Opinion: Time to look back and enjoy successes



The Louisburg High School football team was one of many bright spots for LHS athletics this past school year.

We live in a world where, especially in sports, we often don't take time to reflect on our accomplishments – and instead we are in a rush to move on to the next set of obstacles.

In reality, we are in a "what have you done for me lately" society and sometimes don't remember, or enjoy, those special moments where our hard work has paid off.

Yes, I understand you don't want to relish in those accomplishments as that doesn't make you a better athlete, or whatever your specialty may be, but not taking the time to enjoy the ride can be detrimental.

And what a ride it was for Louisburg High School athletics this past season.

The Wildcats had a special year in several sports, and before we focus on the 2017-18 campaign, we should look back at what the 16-17 season brought us. Just take a look at what these Wildcats accomplished.

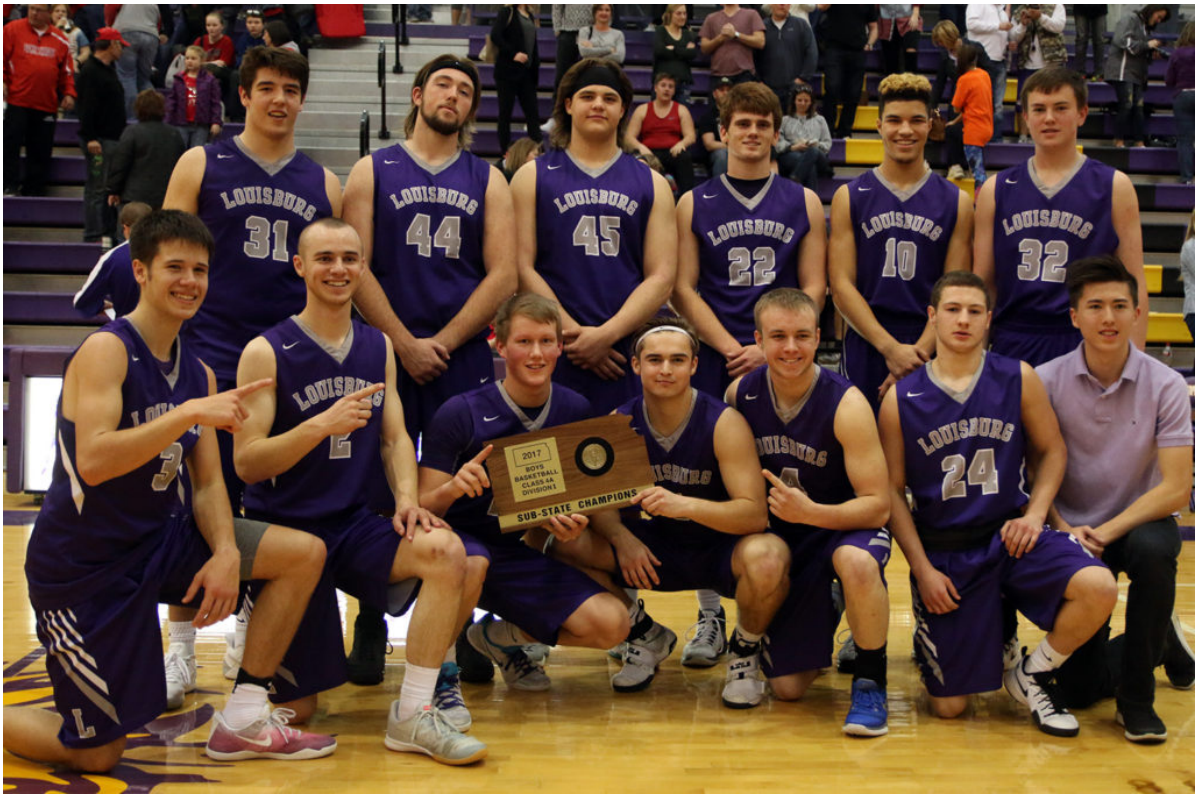
- There is probably no better place to start than the Louisburg soccer teams. Both the boys and girls teams earned spots in the state semifinals for the first time

in program history and both finished fourth. The boys team made it to state for the first time in their 14 years, while the girls advanced to the state tournament in just their second season.



The Louisburg High School girls soccer team finished fourth in the state in just their second season. The Wildcat boys also finished fourth as they advanced to the state semifinals for the first time in program history.

- It was quite the season for the Wildcat boys basketball team as they advanced to the state tournament for the first time since 2005. Louisburg won its sub-state tournament with a 64-52 win over Fort Scott in the championship game.



The Louisburg boys basketball team qualified for state for the first time since 2005.

- The Louisburg football team made quite the run in the 2016 season. The Wildcats won their first playoff game since 2012 and earned a regional title in the process with a win over Independence. Even though their season came to an end in the next round to eventual state champion Bishop Miege, the Wildcats' still finished with an 8-3 record.
- Wrestling had another big season as the Wildcats qualified eight for the Class 4A state tournament in Salina. Although Ryan Adams was the lone state medalist, as he finished sixth overall at 138 pounds, the Wildcats tied a school record for number of state qualifiers that was set back in 1984.
- In cross country, the Wildcats sent three runners to the state meet and had their first state medalist since 2006 when freshman Trinity Moore finished 19th overall, as she, Wyatt Reece and Tim Smith competed at the Wamego meet. Moore was also the school's first female runner to earn a state medal.

- Freshman golfer Calvin Dillon became the Wildcats' first state medalist in several years as he finished 10th at the Class 4A state tournament and was one of two Wildcats, along with Ty Martin, to qualify for state. Dillon could quite possibly be the first freshman golfer in school history to get a medal, but since golf stats aren't quite as well kept, it is hard to tell for sure.
- T.J. Dover and Isabelle Holtzen came through with state medals of their own following the state track meet. Holtzen finished seventh at the Class 4A meet in the pole vault and Dover was eighth in the discus as both medaled for the first time. Holtzen also broke the school record in the pole vault earlier in the season after she cleared 11 feet, 1 inch.
- The girls basketball and softball teams both had big improvements from a season ago as they each reached 10 wins despite falling in the first round of their sub-state and regional tournaments. Softball doubled their win total from 2016, while the girls basketball team improved by seven victories.
- The Louisburg volleyball team advanced to the sub-state championship game against rival Paola and was just a few points away from advancing to its fifth consecutive state tournament. The Lady Cats also finished the season with 23 victories.

Most schools across the state would love to have the kind of success Louisburg experienced this year and to me that doesn't seem like it is talked about enough.

Sometimes we get caught up in losses or not meeting expectations, when in fact, compared to a lot of schools, Louisburg exceeds expectations – at least it does mine.

Could these programs be better? Sure they could and the coaches would be the first to tell you. At the same time, we all need to take a step back, look at the big picture and enjoy the success we have.

To me, Louisburg athletics is as healthy as it has been in a long time.

A lot has been made about all the coaches that have left recently. Louisburg will have four new head coaches this upcoming school year and several new assistants.

Some people have considered this a mass exodus due problems at the school. It couldn’t be further from the truth. A lot of it is just coincidence. For some it was retirement, others wanted to spend more time with family and a few more just wanted a change.

Former activities director Darin Gagenbin left to be closer to his family and work in the town where he lives. I know all about how great of an opportunity that is and it is the same thing I did almost 10 years ago when I moved here with my family. Working in the town you live in is something you can’t put a value on.

Louisburg found a great replacement in Jeremy Holloway, who has been with the district for 17 years and is invested in the community. The school has also brought it a lot of new, young coaches that have come in with excitement and new ideas.

It is bittersweet for me as a lot of those coaches I had a chance to get to know really well are now gone. Although I am mainly a solo operation, I consider a lot them my co-workers and it stinks to see them move on, but I also know they are doing the best for themselves and their families.

The same could be said for the class of 2017. The group of seniors I worked with this past year were great to get to know, just like all the senior classes before them.

I appreciated all their support and what I do could not be done without those kids. It is great to see them grow up and watch them become successful outside the classroom. I am not a teacher or coach, but still appreciate all they accomplish.

With 2016-17 in the rear view mirror, it will soon be time to focus on the upcoming season and I couldn’t be more excited to see what accomplishments this group of Wildcats have in store. It has all the makings of a fun and special year.

Gagnebin steps down as LHS activities director



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

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

That made it all the more hard to say goodbye.

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

Gagnebin spent a total of 17 years in the Louisburg school

district, with the last six spent as activities director. He was also a teacher and coach for 11 years.

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

“People have come and gone, but it is still family here,” Gagnebin said. “I am comfortable here and Louisburg has done a lot for me. I just can’t pass up an opportunity to be where my kids are at. I know I could have brought my kids here, but my wife and I made that decision a long time ago of where we were going to live because of where she taught and I taught. I never thought back when we first moved to Paola and when we had kids, that we would be in this position.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Paola position was an opportunity Gagnebin just couldn’t pass up as he will have an opportunity to watch more of his children’s events and work closer to home.

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

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

Changes to classification system will impact Louisburg

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“We will start in August about building the new league

schedule and it will be tough," Gagnebin said. "One thing you will see is we won't have double round-robin's anymore because we can't play everyone twice. I think there will be traditional rivalries that are held to where we would play those twice due to proximity. Quite frankly, it wouldn't be smart for Louisburg not to play Paola, Ottawa or Spring Hill twice due to higher attendance numbers and proximity. It will probably increase travel costs because you are playing more non-conference opponents."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lady Cat softball garners five all-league selections



Louisburg senior Allyssa Griggs (left) and sophomore Madison Svoboda were both named to the all-Frontier League second team recently. The Lady Cats earned five selections overall.

In a league that featured the Class 4A-Division I state champion in Spring Hill, and state runner-up in Paola, the Frontier League provided a lot of competition all season long.

The Louisburg High School softball team found itself in the middle of it all as it racked up 10 wins on the season and earned several spots on the all-Frontier League team because of it.

The Lady Cats earned two second team selections and had three on the honorable mention team after they doubled their win total from a season ago.

Senior Allyssa Griggs was named as a second team pitcher, while sophomore Madison Svoboda earned second team infield honors. Senior Emalee Overbay was selected as an honorable mention catcher, sophomore Molly Rison earned honorable mention infield honors and sophomore Karson Griggs was an honorable mention utility player.

Allyssa Griggs had a big season at the plate for the Lady Cats as she led them in almost every offensive category. She batted .443 on the season with seven home runs, 29 RBIs and had 31 hits on the season.

On the mound, Griggs finished with a 5-6 record on the year and had a 3.60 earned run average to go along with 65 strikeouts.

Svoboda also had a big season for the Lady Cats at second base. She recorded a .414 average and had 29 hits, nine doubles, a triple, a home run and 11 RBIs.

“I thought our girls represented the program well for all-league honors,” Louisburg coach John Ozier said. “Allyssa was solid on the mound, and one of the best hitters in our league in my opinion. Her second team honor as pitcher was well-

deserved. She battled injuries all season, but gutted it out until the last game of the season.

“Madison battled back from a major knee injury prior to her freshman season. She made solid defensive plays in the field and yielded a big bat in our lineup.”



(From left) Louisburg’s Karson Griggs, Emalee Overbay and Molly Rison were all selected to the all-league honorable mention team.

Karson Griggs had a good year at the plate as well for Louisburg. Karson finished with a team-high 32 hits and had a .438 average to go along with eight doubles, a triple and a home run. She was also tied for second on the team with 20 RBIs.

“In my extremely biased opinion, she had numbers to support higher honors,” Ozier said. “Throughout the season she played third, first and outfield positions.”

In her final season with the Lady Cats, Overbay performed well behind the plate at catcher and contributed offensively as well. Overbay batted .355 on the season, had 27 hits, five doubles, a triple, a home run and 20 RBIs.

Rison also provided some power in the middle of the Louisburg lineup with a .358 average, three doubles, three home runs and 14 RBIs.

“Emalee was great behind the plate all season,” Ozier said. “She provided great leadership with her bat, producing many

big hits for us. Molly earned honors again at first base this season with her fielding and great hitting.”

ALL FRONTIER LEAGUE SOFTBALL

FIRST TEAM

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

Catcher: Sierra Sanderson, Spring Hill, senior

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

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

DH/Utility: Regan Smith, Spring Hill, junior

SECOND TEAM

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

Catcher: Amayah LaTessa, Baldwin, senior

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

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

DH/Utility: Payton Faddis, De Soto, sophomore

HONORABLE MENTION

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

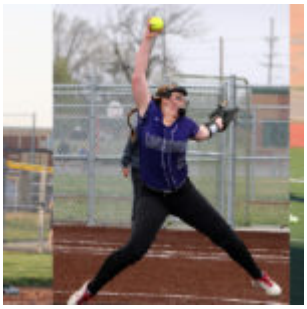
Catcher: Sydney Igert, Paola, junior; **Emalee Overbay, Louisburg, senior**

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

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

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All-Frontier League baseball, softball and girls soccer



Here are all-Frontier League teams for baseball, softball and girls soccer for the 2016-17 season. Congrats to all the recipients who earned the honors.

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE GIRLS SOCCER

FIRST TEAM

Tarah Phongsavath, De Soto, senior

Bailey Belcher, Louisburg, junior

Aly Hargrove, De Soto, senior

Taylor Cawley, Baldwin, senior

Tanith Beal, De Soto, senior

Mackenzie Scholtz, Louisburg, freshman

Sara Watson, Spring Hill, junior

Madisen Simpson, Louisburg, senior

Josie Boyle, Baldwin, freshman

Maddie Plake, De Soto, senior

Goalie: Taylor Rogers, De Soto, junior

SECOND TEAM

Carmen Rush, De Soto, senior

Kaylen Dawson, Spring Hill, freshman

Anna Burnett, Baldwin, freshman

Mackenzie Mohl, De Soto, freshman

Caitlyn Countryman, Baldwin, sophomore

Anna Watson, Spring Hill, junior

Camdyn Clark, Louisburg, sophomore

Mallory Smith, Spring Hill, sophomore

Morgan Laplante, De Soto, sophomore

Savannah Reinhart, Louisburg, junior

Goalie: Emery Mounce, Spring Hill, freshman

HONORABLE MENTION

Ashley Panagakis, De Soto, sophomore

Amanda Wray, Ottawa, junior

Clara Cowden, Baldwin, senior

Alex Schemmel, De Soto, junior

Goalie: Shay Whiting, Louisburg, junior

Goalie: Riley O’Rourke, Baldwin, senior

Goalie: Sutton Jung, Ottawa, junior

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE BASEBALL

FIRST TEAM

Catcher: Chandler Bloomer, Ottawa, junior

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

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

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

Utility/DH: Jack Barger, De Soto, junior

SECOND TEAM

Catcher: Trevor Boehm, Paola, senior

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

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

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

Utility/DH: Garrett Caldwell, Louisburg, junior

HONORABLE MENTION

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

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

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

Outfield: **Korbin Hankinson, Louisburg**, senior; Ty Kempf, De Soto, senior; Sean King, Spring Hill, senior; Monti Enriquez, Eudora, senior

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

ALL FRONTIER LEAGUE SOFTBALL

FIRST TEAM

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

Catcher: Sierra Sanderson, Spring Hill, senior

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

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

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Lady Cats' season comes to a close in regionals



Louisburg senior Allyssa Griggs makes a pitch during the Lady Cats' game against Fort Scott in the first round of the Class 4A-Division 1 regional tournament in Paola. The Lady Cats fell 9-4 and ended their season with a 10-11 record.

The Louisburg High School softball team has made a big jump in the last two seasons.

After going winless in 2015, the Lady Cats responded with five wins last season and they doubled that number again in 2017. Louisburg tallied 10 wins going into the Class 4A-Division I

regional tournament last Tuesday in Paola and were hoping to add to that total.

Fort Scott had other plans, however.

The No. 2 seed Tigers used a big fourth inning to pull away for a 9-4 win over No. 3 seed Louisburg and ended the Lady Cats' year with a 10-11 record. The loss also meant the final game for Lady Cat seniors Hailey Crowder, Allyssa Griggs and Emalee Overbay.

"Although we fell short in our last game, I was very proud of the progress we made this season," Louisburg coach John Ozier said. "The three seniors provided great leadership on and off the field and they will be missed.

"We have an experienced and fairly young nucleus of players returning for the next few seasons, so the future of the program looks good. This group of girls is not afraid to put in extra work, which is what it is going to take to get to the next level."

Louisburg took a 3-2 lead into the bottom of the fourth inning, when Fort Scott recorded six runs and the Lady Cats weren't able to recover. Fort Scott was hit by a pitch three times, walked three times, reached on a Louisburg error and a single.

"It was a very tough loss," Ozier said. "We really felt like we had a chance to make some noise at regionals this year. As was the case with some of our losses earlier this season, we could not avoid that one big inning on defense. I felt like we had some momentum when we pulled ahead in the latter part of the game."

The Lady Cats grabbed the lead in the first inning when Overbay scored on a single from sophomore Molly Rison. Fort Scott answered with two runs in the bottom of the second to jump in front.

Overbay helped Louisburg take the lead back in the top of the fourth inning when she singled to score Kayla Willey and Bailey Kern.

Louisburg pounded out 10 hits on the day, including three from sophomore Karson Griggs. Rison added a pair of singles and 2 RBIs, while Lauren Cutshaw also had two hits. Overbay had 2 RBIs and scored a run.



Outfielder Bailey Kern tracks down a fly ball last Tuesday against Fort Scott.

“It was frustrating to see so many scoring opportunities squandered,” Ozier said. “On the other hand, Fort Scott made the most of their base runners. The girls gave it everything they had though.”

Allyssa Griggs pitched five innings for the Lady Cats. Griggs

gave up just four earned runs and had five strikeouts in her final game.

The Lady Cats had the bases loaded in the seventh inning after Rison singled home Karson Griggs to cut the Fort Scott lead to five, but could get no closer.

Lady Cats drop pair to Spring Hill, get ready for regionals



Louisburg third baseman Karson Griggs fields a ground ball during a game earlier this season. Louisburg fell to Spring Hill 11-1 and 8-2 on May 8 to end its regular season with a 10-10 record.

The Louisburg High School softball team knew it was going to be a difficult way to end the regular season, with a doubleheader against defending state champion Spring Hill.

It was just that as Louisburg ventured to Spring Hill on May 8 and left with an 11-1 and 8-2 loss to the Broncos to finish its regular season with a 10-10 record.

The Lady Cats got off to a rough start in the opener as Spring Hill scored two runs in the first, and after Louisburg scored

a run in the third, Spring Hill answered with eight runs in the third to pull away for the win.

Senior Emalee Overbay led Louisburg with two hits, including a double and an RBI. Fellow senior Allyssa Griggs also had two hits for the Lady Cats.

Louisburg had a tough time against Spring Hill starter Sarah Brown, who finished with a game-high nine strikeouts. Kelsey Krouton also had a grand slam for the Broncos in their big third inning.

In the nightcap, Spring Hill once again got out to a big lead with two runs each in the first, second and fourth innings to take a 6-0 lead.

Sophomores Kennia Hankinson and Madison Svoboda each had a pair of hits to lead the Lady Cat offense. Svoboda also finished with a double and Hankinson added an RBI. Overbay also added an RBI as Louisburg tallied nine hits as a team.

Although the Lady Cats ended their season with a pair of losses, their season will now start anew.

Louisburg will compete in the Class 4A-Division I regional tournament Tuesday in Paola. The Lady Cats, the No. 3 seed, will play No. 2 Fort Scott at 3 p.m.

Should Louisburg advance, the Lady Cats will play the winner between No. 1 Paola and No. 4 Ottawa in the championship later in the evening.

Lady Cats earn split to salvage senior night



Louisburg's Kennia Hankinson knocks a base hit up the middle Tuesday against Ottawa at Lewis-Young Park. The Lady Cats lost the doubleheader opener 9-8, but came back strong with an 18-8 win in nightcap.

The Louisburg High School softball team suffered one of its toughest losses of the season Tuesday, and unfortunately for the Lady Cats, it came on Senior Night.

Louisburg watched as Ottawa scored four times in the final inning to take a 9-8 win over the Lady Cats in the opening game of the doubleheader.

However, instead of letting that game ruin their night, the Lady Cats responded with an 18-run performance in the nightcap for an 18-8 victory to earn a split over the Cyclones. It was a great way for seniors Emalee Overbay, Allyssa Griggs and Hailey Crowder to say goodbye to their home fans as all three played their final game at Lewis-Young Park.

"It was good to see our three seniors finish out their home season with a win," Louisburg coach John Ozier said. "All three girls have been strong leaders with their defense, hitting and pitching. All three have provided big plays and/or hits this season to put us in position to win games. They will be missed next year."

The Lady Cats (10-8) trailed by a run going into the second inning of the final game of the doubleheader, but their bats woke up in a big way as they scored eight times in the frame to grab an 10-2 lead that they wouldn’t relinquish.

Freshman Allison Boles had a perfect 5-for-5 performance at the plate with two doubles and 4 RBIs. Sophomore Madison Svoboda came through with four hits and 3 RBIs, including just missing her second home run of the doubleheader after her fly ball hit the top of the fence and came back in for a double.

Karson Griggs, a sophomore, had a double and drove home four runs. Overbay also had three hits to help lead the Lady Cats as everyone in the lineup each had at least one hit.

“Up and down the lineup our hitters have gained tremendous confidence throughout the string of wins we have put together,” Ozier said. “Some of our underclassmen have come through with some key hits. It has taken the pressure off the seniors to have to carry the load.”

Boles pitched all five innings to earn the win for Louisburg as she was able to hold off the Ottawa offense enough to get the run-rule win.



Louisburg seniors (from left) Emalee Overbay, Allyssa Griggs and Hailey Crowder were honored Tuesday during Senior Night ceremonies.

Ottawa grabbed the lead early on Louisburg in the first game as it had a 5-3 advantage going into the fourth inning, when the Lady Cats scored three times to take the lead. Louisburg then got two more runs in the sixth on a two-run home run from Allyssa Griggs.

Allyssa, who also started the game for the Lady Cats, got the first two outs of the seventh before Ottawa started to chip away and scored four runs with two outs to take the lead back.

Louisburg had runners to try and tie the game in the seventh, but the Wildcats popped into a double play and then grounded out to end the contest.

“I must admit we were all stunned by the loss,” Ozier said. “We had battled the entire game after being down early and

thought we had enough to finish. Ottawa never quit, even with two out and nobody on in their last at bat.

“We re-grouped between games and came out and exploded with our bats. We had some big hits with runners in scoring position all night. This is something we have struggled with all season, but lately have corrected.”

Allyssa Griggs led the Louisburg offense with three hits in the effort to go along with 4 RBIs. Svoboda also had a big game as she recorded her first home run of her high school career – a solo shot to get Louisburg on the board in the second inning.

Overbay and Molly Rison also had a two-hit game for the Lady Cats, as they cranked out 11 hits as a team.

Although the loss ended a six-game winning streak for Louisburg, the Lady Cats have still won seven of their last eight games as they end the regular season today when they travel to the defending state champion – Spring Hill. Louisburg will then compete in the regional tournament next week in Paola.

Lady Cats continue offensive tear against Anderson County



Louisburg sophomore Molly Rison (above) was one of several Lady Cats to get hits Thursday in a sweep of Anderson County in Garnett.

GARNETT – Just two weeks ago, the Louisburg High School softball team found itself in rut and couldn't find its way out.

The Lady Cats had lost five of their last six games and the offense couldn't manage to get that big hit or put together a big inning.

A lot has changed since then.

Louisburg has now won six games in a row and its latest victim – Anderson County. The Lady Cats racked up 19 runs in two games and rolled to a 13-0 and 6-0 victory Thursday in Garnett.

The Lady Cats (9-7) have now scored 39 runs in their last four games and everything seems to be going right.

"The girls are playing loose and confident right now," Louisburg coach John Ozier said. "I have continually emphasized to them the importance of capitalizing on our scoring opportunities. It will alleviate some of the pressure we have experienced with our defense and pitching in the latter part of games and it has worked."

Senior Allyssa Griggs got the Lady Cats going in both games of the doubleheader as she tallied five hits, which included two home runs and 7 RBIs. Griggs is having great stretch for Louisburg as she now has five home runs in her last six games.

Louisburg didn't waste time in the opener as it took a big lead. The Lady Cats scored seven runs in the first two innings in the opener to pull away and then used a four-run seventh inning in the nightcap to seal the sweep.

“We got the bats going early,” Ozier said. “Everyone put together great at bats. We are more patient at the plate, and it is really paying off. Hard hit balls that were being caught earlier in the season are now finding holes. Allyssa continued her home run tear and up and down the lineup we are putting the ball in play and making the defense make plays.”

The bats heated up early for Louisburg as it jumped out to a 7-0 lead after two innings in the opener. The Lady Cats scored three runs each in the fourth and fifth innings to secure the run-rule win.

Griggs finished the game with 5 RBIs, including a 3-run home run to lead Louisburg. Senior Emalee Overbay knocked in four runs, while sophomores Karson Griggs and Molly Rison each had three hits.

Rison also had a pair of RBIs along with Allison Boles and Madison Svoboda. Boles and Svoboda each recorded a double in the win.

Allyssa Griggs also did the work on the mound. Griggs threw a complete game shutout and allowed just one hit to go along with two strikeouts.

Boles continued the strong pitching in the nightcap as she also earned the complete game win. The Louisburg freshman gave up just three hits over seven innings and struck out seven.

“Allyssa and Allie were both in a groove,” Ozier said. “They worked ahead to most batters and had a nice rhythm going.”

Kennia Hankinson, Karson Griggs, Allyssa Griggs and Rison each finished the game with two hits. Karson recorded a pair of doubles and 2 RBIs, while Hankinson, Rison and Allyssa each scored a pair of runs. Allyssa also had a solo home run in the fourth inning.

Louisburg will try to continue its winning streak tonight when

it hosts Ottawa for senior night as the Lady Cats honor their three seniors – Allyssa Griggs, Emalee Overbay and Hailey Crowder. First pitch is set for 4:30 p.m.

“The girls are a more relaxed team right now,” Ozier said. “We know that we are headed back into the tough back end of our schedule, but we appear more ready to take on the challenge.”

Three schools to join Frontier League



Three schools have accepted invitations, or will soon, to join the Frontier League for the 2018-19 season and beyond.

Piper, Bonner Springs and Tonganoxie will be leaving their current home – the Kaw Valley League – to join the Frontier after all three were offered spots during a meeting in early April.

Their addition will now bring the Frontier League to 10 members, along with Louisburg, Paola, Ottawa, Spring Hill, De Soto, Baldwin and Eudora. The trio of schools made presentations to the current Frontier League members for admittance due to the fact the Kaw Valley is in the process of breaking up. Current member Bishop Ward is leaving the league next school year, which leaves them at six.

Piper quickly accepted the invitation following a vote of its board of education and is looking forward to joining the Frontier.

“We are extremely excited to get into a league with like-size schools and competition levels,” Piper High School activities director Doug Key said. “We believe Piper High School is good fit for the league due to the competition level in all activities and will match up well. We have played all current schools in various activities and felt like this would be a positive move for the future.

“Being in a league with various size schools and us being the smallest wasn’t going to be optimal. We are still are competitive in many areas, but we needed to secure a more balanced future. We feel like being in the middle, size-wise, will keep us competitive for years to come.”

According to this year’s classification numbers, Piper has a current enrollment of 601 students. Turner is the Kaw Valley’s biggest school with 1,114 students, followed by Lansing (910), Bonner Springs (758), Basehor-Linwood (710) and Tonganoxie (618).

Bonner Springs, Piper and Tonganoxie compare to other Frontier League programs. De Soto is the biggest school in the league with 854 students, followed by Ottawa (709), Spring Hill (699), Paola (612), Louisburg (563), Eudora (471) and Baldwin (410).

Bonner Springs’ board of education also approved the move to the Frontier League and Bonner Springs High School principal Rick Moulin echoed Key’s statement.

“We have competed against teams in the Frontier League the past several years,” Moulin said. “The schools in the Frontier League are a lot like Bonner Springs – we are competitive and value sportsmanship. The teams in the Frontier League are similar in size to Bonner Springs, which will be a great gauge

for us as we try to compete at the highest level possible in 4A. Bonner Springs is a small town community, with great community support, much like the schools in the Frontier League.

“We are excited to be joining with Piper and Tonganoxie. We hope to continue to be able to compete against Basehor-Linwood, Lansing and Turner. I have a lot of respect for their schools and their programs. Ultimately, the Frontier League was a better fit for our students and our community.”

Tonganoxie hasn’t officially accepted the invitation, but it is just waiting for its board of education to approve the move during its May 8 meeting. At that point, according to Tonganoxie High School principal Mark Farrar, it will immediately send letter accepting the invite.

“We are very excited to join the Frontier League,” Farrar said. “This new partnership will be very good for our students as well as our community. Joining the Frontier League will provide some great opportunities for our students from an athletic and activities standpoint. Tonganoxie mirrors many of the activities that most or all Frontier League schools offer. We see it as a league that will be a good fit for many years to come.

“One of the things that I think gets overlooked is the idea that a strong league doesn’t just offer opportunities on a playing field, but it also offers a chance for kids to network and make lifelong connections with students from all across the league. The Frontier League is a strong and stable league and we believe that it can advance the overall mission of what we want to do at Tonganoxie.”

Louisburg High School activities director Darin Gagnebin now believes the league is healthier than ever.

“By adding teams to our league, it solidifies our league numbers for years to come ensuring that we, as a league, will

remain strong and competitive whether schools decide to leave or stay," Gagnebin said. "We could have been in a situation in which the Frontier League could have dwindled to four or five schools, but instead we will be stronger at 10 teams, if all teams decided to stay.

That situation came about in March when it was reported by the Tonganoxie Mirror that Kaw Valley League member Lansing wanted to create a larger league that would have contained all or some combinations of Lansing, Blue Valley Southwest, De Soto, Leavenworth, Bonner Springs, Basehor-Linwood, Tonganoxie, Ottawa, Piper, Spring Hill, Turner and Topeka schools Seaman, Shawnee Heights and Topeka West.

A meeting was held between all the schools to look at possibilities of building a stronger league that would rebuild the current Kaw Valley that has Lansing, Turner, Piper, Bonner Springs, Tonganoxie and Basehor-Linwood.

The Frontier League responded with meetings of its own shortly after to discuss each member's happiness in the league after De Soto, Spring Hill and Ottawa attended the March meeting with Lansing.

De Soto mentioned needing more competition at the sub-varsity level since it has a growing enrollment and looked at the possibility of playing in a league with bigger schools since it has made the jump to Class 5A.

Spring Hill's enrollment also looks to make that jump in three to four years, while Ottawa's enrollment usually hovers around the line between 4A and 5A. Still, all three schools stated during league meetings they were happy in their current position, with De Soto and Spring Hill stating they might need to make a move due to increasing enrollment numbers.

Faced with the possibility of losing at least two members, the Frontier invited Kaw Valley members to make presentations to join the league in order to fill those spots. Piper,

Tonganoxie and Bonner Springs all made presentations and the Frontier League principals all offered invitations shortly after.

At this point, it appears the league is going to move forward with 10 members as no school has stated their desire to leave the Frontier – however, it doesn't mean it can't happen in the near future.

"I cannot speak for other schools in the Frontier League about their desire to stay or to leave," Gagnebin said. "I know some are considering their options and will do what they believe is in the best interest of their school, and I would support them in whatever they decide. I do believe though whatever they decide, with the addition of these new schools to our league, the Frontier League will remain solid in numbers and will continue to be one of the most competitive leagues in Class 4A.

"I believe the three schools that chose to petition our league for membership will be a great fit for the Frontier League. They offer all sports and activities that are currently offered by the league at all levels. Their enrollments, though larger than Louisburg, will put them in the middle to upper middle in size within the league."

The league schedule will also look different beginning with the 2018-19 season, as there will no longer be a double round-robin schedule in certain sports and not every school will play each other in football.

"The biggest challenge will be league scheduling," Gagnebin said. "Although it will change how we schedule things as a league, most league schools already have some or all of these schools on some of their athletic schedules already. It could increase the amount of non-league games we have to go out and find in some sports, since with 10 teams you can no longer play a double-round-robin schedule as we have currently, due

to the amount of games allowed by KSHSAA.

“This is both good and bad, meaning, it could increase travel and some expense, but it allows us greater flexibility in the schedule to play other teams outside the league as well. One negative will be in football. With 10 teams, we will not be able to play every team in the league as we do now. As stated before though, solidifying the league as far as numbers go and increasing the competitiveness of the league are also positives.”