

LHS sports preparing to start back up in June with summer workouts



Kansas high school sports has been absent since the middle of March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but that all could change very soon.

During its board of directors meeting earlier this month, the Kansas State High School Activities Association made a change to its summer regulations. Starting on June 1, school employed coaches may begin summer programs as long as it is permitted by the community's health authorities and the school district.

Coaches at Louisburg High School are making plans to move forward beginning the first of June, but they must meet some guidelines to do so.

In the first two calendar weeks in June, athletes will need to attend a conditioning session each day. Those must be completed to be able to participate in a coach's camp or organized competition.

If an athlete is playing football, they must complete an extra five days of conditioning before being able to participate in competition.

The first two weeks of conditioning sessions will not involve weights, indoor facilities or sporting equipment to ensure safety. Masks will be optional at workouts, but six feet of

distance will be in place along with no more than the 90 gathering restriction under the phase 3 guidelines put out by the state.

Then on June 15, barring no setbacks, conditioning will include indoor weight sessions and indoor facilities will be allowed. Coaches will also be able to hold camps and competition throughout the summer.



Louisburg football coach Robert Ebenstein has plotted out summer workouts for his football team beginning with three weeks of conditioning starting June 1

“I think the guidelines were set to help ensure the safety of all student athletes accords the state, along with their physical health as well as the preparation for the season,” Louisburg football coach Robert Ebenstein said. “Challenges may be there, but overall they are irrelevant as all the teams in the state have to follow the same guidelines. Our school

administrators have been very supportive throughout this process.”

Along with the new changes, KSHSAA also lifted the moratorium period at the end of the summer and will allow teams to practice all the way up to the beginning of the school year. Fall sports, however, will take precedence from Aug. 1 through Aug. 15.

For some programs, the changes won’t be much different as what they have experienced in the past, other than practicing social distancing through the first two weeks of conditioning.

“We are still allowed to compete in leagues and camps after all athletes have completed 10 days of conditioning/training,” Louisburg volleyball coach Jessica Compliment said. “Our summer weights program is changing some this summer, so it gives the players a chance to acclimate back into workouts before putting a ball in their hands.

“When you really look at the schedule, we lost the first two weeks in June (in terms of volleyball skill work), but we gained the moratorium week and have full contact until August 16. The fall season starts on August 17. Normally, we can’t have contact, outside of weights and conditioning, after mid-July. This actually gives us about four weeks on the back end of summer to work with the athletes.”



Louisburg volleyball coach Jessica Compliment has her normal summer scheduled planned out despite a different start.

Still, the new-look summer won't be without its challenges – especially in the first 10 days of the summer calendar. However, the coaches and athletes will gladly work around the new rules in order to get back together and competing again.

“I think the new guidelines will help kids get back to some normalcy as long as everything continues to get better, but the six feet of social distancing could be challenging when you are coaching a team sport,” Louisburg soccer coach Kyle Conley said. “We will find a way to overcome these challenges and help the kids develop as much as possible.”

Coaches have already altered their camp schedules for the summer, and that information, along with a list of camps, can be found here.

As for Louisburg cross country, the runners will also be going through a conditioning period like everyone else. They will meet at the football practice field at 7 a.m. for an hour every morning beginning June 1 and that will continue through the summer.

Since school has been out since the middle of March, coaches have tried to find a way to stay in touch with their players – and like with online schooling – the zoom platform has been a big help for coaches.

“Football has been doing online zoom workout together for those currently in high school every Monday, Wednesday and Friday while we have been out of school, so I have still been seeing them and they have been doing some cardio,” Ebenstein said. “We have as normal of a summer planned as possible. We will have our weights sessions, our team camp, review/skills night, and we will have our contact camp that KSHSAA is allowing.”

With everything going on around the state and the country, everything is still in limbo and dates could have to be altered once again depending on what local officials decide. Even with all that, the coaches believe there will be a fall season.



Louisburg soccer coach Kyle Conley has tried to keep many of his same events for both the boys and girls teams.

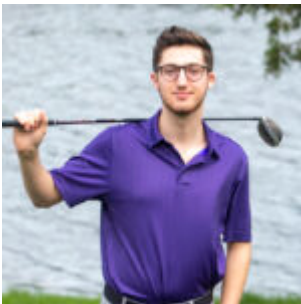
"I am confident our fall season will be played," Conley said "It may have some things that are different, but we will play. I know that the boys are very anxious in having conversations with some of them."

Many of the coaches and players are just ready to return to some kind of routine following the spread of COVID-19 and they hope sports can give that to them.

"As of right now, our season is scheduled, and we'll plan accordingly if told differently," Compliment said. "But for right now, (activities director Michael) Pickman has stressed that for most of the athletes, a return to summer weights/conditioning/activities will be their first taste of 'normalcy.' I'm excited to get back at it and see the athletes

and students again.”

2020 Senior Spotlight: Colin Cook



Louisburg Sports Zone will be running senior spotlights through April and May everyday (Monday through Friday) in an effort to honor seniors who had their seasons taken away due to the spread of COVID-19.

Colin Cook's favorite memory from his time with the Louisburg golf program was from a tournament that really never happened.

A year ago, Cook and his Wildcat teammates qualified for the Class 4A state tournament in Winfield, and even though it was eventually postponed and later moved to Dodge City a week later, it was that trip that left a lasting impression on him.

"My favorite moment of high school golf was getting to play at the state tournament the first time around before it got canceled," Cook said. "It was a really fun experience. We got to swim in the pool and hang out and tried to see a movie even though it got shut down because of the storms. I'll always remember the course and that moment."

That's not to say there weren't many other memorable moments along the way. Whether it was qualifying for state, or just

hanging out with his teammates, Louisburg golf meant a lot to Cook and he was looking forward to something even better this spring.

Cook was one of five returning golfers from the Wildcat state team and he was one of eight seniors battling it out for six spots on the varsity squad.

"I always get really excited around the spring time because golf season is starting up, but this year I was especially excited to get to play my final tournaments with my friends and hopefully make more memories at state like last year," Cook said. "It would've been a blast."

Like Cook, many of his other classmates at Louisburg High School have spent almost the last two months dealing with the fact that spring sports were cancelled. He would never get an opportunity to – not only play golf for Louisburg – but have those memorable moments to wrap up his senior year.

"It's been pretty rough for me," Cook said. "I went into spring break and was actually looking forward to coming back and playing golf and getting to see my friends and teachers, but in the blink of an eye it wasn't possible anymore. I think I speak for a lot of people that we took school for granted and didn't know just how much we will miss it until it's gone. I'm going to miss high school a lot."

The eight member senior class certainly made it's footprint in school history with its state berth from last season and Cook will certainly miss his teammates.

"My fellow seniors are all my best friends and I have been playing with them for a long time now," Cook said. "Most of them I have even played other sports with since we were little kids, so it was a really good time getting to share our final moments in high school together playing a sport we all enjoy. There is going to be a huge void in the team next year since there are so many of us, and I hope we left our mark on the

team.”



Colin Cook was one of five returning golfers from the Wildcats’ state tournament team a year ago.

On the positive side, when this all passes, golf is a sport that he will get an opportunity to tee it up with his teammates again and it is something that has been a big part of his life since middle school.

“I have played golf for about five years or so,” Cook said. “I didn’t learn it at a young age and didn’t have anyone of my family that played it. I just thought I would give it a try and joined a summer camp in the seventh grade and have loved it ever since. Golf is a life-long sport so I will continue to use it even if not in high school.”

Other than golf, Louisburg Sports Zone also had a chance to catch up with Colin on how he has been coping with an early

end to his senior year and some of his other interests. Here are his responses from the rest of our Q&A.

LSZ: What have you been missing the most during this time away from everyone?

CC: During this time away from everyone I miss the normal day life of getting up and going out to do fun things on the weekend like a movie or going to new places I have never been before. I also miss getting up early for school and having an actual schedule.

LSZ: What is your most memorable moment as an athlete or in school, and why?

CC: I would say my biggest accomplishment as an athlete would be the amazing season we just had in boys soccer. We may not have gone to state, but it made me so proud to play alongside my brothers on the field and achieve such a great record. We may not have gone to state but we made history and we made our mark on that field. I'm really going to miss all the players on the team that I have gotten to know so well.

LSZ: What is your favorite activity/hobby outside of sports and why?

CC: My favorite activity or hobby is traveling. I love exploring new places and getting to see the world. I really love exploring national parks and I want to go to as many as I can.

LSZ: What are your plans for after graduation?

CC: My current plan after graduation is to attend KU in the fall and major in either exercise science or biology. I'm still trying to figure that out. I will also be taking the pre-med course classes and eventually go to medical school.

LSZ: What accomplishments that don't involve athletics are you most proud of and why?

CC: I am most proud of being able to go march in the Rose Parade. It was a huge honor to be able to march in such a huge event. We also got to march in Disneyland which was a huge bonus too. Not too many people say they get that opportunity to do tha.

LSZ: What do you think would be something that a lot of people don't know about you?

CC: Something that a lot of people don't know about me is I would love to be able to be an actor.

Colin's Favorites

Pro athlete: Tyrann Mathieu

Pro team: Kansas City Chiefs

College team: KU (Not for football)

Movie: Baby Driver, of course

TV Show: The Goldbergs

Song: Vienna by Billy Joel

Band/Musician: Queen

Pregame meal/snack: My whole fridge

Class/subject: AP Bio

Teacher and why: Sorry all teachers reading this but there just isn't enough of me to go around. There were other top contenders but I'd have to go with Kyle Wright. Wright is an awesome teacher and he loves his students and I could feel that every time I stepped in his classroom and anyone that knows him knows he is the nicest guy you could ever meet. He genuinely developed a bond with his students including me and I want to thank him for that.

Previous Senior Spotlights

Drake Varns – Golf

Trinity Moore – Soccer

Andrew Krause – Baseball

Kayla Willey – Softball

Anthony Davis – Track and Field

Garrett Rolofson – Golf

Shayla Aye – Swimming

Allie Boles – Softball

Michael Waldron – Track and Field

Avery O'Meara – Soccer

Ryan Haight – Golf

Andie Masten – Soccer

Lauren Cutshaw – Softball

Trent Martin – Track and Field

Erin Lemke – Soccer

Luke Wickersham – Golf

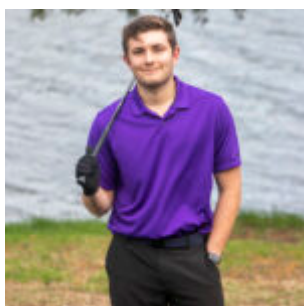
Skylar Bowman – Soccer

Gabby Dugger – Softball

Sydni Keagle – Track

Olivia Chase – Soccer

2020 Senior Spotlight: Luke Wickersham



Louisburg Sports Zone will be running senior spotlights through April and May everyday (Monday through Friday) in an effort to honor seniors who had their seasons taken away due to the spread of COVID-19.

Last season, Luke Wickersham moved back and forth between the junior varsity and varsity golf teams, but this year he was looking forward to earning that varsity spot for the entire season.

Wickersham, who helped the Wildcats to a first place finish at Paola last year, saw all the success the Wildcats had in the postseason and he wanted to be a part of the Louisburg team that returned to state for the second year in a row.

“I was extremely looking forward to it,” Wickersham said. “We had a really good varsity this year and I think we would have gone to state again without a question.”

The Wildcats won’t ever get to know what happened with the cancellation of spring sports due to the spread of COVID-19. Eight seniors lined the Louisburg golf roster and it was all set to be one of the most memorable seasons in school history.

“I have just been dealing with it like everyone else has,

doing my school work and trying to keep busy,” Wickersham said. “I’ll still go golfing with the guys like we always have and I work for the City of Louisburg to keep myself busy. There were a lot of seniors on this year’s golf team and it was a special class.”

It is that senior class that helped Wickersham get involved with the sport in the first place as golf really wasn’t on his radar screen growing up.

“I haven’t been playing it very long at all – maybe two-and-a-half years is about all,” Wickersham said. “I used to go with my friends to just mess around and I never was good because I was just messing around. I guess I just started having lots of fun and decided to try and get better at the sport and I did. I still have lots of areas of improvement, but I like it because of the comradery with your friends.”

Even though the ending to his high school career wasn’t what he was hoping for, he still has a lot of great memories from his time with the Louisburg program, including one in particular.

“My favorite moment was when it was my first tourney ever and they wanted me to get experience at a JV tournament so I would be better at the varsity ones,” Wickersham said. “It was a par 5 and I was on the green in four. I had like an 18-foot putt and Coach (Barry) O’Brien was on the other side of the green watching. I made the putt and he yelled to me ‘Luuuke, I am your Father.’ We had a running joke that if I left a putt short he would call me Leia, because of the Star Wars reference.”

Other than golf, Louisburg Sports Zone also had a chance to catch up with Luke on how he has been coping with an early end to his senior year and some of his other interests. Here are his responses from the rest of our Q&A.

LSZ: What have you been missing the most during this time away

from everyone?

LW: I really miss the comradery of the senior varsity golf team. I do miss school because I got to see people, talk and have fun with all of my classmates.

LSZ: What is your favorite activity/hobby outside of sports and why?

LW: I like to hang out with friends and further my studies in aeronautics.

LSZ: What are your plans for after graduation?

LW: Plans are to attend Kansas State University and major to be a professional pilot.

LSZ: What accomplishments that don't involve athletics are you most proud of and why?

LW: Not really much, but I have been on the principal's honor roll for the past two years since Mr. Holloway became principal.

LSZ: What do you think would be something that a lot of people don't know about you?

LW: People don't know that I am going into the field of aviation.

Luke's Favorites

Pro athlete: N/A

Pro team: Kansas City Chiefs

College team: Kansas State

Movie: Saving Private Ryan

TV Show: Seal Team

Song: Simple Man by Charlie Daniels

Band/Musician: Blake Shelton

Pregame meal/snack: Trail Mix

Class/subject: Math

Teacher and why: Kasitz – Chief is just a funny guy who doesn't get caught up in all the common core stuff and just does his one thing and method of teaching.

Previous Senior Spotlights

Drake Varns – Golf

Trinity Moore – Soccer

Andrew Krause – Baseball

Kayla Willey – Softball

Anthony Davis – Track and Field

Garrett Rolofson – Golf

Shayla Aye – Swimming

Allie Boles – Softball

Michael Waldron – Track and Field

Avery O'Meara – Soccer

Ryan Haight – Golf

Andie Masten – Soccer

Lauren Cutshaw – Softball

Trent Martin – Track and Field

Erin Lemke – Soccer

Pickman named as new LHS activities director



Michael Pickman (left) was hired as Louisburg High School's new activities director and assistant principal last week following the USD Board of Education meeting. Current Louisburg AD, Scott Hinkle (right), will move to the middle school to serve in the same capacity starting next school year.

Louisburg High School will have a little different look to its activities department for the 2020-21 school year.

Following the USD 416 Board of Education meeting on April 13, Michael Pickman was hired to serve as the school's new assistant principal and activities director. Pickman will replace Scott Hinkle, who has been in that position for the last two years.

Hinkle will remain in the district and will move over to the middle school to serve in the same capacity.

"I had known for a while that I wanted to continue my education by getting a second master's degree, but I didn't really know which area," Pickman said. "I talked with current administration and was both inspired and encouraged to explore administrative leadership. This is the job I wanted because it meant staying in Louisburg and continuing to work with the

staff and coaches who I know have, can and will achieve great things when it comes to our students and student athletes.

“We are a Louisburg family and I want my daughter in the Louisburg community and school system, so I wouldn’t have done this anywhere else. The atmosphere from district leadership to the building leadership is top notch and I am ready to grow as an educator and work alongside (principal) Jeremy (Holloway) and the administrative staff at the high school and the amazing coaches and support them.”

Pickman has taught English at the high school for the last seven years and has also worked in the Prairie View, West Franklin and Maur Hill Prep school districts.

He has also spent a lot of time in the athletic arena as he has served as the Wildcat boys and girls soccer assistant coach, alongside head coach Kyle Conley, for the last five-plus years.

“It will be tough to give up all aspects of it, but the magic of these soccer programs will be especially difficult,” Pickman said. “Kyle has been an amazing person to coach with and his passion is contagious. Getting to start the girls program with him and the immediate success has been amazing. State finals and big wins and the atmosphere – some don’t ever get to experience that – and lastly the players, both boys and girls who have graduated and those who remain to carry on the greatness are why I said yes to coaching. They make the whole experience amazing and fun.

“So it will be hard, but I would also not have gone anywhere else to do a different job and so I will still be able to support the soccer players and every other student and athlete through my new opportunity and to do so the Wildcat Way.”

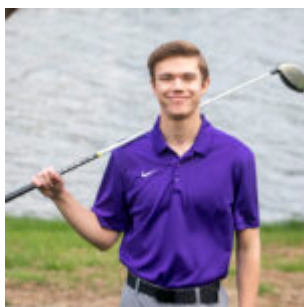
As for Hinkle, he spent the last two years as the LHS activities director after coming from Liberal High School. He is excited that his new position at the middle school will

allow him to spend more time with family.

“I really enjoyed my time at the high school, even though it was only two years,” Hinkle said. “I am leaving behind a great workplace with a great culture and an unbelievable staff. It was not an easy decision.

“I made the move to the middle school to get back some evenings and weekends. I have been an athletic director for 11 years at the high school level in my career, and I was ready to free up some time. I know I am joining another great staff at LMS, and look forward to the new challenge ahead of me.”

2020 Senior Spotlight: Ryan Haight



Louisburg Sports Zone will be running senior spotlights through April and May everyday (Monday through Friday) in an effort to honor seniors who had their seasons taken away due to the spread of COVID-19.

Ryan Haight was one of the first Louisburg golfers back to the clubhouse during what turned out to be a memorial May tournament in Paola.

The Wildcats were competing in the Class 4A regional tournament at the Paola Country Club and Haight had just

finished his round not knowing how the rest of his team did. They were hoping to sneak in the top three to earn a spot in the state tournament, but it was going to be difficult.

As it turned out, the Wildcats qualified quite comfortably. Louisburg finished third – nine strokes ahead of fourth place Ottawa.

“My favorite moment came towards the end of last year when we were announced as being a state qualifier,” Haight said. “As one of the first golfers back, it was very exciting to see all my teammates come in with extremely good scores. Once everyone finished, there was a lot of buzz throughout our team as we all tried to calculate our overall team score. I don’t think I can describe the joy we all shared after hearing that our team was going to state.”

Louisburg was hoping for even bigger things this time around. The Wildcats had five of the six golfers back from that state team and they were aiming high for the 2020 campaign.

Not only that, but the Wildcats featured eight seniors on the team – many of which got together in the offseason to play the occasional round and improve their game. It is a close knit group.

“There was a lot of anticipation surrounding the start of the season from all the golfers,” Haight said. “I personally was immensely excited seeing as it was our last go at state. Plus this was one of the first years we were considered favorites to at least qualify.

“It’s not very often that all your best friends make up the majority of the team. Ever since freshman year, we all bonded very well together and would continue to play golf together into the following summers. I think that is what made this season seem special – the fact that more than half the team had all been a part of one team for so long.”



Ryan Haight was one of five returning golfers from the Louisburg state team from a year ago.

Obviously, the Wildcats will never know how that final season turned out as the spread of COVID-19 halted spring sports across the state and closed schools.

“I think the only words I can use are speechless and stunned,” Haight said. “Going into Spring Break, I knew something like this was a very possible scenario, but it becomes surreal when it is your own school. The day the news came in I had just got my wisdom teeth out. However, hearing all my friends’ responses to the cancelation the following day was heartbreaking.”

Golf was supposed to be the perfect end to a high school career for Haight that included success on the Louisburg boys' soccer team, as he was a first team All-Frontier League player and was the Co-Defender of the Year in Class 4-1A. Still, golf was a sport that has meant a lot to him and his family.

"I have played golf now for roughly nine years," Haight said. "I originally got into the sport as something to do with my dad and my cousin. Every time I would visit my cousin, we made sure to at least get one round in before I left. Since he was also a high school golfer, it was always fun to be able to track each other's scores through KSHSAA throughout the season."

Other than golf, Louisburg Sports Zone also had a chance to catch up with Ryan on how he has been coping with an early end to his senior year and some of his other interests. Here are his responses from the rest of our Q&A.

LSZ: What have you been missing the most during this time away from everyone?

RH: I think the social aspect of school is what I miss the most. The ability to just say hi to someone is something I think I took for granted. I guess you never realize what you have until it's gone

LSZ: What is your most memorable moment as an athlete or in school, and why?

RH: Throughout my soccer career I have had numerous favorite memories. Scoring a hat trick against Spring Hill and playing in a state semi-final game are just to name a few. However, with all the tribulations I had this year, finding a way to lead a team to a regional championship as a captain is my biggest triumph.

LSZ: What is your favorite activity/hobby outside of sports and why?

RH: Ever since I was little, I have always loved to build with Legos. I guess I find it relaxing just to be able to create something amazing with just simple shapes. Even though the box says for 8 and up I still find joy in building a set. I personally have more Lego sets than I would like to share.

LSZ: What are your plans for after graduation?

RH: I plan to attend the University of Kansas and graduate with a Masters in Architecture and Design.

LSZ: What accomplishments that don't involve athletics are you most proud of and why?

RH: I have always been very focused on academics as well as athletics. So receiving the Kansas Honor Scholar award is by far my biggest academic achievement. I felt the award was a testament to my hard work.

Ryan's Favorites

Pro athlete: Marco Reus

Pro team: Sporting KC

College team: Utah University

Movie: The Lord of the Rings

TV Show: Lego Masters

Song: Mr. Blue Sky

Band/Musician: Electric Light Orchestra (ELO)

Pregame meal/snack: Quakers Granola Bar

Class/subject: History

Teacher and why: Coach Conley. He has encouraged me both as a soccer coach and history teacher.

Previous Senior Spotlights

Drake Varns – Golf

Trinity Moore – Girls Soccer

Andrew Krause – Baseball

Kayla Willey – Softball

Anthony Davis – Track and Field

Garrett Rolofson – Golf

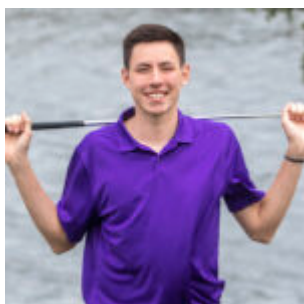
Shayla Aye – Swimming

Allie Boles – Softball

Michael Waldron – Track and Field

Avery O'Meara – Girls Soccer

2020 Senior Spotlight: Garrett Rolofson



Louisburg Sports Zone will be running senior spotlights through April and May everyday (Monday through Friday) in an effort to honor seniors who had their seasons taken away due to the spread of COVID-19.

Garrett Rolofson remembers his favorite Louisburg golf memory quite vividly.

It was the moment when the Wildcats were on pins and needles waiting for their fate to be determined following last season's regional tournament in Paola. It was a nerve-racking experience for Rolofson and the rest of his teammates.

"We were all sitting in the club house nervously awaiting for the last few scores to come in from Ottawa," Rolofson said. "I remember we were counting all the group scores over and over again because of how bad we wanted to make it to the state tournament. I remember when the last score was tallied and we knew we made it to state. It was a memory I will never forget."

Little did Rolofson know that it would be the last time he would suit up for the Wildcat golf team.

Inclement weather pushed back the state tournament a week and Rolofson was unable to participate due to a previous engagement. It was a tough break for him, but the silver lining was that he would get another chance for his senior year.

"This golf season was something I'm sure almost every golf senior was looking forward to," Rolofson said. "After making it to state last year, and returning almost everyone but Noah (Hill), gave us confidence and our goal was to place in the state tournament. We knew we had a good enough team to make it to state again, and there was no doubt we would have, but this time we wanted to place."

Unfortunately a team – that featured eight seniors – will never get that opportunity. The spread of COVID-19 canceled spring sports across the state back in March and high school careers for seniors were ended prematurely.

Rolofson was on the golf course of all places when he received

the official word.

“Drake Varns and I were on hole 9 at Paola Country Club,” Rolofson said. “We had just finished our afternoon round of 9 holes and were walking back to our golf cart. I received the notification that school was cancelled for the rest of the year and my heart sank. Drake and I were talking how maybe, just maybe, they would let us play our last year and find some way we could still play sports. But in the back of our minds we knew our high school golf careers were finished. It hit me really hard, especially because after last year’s state tournament initially got rained out and due to a scheduled vacation I couldn’t attend the new state tournament.

“I remember the countless rounds of golf we played over the summer to make sure we could go to state again and how hard we worked and now it’s all for nothing. It is still hard thinking about what could have been, possibly the greatest golf team to come through Louisburg High School, never getting to even play a tournament.”



Louisburg senior Garrett Rolofson was one of five returning golfers from last season's state team.

Golf hasn't always been a big part of Rolofson's life, but he has really caught on to the sport in the last few years.

"My freshman and sophomore years of high school I played baseball," he said. "I first started golfing during the spring semester of my sophomore year when Calvin (Dillon) came over to my house and saw my dad's clubs. We went to my backyard and started making our own holes, marking trees, bushes, and any object as a hole and played rounds of backyard golf.

"Over the course of a month, I remember when I first got invited to play a round of golf. I had no clubs, balls, a glove or anything. My dad let me use his clubs but my classmates helped me out with the other supplies. Ever since that time during my sophomore year, golf has been a major getaway for me. It's a way that I can see my friends, have a

competition with them and play this amazing sport.”

Although he experienced a lot of success in his short time with the Wildcat program, that part isn’t what he is going to miss the most – it is the chance to play with his seven other senior teammates.

“This class of senior golfers is a once in a lifetime type of group,” Rolofson said. “I had never played a round of golf until the spring of my sophomore year and I remember I was welcomed right into the group, added to their group chats, and was invited to golf every time they went out.

“This was something special because we would always go to get better, but also to have fun with our friends and have a little competition while always trying to invite more and more people to grow the golf team. Practicing last year, with a junior (now senior) dominant team was amazing because it was the group of boys we always golfed with and just got to go out and enjoy playing the game we love.”

Other than golf, Louisburg Sports Zone also had a chance to catch up with Garrett on how he has been coping with an early end to his senior year and some of his other interests. Here are his responses from the rest of our Q&A.

LSZ: What have you been missing the most during this time away from everyone?

GR: This time away from everyone has been harder than I first expected. It hit me last week that March 12 was my last day ever of high school. I would never have another class, sporting event or see most everyone ever again. The hardest part is knowing in five months I will be moving away and starting a new chapter in my life. I won’t get to see everyone I grew up with and spent 13 years of my life with, now knowing I won’t get the proper goodbye to my family of Louisburg.

LSZ: What is your most memorable moment as an athlete or in

school, and why?

GR: My most memorable moment as a student and student athlete isn't actually an achievement. Every memory I have of sports, from the golf teams' first state appearance in years to a historic soccer season this year – are all amazing and something I will never forget. But my favorite memory was listening to the golf playlist before every tournament and before every time we played golf. We would play these same five or six songs over and over before every round of golf because it was "good luck" and everyone singing and having a good time was always fun.

LSZ: What is your favorite activity/hobby outside of sports and why?

GR: My favorite hobby outside of sports is actually solving Rubik's Cubes. In seventh grade I was taught by Deven Wieland how to solve them and my fascination and obsession grew from there. I enjoy Rubik's Cubes because it's a very good stress reliever and is a way for me to just relax.

LSZ: What are your plans after graduation?

GR: I plan to attend the University of Kansas to obtain a degree in exercise science and minor in business with my ultimate goal of being a sport physical therapist.

LSZ: What accomplishments that don't involve athletics are you most proud of and why?

GR: I am most proud of lettering in academics every year of middle school and high school. It is a big achievement of mine because it shows how hard I worked not only on the sports playing field, but in the classroom.

LSZ: What do you think would be something that a lot of people don't know about you?

GR: If I could go to one place in the world right now it would

be Japan because I want to learn about the culture and way of life. I am one-fourth Japanese and I would like to travel to Japan and learn about my ethnicity.

Garrett's Favorites

Pro athlete: Rory McIlroy

Pro team: Kansas City Chiefs

College team: University of Nebraska

Movie: Avengers: Endgame

TV Show: The Flash

Song: LOYAL (feat. Drake) by Partynextdoor

Band/Musician: Post Malone

Pregame meal/snack: Peanut Butter and Jelly

Class/subject: Math

Teacher and why: Conley, because he is always there for me and through soccer has shown me so many valuable life lessons that I will continue to use throughout my life.

Previous Senior Spotlights

Drake Varns – Golf

Trinity Moore – Girls Soccer

Andrew Krause – Baseball

Kayla Willey – Softball

Anthony Davis – Track and Field

2020 Senior Spotlight: Drake Varns



Louisburg Sports Zone will be running senior spotlights everyday (Monday-Friday) through April and May in an effort to honor seniors who had their spring seasons taken away due to the spread of COVID-19.

Since last June, Louisburg senior Drake Varns had been waiting for one more shot at playing with his team at the highest level.

Varns and the Wildcat golf team qualified for the Class 4A state tournament a year ago and were the first Louisburg squad since 1977 to go to state as a team. With a majority of the Wildcats back from last season, expectations were high all-around.

“There were no possibly about it, we were most definitely going back to state,” Varns said.

Varns ended the 2019 campaign on an exciting note as he took 10th at the regional tournament and earned a medal. He went on to finish 34th at the state tournament and it was a memorable time for him and the rest of his team.

It was a different state tournament than in year’s past as the team made the drive to compete at state in Winfield, but torrential rains forced it to be postponed for a week and it was eventually moved to Dodge City.

“Going to state was a great time,” Varns said. “The characters we had on the golf team, plus the coaches, really made the drives and stay a fun and exciting time.”

“Playing last year at state was definitely a blast, especially with the extension. It just allowed us more time together as a team. After state, we all knew we were gonna be back with everyone we had returning.”

Unfortunately, that would not be the case.

The spread of COVID-19 canceled, not only school, but the spring sports season as well and left seniors across the state in shock as their final seasons of competition was taken from them.

“I really do not care about the graduation, the prom or anything like that, but, when golf was canceled I was devastated,” Varns said. “I just wanted to play with the boys one last time.”

Expectations were high for the Wildcats this season as they returned five of the six members from last year’s state team and had eight seniors in all. To prepare for one last campaign, many of the seniors got together for practice rounds in the fall and spring.

It was not just about qualifying for state again, but they had high expectations for themselves. Varns, along with teammate Calvin Dillon, are both playing golf in college next season and the Wildcats wanted to make sure they were ready for one final run at it.



Senior Drake Varns earned a regional medal a year ago and helped the Wildcats to a state tournament appearance last season.

“When you have two college athletes on one team and one who has been playing since they were 5-years-old (Dillon), you know you’re going to be good,” Varns said. “But, the supporting roles were the true stars of the show always coming in when most needed. We have a bond that most teams do not have and teams like this don’t lose – that’s just a fact.”

Golf has been a big part of Varns’ high school career, but it hasn’t always been that way. In fact, it wasn’t until high school when he actually got into the spot.

“I started truly golfing my freshman year,” Varns said. “I got into it by getting cut from the baseball team. From then on, I just fell in love with golf.”

Other than golf, Louisburg Sports Zone also had a chance to catch up with Drake on how he has been coping with an early end to his senior year and some of his other interests. Here are his responses from the rest of our Q&A.

LSZ: What have you been missing the most during this time away from everyone?

DV: I've been missing, well, everyone. I'm a pretty big people person so this time away from my friends has really taken its toll.

LSZ: What is your most memorable moment as an athlete or in school and why?

DV: My most memorable moment has been either state golf, of course, or the feeling of making that 41 yard field goal during football. That was great. Really it was just the feeling of accomplishment of both.

LSZ: What is your favorite activity/hobby outside of sports and why?

DV: My favorite activity outside of golf is – golf. Just kidding, it would probably be fishing or hunting. I love the peacefulness, I guess.

LSZ: What accomplishments that don't involve athletics are you most proud of and why?

DV: My most proud accomplishment is owning a 1981 El Camino.

LSZ: What are your plans for after graduation?

DV: I plan to attend St. Mary's of the Woods (Indiana) to study Natural Sciences and play golf.

LSZ: What do you think would be something that a lot of people don't know about you?

DV: A lot of people don't know I'm a tank on the saxophone.

Drake's Favorites

Pro athlete: Tiger Woods

Pro team: Kansas City Chiefs

College team: Mizzou

Movie: Happy Gilmore

TV Show: Criminal Minds

Song: Just the Two of Us – Grover Washington

Band/Musician: Billy Joel

Pregame meal/snack: Enchiladas

Class/subject: Science

Teacher and why: Big Bear (Barry O'Brien) – I've never had him as a teacher, but he's my dawg

Players, coaches mourn loss of spring sports season



Louisburg softball, along with the rest of the Wildcat spring sports teams, saw their season come to a close with the spread of COVID-19.

It has been almost a week since Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly closed all schools for the rest of the 2019-20 school year due to the spread of COVID-19.

When most students hear school has been closed, especially in the winter, cheers erupt. In this case, however, the tone was much more somber – especially among the senior class.

Proms were canceled. Any plans they had for a graduation ceremony were put on hold, and for more than 30 seniors, their last opportunity at playing a sport at Louisburg High School was taken away.

In fact, close to 200 students were planning on participating in an activity in the spring, but with no school, the Kansas State High School Activities Association followed suit and canceled the spring season the day after Gov. Kelly's declaration.

Students, parents and coaches alike have had to come to grips that a season they had been looking forward to all year, was never going to happen. Tears flowed, walls were punched in frustration and some were left speechless.

There would be no game days, no Senior Nights and no postseason runs. Athletes had to figure out how to cope with this fact – and in many cases – are still trying to do so.

GIRLS SOCCER

Mackenzie Scholtz didn't spend as much of her Spring Break relaxing with family and friends as she wanted.

Instead,

she found herself focused on social media, constantly checking updates on what was going to happen with the rest of her senior year. She was scared that her final soccer season was going to be taken away from her.

Turns out, those fears became a reality.

“When I read it for the first time, I just couldn’t believe it,” Scholtz said. “I immediately broke down in tears. I think I cried for about four hours non-stop just thinking that I would never get to step on that field with my best friends ever again. I had such high hopes for this season too and had been so excited all year.”

Before this all came about, none of the 12 Louisburg seniors had any idea they had already played their last match as a Wildcat.

The senior class of Scholtz, Avery O’Meara, Erin Lemke, Lily McDaniel, Ashley Moore, Trinity Moore, Skylar Bowman, Haley Cain, Hannah Straub, Olivia Chase, Andie Masten and Morgan Messer provided Wildcat coach Kyle Conley with a lot of good memories, which left the news even harder to stomach.

Louisburg was looking for its fourth consecutive state final four appearance after earning second place finishes the last two seasons.

"The decision absolutely broke my heart," Conley said. "I couldn't in a million years fathom something like this could happen. I honestly felt the cancellation was harsh this early, but would have rather like to have seen a postponement and then reevaluate at a later date. This group of 12 seniors was going to be very special. If they would have returned to the state final four this season, they would have been one of only two 4A-1A teams to do this improbable feat. This group was 44-18-1 in their three years. I would be willing to bet this is the most successful program over those three years in regards to win percentage. Obviously, winning state championships would trump that, but we were extremely successful."

The one thing that has helped players get past this disappointment is that there are so many seniors to lean on and they have done a lot of that this past week.

"The amount of support from this team has helped me so much," Scholtz said. "As soon as we found out that we would no longer play, all of us seniors were sending nothing but love to one another as well as to the whole team. Individually, there were many messages sent showing how much we love each other and that this would get better. Coach Conley and the younger girls also shared a lot of great messages as well. Hearing positive words is really helping me get through this whole thing."



The 2020 Louisburg High School girls soccer team

Many of the 12 seniors and their parents were a part of the group that helped raise money to start the Louisburg program nearly five years ago. They had always dreamed of winning a state title, but the wondering what could have happened is the worst part for a lot of them.

“This group had three goals: they wanted to win a league title, to win a regional championship and finally win a state championship,” Conley said. “This would have been our program’s fifth year and everything was built for this season. I believed in this group and I felt we were going to compete for that league title and we were going to go back to the state final four. We wanted three banners: league title, regional championship, and a state championship. It’s so sad that we will never get the opportunity to show the state what this team is capable of accomplishing.”

BASEBALL

Kade Larson was all set to begin his first season as the head baseball coach at Louisburg High School.

Larson, who was hired late last spring, was looking forward to leading his alma mater and had high expectations for a group that was young, but returned experience from the year before.

Then came the news from KSHSAA to cancel spring activities, which left Larson, and the rest of the Wildcat program, speechless – including seniors Madden Rutherford, Andrew Krause and Kaden Oehlert.

“To say I am disappointed is an understatement,” Larson said. “I was very excited for this upcoming year. Being my first year as head coach I was more than ready to get the season underway and see what kind of team we had. I thought we could do some great things this year with the group that we were working with. For the short time we were able to practice, they had a great chemistry and worked super hard.

“I feel terrible for all the players having to lose a season like this, especially the seniors. Madden Rutherford and Andrew Krause were showing great leadership skills and I hate that they had their final season taken away. They are unprecedented times that I never thought would happen.”

Rutherford, who is a two-time All-Frontier

League player himself, was ready to make one final run with the Wildcats. Even though he has signed to play baseball for Washington University in St. Louis, he regrets not being able to have one final run in high school.

“Personally

I was just ready to just play ball again,” Rutherford said.

“My football season

ended with an injury, and two surgeries later I was just starting to get back

into the swing of things. I was excited for the baseball team this season; we

had a different looking coaching staff and a different mentality which was

evident at practice. I’ll always be left wondering what could have happened.”



Senior Madden Rutherford, along with fellow seniors Andrew Krause and Kaden Oehlert, all saw their high school careers come to a close with the spread of COVID-19.

As

difficult as it was for the seniors, the junior class will also have some

obstacles to overcome – especially for those who are wanting to play at the college level.

“To go with the seniors, this is also horrible for the juniors,” Larson said. “Junior year is a big recruiting time and a lot of these guys are missing that. So all around

this just is a bad time for an athlete, but I know they will work through it

and come back next year ready to go.”

Even
with all the hardships athletes are facing, including the loss
of a season,
several are trying to find the silver lining in it all.

“The
whole COVID-19 situation has made me appreciate what I have,”
Rutherford said. “It’s
hard to truly recognize how nice you have things until they’re
taken away. I
just hope and pray that things don’t escalate further.”

TRACK AND FIELD

Carlee
Gassman and Sydni Keagle were ready for the seasons of their
lives on the track
this season.

Gassman,
who is a returning a state medalist in the hurdles, was
considered one of the
best returning 300-meter hurdlers in Class 4A. As for Keagle,
she finished one
spot away from a state medal last year in the 100 hurdles.

Both
Louisburg seniors had high hopes, as did the rest of the Lady
Cat track team
that was ranked high in Class 4A in the preseason. That made
the news of
canceling spring sports all the more crushing.

“I honestly couldn’t believe it,” Keagle said. “At first I
was in shock and then I was just incredibly sad at this loss
of opportunity and
it’s taken a while to come to terms with the fact that I won’t
be able to
compete in my favorite sport one last time.”

Gassman felt much the same way as she earned three state medals as season ago. Along with sophomore Delaney Wright, who garnered four state medals, the two athletes figured to score a lot of points for the Lady Cats this season.

“When I heard the last quarter of my senior year was cancelled and knowing track would be over as well, I found myself crying about not having school,” Gassman said. “I never thought I’d find myself crying over school. I am just trying to keep my head high – there are better things to come.”

Girls coach John Reece said there were 34 out for track before the team departed for Spring Break, which was one of the bigger groups the Lady Cats have had in several years.



The Louisville 4×400 relay of (from left) Carlee Gassman, Rain

Pugh, Sydni Keagle and Delaney Wright were some of several returning Lady Cats trying for a big state performance.

"It is a huge bummer that everything got nixed," Reece said. "We had a chance to do some great things this track season on the girls side. We could have been a top three team at state with a handful of very talented girls. My heart goes out to the girls and the missed opportunity for them."

The same could be said for the boys as the Wildcats featured a big roster of 74 athletes and Louisburg would have been competitive in most events throughout the season.

"I am just extremely disappointed," boys coach Andy Wright said. "We had 74 boys out, which is the biggest number we have had in several years. We had multiple state qualifiers returning as well as some newcomers that could have helped contribute to a successful year."

One of those qualifiers was javelin thrower Michael Waldron. The Louisburg senior finished just a few feet away from earning a state medal a season ago, and now his attempt at getting there has been dashed.

"It's really hard to describe the disappointment I had when I heard that I wouldn't be able to throw javelin this year," Waldron said. "It was tough and very hard to wrap my mind around, it's tough

knowing that I had about a week of practice under my belt and a lot of preparation for the first meet of the year. Just finding out I wouldn't be competing at all was crushing."

The season was an important one, not only to Waldron, but to the rest of the track seniors as well. Anthony Davis (distance), Trent Martin (pole vault), Charlie Koontz (sprints, relays), Carter Anglin (discus), Garrett Harding (shot put) and Indy Strumillo (jumps) were all in their final year and were excited with what lied ahead. A few of them had already made plans to work out together over Spring Break to get some extra work in.

"I texted Carter Anglin and Garrett Harding about the fact that our season was over, since we all threw together," Waldron said. "It was tough for Carter because I knew he was thinking about a possible state appearance this year. For Garrett, it was his first year but he had some good success in the first few weeks with throwing shot put, so I know he was excited. It's just a bummer and we have texted each other, and comforted one another. We are just still in shock – it was like a slap in the face."

GOLF

Calvin Dillon has already had the best career in Louisburg High School golf history, and he accomplished that after his junior season.

Still, he wanted a lot more.

Dillon, who is a three-time state medalist, was looking for that elusive state championship this year and was considered one of the favorites going into the season. With the cancellation of spring sports it left Dillon, like many others, wondering 'What if?'

"It was definitely hard to hear that the regular season, as well as postseason were canceled," Dillon said. "It seemed like it happened all of a sudden. When you hear of professional and collegiate seasons being cancelled, you feel some remorse and disappointment for them, but when your own season gets cancelled, it becomes real."

The remorse for his own season wasn't what Dillon was feeling. It was the fact that he had hoped to lead a team – full of seniors – to its second consecutive state tournament appearance.

Seniors Drake Varns, Garrett Rolofson, Ryan Haight and Colin Cook all returned from that team, while other seniors like David Perentis, Deven Wieland and Luke Wickersham were also trying to vie for the final spots.



Five of the six golfers from Louisburg's state team returned in 2020 to try and make another trip to the state tournament. (From left) Colin Cook, Drake Varns, Calvin Dillon, Ryan Haight and Garrett Rolofson.

"We definitely had high expectations for this season," Dillon said. "With the heavy amount of seniors on the team, as well as our regional and state experience last year, we were really excited. I think the most disappointing thing for all of us is going to be the lack of closure. We were all looking forward to one last go-around, and to have our season disappear in a matter of days is devastating."

Like with every other conflict in life, the Wildcats are trying to make sense of it all and find a positive side to what has been a forgetful week.

“One positive that comes from this situation is the gratitude we will now have for our everyday lives,” Dillon said. “You never know when something catastrophic like this can happen, and we need to be thankful for the life we do have. Although this situation is disappointing for us, it was ultimately God’s plan. He is the one that is in control, and if we seek him in this time of discomfort, we will find the closure and satisfaction that we lost along with our senior season.”

GIRLS SWIMMING

It was an historic season before it even started as Louisburg would join the Osawatomie-Paola girls swim team for the first time this year.

Unfortunately, thanks to the pandemic spreading across the country, history will have to take a back seat for another year.

Head coach Maddie Carrigan was in her first year with the program after assisting with the boys team last winter, so finding out the news with everyone else was a little tough to take.

“It was really upset when I heard the news,” Carrigan said. “Obviously, I understand the reason for the cancellation of school and

sports season, so I completely back the decision. It was still a huge bummer for me because this was my first time having a high school head coaching role. It was a pretty big honor since I'm only 23 and I was super excited to try some fun new things I came up with for the girls. The first two weeks were already so much fun and the girls improved so much, so I can't imagine how great the whole season would have been."

Osawatomie-Paola-Louisburg had three seniors swimmers this season, including Shayla Aye from Louisburg and Brayden Hanf and Grace Shore from Paola.

In all, Louisburg had eight swimmers on the team including Aye, Claire Brown, Bailey Hallas, Sydney Keaton, Dana Mattison, Anna Morrison, Dagen Page and Reese Reitz.

"Everyone is really bummed, especially the seniors," Carrigan said. "We had a lot of first time swimmers, as well, so I hope this doesn't deter them from joining the team again next year."

SOFTBALL

Last year was a special season for the Louisburg softball team as the Lady Cats made a run to a regional championship and a state tournament appearance.

It was a great last part of the season for several of the Lady Cats.

Unfortunately, with the news of COVID-19, this year's version of Louisburg softball team will never get another chance at a magical season.

"When I found out my season was canceled, I was devastated," senior Reilly Ratliff-Becher said. "It would be the last time I ever played softball and it's just taken away from me."

The seven Lady Cat seniors were excited to begin this season, as was their coach, Nick Chapman. Chapman was in his first year as head coach with the program after spending last season at the junior varsity level.

After a couple weeks of practices, Chapman had barely gotten a chance to get to know his new team. Then he had to deliver the news that no one wanted to hear.

"This was not easy news to get," Chapman said. "It was even harder to have to tell the girls and even worse that I had to do it over the phone. It's still not real. Next week, we were going to get back to work and prepare for a special season. The girls had bought into what we were trying to accomplish. Just in two weeks, the culture was changing and girls were understanding what it meant to play team softball and do what is best for the team. The end of last week we had our first team bonding night.

The seniors set their team expectations and goals for the year. I listened to each of them say how excited they were for this specific year and to make one last run at it.

“I was crushed to have to tell them they weren’t going to get that chance. All seven of them helped mold this team into something special and set the tone for what Louisburg softball should be. I was excited for the product we were going to put on the field game one. I thought this year was going to be a season full of success.”

The seven seniors consisted of Ratliff-Becher, Allie Boles, Lauren Cutshaw, Kayla Willey, Kat Coolidge, Gabby Duggar and August Daniels. Some of those seniors were a big part of the Lady Cats’ state run a year ago, while others were looking to make an impact on the varsity level this year.

“I had very good expectations for this year,” Ratliff-Becher said. “As much as I feel bad for myself, teammates and my fellow seniors, I feel especially bad for Chapman. He worked so hard once he found out he got this job. I was so ready to learn and make him proud this season.

“I tell myself is that I have to think of other people in this situation. This could all be much worse. We are just containing this virus and protecting the

ones at the most risk, although it's going to be hard on everyone for a while."

Top 10 Louisburg Sports Stories of 2019



It was a successful, and eventful, 2019 for Louisburg High School athletics and for those who are connected to the Wildcat program. This past year created a lot of school history for LHS and several programs brought back state hardware.

Below are the Top 10 stories from 2019, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the explanation is the link to the actual story from the event.

When putting the list together, I took a lot of things into account – whether it was team vs. individual, popularity of the sport, historical achievements and the interest it drew on the web site. There were stories that I had to leave off that normally would easily make it. 2019 was that successful of a year for Wildcat athletics.

This year was a blast to cover and I was blessed to have the opportunity to go along for the ride with many of these. As much fun as it was, I can't wait for 2020 to begin. Looking forward to it!



10. Tucker, Ratliff-Becher win powerlifting titles, Tucker breaks state record.

Two Louisburg High

School weightlifters made their way to the top of the podium in March during the Class 4A State Powerlifting Meet at Basehor-Linwood High School.

Louisburg senior Kiefer Tucker and junior Reilly Ratliff-Becher both earned state championships in their respective weight class. Senior Jonathan DePriest finished third overall and several other Wildcats also earned individual medals.

Not only did Tucker win a state title in the 220-pound division, he also broke a 24-year state bench press record as he recorded a bench of 375 pounds to surpass the old mark of 365. He also won the squat competition at 505 pounds and had a total of 1,165 pounds to run away with the crown.

Tucker's total was the highest three-lift mark at the entire state meet in all weight classes.

"I had messed around with 375 and 385 before on bench, so I was confident that I could lift it if I had the chance," Tucker said. "I was more worried about my first lifts on bench at 345 and 365 because if I messed up on those attempts then I would not have had the change to even attempt 375. It was definitely a sigh of relief when I finally locked it out.

"It was a great feeling to beat the state record. To put Louisburg up on the record chart definitely brought a smile to my face."

Ratliff-Becher had a big day in the women's division as she won a state crown in the 180-pound weight class. She finished with a three-lift total of 575 pounds.



The Louisburg junior took first in bench press with 155 pounds, first in clean at 150 pounds and second in squat with a 270-pound lift.

“Winning the state title meant a lot to me,” Ratliff-Becher said. “I have put in a lot of time and

effort in weights class, so it's nice to see it has paid off. But, also because I feel as if I put out a message to girls that it's cool to be strong physically. I know that being sometimes the only girls in a class with a lot of strong guys is intimidating. Weightlifting is all about your own personal growth and seeing how far you can push yourself.

"I was honestly surprised I won because there are lots of very strong girls there and it's good competition. It's also fun to meet new people that have the same interests and motivation as you."



9. Golf qualifies for state, Dillon medals for third straight season

As the scores trickled

in to the clubhouse at Paola Country Club, the Louisburg golf team could hardly stand it.

The Wildcats were nervously waiting to hear if they had qualified for state, but they knew it was going to be close. Louisburg had to be in the top three of the team standings to earn a spot and the Wildcats had some tough competition amongst them.

As it turned out, the Wildcats had nothing to worry about.

Louisburg recorded a team score of 352 during the Class 4A regional tournament in May and finished third overall by nine strokes over fourth-place Ottawa. The Wildcat team of Calvin Dillon, Drake Varns, Garrett Rolofson, Ryan Haight, Noah Hill and Colin Cook all competed in the state tournament

Topeka-Hayden won the regional title going away with a 332 and Louisburg was just three strokes behind runner-up Tonganoxie, which had a 349.

“It feels great, especially with all the hard work we have put in the offseason and last few months,” Dillon said. “It was our goal coming in and we did it. I felt like we had a good chance. It was borderline with those four teams being as close as we are. I knew we had a chance, but it was nice to actually qualify. It was definitely a little nerve-racking waiting for the scores to come in.”

As impressive as that

feat was for the Wildcats, Dillon's performance blew away the rest of the competition.

The Louisburg junior won his first individual regional title as he carded a 1-over 73 to win the tournament by six strokes. Dillon's 73 was his best score on the season and he has now won all but one tournament on the year.

Dillon went on to record his third consecutive state medal and finished 11th overall in Dodge City after the tournament was postponed several times, and eventually moved due to weather.



8. Wildcat wrestling sends six to state, Moore earns first state medal

Back in early November of 2018, Austin Moore was in a sling with a broken collarbone and he wondered why all this was happening.

Moore suffered the injury during the regional football playoffs and he didn't get to finish his final high school season. Not only that, his hopes of getting his first state wrestling medal was in serious jeopardy.

A little more than four months later, Moore was on the medal stand with some of the state's best wrestlers in his weight class.

The Louisburg senior earned a fourth-place medal at 220 pounds during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in February at the Tony's Pizza Events Center in Salina. It was his first high school state medal and it marked the end of a long journey for Moore.

"It was pretty special for me to get a state medal, especially because it has been a goal of mine ever since I started wrestling," Moore said. "Overall, I felt like I wrestled pretty well, but I just wish I could've ended it on a win."

The Wildcats qualified six wrestlers for state, had three regional champions and took third place in the team standings during the regional tournament in Paola – all while not being able to field a full team.

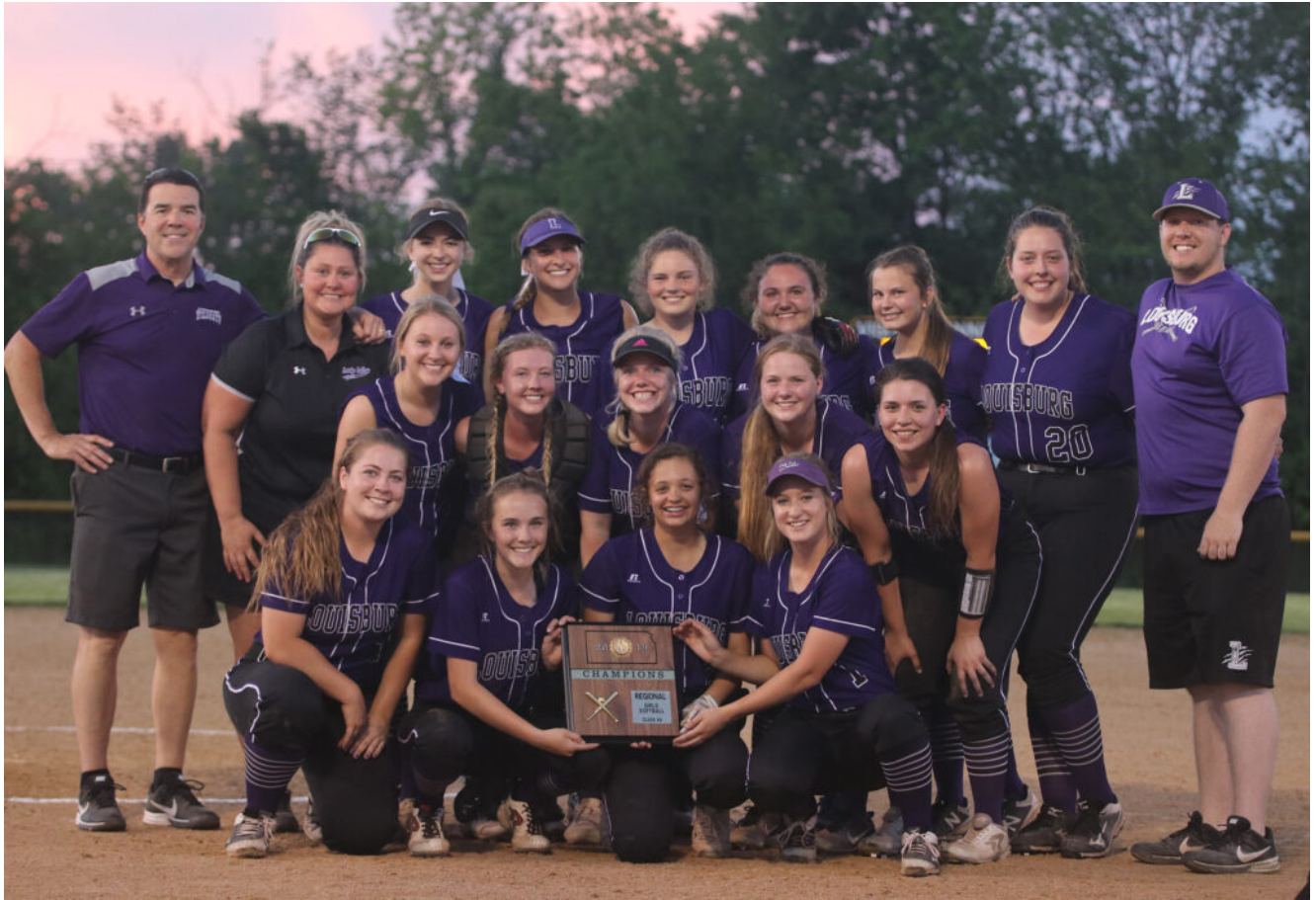
Louisburg's talent was

certainly on full display during the two-day tournament. Brandon Doles, Blue Caplinger and Austin Moore won regional crowns, Cade Holtzen was a regional runner-up, while Gabe Bonham and Ryan Owens also qualified for state by placing third and fourth, respectively.

As a team, the Wildcats ended up with 138.5 points and was just 2.5 points out of second place. Ottawa won the regional with 149.5 points and Eudora was second at 141. It was the highest regional team finish for Louisburg since 1998.

"The way these guys wrestled this weekend shows that the program has been doing so many things right this season," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "We've had the obstacle of low numbers, which hurt us in our duals, but when it comes to tournament time, we have a bunch of guys who are placing high and that gives us a lot of team points. Taking six to state feels pretty encouraging, and finishing third at regionals is an awesome statement for this team.

"If a few things had gone the other way, we would have been in second as a team. On paper, we weren't supposed to be in the race for a regional plaque. Almost all of our guys stepped up and scored huge team points for us."



7. Louisburg softball captures regional title

OTTAWA – Madison

Svoboda could feel her heart starting to come out of her chest.

Karson Griggs was a
feeling a little nauseous.

Those are some of the
same feelings that were flooding the Louisburg softball's team
dugout during the
final inning of the Class 4A regional championship game
against Chanute on
Tuesday in Ottawa.

Louisburg held a one
run lead, but Chanute had the tying run on third, two outs,
and a trip to the
state tournament was on the line. On the mound was sophomore

Brooklyn

Diederich, and with two strikes, the Chanute batter fouled five straight pitches.

The tension was mounting.

Finally, on the 10th pitch of the at-bat, Diederich got what she was looking for – a swing and miss.

The strikeout sealed the Lady Cats' trip to state with a 6-5 victory over No. 7 seed Chanute and sent shockwaves throughout Class 4A softball.

"I want to cry, but at the same time I am just really happy," Griggs said. "It is exciting because I never thought something like this could happen, especially this year. It feels really nice and now maybe people will actually start taking us seriously."

Not many gave people gave the Lady Cats a chance as they entered the Class 4A regional tournament with just five wins and were forced to begin tournament action in the play-in game.

After a 17-2 win over Parsons last Monday in the play-in game, No. 15 Louisburg advanced to the regional semifinals and upset No. 2 seed Ottawa, 9-7, which helped set up the Lady Cats' first state tournament appearance since 2014.

"I think a lot of

other teams underestimated us,” Diederich said. “The fact that we came out and played our hardest ball showed what type of team we actually are. It is just crazy.”

At the state tournament in Salina a week later, the Lady Cats faced off against Andale and lost to the eventual state champion in the first round, 10-0.



6. Cross Country qualifies for state, Moore breaks school record and takes third at state

BALDWIN CITY – One by one, members of the Louisburg girls cross country team crossed the finish line and coach John Reece was unsure whether or not his team did enough

to qualify for
state.

The Lady Cats had made
school history by qualifying the last two seasons, but the
third time was a
little bit in jeopardy – that was until the results were
released.

As it turned out,
Reece didn't need to be so worried.

Louisburg finished third overall with 96 points in October at
the Class 4A regional meet at the Baldwin Golf Course, and
beat out Bishop Miege by six points to earn a spot at the
state meet this weekend in Wamego.

The team of Trinity
Moore, Carlee Gassman, Reese Johnson, Claire Brown, Ruth
Minster, Kennady
Wilkerson and Bree Gassman competed for the Lady Cats at
state.

"This group of girls runs
well, they race well and they train well together," coach
Reece said. "They are
a good group and this is just as exciting as the other two
times. The
competition was a lot tougher than the previous two times. We
had to run our
races and we did. From our third to fifth runners was about an
eight point
spread."

Trinity Moore has left a
lasting impression on the Louisburg cross country program over
the last four
years, but she saved the best moment for her final act.

Moore broke her own school record with a time of 19 minutes and 39 seconds to finish third overall at the Kansas Class 4A State Cross Country Championships at the Wamego Country Club a week later.

The Louisburg senior recorded the program's best ever state finish as she eclipsed her fourth-place state medal from a season ago.

"It meant so much to me to finish with such a great race for my high school career," Moore said.

"Going into the race, I didn't know how well I would finish. This race had the best competition that I have ran against all year and I think that is what really pushed me.

"When I saw my time crossing the finish line, I was ecstatic. I felt great the entire race and was able to control everything I did. Finishing third was icing on the cake. I was surprised but so incredibly happy to be able to place in such a great spot, but I also knew that this was what I had worked for all year."

This made the fourth state medal for Moore in her high school career and she improved on her state finish every year. Last season, she took fourth overall and bested her state time from a year ago by more than 30 seconds.



5. Boys Soccer wins league, regional titles to earn No. 1 seed in playoffs.

For more than 70 minutes, the goals for Louisburg were hard to come by and it started to leave an eerie feeling on Halloween night.

However, the Wildcats got their treat when it was all over.

Louisburg scored two goals in the final seven minutes of the match to earn a 2-0 victory over Kansas City Christian in the Class 4-1A regional championship game Thursday. The Wildcats (16-2-1) earned their third regional title in the last four years and advanced to the state quarterfinals.

"This group is special," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "It is going to be tough when it is

all over. This group has changed our culture. They came back to what this program believes and they have bought in to what we are teaching them. They have worked so hard since June. For these seniors, this is their third title in four years and I think it is a lot of fun for them.

A school record 16 wins, a Frontier League championship and a regional title are all something worth celebrating, but following the state quarterfinal match with Bishop Miege, all Louisburg could think about was the finality of it all.

Despite all those accomplishments, the Wildcats fell one win short of their main goal – a spot in the state final four.

Louisburg saw its season come to a close with a 3-0 loss to Bishop Miege at the Wildcat Sports Complex. The Wildcats lost to the eventual state champion, as Miege went on to defeat Wichita-Trinity on Saturday, 3-1, for the Class 4-1A state championship – the Stags' fourth in a row.

As difficult as the loss was for Louisburg, there was no forgetting how big of a jump the Wildcats made from the season before as they went from a 6-win team to one that earned the East's No. 1 seed in the state playoffs.

"Going 6-11 last year and seeing this Miege team almost mercy-ruling us in the regional championship last year in the rain, was a program changer," Louisburg coach

Kyle Conley

said. "After that was over, we talked about how things needed to change and it starts now. For our first practice in June, I told them that they are the ones that has to change them. Since day one, they have played for each other, played hard in practice and it was a total mindset change. When someone got hurt, it was the next guy up. We missed two starters for half of the year and it was always the next guy up taking advantage of his opportunity to fill in. The freshmen stepped up huge for us.

"This team is special.

16 wins is a school record and only two losses is probably a school record.

This team is incredible, played so hard and did everything I asked them to do.

They were always there to pick each other up and that is what this soccer

family is all about. It will be tough to say goodbye to these kids."



4. Volleyball knocks off Miego to win regional title, takes fourth at state

ATCHISON – The sub-state semifinal game between Louisburg and Bishop Miego had all the feels of a state tournament match.

Partially because a year ago, it was.

Louisburg met Miego in the state championship match only to see the Stags send the Lady Cats to a runner-up finish in two sets. Then three weeks ago the two teams met again, and like before, Miego dispatched of Louisburg in two sets.

However, Bishop Miego saw a different Louisburg team during the sub-state tournament at Atchison High

School – one they didn't expect.

The Lady Cats came out on fire and never let up in a 25-18 and 25-22 win over Miego to end the Stags' season. It marks the first time in at least 12 years, if not longer, that Miego will not be at the state tournament.

Since the state tournament began in 1971, Bishop Miego has made 39 state appearances during that time in either Class 5A or 4A and is the most in Kansas history.

"Our energy was going to be the difference in that match, so we knew we had to bring it," Louisburg senior Erin Lemke said. "We knew we had the same skill set as Miego, but our energy was what was going to pull us through there in the end. To get there, we just had to believe in ourselves and work hard this past week to give us the confidence that we needed."

However, even after pulling off a big revenge win that expended a lot of energy, the Lady Cats still had a sub-state championship match to play against No. 2 seed Atchison. The No. 7 seed Lady Cats took care of business as they won in straight sets, 25-12 and 25-15, at Atchison High School.

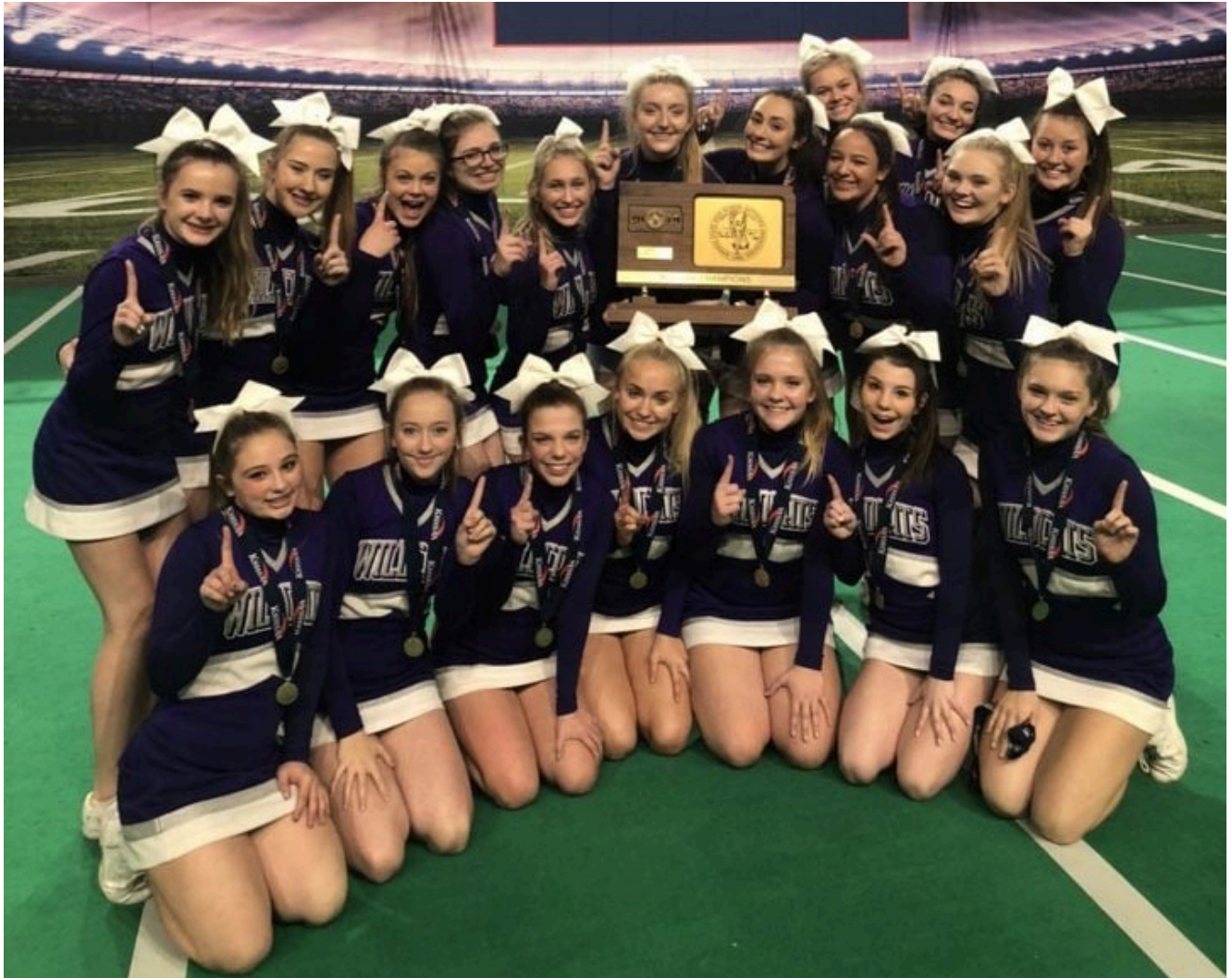
Louisburg lost its final two matches of the season, but those setbacks didn't take away from what the Lady Cats accomplished during the Kansas Class 4A State Championships.

For the third straight season, the Lady Cats were among the last four teams playing

and brought home a little hardware for their efforts. Louisburg took fourth overall after losing its third place match to Towanda-Circle, 2-1, in October at Hutchinson Sports Arena.

“Every season our goal is to put ourselves in the best position to qualify for state and then to hopefully advance to bracket play on Saturday,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “Leading up to state, we talked about how nothing is guaranteed and in order to make it to bracket play, we have to show up and play our best from the first whistle to the last whistle. If we play our game, then hopefully the winning will take care of itself and we’d advance.”

“The eight teams at state this year were all very talented. I was happy that we qualified for the semifinals because that put us one step closer to the championship. Even though we didn’t reach the championship match and finished fourth, I was still very proud of how the team played throughout the tournament.”



3. Louisburg cheer wins first state championship

The Wildcat

cheerleaders competed at the Class 4A KSHSAA Game Day Spirit Showcase

Competition on Nov. 23 at the Stormont Vail Events Center in Topeka and came back home with a big trophy in tow.

Louisburg edged out runner-up Augusta with a point total of 82.25 to 81 in the finals to secure what is just the third athletic team state title in school history.

"I was so nervous at the awards," Louisburg senior Lauren Vincent said. "We were all holding hands and had our heads down. We thought that we would get second

place at best, most likely third. We were content because we put everything out on the mat and did the best we could. But when they called out second place and it was Augusta, we screamed, cried, and hugged each other because we knew that we had just won.

“When our name was called for first, we jumped up and hugged each other. Then I ran out onto the mat and grabbed the trophy and we held it up and jumped around victoriously. It was the best feeling in the entire world. Knowing that all of our hard work had finally paid off was indescribable feeling of joy.”

The Louisburg cheerleaders that competed are Lexi Pena, Lauren Vincent, Ashlyn McManigal, Brooklyn Mitchell, Gabby Tappan, Andrea Gaza, Eleanor Willming, Jayden Trester, Lacie Kallevig, Sammy McDaniel, Mable Graham, Anna Morrison, Bella Feikert, Audrey Anderson, Sydney Dudzik, Kaitlyn Vest, Jolie Hendrickson, Abby Bradley and Zoe Cutshaw. Louisburg’s head coach is Jayna Guerra.

Not only were the Wildcats the third team to win a state title in school history, they were also the first female squad to win a team crown as well. All the history just added to what was a special day for the program.

“It means so much to me and all my teammates,” Tappan said. “As someone who’s been a part of a variety

of sports my entire life, I know how hard each of our teams work to do their very best in whatever sport they're a part of. We are so thankful that we got to make history for Louisburg and it is something that I can guarantee that each and every one of us will remember it for the rest of our lives."



2. Girls soccer takes second at state, Conley named coach of year and Scholtz, Buffington awarded players of year.

When it was all said and done, the Louisburg girls soccer team held its trophy high in front of the Wildcat faithful and the tears were easy to spot.

After nearly 200 minutes of soccer in a nine-hour time period, including one

match that ended in penalty kicks, the Wildcats were spent. They gave everything they had.

For the second consecutive season, Louisburg earned the Class 4-3-2-1A state runner-up trophy after a wild victory over Topeka-Hayden in the semifinals and then were shutout by Bishop Miege in the championship game, 4-0. It was the third consecutive state final four appearance for Louisburg.

Frustration and sadness was easy to see following the Wildcats' loss to the defending state champion, but the team realizes what they have accomplished in just four years of existence is to be celebrated.

"Being in this situation two years in a row is something that doesn't happen very often," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "There are a bunch of teams that haven't been to a state final four and we have been to three in three years. It is pretty cool and it is special."

It was a wild 24 hours for the Wildcats. Louisburg was supposed to play Hayden on Friday in the semifinals, but severe weather forced the postponement to early Saturday morning.

The Wildcats battled Hayden through four overtimes and eventually led to penalty kicks. After an intense first five penalty kicks that left the match still tied, senior goalie

Carson Buffington recorded a big save and then senior Hallie Hutsell converted the sixth penalty kick to break the tie and give Louisburg a 2-1 win over Hayden.

“We usually play 80 minutes, but this time we had to play 110 minutes and we were gassed,” Conley said. “We were holding on and had some chances at the end to win it, but then we went to overtime and then to penalty kicks. It was all about to see if we could survive. Emotionally it was just a high for us and an unbelievable response and a great finish. Carson making a big save, Hallie putting it in for the win – it was just a great game.”

In the championship match, the Stags were just too much for the Wildcats and junior Sophia Stram provided a big spark. Stram scored all four goals for Miego in the title game, all of which came in the first half, and the Wildcats didn’t have an answer.

“They are just so freaking good,” Conley said. “I think the girls were mentally ready, but I don’t think their legs were quite ready, but we lost to one of best teams in the state of Kansas. They have great players, they are well-coached, but our girls played their butts off.

Coming off its second consecutive state runner-up appearance, Louisburg had some positive repercussions from its historic season.

However, none bigger came when the all-state teams were released by the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association. Not only did six Wildcats earn all-state selections, but they were honored with some of the highest awards out there.

Junior Mackenzie Scholtz was named as the Co-Offensive Player of the Year in Class 4-1A with Bishop Miege's Sophia Stram after she led the Wildcats in scoring.

Louisburg was also recognized on the other side of the ball as senior Carson Buffington was named the Class 4-1A Goalkeeper of the Year.

"Seeing Mackenzie and Carson recognized for their positional player of the years was fantastic," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "They both had incredible years."

The Wildcats weren't done, as for the second consecutive season, Conley was named as the Class 4-1A Coach of the Year as he guided Louisburg to a 17-4 record. He also led the Wildcats to three consecutive final four appearances.



1.4×400 boys wins state championship, Wright wins four state medals and team breaks six school records at regional meet.

Three days after arriving in Wichita for the Kansas State Track and Field Championships, Justin Collins, Blue Caplinger, Ben Wiedenmann and Chris Williams finally got the chance to get on the Cessna Stadium track.

The four Wildcat runners had the top time in Class 4A going into the 4×400-meter relay, but weather threw a little wrench into their plans. The meet, which was supposed to end on a Saturday, was postponed to Sunday morning and all

races were judged by
times with no preliminaries.

It wasn't the ideal
situation, but they made it work – and it worked well.

Collins, Caplinger, Wiedenmann and Williams won the state championship in a time of 3 minutes and 25.39 seconds as they edged Chapman at the finish line, which ran a 3:25.61. It was the first state track championship for Louisburg since 2015 when Connor McMullen won the discus.

That was just one
event in what was an historic week for Louisburg track.

Louisburg freshman Delaney Wright earned four state medals, while junior teammate Carlee Gassman finished with three as the Lady Cats went on to finish 10th in the team standings. The Lady Cats earned several other medals at the state meet coming off an impressive performance at regionals.

During the Class 4A
regional meet at Paola High School, Wright qualified for state in four events,
broke two school records and earned a regional title in her first postseason
track meet.



Wright won a regional title in the long jump and finished second in the 200 and 400-meter dashes. She also helped Carlee Gassman, Rain Pugh and Sydni Keagle to a second place finish in the 4×400-meter relay.

“I am so grateful for everything,” Wright said. “I had been having trouble with my hip this week and I just wanted to come out and make state in at least one event. I didn’t realize I would make it in four. It is an unbelievable feeling.”

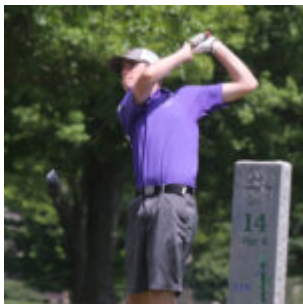
Wright’s day was just one of the many positives for the Lady Cats as they broke four school records, had four regional

champions and qualified for state in 10 events.

As a team, the Lady Cats nearly earned the regional runner-up trophy as they racked up 86.5 points and finished a half a point behind second place Baldwin and Bishop Miege, who tied for second. Paola won the regional title with 107 points.

The Wildcat boys also broke two school records and would end up qualifying for nine spots at the state meet.

Dillon excited for opportunity at tradition-rich Central Missouri



On Friday, Louisburg senior Calvin Dillon signed his letter of intent to play golf at the University of Central Missouri. Dillon is a 3-time state medalist and a 2-time Frontier League champion.

As Calvin Dillon walked into room 113 at Louisburg High School, he received a loud applause from several of his friends as it he sat down at the table.

Dillon doesn't usually hear that loud of a roar on the golf course – because well – that sort

of thing is

frowned upon among his fellow golfers. The ovation was well deserved, however.

After playing just three full seasons of high school golf, the Louisburg senior has already become the most decorated golfer in school history and that led him to the jam-packed room in 113.

On Friday, Dillon made it official as he signed his letter of intent to play golf at the University of Central Missouri, a Division II program in Warrensburg, Mo.

"I am ready," Dillon said. "It is really exciting and I am thankful I was able to make it official and I can focus on getting to work for next year. I wanted to sign early so I could play in the spring without any pressure and just go out there and play golf. I think that will definitely be an advantage for me going into the spring and summer. It definitely takes a lot of pressure off."

Dillon joins a Central Missouri program that has a lot of tradition in the MIAA. Under head coach Tim Poe, the Mules have earned 14 MIAA Championships and have made 27 straight NCAA postseason appearances.

Poe has been named the MIAA Coach of the Year 14 times as was recently inducted into the Golf Coaches Association of America Hall of Fame. He coached the 2015 NCAA Division II individual national champion and helped the Mules to a second place

finish in 2010.

“The coach at Central Missouri is really great,” Dillon said. “Coach Poe has been there for 30-some years and he is veteran. He has had multiple guys turn pro and he is very experienced. I really connected with him on my visit and I think Central Missouri has a very good program. They are more than likely going to be in the postseason every year and that was another big factor for me. I want to compete for a national title.”

Although he eventually found his future home, the decision wasn't always an easy one for Dillon as he took his time and visited several programs before deciding on a final two.



Louisburg's Calvin Dillon made it official last Friday during a signing day ceremony at LHS as he signed with Central Missouri. Seated next to Calvin are his parents Jim and Karen Dillon. Standing (from left) Louisburg assistant golf coach Barry O'Brien, Calvin's sister Katie and Louisburg head coach Brian Burns.

"It was definitely tough," Dillon said. "We visited five or six schools and then I narrowed it down to three and then to my top two. Those couple weeks were a little stressful, but it was a good stress to have and weighing the pros and cons. It was between Central Missouri and Drake University, and when it came down to it, Central Missouri was just the place for me."

Dillon has had a memorable career as a Wildcat through his first three seasons. He has earned a Class 4A state medal each of the last three years and has won 17 of the 28 tournaments he has played in.

He won the regional title this past May and is a two-time Frontier League champion. This past summer, Dillon won the Kansas City Junior Match Play Championship and had a top-10 finish at the Midwest Junior Championship.

"The competition is great," he said. "Kansas has some good golf and I think it helps me get better by playing in the state tournaments and ones over the summer as well. I think the KGA does a great job and put on some really good tournaments and there is a lot of good competition out there. It is a lot of fun."

However, it all started with his father Jim, who introduced Calvin to the game of golf at an early age and the countless hours improving his game has certainly paid off.

"Dad put a club in my hand early and we would just hit it around the yard," Calvin said. "We never really made a distinct decision that I was going to play college golf. I think it was just kind of assumed that I would or that I wanted to. It is a good feeling to officially sign and I'm ready to play at the next level."

So when Friday finally arrived, Dillon walked into 113 and saw a lot of familiar faces join him on his special day as he took the next step on his golf journey.

"It was nice to have all my friends here for this," he said. "It was really awesome to see and I am thankful for every one

of them. It was great to have them here supporting me.”