisen Simpson led the way with a pair of goals, while Peyton Shaffer, Savannah Reinhart, Quincy Rice and Hayli Detherage added one each.



## **Wildcats fall to state-ranked De Soto**

On paper, it might have been a mismatch with a first-year program in Louisburg going up against the No. 3 team in Class 4-1A in De Soto.

In fact, it wasn't a mismatch at all.

Louisburg held its own against De Soto before eventually falling 2-0 last Thursday in De Soto. Ashley Panagakis scored a goal in each half for De Soto to hand the Wildcats their first loss on the season.

The Wildcats trailed 1-0 for much of the contest and had a few chances of their own to tie the match. Louisburg had four shots on goal, while De Soto had 11.

Sophomore goalie Shay Whiting turned several shots away, while senior Rylee Bergh led the Wildcat defense to limit De Soto's chances.

"The girls played a very good game against a very good De Soto team," Conley said. "I am proud of how hard we played and how we didn't give up. We were focused and dedicated towards the game plan and playing such a good team. I feel that we all played a very solid game.

"We limited their quality chances and had several nice opportunities ourselves. We faced more shots from them than we did the first two games combined, but we did not break. Our back four and goalkeeper did a fantastic job. Rylee and Shay were especially good."

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# Louisburg girls soccer impresses in home opener



Louisburg sophomore Isabella Ford tries to cut past a Tonganoxie defender during Thursday's home opener. The Lady Cats defeated the Chieftains 2-0 to win their second straight game to start the year.

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This wasn't just any home opener.

The Louisburg High School girls soccer team, already with an emotional-filled victory over Harmon on the road last Tuesday in the program's first-ever game, tackled another milestone Thursday.

Louisburg played host to Tonganoxie for the Lady Cats' first game on their home field and they didn't disappoint their fans one bit.

A big second half gave Louisburg a 2-0 victory over the Chieftains and gave itself, ironically, a 2-0 record to start the year. In between the varsity and junior varsity game, those who helped with fundraising efforts to fund the team for three years were honored, many of whom were members of the Louisburg Soccer Club.

It was a start the players and coaches were hoping for.



**Members of the Louisburg High School girls soccer team pose for a picture with the fundraising committee that helped raise money to fund the program for three years.**

“It is fantastic,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “They have put in a lot of work to get here. Honoring everyone who made this possible between the games was a great thing as well and was deserving. It was a great start to the season for sure.”

The nerves didn't seem to bother Louisburg too much as it was the aggressor early. Senior Lilly Scott nearly scored a goal in the first 10 minutes as her shot from just outside the box sailed just wide of the post as a cold, blustery wind pushed it away.

Louisburg's next-best opportunity was thwarted on a nice save from the Tonganoxie goalie with nine minutes left as she jumped to knock a shot from senior Maddie McDaniel away. Sophomore Bailey Belcher also had two shots on goal that were just offline.

“In the first half, (Tonganoxie) just really crammed the

middle on us and we struggled to get the ball wide and play the ball a little quicker,” Conley said. “We did well possessing the ball for two-thirds of the field, but that other third we just tried to go 1-on-1 and that wasn’t successful for us. So we talked about that at halftime, then we finally started ping-pong some passes together and it worked out.”

It certainly did as sophomore Isabella Ford facilitated the offense. Ford crossed the ball to Belcher from the right side and Belcher put the shot away for the game’s first goal. It was the team’s first-ever goal at home.



**Louisburg goalie Shay Whiting slides on the ground for a save in front of a Tonganoxie player Thursday in Louisburg.**

“I missed a lot early like I did (against Harmon), but to finally get that shot to go in made me really happy because it

gave us a boost,” Belcher said. “It just gave us a little more umph to play on.”

About 10 minutes later, the Lady Cats used that “umph” to all but seal the win. For the second time, Ford crossed the ball into the box and sophomore Lily Cook headed the ball in for the 2-0 advantage.

It was the second assist on the day for Ford, who was more than happy to set up her teammates.

“Honestly I think it feels better to give assists than it does scoring goals,” Ford said. “I don’t like to play very selfish. I do like to cut and stuff, but it felt really good to be a part of those plays. Lilly Cook’s was an amazing header and I am really proud of her.”



**Lily Cook (right) celebrates with teammates (from left) Lilly Scott, Hayli Detherage and Savannah Reinhart following her**

## **header goal.**

The match was also the second straight shutout for sophomore goalie Shay Whiting as she handled three shots on goal, but Tonganoxie didn't threaten otherwise as the Lady Cats controlled the possession most of the game.

Louisburg will face its toughest challenge to date as it will travel to De Soto for a 6 p.m. game on Tuesday. De Soto is considered one of the toughest teams in the Frontier League and Conley knows his team has to be ready.

"De Soto is the cream of the crop," Conley said. "They are the best team in our league in my opinion and we will see how we measure up. It will be exciting."

## **JV wins second in a row**

The Louisburg girls junior varsity team didn't have any problems scoring against Tonganoxie in its home opener Thursday.

The Lady Cats scored two goals in each half on their way to a 4-1 victory to give them a 2-0 record on the season as well.

Early on in the first half, Leia Shaffer opened the game with a goal to put Louisburg up early and then Quincy Rice added another goal on an assist from Hayli Detherage to give the Lady Cats a 2-0 lead at halftime.

Isabella Ford gave Louisburg a 3-0 advantage early in the second half with a goal, and then after a Tonganoxie score, Lily Cook sealed the win with a goal on an assist from Shaffer.

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# Opinion: Lady Cats want to make community proud



Louisburg head coach Kyle Conley speaks with the team shortly before the start of the varsity matchup with Harmon on Tuesday at Harmon High School. The Lady Cats won their opener 2-0.

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One by one they made their way onto the field as their names were called. It was really happening.

*Bailey Belcher...Camdyn Clark...Maddie McDaniel...Rylee Bergh...Bryn O'Meara...Savannah Reinhart...Lily Cook...Lilly Scott...Madisen Simpson...Georgia Wilde...Shay Whiting.*

The Louisburg girls soccer team ventured onto the field for the first time Tuesday at Harmon High School and those girls in the starting lineup have the distinction to say they were the ones to start it all.

Yes, they were the ones to kick off the era of girls soccer at Louisburg High School and it will be something they remember for the rest of their lives. How cool is that?



**(From left) Georgia Wilde, Shay Whiting, Madisen Simpson, Lilly Scott, Lily Cook, Savannah Reinhart, Bryn O'Meara, Rylee Bergh, Maddie McDaniel, Camdyn Clark and Bailey Belcher started the first game for Louisburg.**

As many of you know, and I have written about it quite a bit, it couldn't have been done without the work and fundraising efforts of numerous parents throughout the community. Led by efforts from the Louisburg Soccer Club, they were able to raise \$39,000 in a year to be able to fund the Lady Cat program for the next three seasons.

Fundraising leaders Diana Moore and Karin Olson were in attendance for the special day, as were several other parents who put in a lot of time to make this possible for the girls in Louisburg.

Let's face it – they were tired of playing on the boys team. It was hard for them to compete at such a physical level and the opportunity wasn't there to show what they could do.

On Tuesday, those girls wanted to return the favor to those parents and community members and prove that it wasn't a waste of their time. They did that by getting a hard-fought 2-0 victory over Harmon to get the program's first win.

“To me it shows that we are just not throwing the community's



money in the trash,” Belcher said. “We are committing ourselves to do what it was meant for – to make us better and make sure that we have a soccer team in the future.”

It is hard to imagine the emotion Diana and Karin were feeling watching those girls take the field for the first time wearing the Louisburg purple. I can’t begin to fathom what the players’ parents were thinking when their daughters officially became a part of history.

I have been in this business for 13 years and I have never had the opportunity to cover a program’s first game or season. It was an awesome experience to be on the sideline Tuesday and watch the girls – and coaches – go through this wide range of emotions.

First there was nerves. Then overwhelming joy when the first goal was scored, then back to being nervous when Harmon threatened late in the match.

Heck, even I was a little nervous as I was taking pictures before the junior varsity game. I wanted to capture as many moments as I could, only to be told I was on the field of play and had to back up. And believe me, I was WAY on the field.

However, all those emotions were so pure and heartfelt. None of what they experienced Tuesday was fake. These girls wanted to win this game, not for themselves, but for the community.

It couldn’t have been more fitting to watch senior Maddie McDaniel, who was one of the many to help raise money in hopes of being able to play just one year for her high school team, score the first goal in program history – on a header no less.



**Maddie McDaniel (right) slaps hands with Savannah Reinhart after McDaniel scored the first goal in program history.**

Bailey Belcher got the first-ever assist and goalie Shay Whiting recorded the first shutout. Camdyn Clark scored the first junior varsity goal and became the first junior varsity player to get a hat trick.

They all now have the distinction of becoming the answer to a cool trivia question down the road.

As it was pointed out on Twitter by LHS grad David Embers, head coach Kyle Conley is now the winningest coach in Louisburg High School girls soccer history.

Can't really argue with that.

The emotion will no doubt be just as strong today when the Lady Cats play Tonganoxie in their home opener. These girls want to show what they can do in front of their home fans and make their town proud.

Whether they like it or not, these girls are already role models to young girls all over town who want to have the opportunity to play soccer when they get older. They are paving the way for a growing sport to become even bigger in a small town.

It doesn't matter if they go on to lose their remaining 15 games – these Lady Cats still win because they took the field and worked hard for something that no one can take away from them.

This is their time to shine and they are enjoying every minute of it.

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## **Lady Cats shine in program debut**



The Louisburg High School girls soccer team breaks down the huddle following their 2-0 victory over Harmon on Tuesday at Harmon High School. It was also the first win in the program's history.

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KANSAS CITY, Kan. – Maddie McDaniel had been dreaming about this day for months.

Head coach Kyle Conley was nervously anticipating the game's first whistle.

The other 22 members of the Louisburg High School girls soccer team, on the other hand, were faced with emotions from both sides of the spectrum.

Season openers usually feature butterflies, but this one was different.

Tuesday was a special day for these group of girls as they took the field for the first time in program history at Harmon High School. Win or lose, it was going to be a memorable experience for the Lady Cats.

As it turned out, Louisburg put together an historic performance.



**Senior Maddie McDaniel heads the ball toward the goal in the first half Tuesday against Harmon.**

The Lady Cats scored a goal in each half and walked away with a 2-0 victory to capture the program's first win among many other firsts against a Harmon team that finished with a 13-2-1 record a season ago.

"Words can't express how excited and proud I am of these young ladies," Conley said. "It was a night in which everyone was nervous and anxious and we responded very well."

Louisburg seemed to get rid of that anxiousness in a hurry as it put the pressure on from the opening whistle and it didn't take long to find the back of the net.

McDaniel, a senior, received a pass in the air from sophomore Bailey Belcher and headed the ball in the goal to give the Lady Cats a 1-0 lead in the 16<sup>th</sup> minute. She also gets the distinction of going into the record books as the first varsity player to score a goal, while Belcher got the first assist.

"It is my dream to just get a header goal and I accomplished that," McDaniel said. "I almost cried that it was so amazing. It really hasn't sunk in yet. It was a great pass from Bailey. We just made eye contact and it was over."

From there, the Louisburg defense took over as they limited Harmon's shot attempts. The Lady Cats used waves of defenders to keep the Hawks at bay.

Senior Rylee Bergh led the charge as she knocked a lot of balls away in the back, while Georgia Wilde, Madisen Simpson, Bryn O'Meara, Camdyn Clark, Hayli Detherage, Kaitlyn Lewer and Bria Jensen all did their part to take possession away from Harmon.

However, Harmon made an even bigger push midway through the second half as they put numerous shots on goal, but sophomore goalie Shay Whiting didn't show many signs of it being her first game in the net.



**Junior Bryn O'Meara  
knocks the ball away  
from a Harmon player.**

Whiting not only recorded the team's first ever shutout, but she slid in for several saves in the final minutes. She also dove to knock away a Harmon shot early in the first half.

In the 67<sup>th</sup> minute, Harmon had a good chance to tie the match with a penalty kick, but the shot sailed over the crossbar to preserve the Lady Cat lead.

"My teammates told me, 'Well, your short so she is probably going to get some air underneath it,' so I knew it was going to go in the air," Whiting said. "I was just watching the girl and thank goodness it went over. I think we would have been fine either way though.

"I was pretty confident in what I was taught and I knew what to do. My defense helped me out a lot and shutting them out was a team thing. It was from the offense to the defense and all the way back. It was a good win."

Conley was impressed with what he saw out of his back line for the first time out.

"I think the whole back four did a fantastic job," Conley

said. "The phrase 'Bend but don't break' fit us. We knew they had a very special player at forward and it was going to take a team effort to stop her. Rylee, Georgia, Bryn, Cammie, Madison, Hayli, Kaitlyn and Bria all did great to limit their chances. I am proud at their communication and toughness.

"Shay was fantastic. She was big for us and her reaction saves were quality! Her reaction tonight looked nothing like a girl making her first high school start. She looked like a seasoned veteran back there."

Belcher was able to provide the Lady Cats with a little breathing room in the final minutes. Already with an assist, Belcher added a goal to the stat line as she took a shot from 25 yards away to put Louisburg up two goals in the 74<sup>th</sup> minute.

"I am so happy," Belcher said. "Honestly, with this being a new program, I wasn't sure how it was going to go. Now that we have won our first game against a team (Harmon) that won 13 games a season ago, I am just amazed."



**Louisburg sophomore Bailey Belcher celebrates her goal late in the second half Tuesday against Harmon.**

The Lady Cats look to start the program's first winning streak Thursday when they host Tonganoxie in their home opener. The

varsity begins the action at 4 p.m., in what looks to be another emotional game as Louisburg gets to play in front of their home crowd for the first time.

“Our home opener will be special and they always will be, but this one even more so because of how hard community members worked to make these young ladies’ dreams a reality,” Conley said. “They will be a little anxious because a ton of community members, friends and family members will be in attendance. It will be a lot of fun and the ladies should be excited.”

### **Junior varsity wins opener**

The varsity team wasn’t the only one to make history Tuesday at Harmon High School.

The Louisburg junior varsity took the field and left with a 3-1 victory over the Hawks and got a strong performance from freshman Camdyn Clark.

Clark not only scored the team’s first junior varsity goal, but she was responsible for all three as she recorded the first hat trick in team history. All three goals came in the second half, including one on a penalty kick with 10 minutes left in the contest that broke a 1-all tie.

Under the direction of coach Michael Pickman, the Lady Cats played a strong first half but had several shots on goal just miss the back of the net.

Sophomore Isabella Ford had five shots on goal in the first half and freshman Peyton Shaffer also took shots as well. The match remained scoreless until Clark scored her first goal in the 57<sup>th</sup> minute.

“The JV played very well and I was very excited with how they



performed,” Conley said. “I actually think the way coach Pickman and the JV team played, and the result they got eased a lot of the nerves for the varsity team. It was just a fantastic night for our program.”

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## **Lady Cat soccer ready to begin inaugural season**



The Louisburg High School girls soccer team will play the first game in program history Tuesday when the Lady Cats travel to Harmon High School. They will have their home opener Thursday when they host Tonganoxie.

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It may just be one game, but for the Louisburg High School girls soccer team, it is more than that.

It is a new beginning. It is a chance to make a good first impression and it is an opportunity to say a big “thank you” for all those that will make Tuesday, and the other 15 games, possible.

Tuesday will mark the first game in program history when the Lady Cats travel to Harmon High School. The day will begin

with the junior varsity game at 4:30 p.m., with the varsity game to follow.

Louisburg will face off with a good Harmon team that finished with a 13-2-1 record a year ago, but its biggest opponent Tuesday might be itself. The nerves have already started to creep in.

"I don't know if it is a gut-wrenching feeling or if it is 'I am ready to do this' feeling," senior Maddie McDaniel said. "It feels like I am at the top of the rollercoaster looking out at everything and all I want to do is get down the hill."

The nerves are not just with the players, but with the coaching staff as well. Head coach Kyle Conley admits it will be an emotional day for everyone.

"I will probably be a mess but it will be ok," Conley said. "I talk to the girls about being tough and living in the moment and hopefully that emotion doesn't hit when the first whistle blows and we are a mess for five minutes. At the same time I can't blame them if that happens, especially with all the work they have put in."

It has been a lot of work for the Lady Cat players as they began their journey with summer workouts and have spent the last two weeks getting ready for the upcoming season. The team even had practice for the final three days of spring break, including a couple practices in rainy, cold conditions.

They want to be ready for one of the most important days in program history.

"I am really excited but nervous at the same time," senior Lilly Scott said. "I know we have worked really hard these past two weeks and a lot is riding on this first game. We are either going to come out with a bang and show people what we can do, or we come out and not do as well and show us what we need to work on. It is just an exciting time because it is

something new and I get to be a part of it, which is pretty special.”

Senior Rylee Bergh, McDaniel and Scott will lead the Lady Cats on their inaugural journey and will try to make sure the other 22 players on the team stay on track for what they hope is a fun, successful year.

“I am really excited to see how the team is going to shape up during the game,” Bergh said. “I am excited to see who steps it up, who surprises me and how the team comes together in a game situation. It is going to be special.

“I want us to be a family and like each other. I want us to communicate on the field, and no matter the score, I want our team to be proud of what happens this season.”

Regardless of the outcome Tuesday, the Lady Cats have a long 16-game season ahead of themselves to prepare for, and Conley likes what he has seen so far. After 45 girls initially signed up to play last spring, 25 came out and many of them have settled into their roles.

Scott and sophomore Bailey Belcher will play in the midfield, while McDaniel will also see some time there and the forward spot. Bergh will lead the team in the back as Conley sees her as a defensive midfielder.

Junior Bryn O’Meara, sophomore Georgia Wilde, freshman Bria Jensen, sophomore Savannah Reinhart and freshman Camdyn Clark are all competing for spots on defense. Juniors Madisen Simpson, Quincy Rice, Lily Cook and Mara Justesen will also be vying for varsity spots as well.

“I think we are going to be pretty solid in the midfield,” Conley said. “We have a good core of kids that play quite a bit or are athletic. We have four or five kids that haven’t played soccer before and another six or seven kids that haven’t played since sixth grade. We have a good group though.

“We are going to try and keep possession of the ball a lot and I think the middle and forward-wise we should be pretty solid. We have had quite a few surprises with kids and the rust wore off pretty quick. They are doing a good job.”

A pair of sophomores are also battling it out for the goalkeeper job as Shay Whiting and Sarah Wilson look to be that last line of defense for the Lady Cats.

“Both girls are playing pretty well and it has been a good competition so far,” Conley said. “It will be one person’s job to win, but both might have to play some junior varsity too in case someone gets hurt because we only have two on the team. Both haven’t played before, keeper-wise, but they are going to do the best they can.”

If the first game in program history wasn’t emotional enough, it might be even more emotional on Thursday when the Lady Cats will play on their home field for the first time when they host Tonganoxie.

It will be a day in which they recognize the parents and community members who helped raise the nearly \$40,000 to fund the program for three years and they hope to honor them with a good performance on the field.

“It will be huge because before if they wanted to play, they had to play with the boys and it has always been about the boys,” Conley said. “Here is our chance and it is our turn to do what we want to do. It is about all those community members that fought so hard and donated so much time, sweat and work and now it is our time to make something of it.

“There have been times when we haven’t been working so hard in practice and I have reminded the girls about how much work people put in for them to have this opportunity. It gives other girls in the community something to look forward to. My daughters are excited about it and my oldest is only five. Hopefully younger girls can see now that they have an

opportunity to play high school soccer and I think these girls are going to be good role models for the youth with how they carry themselves.”

### 2016 LOUISBURG HIGH SCHOOL VARSITY GIRLS SOCCER SCHEDULE

Mar. 22			at
Harmon		6 p.m.	
Mar. 24			
Tonganoxie		4 p.m.	
Mar. 28			at De
Soto		6 p.m.	
Mar. 31			Sumner
Academy		4 p.m.	
Apr. 5			at
Piper		6 p.m.	
Apr. 7			Heritage
Christian		4 p.m.	
Apr. 11			
Ottawa		4 p.m.	
Apr. 14			at Spring
Hill		6 p.m.	
Apr. 18			at
Wyandotte		6 p.m.	
Apr. 22			Basehor-
Linwood		4 p.m.	
Apr. 26			at

Baldwin		4 p.m.	
Apr. 28			at Kansas City
Christian	6 p.m.		
May 2			
Baldwin		4 p.m.	
May 3			De
Soto		4 p.m.	
May 9			at
Ottawa		6 p.m.	
May 12			Spring
Hill		4 p.m.	

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## Paola AD proposes bill to help classification issue



Last October, Paola activities director Jeff Hines went to a Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) regional meeting to get updates on classification issues.

Six months later, Hines found himself in Topeka, in front of the Kansas Senate Education Committee to talk about a bill that could change the way schools are classified.

On Thursday, Hines sat in front of the committee to discuss Senate Bill 464 – a bill that he proposed with guidance of Sen. Caryn Tyson.

Statute 72-130 establishes specific guidelines pertaining to the organizational structure and functions of KSHSAA. Senate Bill 464 would change one part of the statute and strike the line which allows schools to be classified only by student enrollment.

“The total number of students in schools is a great starting point for classifying them,” Hines said. “It makes sense that the largest schools should play the largest schools and the smallest schools should play the smallest schools, but there are other things that need to be considered.”

For several months, KSHSAA has had a classification committee discuss different ways to have a competitive balance with its member schools. They came up with ideas of reducing the number of classifications or changing the number of schools in a division.

“There were no other factors being considered and that bothered me,” Hines said, “All that would do was reshuffle the schools just a little bit but we would have the same problem.”

The problem for the committee was its hands were tied thanks to the wording in Statute 72-130 that specifically states schools can only be classified by enrollment numbers and nothing else.

So Hines went to work and helped create Senate Bill 464, which does not give a specific solution to the problem, but rather would take wording out of the statute to allow KSHSAA to figure out how to classify schools on its own.

Hines gave a 15 minute testimony in front of the committee and then answered questions from the committee members for more than 30 minutes afterward. Before the hearing, Hines received

support from every member in the Frontier League, Pioneer League and all but two schools in the Kaw Valley League, as those two didn't respond before the hearing.

Following Hines' testimony, Sen. Vicki Schmidt, R-Topeka, had concerns as to why KSHSAA did not come in front of the committee itself to ask for changes.

Hines informed the committee that it would be redundant for KSHSAA to endorse the plan, because if approved, member schools would still have to vote on it. He believes Bill 464 would let KSHSAA come up with a system and let schools improve it, instead of the legislature.

"KSHSAA wants to be neutral because this proposal would affect different schools in different ways," Hines said. "It could be very beneficial to some schools and others may not like it because they might have to move up a class. So, why should KSHSAA have to pick sides in it and pit member against member? It doesn't have to be that way in my opinion.

"Yes, a school that has to move up a classification might not like it, but is it the best thing overall for the association? They can't look themselves in the mirror and say 'No, this isn't the right thing to do?'

A major problem for some member schools in KSHSAA is they do not believe it is competitively equal the way it is currently structured.

"I am not a believer in participation medals," Hines said. "If they are kindergartners, sure, but when you start playing, part of being successful later in life is learning how to compete. We all competed for a job when you have gone in for an interview and that is good. You need to have that skillset and I am not saying that we need to give more trophies out and give everyone a shot, but I just want a system in place that is equitable for all so that some don't have an unfair advantage at the expense of the rest and I think that is what



is happening.”

One of the problems is the lack of balance between championships won between public and private high schools. Hines did research and presented numbers at the hearing at the number of state championships won between private and public schools from 2004 to 2014.

Here is what he found.

- Private schools make up slightly less than 8 percent of the KSHSAA membership.
- Private schools have won slightly less than 32 percent of the state championships.
- Based on membership percentage, private schools should only win approximately 8 percent of the titles, not nearly 32 percent.
- Private schools are winning four times more state titles than should be expected based on their memberships.
- Private schools are nine times more likely to win five or more state titles than their public school peers.

“In that period of time, I looked for who has won five or more state titles,” Hines said. “That is a difficult feat. You look at Paola’s history and we have won like seven and Louisburg has won three in 100-plus years. During those 10 years, 37 percent of those private schools won five or more during that time and public schools had 4 percent win five or more. Private schools are nine times more likely to become a dynasty or a successful program with strong tradition. You tell me how we are all the same?”

Another problem they are facing is schools with a high percentage of low socioeconomic status (SCS) students, cannot compete against fellow schools in their own classification in many activities, including football.

“There is a whole bunch of schools in the Kansas City, Kansas school district that are 6A or 5A that have no business

competing against those really hard schools,” Hines said. “They don’t have resources, they don’t have the students, there is no interest and they have all those things working against them and I feel bad for those kids. Who wants to trot out against some of those bigger schools and know you are going to get your ears boxed in? That is not fun. Moreover, it is not challenging for the kids those schools are playing against.”

Hines believes competition is important when it comes to the growth of the student athlete and it is beneficial for the school and its community.

“Not only what it does for grades, but for what it does for the human spirit,” Hines said.

“When I was the FFA advisor in Paola, we won 10 state championships in nine years and you could tell the interest by the students and the community went through the roof. You can say the same thing about Louisburg and what Jim Morgan does with his FFA kids. People flock to success.

“Naturally, when they are there they feel better about themselves, they want to work harder in the classroom to stay eligible and kids that want to stay involved are going to be more successful in life. It is all about having the chance to be successful.”

During Hines’ testimony in front of the Senate Education Committee, not all of the legislatures seemed open to the idea. Molly Baumgardner, R-Louisburg, asked Hines if he would be willing to relinquish state funding if the legislature agrees to release oversight of how KSHSAA classifies schools.

“If we relinquished the funding behind it, (high school activities) would disappear,” Hines said at the hearing.

No action was taken following the hearing, but the committee chairman spent 15 minutes with him and Tyson to help them strategize on what to do next.

One option is to amend the bill to include more specifics that could include a multiplier or a separate division for private schools and a low SCS school de-multiplier.

Another option, Hines said, would be to have the classification committee draft a letter to the Senate Education Committee that states they would like to study these other factors as part of a proposal for revamping the classification system, but not until they feel the legislature is open to changing the law.

Whatever decision comes next, however, Hines wants it to be decided by multiple people within KSHSAA on how to proceed.

“I don’t feel comfortable making that change because I feel a committee needs to do the work,” Hines said. “I shouldn’t be doing it, nor should 11 legislators, you need more. We should let the classification committee work on it and hopefully we can get some things accomplished.

“The only way to allow this to happen is to remove the barrier in place that exists due to the state statute.”

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## **Top 10 stories of 2015**



Here are the Louisburg Sports Zone Top 10 Stories of the Year. In each brief explanation of the story, there will be a link to the full story of when the event actually happened. Thanks

again for a successful 2015 and I am already looking forward to 2016.



**Hogan Welch (left) and Wyatt Reece each qualified for state in their respective sports.**

### **10. Welch and Reece qualify for state**

LHS students Hogan Welch and Wyatt Reece each put together strong seasons in their respective sports.

In May, Welch qualified for the Class 4A state golf tournament after he shot an 85 at the Osawatomie Golf Course to become one of five individual qualifiers for state. It was the first time Welch had qualified for the state tournament and would shoot a 79 a week later in McPherson to finish 40<sup>th</sup> overall.

As for Reece, he qualified for the state cross country meet for the first time in his career in October. The Louisburg sophomore came in 13<sup>th</sup> overall and was also one of five individual qualifiers. A week later Reece traveled to Wamego to compete at the state meet and ran a 18:43 to come in 71<sup>st</sup>.



**Louisburg's Jimmy Dolan (left) and Mya Diacono each suffered major head injuries from an accident just days apart. The Louisburg community rallied together to help the two families.**

### **9. Accidents bring Louisburg community together**

Jimmy Dolan and Mya Diacono live in the same community but were worlds apart from each other.

Jimmy, a junior at Louisburg High School, loves to wrestle, hang out with friends and live the life of a teenager.

It was a far cry from 9-year-old Mya who loves soccer, horses and spending time with her fourth-grade friends at Broadmoor Elementary. In a town of less than 5,000 people, the two had never met.

Two tragic accidents changed all of that.

On Jan. 12, Jimmy lost control of his vehicle while driving to school and suffered a major brain injury. Just 42 days later,

Mya was involved in an automobile accident just outside the Louisburg city limits that left her with the same severe brain trauma.

That was when the Louisburg community came together to help the two families cope with a burden no family should have to bear. Since then, both Jimmy and Mya are on the road to recovery thanks to the help of a lot of people.



**Louisburg Soccer Club president Karin Olson (second from left), Louisburg High School junior Maddie McDaniel (middle) and fundraising organizer Diana Moore (right) receive the WIN for KC Sprint Teamwork Award on Feb. 13 in Kansas City, Mo.**

#### **8. Girls soccer raises funds to start program, wins award**

A fundraising committee made a big push to make sure there was a girls soccer program at Louisburg High School.

The committee raised \$39,000 in almost a year's time to fund the program for three years. Thanks to all the hard work, the group was also recognized by the WIN for KC organization. The

Lady Cats' soccer season will kickoff in late March.



**Louisburg graduates Kody Cook (left) and Garrett Griffin are each winding down their careers with their respective Division I football programs.**

### **7. Griffin, Cook wrap up college careers**

Louisburg High School graduates Kody Cook and Garrett Griffin have lived the lives a lot of football fans could only hope for.

Both are wrapping up their Division I collegiate football careers and are doing it with a lot of success. Cook is living his dream with the Kansas State football team as he has made contributions at both the wide receiver and quarterback positions to help the Wildcats to the Liberty Bowl.

Griffin, on the other hand, battled through an injury-plagued senior season to help Air Force reach the Armed Forces Bowl and made several big plays at the tight end spot.



**Louisburg quarterback Austin Terry was one of several players responsible for the Wildcats' turnaround this season.**

## **6. Wildcat football has big turnaround**

After finishing with just three wins a year ago, the Louisburg High School football team put together a strong season in 2015 as they finished with seven wins.

Those seven victories put the Wildcats within a game of Paola for the Frontier League title and Louisburg also earned a spot in the regional playoffs before falling to Basehor-Linwood in a tight contest.





**The Louisburg High School soccer team captured its first regional crown since 2010 after a 2-0 win over Coffeyville.**

### **5. Louisburg soccer wins regional crown**

Through much of the regular season, the Louisburg High School soccer team didn't have much to cheer about.

The Wildcats had just four wins during the regular season, but they seemed to find the right chemistry in the postseason. Louisburg rattled off three consecutive wins in the postseason, including a 2-0 victory over Coffeyville-Field Kindley in the regional championship.

It was the Wildcats' first regional title since 2010 and their sixth in the last 10 years.



**Anders Vance won a regional title in the 285-pound weight class last February as he was one of five Wildcats to earn state bids.**

#### **4. Louisburg wrestling qualifies five for state**

The Louisburg wrestling team hadn't been a part of the state tournament since 2012 – that is before last season.

The Wildcats put together a breakout season as they qualified five for the state tournament, while Anders Vance won the regional crown at 285 pounds. Brenton Wrigley (195 pounds), Mason Koechner (220), Nathan Keegan (113) and Ryan Adams (138) all made the trip to Salina for the Class 4A state tourney.



**Jeff Lohse (left) and Ben York each stepped away from their head coaching posts in 2015.**

### **3. Long-time coaches resign from post**

Jeff Lohse and Ben York had been fixtures in their respective sports for Louisburg High School, but both decided to call it quits this year.

Lohse, who spent the last 17 years as the head coach for the LHS baseball team, stepped down from his spot in May, citing personal reasons. Lohse led the Wildcats to two state tournament appearances.

York, who was the head coach when the boys soccer program started, also cited personal reasons for leaving the Wildcat soccer program after 13 years. York helped the Wildcats to six regional titles in the last 10 years.



**Connor McMullen won the state title in the discus back in May and became Louisburg's first track state champion since 2011.**

## **2. McMullen wins state title in discus, Dennis medals in hurdles**

Louisburg High School senior Connor McMullen finally got the state title in the discus he had been searching for.

McMullen recorded a throw of 173 feet, 1 inch on his final attempt to win the Class 4A state discus title in Wichita back in May. He would also medal eighth in the javelin with a toss of 164-02.

Fellow senior Sean Dennis also garnered a state medal as he took fourth in the 110-meter hurdles. The boys and girls team combined sent a total of 11 athletes to the state meet.



**The Louisburg High School volleyball team finished third overall in 2015 after making it to state for the fifth time in the last six seasons.**

### **1. Lady Cat volleyball takes third at state**

The Louisburg High School volleyball team has made a habit of making the trip to Salina in recent years and this season was no exception.

This time, however, the Lady Cats finished with a victory.

After ending their season with a runner-up performance and two fourth-place finishes at state the last three years, Louisburg won its final match of the season in 2015 as it defeated Tonganoxie in the third-place match.

The Lady Cats qualified for the state tournament for the fifth time in the last six years.

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# Royals honor Moore, Olson with O'Neil seat



Louisburg's Karin Olson (left) and Diana Moore (second from left) were honored with the Buck O'Neil Legacy Seat during Tuesday night's Kansas City Royals game at Kauffman Stadium. Joining them were Louisburg girls soccer head coach Kyle Conley (second from right) and assistant Michael Pickman.

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. – After a year of nonstop fundraising efforts, Diana Moore and Karin Olson finally had a chance to sit back, reflect and take in a baseball game.

They did it in one of the best seats the Kansas City Royals had to offer.

Both Olson and Moore were honored with the Buck O'Neil Legacy Seat during Tuesday's game with the Baltimore Orioles. The Royals honor O'Neil, a former scout and Negro League legend, every home game by selecting a member of the community who, on a large or small scale, embodies an aspect of O'Neil's giving and caring spirit.

The Louisburg duo, along with the rest of the Louisburg High

School girls soccer fundraising committee, raised \$39,000 in less than a year to fund the LHS girls soccer program for the first three years.

“When we received the email letting us know that we would be honored in the Legacy Seat, I was really in disbelief,” Olson said. “It didn’t seem possible that our efforts to bring girls soccer to LHS would mean this much. I feel very proud of all the work that the entire fundraising committee did; it was truly a group effort to reach our goal in such a short period of time.

“Although I don’t have a daughter of my own, I have met so many amazing young women athletes in our community that deserve this opportunity to play for their high school and I am thrilled that they now have that chance.”

Olson and Moore were honored for their service on the jumbotron before and during the game. The two were also featured during the Fox Sports Kansas City broadcast of the game. Louisburg head coach Kyle Conley and assistant Michael Pickman joined them on their special day.

“To receive the award during the Royals game was the icing on the cake,” Moore said. “It was great that we were able to have coach Conley and coach Pickman there to share the honor with us. Our job is done. We helped get the team. Now it is theirs.

“To be honest the best award of all will be watching the girls take the field the first time this spring and every year thereafter. “It’s a pretty incredible feeling knowing you helped make that happen.”

This wasn’t even the first honor for the fundraising committee. In February, the group received the Sprint Teamwork Award during the WIN for KC Women’s Sports Awards Celebrations.

The Women’s Intersport Network for Kansas City (WIN) was

established in 1994 with the mission to empower girls and women through advocating and promoting the lifetime value of sports and fitness, while providing opportunities for participation and leadership development. WIN is a volunteer, membership-driven organization that operates as a program under the umbrella of the Kansas City Sports Commission and Foundation.

The fundraising efforts are done. The honors are now in the past, but the future of LHS girls soccer is on firm foundation thanks to the work of Olson, Moore and several other Louisburg community members.

As fun as the award ceremonies and baseball games were for both them, they are just looking forward to March when they can see all their hard work come to a realization.

“I am hopeful that what we helped do for the girls in Louisburg will have a lasting impact,” Moore said. “We never imagined we would win awards and be honored like we have. But it does make you step back and realize what our committee did was pretty amazing. I am proud to have worked with a group of people that were determined to make this happen for our girls.”

Louisburg will take the field for the first time on March 22 when they travel to Harmon High School in its season opener. The Lady Cats home opener will be on March 24 against Tonganoxie.

“After all the amazing experiences we have had, the truly amazing day will be when they take the field for the first time at Harmon, as well as their first home game,” Olson said. “I look forward to cheering them on as LHS Wildcats. Last night was truly a great honor to be recognized for all the hard work, but it still seems unreal.”



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# Opinion: Rough patch leads to new beginning



I am just going to come right out and say it, “I’m scared.”

Yeah, it is an unusual way to start out an opinion piece, but there is no two ways around it – I am petrified. But believe it or not, it is what keeps me going.

We have all had at least one point in our existence where our lives changed for better or worse. I have had more than a few of those in my life, but the latest one came on Jan. 9.

It started out like all the other Fridays over the last seven years. I reported to work, spent a few hours in the office getting ready for what was a busy weekend of prep coverage ahead. It was the first action after Christmas break and I was ready to get back into the swing of things.

That never took place.

My bosses came into my office early that afternoon to inform me I was being let go. The job of covering Louisburg athletics was no longer mine. I packed up my things, turned in my key, went home, punched the wall a couple times and cried.

I was scared.

After all the tears came the questions. How was I going to

support my family? What am I going to do for a job? The list went on and on and I couldn't come up with many answers.

As it turned out, one of the worst experiences of my life turned into one of the best.

Thanks to a lot of prayers, and support from family and friends, I decided to start Louisburg Sports Zone. Yep, that's right, I went from being unemployed to starting my own business for the first time in my life.

Not exactly the best way to alleviate fears.

However, when I kicked off the site just a month later, I was overwhelmed with the amount of support from students at Louisburg High School, employees throughout the district, parents and several others who offered encouragement and supported my new venture.

I finished the last half of the winter season and all of the spring doing what I took for granted the previous seven years. I got the chance to cover Louisburg athletics again.

You know, this whole starting your own business thing might not have been a bad idea after all. I would have never had the courage to go out on my own had I not been pushed in that direction.

Fast forward to the present and I am still alive and kicking, ready to start my eighth season of roaming the Wildcat sidelines with camera in hand, waiting to tell that next story.

This fall brings a lot of story lines to the Wildcat programs. The football team is looking to improve off its 3-win season a year ago and find its way back to the playoffs with a veteran group returning.

Volleyball is primed and ready to make its fourth consecutive state tournament this year after placing in the top four in

the last three years. The Lady Cats return five seniors that have a lot of state experience and that bodes well for another trip to Salina.

The Wildcat soccer team returns an experienced group from a year ago as they try to crack the top of the Frontier League standings. The cross country team also has several returning runners who will try and qualify for the state meet.

There is a lot to be excited about when it comes to Louisburg sports, but for me personally, I am just fortunate enough to still be a part of it in a small way.

I take a lot of pride in what I do and I hope that it shows when you read stories or look at pictures on this site. I started this business knowing that I will never be rich, but it gives me an opportunity to continue to do what I love.

Thanks to all those who have supported me and for the more than 23,000 views on the site in the last six months. I have said it before, but I am extremely blessed to live in a community that supports each other through good times and bad.

Every day I am fortunate enough to be able to go to work and support my family doing what I know how to do. That is all I have ever wanted, so thank you Louisburg for allowing me to do it.

I am still scared, though.

It is that fear that drives me to do the best I can in what I do in my job and in life. I don't want what happened on that day in January to happen again and I will do everything to make sure it doesn't.

Right now I am living the good life. I have the opportunity to work for myself, support my family and do what I enjoy. I can't ask for any more.

I am living the American dream.

I just don't want to wake up.