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.

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 16th 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 67th 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 74th 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 57th 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."

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.

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.

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.”

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 40th 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 13th 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 71st.



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.

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.

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.”

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.

Girls soccer team prepares for season



Louisburg’s Bailey Belcher (left) and Rylee Bergh battle for a 50-50 ball during the Lady Cats’ team camp Friday at Louisburg High School. The girls soccer team has been working together since June 1 to prepare for its inaugural season in the spring.

This wasn’t just an ordinary team camp – it was a little more unique.

Last week’s camp marked the first official team activity for the Louisburg High School girls soccer team as the Lady Cats took their first step in the program’s infancy. Approximately 24 attended the team camp throughout the week as they begin to build their program.

“It doesn’t feel real yet,” senior Maddie McDaniel said. “It just feels like we are a bunch of girls getting together for a scrimmage or something. It is a weird feeling, but it has been

good.”

The challenge of building a new a program falls on the shoulders of head coach Kyle Conley as he tries to mold this group of players into a team. He got off to a good start last week as he got a better look at his group.

The Lady Cats have been holding practices since June 1, but Conley was able to work with his team on a more consistent basis last week and he liked what he saw.

“Things went good,” Conley said. “We have been practicing since the beginning of June and there has been a lot of improvement. There are a lot of kids that haven’t played in years or haven’t played at all. The improvement from day one till now is vast. The girls are really working hard right now. We have great numbers, the kids are here, sticking with it and doing what we ask them to do.”

Conley is no stranger to the game of soccer, in fact, the Pennsylvania native has played the game at a high level for most of his life. He attended Ottawa University and started all four years and was also named to the school’s all-decade team.

He also travels to the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, to help with a camp and helps out with another at Messiah College in his former home state.



Louisburg girls soccer coach Kyle Conley gives instructions to his team Friday during the Lady Cats' team camp.

However, starting a high school soccer program has been a little change of pace for Conley, but one he has embraced.

"It has been different," Conley said. "When you start a program you are dealing with a whole spectrum of athletes, whether they are experienced players or ones that haven't played before. Dealing with that spectrum is different for me because the camps I do in the summer and the kids I work with are usually at a certain level.

"It is making me step back and change how I teach to ensure that I am getting every kid the improvement they did and to challenge even the better kids. It has been fun and relaxing so far. It hasn't been stressful yet, which is a good thing I guess."

Several of the players have already learned a lot from their new coach, including two of the senior leaders in McDaniel and Rylee Bergh. Conley has made the transition from club to high school soccer a smooth one for those two girls in particular.

"It went a lot better than I expected," Bergh said. "I really like how Conley is coaching this team. The best team I was ever on is when we played as a team and not an individual person. He is creating a team and he is making every individual person better. I saw girls at the beginning of the week who couldn't get a good touch on the ball, and now they are getting good touches."

Conley is joined by assistant coach Michael Pickman, who also played at Ottawa for four years. The two coaches bring the same philosophies to the table and has given the players a

consistent message.

“A lot of these girls have never played together, so chemistry is always huge,” Conley said. “Just getting to know each other and figuring out their tendencies is big. I am always evaluating every time I see a kid. I go home after every practice and write notes on each kid. I even think about what the lineup might look like even though we are still nine months away from the season.”

“I just wanted to use this camp to get to know each girl and for them to get to know me and coach Pickman. I think we accomplished that for the most part.”

The Lady Cat program was started with the help of the Louisburg Soccer Club and other individuals and businesses in and around Louisburg. In just a year’s time, they were able to raise the $39,000 needed to fully fund the program for three years.

Conley fully sees the passion for girls soccer in Louisburg and is excited to be a part of it.

“It is a fantastic opportunity,” he said. “The individuals involved who raised all this money to make this opportunity to be available for the girls is just unbelievable. It is going to be fun for me. My expectations are going to be extremely high and we are going to push ourselves. It is going to be pretty special.”

Although the first practice is still nine months away, the Lady Cats are already well on their way to becoming a team.

“It has been exciting,” McDaniel said. “It has been a little rough at times but it is fun playing with these girls. They are getting better. It is very cool to see this team come together.”

Summer camp information

Summer camps at Louisburg High School aren’t too far away and here is some information if you are interested in signing up.

FOOTBALL

LHS football coach Kyle Littrell is holding his team camp on June 15 through 19 on the team’s practice field just outside the high school. The cost for the high school camp is $45 and includes insurance, a T-shirt and shorts.

Littrell will also conduct a middle school and elementary school camp. The seventh and eighth-grade camp will run from 10 a.m. to noon on June 15 through 18 and will cost $35. There will also be an elementary camp from 8:30 to 10 a.m. on June 15-17 for grades 3-6 and will cost $25. Both camp fees include a T-shirts.

For more information, contact Littrell at 837-1720 or littrellk@usd416.org.

BOYS BASKETBALL

Head boys basketball coach Jason Nelson is conducting his team camp from 2 to 4:30 p.m. on June 8 through 12 in the LHS gymnasium. The cost for the high school camp is $50 and includes a T-shirt.

Nelson will also hold a junior high and elementary school camp as well. The session for sixth through eighth-grade will run from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on June 8 through 11 and the cost

is $45. The third through fifth-grade camp will run from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. on June 8 through 10 and is $40. Both camps include a T-shirt.

All three camps will have a heavy emphasis on fundamentals. The due date to sign up is May 23. For more information, contact Nelson at (913) 963-8421 or nelsonj@usd416.org.

VOLLEYBALL

LHS head volleyball coach Jessica Compliment will hold camps from fifth-grade on up through high school this July.

On July 13 through 17, Compliment will conduct the high school camp from 1 to 4 p.m. and the cost is $45. The seventh and eighth-grade camp will run from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on July 13 through 16 and costs $35. The fifth and sixth-grade session will go from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. on July 13 through 15 and costs $30.

Deadline to sign-up for the camps is May 15 and all costs include a camp T-shirt. For more information, contact Compliment at (785) 766-3758 or complimentj@usd416.org.

WRESTLING

LHS head wrestling coach Bobby Bovaird will conduct a beginners and advanced camp on June 22 through June 25 in the LHS gymnasium

The beginners camp is for novice and youth wrestlers and will run from 5 to 7 p.m. each day. The minimum age is 6-years-old. Children who will be in kindergarten or first grade must have adult supervision.

The advanced camp will run from 7 to 9:15 p.m. for high

school, middle school and experienced youth wrestlers. The cost for both camps is $35 and includes a T-shirt. Deadline to register is June 1.

For more information, contact Bovaird at (913) 424-0999 or bovairdr@usd416.org

GIRLS SOCCER

The LHS girls soccer program will prepare for its inaugural season this summer. Head coach Kyle Conley is holding a high school camp from 10 a.m. to noon on June 15 through 19 along with assistant coach Michael Pickman.

The cost for the camp is $40, which includes a T-shirt. Campers will need to bring shin-guards and a water bottle. Deadline to sign-up is May 15. For more information contact Conley at conleyk@usd416.org.

BOYS SOCCER

Head coach Ben York will be conducting his high school team camp on July 13 through 17. The cost for the camp is $50. For more information, contact York at benyork13@gmail.com.

Louisburg girls soccer committee receives award



For the Louisburg High School girls soccer fundraising committee, it is hard to be more inspired than after raising $36,000 in 10 months to nearly fund the program.

Three weeks ago, they found out they could.

The committee received the Sprint Teamwork Award on Feb. 13 during the WIN for KC Women's Sports Awards Celebrations at the Sheraton Crown Center in Kansas City, Mo. Their efforts for girls soccer in Louisburg got them noticed by the Kansas City program.

Led by Louisburg Soccer Club president Karin Olson and fundraising leader Diana Moore, the committee held fundraisers throughout much of 2014 and have almost achieved their goal of $39,000 to fund the first three years of the program.

"When you hear people say they are moved by our passion and inspired by 'our story' it makes you so proud, but at the same time we never even knew we had 'a story' until we won the Sprint Teamwork Award," Moore said. "We were just doing what we thought we needed to do to help the girls get the soccer team they so deserved. I've been on some great teams, but this team of ours is the one team I'm most proud to be a part of."

Several members of the committee attended the luncheon, including Louisburg High School junior Maddie McDaniel, who will take the field as a member of the first senior class in the program's history. McDaniel joined Moore and Olson on the stage to receive the award.

"Being with a great group of people like that is really an honor because they have so much heart and they care so much

about getting a girls team for the school," McDaniel said. "Getting that award at the WIN for KC banquet was breathtaking and was really so much fun to be with them. Having that experience of going there and going up on stage to get the award will be one that I will never forget."



Photos courtesy of Andrea Christy

Several Louisburg residents who had a hand in fundraising efforts for the last year made the trip to Kansas City for the award ceremony. Those pictured are (kneeling, from left) Amee Messer, Morgan Messer, Trinity Moore, Hallie Hutsell, Olivia Barber, Peyton Shaffer; (back row, from left) Andrea Christy, Maddie McDaniel, Karin Olson, Diana Moore, Gayle Hutsell, Stacie Shaffer, Angie Barber, Sara McIntyre and Angie McDaniel.

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.

“It was nice to see that others recognize how hard our committee worked over the last year,” Olson said. “Unfortunately, we still have about $2,000 to raise to meet our final goal.”

Along with their award, the group also had an opportunity to listen to featured speaker Amy Van Dyken-Rouen. Amy is a six-time Olympic gold-medalist swimmer and was also named the Associated Press Female Athlete of the Year.

In June of 2014, she was injured in an ATV accident that severed her spinal cord. Amy was paralyzed from the waist down, but has since made progress in her rehabilitation and shared her story with those in attendance.

“The other award winners and the keynote speaker Amy Van Dyken are amazing women and so inspiring,” Moore said. “To be able to be a part of it all and to have most of our committee, my daughter and the other girls there made the day even more special.”

The process will get even more emotional come spring of 2016 when Louisburg High School puts a soccer program on the field for the first time.

“I am out of this world excited to be playing soccer for my school,” McDaniel said. “You really can’t imagine how I feel every time I think about how I will be wearing that jersey and playing my favorite sport for my school. When the day comes that we take the field for the first time it will be overwhelming. It would be like I’m in a dream. I might start to cry as I am warming up or as the whistle blows to start the game. I know I won’t be the only one crying that day.”