

# Wildcat athletes report back for summer conditioning



**Almost 80 high school girls attended the first day of summer conditioning on Monday at Louisburg High School.**

For the first time in almost three months, Louisburg High School and Louisburg Middle School athletes found themselves back on the field starting Monday at Wildcat Stadium.

It didn't include any balls, equipment, weights and wasn't indoors, but more than 300 athletes participated in the mandatory conditioning drills that were set by the Kansas State High School Activities Association.

"The turnout was exceptional, and considering the limit on group sizes, distance restrictions, and getting creative in using multiple spaces to accommodate the large numbers in appropriately sized groups allowed in phase three, these coordinators did a great job setting a standard," Louisburg activities director Michael Pickman said.

This was all following the cancellation of the spring season to the spread of COVID-19 and KSHSAA allowed school districts to begin conditioning exercises on June 1. The Louisburg school district started this past Monday and each athlete must participate in 10 sessions before being able to attend in any team activities or camps.

Several coaches were in attendance running athletes through drills in three separate stations that would allow some space

between everyone. Football coaches Robert Ebenstein, Ty Pfannenstiel, Joel McGhee and Drew Harding were on hand to lead drills, along with other staff from within the USD 416 school district.

“There are many coaches who are volunteering and just want to be there to support their athletes,” Pickman said. “It’s what makes the LHS coaching staff stand out from others. However, I have encouraged coaches not directly coordinating weights to stay home as much as they can with numbers restrictions, but so far we haven’t had that be an issue.”

High school boys begin each morning at 6 a.m., for the hour-long workout and high school girls follow and then it all finishes up with middle school. To start there were 121 high school boys in attendance, 79 girls and 126 middle school students.



**More than 120 Louisburg High School boys attended the first day of summer conditioning at Wildcat Stadium.**

To start the day, each athlete is screened before the start of conditioning with a temperature check and then they are divided into three groups. Each of them will participate in

three stations that focuses on different workouts. There are no more than 45 athletes in a group and the coaches design workouts to promote the six feet of distance.

“There were temperatures that needed to be taken and protocol for sanitizing hands and checking in that went efficiently and smoothly overall,” Pickman said. “A lot of planning went into this with the coaches to make sure it went well. And Mr. Holloway (LHS principal) volunteered his time to help take temps at the various sessions.”

As far as cross country goes, interested runners instead attend running sessions held by coach John Reece that will take place throughout the summer and they do not have to attend conditioning.

Whenever the athletes have completed their 10 sessions, they are allowed to participate in team activities the rest of the summer. As of right now, everything is on track to allow athletes to begin attending camps after June 29.

“Everything is progressing so far to according to schedule,” Pickman said. “Assuming the governor’s phase out stage begins when it is supposed to, we will be ready to begin using the weight room, gyms, and sports equipment. Coaches will be able to have practices and then middle school and high school age camps after June 29. The younger kids who do not have to have the 10 days of acclimatization are able to run the week of June 22. With the schedule the way it is, kids should have no problem getting their 10 days of acclimatization needed to participate in camps.”

---

# Dennis leaves lasting legacy in Louisburg, LHS athletics



Damon Dennis, and his wife Karla, pose for quick picture during a timeout at a Louisburg High School basketball game Dennis was announcing. Dennis, who is better known as Doc D, is handing over his business at Louisburg Chiropractic Office to Dr. Jacob Polzin and is stepping away as the LHS team doctor after 28 years of service. His last day at the office is tomorrow (Saturday).

Almost every day of the week, if you were looking for Damon Dennis, he could be found at his office on 11 S. Broadway St., helping treat those pesky aches and pains, taking X-rays, or mending those beaten up athletes after a game.

Doc D – as he is affectionately known – opened Louisburg Chiropractic Office 28 years ago and has served as the Louisburg High School athletic team doctor for almost that same amount of time.

Dennis has seen it all. The walls in his office are lined with mementos from his years of service to both the community and the high school.

He has taped thousands of ankles, seen even more patients and has touched many lives during his time in Louisburg. That is why this week is one of the more emotional times in his life.

On Saturday, he will officially leave Louisburg Chiropractic Office and hand the reins over to Dr. Jake Polzin. Add to

that, Dennis is also stepping away as LHS' team doctor and will leave an absence on the sidelines and behind the mic that many in Louisburg have come to know.

"My decision to step down and sell the practice has turned out to be the hardest thing I have ever done," Dennis said. "I have poured everything I have into my job and community. It has become my entire existence. I was taught from a young age to serve others and your community. I feel like the pressures I have put on myself have become unhealthy. I have put about 40 years work in to 28 and feel like there is never going to be a good time to make such a huge life change.

"That being said, I feel like I need to make changes while I am still able to do the things that will be best for my family. Dr. Polzin came along and I think he will carry on the work at the office wonderfully. We are a lot alike in many ways. I could not have found anyone better to replace me."

For many, Dennis has been a big part of people's lives, especially in the athletic arena. He has served as the LHS team doctor since 1992 and has treated many athletes in those 28 years.





**Dennis (left) and Dr. Jake Polzin pose for a picture in their office. Polzin will officially take over the practice from Dennis after this week, but both have been seeing the patients the last three months.**

During the school year, Dennis would leave his place of business every day after 3 to go to the high school to tape up athletes from all different sports and made sure they were all ready to go for practice. After that was over, he would rush back to his office to finish the day treating his patients.

It would be hectic life for some, but it is one that he has treasured for the last nearly three decades.

“My time in practice has been a blessing,” Dennis said. “I truly care about all of the patients and people in the community that I have been involved with. I have tried to be a positive impact on the town through my involvement in different organizations. As with any business, there are bumps in the road. I genuinely appreciate everyone who has had a positive impact on me through these years.

“I have poured my heart and soul in to every aspect of my business and involvement in the community, sometimes at the sacrifice of my wife, Karla. I am eternally grateful for her patience and love. Part of the reason why I am handing over the reigns is that I have a lot of making up for time to do.”



**Damon Dennis (middle) walks out of the locker room with the Wildcat football coaches prior to a game.**

Dennis and his family have made a lot of sacrifices during his

time and many of the Wildcat coaches – both former and present – appreciate what he has done for them and their players.

“As far as what he has meant to the community, it is immeasurable,” longtime former coach Gary Griffin said. “He came in the first year and made himself available to all the coaches and was there for whatever the kids needed from the medical stuff, to a new pair of shoes, or money to go to a team dinner. He was even there to lend an ear to a kid that was having issues from girlfriends, teacher issues or problems at home.

“For me personally, he was a cheerleader when times were not good, he was an advocate for kids when I didn’t always know what was going on behind the scenes. I trusted Doc like he was a member of the coaching staff. I told him a lot of things in confidence so I could get his advice knowing it would not go any further. As far as the community goes, he is a pillar and he is involved in everything and is held in high regards by most. It is really hard for Doc to tell anyone no, so most of his days are longer than just his office hours. Doc is going to be missed in so many ways. He is a very humble man and he is very deserving of slowing down and enjoying the fruits of his labor.”

## **A Small Beginning**

Back in June of 1992 is when Dennis began to plant his roots in the town he would begin to call home.

Dennis purchased the small satellite office from Dr. Larry Fulk, who at the time also had a practice in Paola. Dennis was less than a year out of school and was eager to get involved in the Louisburg community.

Two months later, Dennis reached out to then Louisburg High School administrator Doug Chisam and asked if he could serve as the team’s doctor – free of charge. Since August of 1992,



Louisburg High School would not be the same.

Dennis made trips over to the high school for treatment and would also follow many of the team's to their games after work was over. It was a life that would go on to create many memories.

"Jim Knox, Don Meek and Doug Chisam were all very supportive and I am forever in their debt," Dennis said. "I started out just going to all games, home and away, and every sport that I could. At that time I was in the office from 6 am to 7 pm and then off to games 3-4 nights a week. The things I have always enjoyed about being the team doctor was the kids and the coaches. High school athletes have not changed since day one. They want someone who cares about and shows interest in what they are doing. I am still close with a lot of the students who have come through the high school and will continue to be.

"My role evolved over the years. I began doing all the taping before practice and games, Impact testing, announcing basketball and other roles as the coaches requested. I enjoy helping others and that is how my role evolved in to so many other areas. Over the years, the coaches have included me and I will always be grateful to them for allowing me to be a part of the experience."



**Damon and his wife Karla pose for a picture in front of his office back in the early 90s.**

His role got even bigger when the new high school was built and Dennis was asked if he would like to announce basketball games. He certainly didn't mind having a mic in his hand and loved playing off the crowd and making sure the athletes felt a little extra special.

"We had a girls' tournament and Dave Tappan asked me if I would announce the game," Dennis said. "He thought it would be a nice touch to have an announcer. I am not sure he ever asked me to continue, I just did it. I had to be at games anyway and I like to talk, so it worked out. Dave never said to quit, so I just kept doing it.

"I really did enjoy that. I would try to throw in a little funny once and awhile just to see if people were listening. Dottie Cook had a birthday every game night for several years. Knowing the kids so well, it was fun to add their middle name or nickname at the game."

Tappan, who is currently the USD 416 assistant superintendent, worked as the LHS activities director and principal during many of Dennis' years in Louisburg and the two became quick

friends.

With that, Tappan is well aware of Dennis' work ethic and commitment to Louisburg athletics. In fact, he has seen it firsthand.



**Doc D lets out a cheer on the sidelines following a big play during the Wildcats' 2010 state championship game.**

"Most people know that Doc doesn't take vacations very often," Tappan said. "In fact, it usually takes a team of us to get him out of the office for more than a day. But in 2010, he and Karla scheduled a trip over Thanksgiving break to Chicago. Well, that was also the year of our run to the state football championship and there was no way he was going to miss it. In typical Doc D fashion, he lined things up to perfection. He takes a 5 a.m. flight from Chicago to Kansas City, has Karla drive him to the Legends off of I-70 and at about 6:30 I'm

picking him up and we beat the team to Salina. When the bus finally rolls in, he looks at Coach (Gary) Griffin with a grin and says, 'What took you so long?' About four hours later we were celebrating a championship.

"The commitment that Doc D has demonstrated over the years to the students of Louisburg schools is second to none. From the football sidelines on a Friday night in the fall, to being behind the mic in the LHS gym during basketball season, Doc always supported the students, the coaches and the administration of USD 416. I am proud to call Damon Dennis my friend."

## **Beyond The Call of Duty**

Running a business can be difficult enough, but when you have other responsibilities on top of all that, it can be stressful at times.

The coaches at Louisburg High School never got that when working with Doc D. Veteran and young coaches alike were amazed at the dedication he displayed.

"Doc D is one of the most honest and honorable men I have ever met," Louisburg soccer coach Kyle Conley said. "He has donated countless hours and years for helping Louisburg student athletes. He always went out of his way to help anyone and everyone. He wasn't always just helping players. He would always check in on the coaches as well – checking on their well-being, their teams, and their families.

"Doc always went out of his way to make someone feel important and special. He was NEVER too busy for anyone. He will be greatly missed and he is irreplaceable. Thank you Doc D for everything that you have done for my teams, my family and for myself. You are someone I am lucky enough to call a friend."

That dedication would not only be found after school in the evenings, but even before the sun came up as well.





**Doc D checks out Louisburg's Hallie Hutsell following an injury during last soccer season.**

"Doc D will be greatly missed," Louisburg volleyball coach Jessica Compliment said. "He unselfishly devoted many hours to our athletes and was always a phone call or a text away. I can't count how many times he would meet myself and an athlete or two at the school at 5:30 a.m. prior to departure for a volleyball tournament. Not only was he a great role model and mentor for the athletes, but he served as a great mentor to a young coach for the past 14 years. He will be greatly missed by many."

However, where Dennis is most recognized was on the football sidelines. He did anything from tending to injured athletes, mentoring future trainers and handing out free food or candy to the student section before certain games.

It wasn't gone unnoticed as many around the school and



community know what Doc D has meant to the district.

"If Louisburg had a Mt. Rushmore, Damon would definitely be up there," Louisburg graduate and longtime coach Jeff Lohse said. "Doc is one of the most selfless people that I know. He was always more than willing to help anyone out and never expected anything in return. I consider Doc to be a great friend of mine and this is definitely bittersweet. I wish him and Karla nothing but the best as they open up this new chapter in their lives. Damon will be missed but his legacy in Louisburg will live on forever."

Dennis always made sure to welcome the new coaches to the district and made them feel a part of the family and that was the case with boys basketball coach Ty Pfannenstiel when he came to the school three years ago.



**Doc D was presented with a team signed helmet following the team's award banquet two years ago.**

"Doc D is the most selfless man I know," Pfannenstiel said. "What Doc gave to this school and community is unprecedented. He cared so much for all of our athletes, there's no way we are going to be able to replace what he brought to this school. I feel bad for whoever is going to come in and try to fill his shoes – he set the bar way too high."

Dennis has been on the sideline for many of Louisburg's greatest athletic achievements, including three state football appearances and has watched many athletes along the way achieve great individual accomplishments.

He knows that he has been blessed to be able to be a part of Wildcat athletics in one form or another the last 28 years.

“As for favorite memories, it is not always about the wins and losses,” Dennis said. “The things I have most enjoyed is the time spent with athletes and coaches. The things that go on in the locker room, before and after games were the fun part. I have had a behind the scenes view of some pretty amazing people.

“Obviously the 2010 state football championship is at the top of the list. We had gone to the championship twice and come home in second on two occasions. It was a great group to be around and a great experience. If I had to choose a group of kids that really stand out the most, it would be the seniors my first year here (class of 1993). They welcomed me with open arms and made me feel like I was appreciated. I still speak to members of that class often and consider them friends. It was a really special group. I also loved seeing kids accomplish their dreams of success. Louisburg has had its share of champions and athletes that have gone on to do some amazing things.”



**Doc D was also good with equipment as he works on Madden Rutherford's helmet prior to a game.**

In his last week at the office, Doc D has seen a lot of visitors that have come to thank him for everything he has done. Although Dennis won't be around as much as he used to, he wants people to know that this isn't a farewell – but more of a see you later.

"I want everyone to know how much I appreciate their kind words," Dennis said. "There has been talk of various activities surrounding my career change that have been proposed. While I genuinely appreciate this, I don't think I can handle the attention. My emotions have gotten the better of me and I am not sure that I can handle any celebrations publicly, unless everyone wants to see me cry.

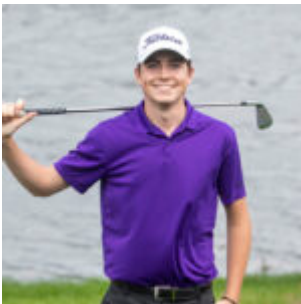
"I am not going away. I just won't be at 11 South Broadway or at the high school every day. Thank you to everyone that has

supported me as I have made every effort to support my community.”

No, Doc – thank you...

---

## 2020 Senior Spotlight: Calvin Dillon



*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.*

Today was supposed to be the day Calvin Dillon and the rest of the Louisburg golf team took to the course for the regional tournament, as they tried to qualify for their second consecutive state tournament appearance.

It was supposed to be the next step in Dillon's quest for a fourth state medal and a shot at his – and the school's – first state champion in golf. Dillon was one of eight seniors on the team this season and they were ready to go out with a bang.

“I couldn't wait for this season to start,” Dillon said. “We all felt that we could punch another ticket to the state tournament and compete at a high level. With it being our



senior year, we were extremely excited for one last season.”

Instead, Dillon can only be left wondering what could have been. There would be no chance at a fourth state medal, or a shot at a state title – there would be no 2020 season.

The pandemic that is COVID-19 made sure of that as spring sports around the country were cancelled. The opportunity to not be able to compete with his teammates again was a tough one to swallow for Dillon and the rest of the Wildcats.

“A state title was my goal this year,” Dillon said. “Realistically, it’s been my goal every year. I am very happy to have three state medals, and I was ready to have one last go at the state tournament. To not get another shot at it is tough.

“It’s obviously hard. The cancellation of your last and best semester of high school is hard to cope with. But I know that there is more to this life than high school and its activities, although it is disappointing. Ultimately we are on this earth to glorify and serve God. He has a purpose for everything that he does and we need to put our faith in him.”

Golf has been a big part of Dillon’s life since he was young and it has showed during his play in high school and in summer tournaments. With his three state medals, Dillon is the most decorated golfer in Louisburg High School history.

Dillon won a regional title last season and is a two-time Frontier League champion. He has won 17 of the 28 high school tournaments he competed in, and last summer he won the Kansas City Junior Match Play Championship and had a top-10 finish at the Midwest Junior Championship.

His golf career certainly hasn’t ended as he signed with the University of Central Missouri earlier this month and he hopes to play in more amateur tournaments over the summer. It is a sport that helps him put those day-to-day worries behind him.



**Louisburg senior Calvin Dillon had already won three state medals and was ready to help the Wildcats to another state tournament appearance.**

"I have played golf for almost all my life," Dillon said. "My dad put a club in my hand when I was a toddler and it's been all downhill from there. I played in my first tournament when I was seven years old. Golf is a massive part of my life. A lot of my day to day schedule revolves around golf. Whether I'm happy or sad or any mood in between, I can always find joy on a golf course."

Dillon experienced a lot of great moments playing for the Wildcats. Even with all the tournament wins and state medals, there is one moment that will stick with him forever.

"I have made so many good memories with this program and with the golfers in the Frontier League," Dillon said. "I would have to say my favorite, however, was on a weekend match with

Coach (Barry) O'Brien, Drake Varns and Garrett Rolofson. Drake and I were matched up against coach and Rolo in a best ball game at Metcalf Ridge. Drake and I were up by one with two holes to play. The 17th hole at Metcalf was about an 185-yard par 3 that is slightly uphill. Coach threw a dart in there to about six feet and started talking a little bit of trash, about how him and Rolo were about to come back and tie us. The other two hit their shots, neither of them landed on the green. I ended up hitting a four hybrid which was tracking right at the stick.

"As soon as I hit it, I had a feeling it was going to be close, if not in. As we were driving up to the green, Drake says to me, 'I think that's in.' We proceeded to walk up to the hole, and sure enough, I had hit a hole in one, which meant Drake and I had won the match. Coach and Rolo were pretty irritated, but it provided a good laugh for Drake and I."

Other than golf, Louisburg Sports Zone also had a chance to catch up with Calvin 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?

**CD:** I'm missing my friends at school and being able to see my girlfriend. You take for granted the day to day activities you experience and how much fun they actually are. I can't wait to see and talk to everyone once this all settles down.

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

**CD:** My most memorable moment was probably when I signed to play golf at UCM. It was great to have all my friends, coaches and family with me at that moment. The donuts were pretty nice too.

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

**CD:** My favorite hobby is playing ping pong. Our administrators put together a 64-person tournament that was a lot of fun. It was a good way for Mr. Hinkle and Mr. Holloway to connect with us students. Now we have occasional weekends where someone invites a bunch of guys over to hang out and play ping pong.

**LSZ:** I know you are planning to go to Central Missouri to play golf next year, but how have you been working on your game during this difficult time?

**CD:** Fortunately, there are a few golf courses still open. When you call to make a tee-time, they have you pay over the phone so there is no money being physically exchanged. Also, they have the holes raised so no one is touching the flagsticks or reaching into the hole to get their ball. I choose to walk so I don't have to touch the steering wheel of a golf cart, although every cart is being sanitized and washed thoroughly after every use.

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

**CD:** I would say my greatest accomplishment is probably maintaining a 4.0 GPA throughout high school. We have one semester to go and I hope to hold on to my 4.0. I think it speaks to my hard working character in the classroom and out of the classroom.

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

**CD:** Something that people probably wouldn't know about me is that my favorite Christmas gift last year was a bottle of Freddy's fry sauce.

## **Calvin's Favorites**

**Pro athlete:** Justin Thomas

**Pro team:** Kansas City Chiefs

**College team:** KU/Central Missouri Mules

**Movie:** Star Wars

**TV Show:** Gilligan's Island

**Song:** Sunflower by Post Malone and Swae Lee

**Band/Musician:** Journey

**Pregame meal/snack:** Beef Jerky

**Class/subject:** Lunch...just kidding...History

**Teacher and why?** O'Brien, because he lets me stop in and watch a few minutes of golf after lunch.

## **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

Colin Cook – Golf

Morgan Messer – Soccer

August Daniels – Softball

Carter Anglin – Track and Field

Hannah Straub – Soccer

Reilly Ratliff-Becher – Softball

Madden Rutherford – Baseball

Lily McDaniel – Soccer

Garrett Harding – Track

Mackenzie Scholtz – Soccer

---

# 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."

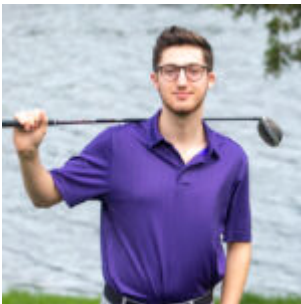
Many of the coaches and players are just ready to return to some kind of routine following the spread of COVID-19 and they hope sports can give that to them.

"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

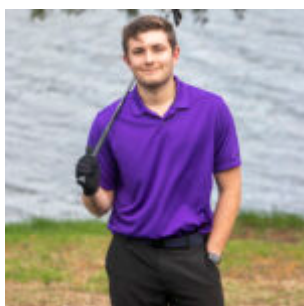
Gabby Dugger – Softball

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

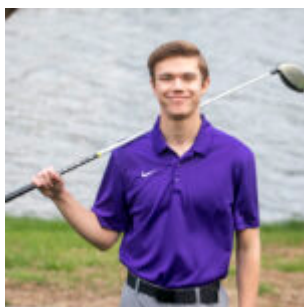
allow him to spend more time with family.

"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

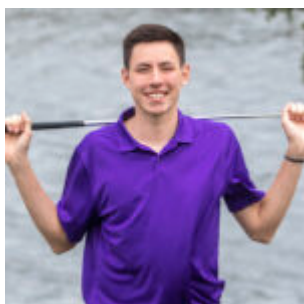
Allie Boles – Softball

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 10<sup>th</sup> at the regional tournament and earned a medal. He went on to finish 34<sup>th</sup> 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