Louisburg softball saw growth despite difficult season



Louisburg senior Jenna Terry tries to turn a double play during the Lady Cats' May 11 game against Paola at Lewis-Young Park.

Louisburg's Senior Night softball games against Paola back on May 11 was an emotional one for many reasons.

Not only did the Lady Cats have to say goodbye to their three seniors – Brooklyn Diederich, Maggie Ming and Jenna Terry – but they also had to say farewell to their 2021 season a little prematurely to what they hoped.

Louisburg's 21-3 and 20-5 losses to the Panthers ended the Lady Cats' season with a 1-19 record as they were not able to qualify for the Class 4A regional tournament.

In a season that didn't feature many wins, the Lady Cats grew throughout the season and it was something head coach Nick Chapman believes is a testament to his three seniors in keeping the team together and staying positive.



Louisburg seniors (from left) Jenna Terry, Maggie Ming and Brooklyn Diedeich were honored during Senior Night earlier this month.

“Our older girls were great leaders in the effort they gave and what they put into the program,” Chapman said. “I’m sad to see our three seniors leave, but I know each of them are going to do great things in the future.

“This year taught me a lot about being a coach. I’m not perfect by any means, but my goal is that we all learned something this season and want to be better and for this program to be successful.”

In the first game against Paola, the Lady Cats scored three runs on six hits. Diederich and Mia Wilson each recorded a double, while Wilson and Jenna Cauthon both had RBI hits.



Louisburg senior Brooklyn Diederich puts a ball in play during the Lady Cats' senior night game against Paola.

Izzy Moreland, Emily Gephart and Ming also had hits in the opener.

In the nightcap, the Lady Cats had a 5-4 lead going into the fourth inning, but Paola responded with four runs in the fourth and fifth innings and ended with an 8-run seventh.

Cauthon led the way offensively with two hits, a double and 2 RBIs and Diederich also finished with two hits. Moreland and Gephart also had RBI singles in the loss.

Despite the rough ending to the season, Chapman liked the improvements that his team made, especially with a young roster.

"I think we got better as the season went on," Chapman said.

“Our record doesn’t show the growth we made as a team. We had five freshmen and two sophomores on varsity to end the year. The rest were made up by a junior and our three seniors.

“Our younger girls really stepped up and a couple of them led the team in hitting. The future is very bright if we can continue to grow and get better over the summer and throughout next year leading up to the start of the season. We are going to find consistency in how we play and play well. Louisburg softball will be up there with the big dogs and consistently competing for championships, year after year.”

Lady Cats find positives in close losses to Wellsville



Louisburg freshman Jenna Cauthon tags out a Wellsville runner at third base Thursday during the Lady Cats’ doubleheader in Wellsville.

WELLSVILLE – The results might not have been what the Louisburg softball team wanted, but it was definitely a step in the right direction.

The Lady Cats lost a pair of road games, 5-1 and 5-4, to Wellsville on Thursday, but they battled back through adversity in both games. As much as they would have liked the wins, there were a lot of positives according to coach Nick

Chapman.

“We lost two games but this was one of our best nights that we have had,” Chapman said. “I think this was the first time we put together a 14-inning night. We had one bad inning, but I can’t really call it a bad inning because our pitcher got drilled in the face and there were runners on base because of little bloop hits that we just couldn’t get to. We limited our errors for the first time and we saw that we can play really good softball when we do that.”

Louisburg suffered a scare in the second inning of the first game when junior pitcher Mia Wilson was hit in the face with a line drive that sent her mask flying.

Wellsville ended up scoring four runs in that inning, but Wilson was able to stay in the contest and struck out four batters over three innings. Freshman Megan Quinn came in for relief and pitched three scoreless innings and also struck out four.

“Mia is one tough cookies” Chapman said. “Since I have known her, she has always been the one that takes hits and gets back up from it. It was an amazing thing that she was wearing a mask because it was hard hit. Once she gathered herself, she wanted to stay in and finish the inning.



Mia Wilson winds up for a pitch during the first game of Thursday's doubleheader at Wellsville.

"In the second game, she came in and had one of her best nights hitting the ball. Funny enough, she jammed her finger really bad sliding back into first in the middle of the game. She took a beating Thursday night but she has so much love for this game, that she just wants to play, no matter how she feels or how hurt she is. That's the kind of player I want on my team."

The Lady Cats (1-17) scored their lone run the next inning when senior Brooklyn Diederich singled home Rylee Hickey. Freshman Jenna Cauthon had the team's other lone hit in the

opener.

In the nightcap, the Wildcats found themselves down a pair of runs going into the top of the seventh.

Diederich nearly provided some heroics, as with a runner on, she sent a shot to the outfield and appeared it might be long enough for a game-tying home run.

Instead, the ball bounced off the top of the fence and back in play. Freshman Ashley Moreau later scored on a sacrifice fly from Wilson, but the Lady Cats couldn’t tie the game up.



Senior Brooklyn Diederich connects on an RBI single in the first game of Thursday’s doubleheader at Wellsville.

“I’m very proud of the girls to see where we have come from to now,” Chapman said. “Our record doesn’t show the progress we have actually made as a very young team.”

Wilson led the Lady Cat offense with two hits and an RBI. Freshman Izzy Moreland also had a double and 2 RBIs and Emily Gephart had a run batted in.

Moreland also started for the Lady Cats and pitched a complete game. She allowed three earned runs and struck out six batters and walked just one.

“Izzy hadn’t pitched in awhile because I’ve needed her to catch,” Chapman said. “I pulled up Emily Gebhart from JV and she came in and did her job as a catcher so that Izzy could get some innings and she pitched a heck of a game.”

Louisburg will play its regular season finale today when it hosts Paola for Senior Night. First pitch is set for 4:30 p.m.

Lady Cats lose two at home to Anderson County



Freshman Megan Quinn lifts a ball to the outfield Thursday during the Lady Cats’ doubleheader against Anderson County.

The Louisburg softball team hosted Anderson County for a doubleheader Thursday and the Lady Cats had their eyes set on a win.

After losing a tough game, 13-1, in the opener, the Lady Cats

battled back and held the lead over the Bulldogs midway through the nightcap.

However, Anderson County scored six runs in the sixth and four more in the seventh to hand Louisburg an 11-5 loss.

“I was happy how we responded after not playing so well in the first game,” Louisburg coach Nick Chapman said. “They just started hitting the ball very well. I told/asked our girls if they saw what I see in them. I see a young team that’s very inexperienced but at the same time can be very very good when we have confidence and belief in ourselves. They all said they see the same thing, especially after the second game.”

Louisburg (1-14) took a 4-1 lead into the fifth inning thanks to a pair of runs in the first and third innings.

Freshman Ashley Moreau led off with a single in the first and eventually came around to score after Izzy Moreland reached on a fielder’s choice.

Brooklyn Diederich, who reached on an error earlier in the inning, scored after Megan Quinn grounded into a fielder’s choice.



Freshman shortstop Ashley Moreau looks to scoop up a ground ball Thursday against Anderson County.

The Lady Cats took advantage of some Anderson County mistakes in the third and Diederich scored on an error and Quinn singled to score Jenna Cauthon.

That lead lasted until the final two innings, when the Bulldogs scored 10 runs in the two frames.

Moreau and Diederich each led the way with two hits and Moreau added a triple to her line. Quinn also drove home two runs.

Louisburg managed just one run in the opener as the Bulldogs scored 13 unanswered to start before the Lady Cats were able to break the shutout in the sixth.

Diederich and Moreland each finished with two hits to lead Louisburg. Diederich had a double and Moreland had the team’s

lone RBI.

“I can’t say enough about our pitchers,” Chapman said. “Mia (Wilson) and Megan (Quinn) do their jobs and they do it really well. They aren’t going to strike out every girl, but they will throw strikes and make girls put it on the ground or in the air for our defense. Brooklyn is putting her body on the line every night, no matter what the score is and making plays. I put her at second during the second game, and she made a sweet diving play off a line drive one the first plays of the game, right after Jenna Cauthon came diving in on a pop right right in front of home plate.

“Our outfield is making almost every play when the ball is hit out to them. They are making great catches, and they are throwing girls out. Our bats can be very dangerous. We have speed and power, but we just need to be consistent. I’m very proud of these girls and how they have stuck with this season. We just need to be consistent in what we do and finish strong to find our way into a regional bracket.”

Louisburg will try and snap its losing streak tonight when it travels to Eudora for one game. First pitch is set for approximately 6 p.m.

Lady Cats lose two to Ottawa

On April 26, Louisburg hosted Ottawa for a Frontier League doubleheader and lost 10-1 and 12-2.

To start the doubleheader, senior Maggie Ming had two hits to lead the Louisburg offense in the first game, including a double. Megan Quinn scored the team’s lone run.

In the second game, Mia Wilson led Louisburg with two hits, including a double. Cauthon and Moreland also had hits for Louisburg, while Cauthon and Rylee Hickey each had a run scored.

Week 4 Athlete of the Week: Mia Wilson



Here is the Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Week for week four of the spring sports season, sponsored by Edward Jones- Craig Holtzen.

Mia Wilson, Junior, Softball

Louisburg junior Mia Wilson provided a big spark for the Lady Cat softball team Thursday. Wilson helped the Lady Cats to their first win on the season as she pitched three scoreless innings to pick up the 5-3 victory over Tonganoxie. She also recorded an RBI base hit late in the win and provided several big defensive plays at shortstop.

For the week, Wilson finished up with nine strikeouts against Tonganoxie and Bonner Springs and had 2 RBIs at the plate.

The athlete of the week award is announced every Wednesday morning during the spring season and the winner is selected by Louisburg Sports Zone with the help of nominations from coaches.

Previous winners:

Week 1: Lexi Hampton

Week 2: Kolby Kattau

Week 3: Jaden Vohs

Lady Cats edge Tonganoxie for season's first win



Louisburg players surround Brylee Diederich after she caught the game's final out Thursday against Tonganoxie. The Lady Cats' 5-3 victory was their first of the season.

With three outs remaining, the Louisburg softball team and fans were on the edge of their seat.

What was at stake for the Lady Cats was their first win of the season as they took a two-run lead into the seventh inning Thursday against Tonganoxie at Lewis-Young Park.

Louisburg needed something positive to go its way after losing its first eight games to start the season and it got just that.

The Lady Cats, thanks to a couple big defensive plays in the seventh, came away with a 5-3 victory over the Chieftains and the players were more than happy to celebrate their first win.

“The girls were excited to get that win for each other,” Louisburg coach Nick Chapman said. “We put together a full 7 inning game and grinded to get that win. I don’t think I could put into words how proud I am of this group to grind that out.

“When Brylee (Diederich) caught that ball, I went crazy. It was just the build up of waiting for this team to play a game like that because I know they are capable of doing great things this year. I’m just waiting for them to believe it and hopefully we are one step closer to that.”



Junior Mia Wilson slides safely into home plate after she scored on a passed ball Thursday against Tonganoxie.

Several different players came up big for the Lady Cats, but maybe none bigger than Mia Wilson. The Louisburg junior pitched the final three innings of the game, allowed no hits,

no runs and struck out four.

Wilson also contributed at the plate with an RBI single in a big sixth inning for Louisburg. She also had two runs batted in on the day and scored a run.

“Mia Wilson was huge,” Chapman said. “She made plays in the field. The day before, she stayed after practice and we worked on those little bloops between infield and outfield. Then the first ball hit to her was exactly that and she got to it and made the play. It was huge to start the game making plays on defense. She was big on offense. She hit well, she laid down a sac bunt and I think ended up getting on base from it. She did some things that are not recorded in the stat book like some big time heads up baserunning to get to the next base.

“When we went through their lineup twice with Megan (Quinn), we threw Mia in there to pitch and she only had a half inning of warm up while we were hitting. She came in and shoved. Out of her 42 pitches, 31 of them were strikes. She was big time.”

Tonganoxie got out to good start against Louisburg early as the Chieftains took a 2-0 after the first inning, but the Lady Cats quickly rallied to take the lead. Louisburg used a 3-run second inning to grab the one-run advantage.

Megan Quinn led off with a walk and then pinch-runner Rylee Hickey stole second and went to third on a wild pitch. Wilson then reached on a Tonganoxie error, allowing Hickey to score.

Wilson would later go on to score on a passed ball and Brooklyn Diederich singled home sister Brylee Diederich to give Louisburg the lead.



Louisburg first baseman Megan Quinn stretches out for the ball during Thursday's game against Tonganoxie.

The Chieftains tied the game at 3-all in the top of the third, which set up the Lady Cat heroics in the sixth.

Louisburg loaded the bases after Brooklyn Diederich was hit by a pitch, Jenna Cauthon reached on an error and Izzy Moreland singled. Quinn was hit by a pitch that scored Brooklyn Diederich and Wilson followed it up with a single that scored Jenna Cauthon to make it 5-3.

Tonganoxie had one last chance in the seventh, but with two runners on, Brooklyn Diederich made a running catch in centerfield for the first out. Then after a ground ball out, Tonganoxie hit a fly ball to Brylee Diederich and the Lady Cats clinched the win.

"As tense as that game was, I'm glad we had to work to win

that game," Chapman said. "It taught us how to win those close games. We had to execute some things at the plate. We had to execute on defense also. Our pitchers (Megan and Mia) are pitching their butts off this year and our defense had their backs.

"Brylee Diederich had four put outs on 4 fly balls that were not easy to hang with. Each of one them hung in the air forever and sometimes those are hard because it feels like they are in the air forever, especially when it's to end the game. Her sister Brooklyn made 2 of her own and she had to really get to them. She has such amazing range and it's always fun to watch her chase down a ball in center. If we don't execute on both sides of the ball, we don't win that game. We needed a game like that to show us that we are capable of doing great things."

Louisburg will try and make it two in a row in a week that features two doubleheaders. The Lady Cats are scheduled to host Ottawa on Tuesday and then Osawatomie on Thursday at Lewis-Young Park. First pitch for both is set for 4:30 p.m.

Lady Cats find positives in rough start to season



Louisburg junior Mia Wilson struck out eight Baldwin batters

during the Lady Cats' opener last Tuesday in Baldwin City.

Any young team is going to experience growing pains at times during a season, and unfortunately for the Louisburg softball team, they had to go through some last week.

Louisburg, which can feature anywhere from five, all the way up to seven freshmen and sophomores in one lineup, knows it will have its bumps in the road.

The Lady Cats opened their season at Baldwin last Tuesday and lost the opener 9-3, before losing a slugfest in the nightcap, 24-14.

"I'm proud as heck of the girls," Louisburg coach Nick Chapman said. "Once we got the nerves out, they played really well. We didn't help ourselves out with all the errors that we had and Baldwin hit really well. With a team like that, we have to keep them off the bases as best as we can and make the plays that we need to make.

"Once we got going at the plate, our offense was on fire. The girls played team softball and executed situations really well. We got down 8-21 at one point and then put up 6 runs the next inning because of how we play offense."

In the opener, junior Mia Wilson pitched a complete game and only four of the nine runs she gave up, were earned. She also finished the game with eight strikeouts.

The Lady Cats just couldn't shake a bad second inning in which Baldwin scored five times and took a 6-0 lead into the third.

At the plate, freshman Ashley Moreau had a big day as she was 4-for-4 and accounted for half of the team's hits. Another freshman, Izzy Moreland, had an RBI single and freshman Maddy Rhamy also had an RBI.



Freshman Jenna Cauthon makes contact for a base hit last week at Baldwin.

Senior Brooklyn Diederich and freshman Jenna Cauthon also had base hits for the Lady Cats.

In the nightcap, the Lady Cats got out to a great start as they led 3-0 after the top of the first inning as Wilson singled home Moreau and Rhamy to put them up two and then Diederich scored on a passed ball.

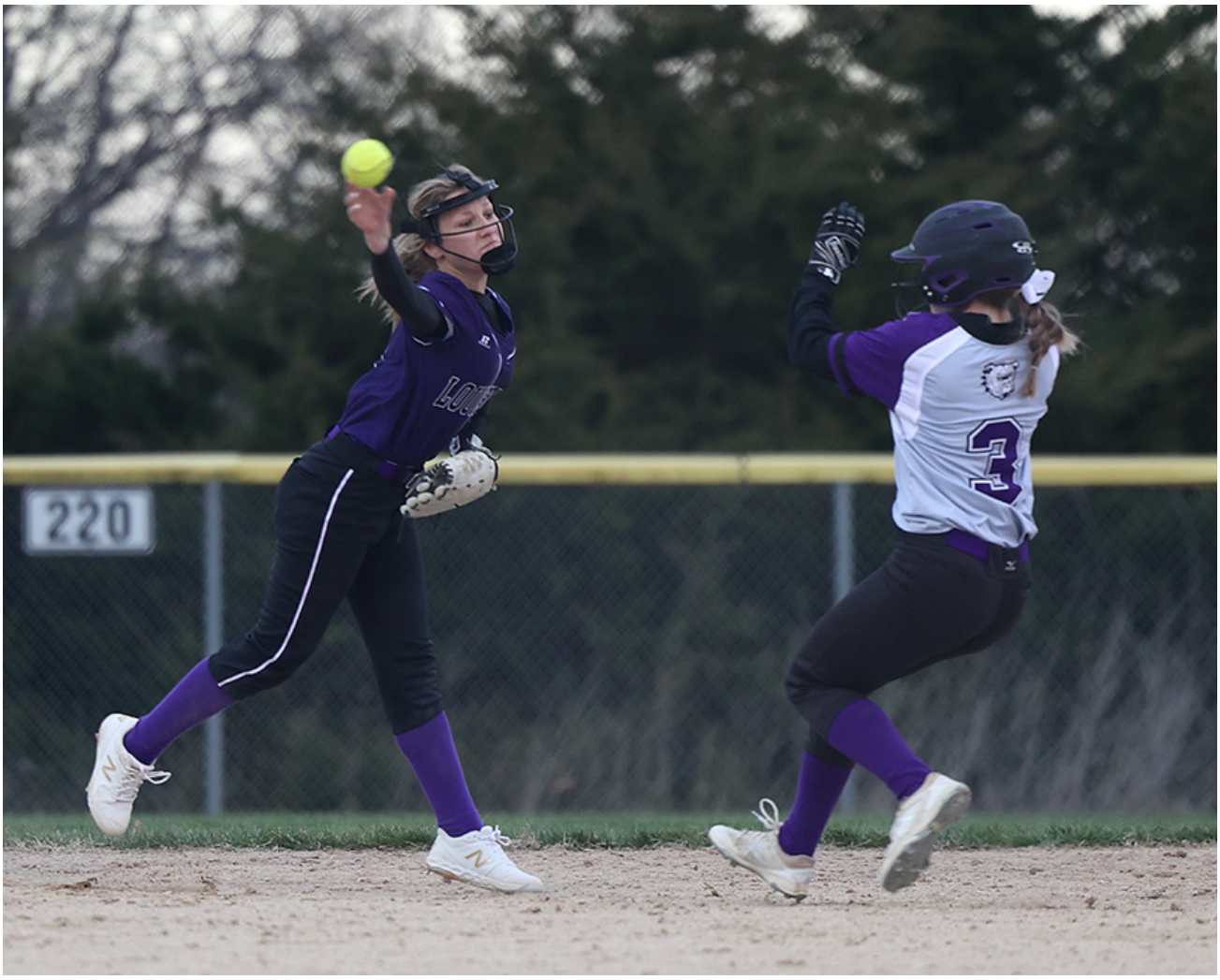
However, Baldwin went go on to score 13 of the next 14 runs as a 6-run third inning gave the Bulldogs 13-4 advantage. They then scored another eight runs in the the fourth.

“Hats off to Baldwin, we threw everything we could at them and they just found the places where we weren’t,” Chapman said. “They have some solid hitters. It was nice to see where our pitching staff is at right now and what we need to work on.

All three of them are hard workers and will make the adjustment and be better the next time. I have total faith in our pitching staff and very proud of how they handled the adversity Baldwin gave us.”

Moreland delivered at the plate for the Lady Cats as she was a home run short of the cycle. She finished with a single, double, triple and also had 2 RBIs.

Wilson had three hits and 4 RBIs for Louisburg, while Moreau added two more hits to her night. Senior Maggie Ming had a 2-run single, while Diederich, Moreau, Cauthon, Megan Quinn and junior Jada Frazier all had runs batted in.



Freshman shortstop Ashley Moreau tries to turn a double play against Baldwin.

Diederich and Moreau each scored three runs, while freshman Rylee Hickey came around twice to score

“Our whole lineup was great,” Chapman said. “From top to bottom, each girl has their role and they are learning how to execute that role. Izzy had a night, Ashley hit and executed everything I called for her, from a bunt to a slap, moving runners. Those two were huge and kept us in the game. Mia batted over .500 as well with four huge RBIs. Once she got going, she was going. Very pleased and proud of how she did.

“Like I said I’m proud of all 12 girls and the offense that we played as a whole team. When we get the other side of softball figured out, we are going to be very dangerous.”

Lady Cats drop two to Piper

Friday’s doubleheader against Piper in Kansas City, Kan., was not what the Louisburg softball team was hoping for.

The Lady Cats couldn’t avoid the big innings as Piper cruised to 18-3 and 16-0 victories over Louisburg.

“For three innings we played great softball with one of the best teams in our league,” Chapman said. “We had our bats rolling in the first inning and even into the second. We had a lot of momentum that we just couldn’t hold onto. Hats off to Piper for hitting the ball hard. They are a really, really good team.”

Louisburg opened the first game with a 3-0 lead when Izzy Moreland and Mia Wilson recorded RBI singles and Maddy Rhamy took home on a rundown.

The Lady Cats took a 3-2 lead into the bottom of the third, but the Pirates exploded for eight runs, many of which came on the eight errors Louisburg committed for the game.

Piper carried that offense over to the second game when it scored six runs in the first and another eight in the third to complete the shutout.

Lady Cats feature young roster as they look to rebound after missed season



Louisburg junior Mia Wilson will be one of three starting pitchers for the Wildcats this season. The Louisburg roster features six freshmen that will see a lot of playing time throughout the year.

The last time the Louisburg softball team took the field for an official game, the Lady Cats were competing in a state tournament.

Louisburg had just come off a thrilling regional championship and put together a memorable run at just the right time.

That was almost two years ago.

COVID-19 ended the Lady Cats' hopes of trying to get back to another state tournament as they watched their season cancelled due to the pandemic.

Nick Chapman was all set for his first season as head coach in 2020, but instead will make his debut in today's season opener against Piper along with the rest of the Lady Cats.

Now, after such a long time off, Louisburg is ready to make

another run at it and the Lady Cats are excited to get going.

“To say I’m excited is an understatement,” Chapman said. “Losing my first year as head coach has left me in a place of wonder. We didn’t get to see if what we are doing, and our philosophy, is going to work or not. I’m excited to finally play a game and to see the girls step on the diamond together, as a team. Especially this year, we have a young group. Half of our varsity squad is either a freshman or a sophomore.

“We have a completely different dynamic than we would have had last year. There are two girls that played at state two years ago. We are starting fresh and beginning to build this program from the ground up.”

Those two girls are senior Brooklyn Diederich and junior Mia Wilson.

Diederich has been a fixture on the varsity lineup for the Lady Cats and will look to lead a young group of players. She is just one of three seniors, along with Jenna Terry and Maggie Ming.

After pitching her first two years, Diederich will shift to centerfield and will join Ming, Wilson, sophomore Brylee Diederich and freshman Maddy Rhamy in the outfield.



Brooklyn Diederich is one of three seniors on this year's Lady Cat softball team.

Youth will big a big factor for the Lady Cats this season as six freshmen will see a lot of playing time as Chapman looks to build the program back up.

"We had a big group of freshmen come in and we are asking six of them to step up to the varsity level full-time and they will see a lot of time," Chapman said. "We are going to be super young, which is not a bad thing for the future, but it will leave us inexperienced a little this year. We also have a lot of girls coming in that play on different club teams all over. With that being said, every single girl has accepted the challenge and we have gotten better every single day and I feel confident we are about to do big things this year.

"The biggest thing I wanted to accomplish at the beginning of the year is getting them to play together and be a team that

cares about each other and will do anything for each other. If that happens, it will carry over into the game setting where they will be willing to sacrifice their stats to help the team win and help each other be successful."

It all starts on the mound where Wilson will lead the Wildcats after earning several starts as a freshman. She will be joined by a pair of freshmen in Megan Quinn and Izzy Moreland.

"We finally have pitching this year," Chapman said. "We will have the luxury of having three varsity pitchers and three JV pitchers. The three we have at the varsity level bring their own style and and different abilities. Megan and Izzy are both freshmen but do not pitch like freshmen. Mia and Megan bring some heat and then Izzy brings some nasty off-speed stuff. I'm super pleased with all three of them and what they bring to our team."

Moreland will also share the catching responsibilities with junior Jada Frazier, while Frazier and Quinn will also split time at first base.

Terry and freshman Rylee Hickey will split time at second base, while freshman Ashley Moreau will be the team's starting shortstop. Another freshman, Jenna Cauthon, will start at third base for Louisburg.

"Our offense is going to be one that is really strong together," Chapman said. "Our philosophy is get on, get 'em over, and get 'em in; team softball. We work everyday on situational hitting vs. just hitting the softball for fun. We have a few girls that can get a hold of the ball and we have a few that have great speed and we are going to utilize both of those things. They have really bought into this idea and are finding success when we scrimmage. We just need to play a game at this point."

The Lady Cats will get that chance today as they travel to Piper for a doubleheader to open the season.

Top Louisburg Sports Stories of 2020

There hasn’t been a year like 2020, and for most people, they are ready to put it behind them and forget it ever existed.

Still, with all the challenges that 2020 brought, there were still plenty of positives to talk about when it came to Louisburg High School sports. History-making state places and state medals were plentiful on this list, but it wasn’t all positive. Louisburg had to say goodbye to a beloved town figure and athletes had to deal with the loss of spring sports.

Below are the top stories from 2020, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the explanation is the link to the actual story from the event.

When putting the list together, I took a lot of things into account – whether it was team vs. individual, popularity of the sport, historical achievements and the interest it drew on the web site. Thanks to the cancellation of spring sports, I don’t have the top 10 like I normally do, but I got close.

This year was a blast to cover, when I had the opportunity, anyway. Still, I am looking forward to what 2021 will bring. Thank you for everyone’s support and can’t wait for it all to begin again.



8. Ratliff-Becher wins state powerlifting title

After winning a state championship in 2019 Reilly Ratliff-Becher had every intention of backing up her performance during the Class 4A State Powerlifting Championships on March 7 at Piper High School.

In fact, the Louisburg senior wanted to improve it. Last

season, Ratliff-Becher took first in everything but squat, which she got runner-up.

This time around, she got the clean sweep.

Ratliff-Becher took first in bench, squat and clean and that led to her second straight state championship in the 180-pound class.

“It means a lot to me that I was able to win the state title again,” Ratliff-Becher said. “I set a goal for myself to win first in everything since I had got second in squat last year and I achieved it. Even though it wasn’t my best showing with the numbers I got on my lifts.

“The competition was very good this year, as it always is. But, fortunately with all the work I put in to at least maintain my numbers from last year, meant I was able to lift bigger amounts than my competition.”



7. Conley named state and midwest coach of the year

After a third place finish to end the year, Louisburg boys

soccer coach Kyle Conley was recognized among the state's best.

Conley was named as the Class 4-1A Coach of the Year by the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association in November.

He guided the Wildcats to a 16-2 record on the season and the team's highest finish in program history when Louisburg ousted Rose Hill, 3-0, in the state third-place game.

Just a few weeks later, Conley was honored once again – this time on the girls' side.

Despite the lost season, the United Soccer Coaches wanted to recognize coaches for their past accomplishments and for what this past spring was supposed to hold.

Atop that list was Conley as he was named as the Small School Midwest Coach of the Year.

"I am absolutely honored to receive this award," Conley said. "There are so many great coaches in the Midwest, but to me this is a program award. None of this is possible without everyone involved; girls coming to work their tails off everyday, parents traveling and supporting us anywhere and everywhere, community helping with supporting the program, the school supporting the girls, etc. Without the support and buy in from the girls, parents and community none of this is possible."

The Wildcat girls program has had a successful start in its four years. Conley has a 54-22-2 record during that span, that included two state runner-ups and another state final four appearance.



6. Louisburg cheer places third at state

The Louisburg cheer squad had to do its postseason competition a little different this year thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It didn’t seem to bother them much as the defending state champions found themselves right in the thick of things again.

Although they didn’t repeat as champs, they were still among the state’s best as the Wildcats cheerleaders finished third in the state back in November.

Unlike performing in front of judges like they did in 2019, the Wildcats had to video tape their performance and send it in to be judged. It fared well as they tallied 83.35 points to finish in the top 3.

Baldwin earned the state title with 88.85 points and Abilene was second with 85.25.

Members of the Louisburg cheer squad are Bella Feikert, Addison Drake, Brooklyn Harmon, Jayden Trester, Maddy Carpenter-Ross, Sophie Katzer, Sammy McDaniel, Julia Arriola, Andrea Gaza, JoJo Hendrickson, Sydney Dudzik, Abby Bradley, Anna Poe, Sienna Finch, Mable Graham, Audrey Anderson, Zoe Weers, Anna Morrison and Maggie Madison



5. Holtzen, Owens earn state medals for Wildcat wrestling

Ryan Owens and Cade Holtzen both had their own agendas going into the state wrestling tournament.

Owens, qualified for state last year, but left without a win and he vowed to fix that this time around. As for Holtzen, he came up short in his efforts for a second state medal as a

sophomore last season and had all the motivation not to come home empty-handed again.

Both wrestlers more than made up for their rough patches a year ago.

Owens and Holtzen left Salina with a state medal during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships on Friday and Saturday at the Tony’s Pizza Events Center.



Owens made it to the semifinals and wound up earning a fourth-place medal at 120 pounds, while Holtzen finished fifth at 126 pounds.

It also marked the first time since 2016 that Louisburg finished the season with multiple state medalists, when Nathan Keegan and Mason Koechner each brought home medals.

The Wildcats nearly had three medalists as sophomore Brandon Doles finished one win shy of a state medal at 160 pounds with a 2-2 record.



4. Dennis steps down as LHS team doctor

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 his 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.

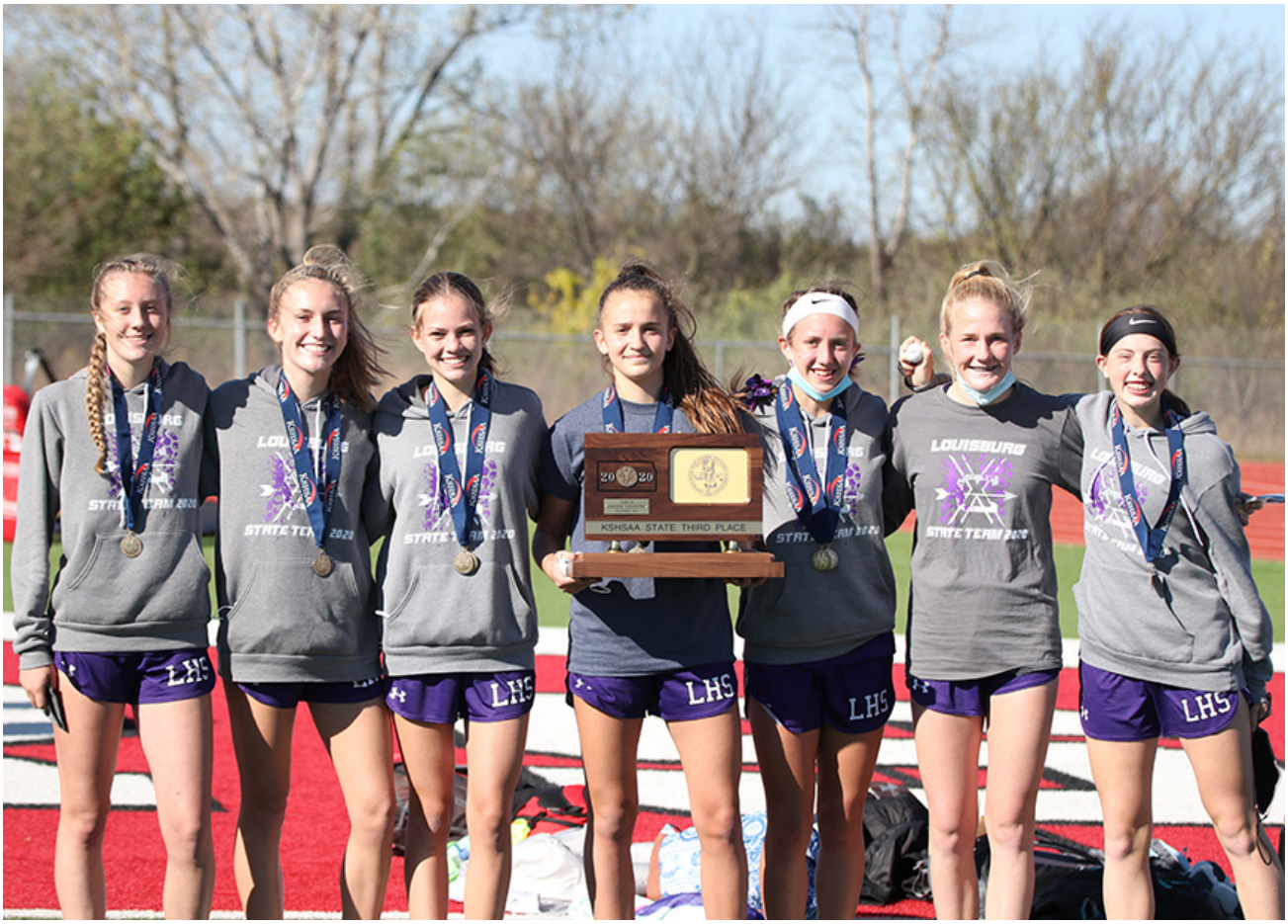
He has taped thousands of ankles, seen even more patients and has touched many lives during his time in Louisburg. That is why this week is one of the more emotional times in his life.

In May, he left Louisburg Chiropractic Office and handed the reins over to Dr. Jake Polzin. Add to that, Dennis also stepped away as LHS' team doctor and left 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.



3. Girls Cross Country Takes Third at State

For 23 years, the Louisburg cross country program has been chasing a top three finish at the Class 4A meet.

The Wildcats have had several teams qualify, especially in the last few seasons, but have always come up short of their goal. Following Saturday's race in Wamego, the Wildcats can finally stop running after it.

The Louisburg girls put together an historic performance at the Class 4A Kansas State Cross Country Championships at Wamego Country Club. The Lady Cats earned a state plaque with a third place finish as they surpassed Buhler by eight points to record the school's first top three state finish.

Junior Reese Johnson, sophomores Claire Brown, Bree Gassman and Nova Ptacek, along with freshmen Lola Edwards, Maddy Rhamy and Erin Apple, will all go down in school history as they became the first Wildcat team to bring home state hardware.

“It means the world to me to be a part of the first team ever to place at state,” Rhamy said. “Coming into the state meet, I was just hoping our team would be in the top half, so you could imagine my excitement when our team placed third. I didn’t even know we made school history until our coaches told us.”

Rhamy was one of two freshmen who earned top 10 finishes individually, along with Edwards. Rhamy finished eighth overall in 20 minutes and 58 seconds, while Edwards was right behind her in 10th in 21:02.

Junior Reese Johnson also garnered a state medal as she was 15th in 21:28 to help the Lady Cats to an historic performance.

It was a proud moment for many in the Louisburg program, and included in that is John Reece. The longtime Wildcat head coach was all smiles following his team’s performance.

“It is 23 years the making,” coach Reece said. “You always have the plans and goals to get to state and then you get a group to go to state and do something great. This year was one of those. With the Frontier League as tough as it is, and then getting third there, put it in our heads that maybe we could do this. They all went out and ran their races, and that just shows their grit and determination and who they are.”

A week earlier, the Wildcats also made history as its was the first time in school history when they qualified the entire boys team to the state meet as they took third at regionals.



2. Boys Soccer Finishes Runner-Up At State

As the Louisburg players huddled around their state plaque, many of them looked at it in awe and wonder.

“Hey guys, we won this,” a player shouted.

The statement was obvious at the time, but nonetheless, their excitement was more than warranted.

For the first time in program history, the Louisburg boys soccer team brought home a plaque from the state final four as the Wildcats defeated Rose Hill, 3-0, on Saturday in the third place match of the Class 4-1A state tournament at Stryker Sports Complex in Wichita.

It was only the second time in school history that the Wildcats had it made it this far, with the other being in 2016, when they finished fourth.

“There are only six teams in the entire state that get to end their year with a win and we wanted to be one of those teams,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “We want to be able to hang up a banner on our field and we wanted a plaque so that no one can forget what these kids earned and what they did this season. I am so proud of all of them.”

It was a program defining moment for the Wildcats as they began the weekend searching for a state championship, but lost 2-0 to Bishop Miege on Friday in the semifinals. Still, recording the best finish in school history is nothing for someone to hang their head about, and the Wildcats came out Saturday wanting to make sure they brought some hardware home.

“It’s absolutely crazy to think about what we have accomplished this year, partly because I have only played soccer in high school,” senior captain Logan Faulkner said. “Bringing a state plaque back will just be a reminder of what we did and how we reached our goal.”



1. COVID-19 Cancels Spring Sports

In March, Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly closed all schools for the rest of the 2019-20 school year due to the spread of COVID-19.

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

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

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

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

There would be no game days, no Senior Nights and no postseason runs. Athletes had to figure out how to cope with this fact and it was a challenge for the Louisburg girls soccer, track and field, baseball, softball, golf and swim teams.

Many of those teams had big postseason aspirations after success in 2019 and were left wondering what could have been.

Ratliff-Becher named 2020 Louisburg Sports Zone Female Athlete of the Year



When Reilly Ratliff-Becher looked at the list of fellow nominees, it was one that seemed fairly daunting to overcome.

It included a four-time state cross country medalist in Trinity Moore, a 12-time varsity letter winner in Haley Cain along with a two-time team captain for girls soccer in Erin Lemke. The Louisburg senior was just happy to be nominated in such great company.

As it turned out, Ratliff-Becher found herself at the top of the list as she was named as the 2020 Louisburg Sports Zone Female Athlete of the Year.

“I really mean this, I was surprised when I won because Erin, Haley and Trinity are A+ athletes in my book,” Ratliff-Becher said. “But, it means a lot to me considering that whenever I think about my favorite moments in high school, it was during sports. I’m very grateful that my coaches enjoyed me so much to even consider honoring me with this award.”

The award, which is in its third year, is to recognize an outstanding LHS student athlete. Louisburg Sports Zone asked the head coaches at LHS to submit nominations and those nominations were then organized and submitted back to the coaches for a vote.

The coaches then submitted their top two choices and the number of votes were added up, which decided the winner.

Ratliff-Becher was a three-sport athlete for Louisburg High School, and it all started in volleyball where she was a part of two state runner-up teams and she helped the Lady Cats to a fourth place finish at state this past season.

As the team's libero, Ratliff-Becher earned honorable mention All-Frontier League honors and she finished with a team-high 359 digs to go along with 85 assists and 17 aces.



"I'm excited for Reilly to win this award, and she is very deserving," Louisburg volleyball coach Jessica Compliment said. "Reilly was a quiet, yet powerful voice on the volleyball team for the past four years. She worked her tail off during the offseason and hardly ever missed an opportunity to improve her skill, strength, speed, agility, etc. She also

consistently pushed her teammates to improve as well and was a great leader on the team. Her work ethic showed in her other activities as well.”

It was that tenacity to get better that also led to her to great things in the world of powerlifting.

Ratliff-Becher became a two-time state champion in powerlifting this past year as she won 180-pound class and took first in bench, squat and clean. She is also the school’s all-time record holder in power clean.

“I can’t say enough about Reilly,” Louisburg weightlifting coach Ty Pfannenstiel said. “She is the hardest worker that we had in our school. I’ve never seen an athlete with more focus, drive, and determination to be her best. Back to back state champion in powerlifting and the all-time school record holder in power clean is quite an accomplishment. She’s earned every bit of it.

“Reilly is a high-character kid. We are really going to miss her leadership and she is going to be successful in the future with whatever she decides to do.”



Ratliff-Becher was also a key piece on the Lady Cat softball team’s regional championship a year ago and was one of seven seniors ready to defend that title this year. Instead, the COVID-19 pandemic took that opportunity away as the spring season was cancelled.

Still, competing in all three sports has been a blessing for Reilly as she said goodbye to all three and will be attending Pittsburg State in the fall. All three have given her traits she can use for later in life.

“I enjoyed volleyball so much because of the speed of the game,” she said. “Momentum and mental state was key for our team and we exceeded a lot of people’s expectations. It was definitely my favorite program through high school and I made some of the best friends because of it. Weightlifting was something that just challenged me, the harder I worked, the

better results I would get and I was addicted to seeing what my body could do and I still am.

“I know I didn’t play basketball my junior or senior year, but it was super fun, just wasn’t for me. I am very grateful for the lessons I learned and memories I made though. Softball holds a very deep meaning in my heart. I loved it and I loved all the girls I played with. Practices were a lot different than my other sports because it was solely working on technique and patience.”

Playing sports and staying active all throughout high school has been what has helped Ratliff-Becher through the difficult times in life.

“I could go on and on about how much of an impact being a part of teams and being active helped me in school,” Ratliff-Becher said. “It was my safe place, nothing else mattered except getting better at whatever it was I was doing. I gained confidence, great social skills, amazing friends, mentors and coaches, strength, special opportunities and countless memories. Makes me so sad thinking about how it’s all over, but looking forward for what’s to come.”

2020 Athlete of the Year Nominees



For the past four years, Louisburg Sports Zone has given out Athlete of the Week awards during each of the three sports seasons. I do it to recognize special athletic achievements and to highlight the athletes.

For the third straight year, Louisburg Sports Zone will be handing out an Athlete of the Year honor to a male and female athlete at Louisburg High School. I wanted the opportunity to recognize those who exemplify what it means to be an "athlete."

Obviously, 2020 has not been the typical year when the spring was cancelled due to COVID-19. However, I still want to make sure those athletes that were set to make an impact in the spring were recognized as well.

Although I am giving out the award, I wanted the process to be subjective, so I asked the head coaches at LHS to help me out. I asked each coach to send me nominations of who they thought exemplified the Athlete of the Year honor. They voted for their top male and female athletes and then I tabulated the results. I will release the results in the coming days.

Below are the nominees for this year's award in alphabetical order by last name. Congrats to all those who were nominated and best of luck!

Female Athlete of the Year Nominees



Haley Cain – Senior – Volleyball, Basketball, Soccer

Haley was a three-sport athlete during her time at Louisburg High School and recorded the rare feat of earning 12 varsity letters.

In the fall, she helped the Louisburg volleyball team to its third consecutive state tournament and was selected to represent Kansas in the Greater Kansas City All-Star Match. She was also named to the All-Frontier League second team as a middle hitter.

Cain was also a two-time team captain for the Louisburg girls basketball team and was a key player for the Lady Cats this past season. She was also set to be a big contributor for the Wildcat soccer team in the spring as well.



Trinity Moore – Senior – Cross Country, Soccer

Trinity made cross country history for the Wildcats this past season as she medaled third at state and broke her own school record in the process. The Louisburg senior also medaled at state all four years.

Moore was also a returning starter for the Wildcat soccer team and was a key factor in helping the Wildcats to three consecutive state final fours and two state runner-up finishes.

She started 43 games for the Wildcats and concluded her career with 18 goals and eight assists. She is fifth in school history with 44 points.



Erin Lemke – Senior – Volleyball, Soccer

Erin was another multi-sport athlete for Louisburg as she was a member of the volleyball and soccer teams. Lemke was an outside hitter for the Lady Cat volleyball team and was selected to represent Kansas in the Greater Kansas City All-Star Match.

On the soccer team, Lemke was a two-time team captain for the Wildcats and was a returning all-league and all-state player. She was also one of the team's top goal scorers.

Lemke had a very productive career for the Wildcats as she started 48 of her 59 games and earned all-league and all-state honors as a sophomore and a junior.

She finished her career with 29 goals and 27 assists and Lemke

has the second-best assist mark for a season in program history with 17 and is third in career assists. She also added seven game-winning goals.



Reilly Ratliff-Becher – Senior – Volleyball,

Powerlifting, Softball

Reilly was a multi-sport athlete for Louisburg High School as she competed in volleyball, power-lifiting and softball. She was an honorable mention all-league selection in volleyball as she served as the Lady Cat libero.

Ratliff-Becher was a big part of the Lady Cats' state tournament runs the last three years. She was also selected to participate in the Greater Kansas City All-Star game last November.

As a powerlifter, Reilly recorded her second-straight state championship and took first in each of the three individual events.

Ratliff-Becher was also a returning starter on the Lady Cat softball team after she helped Louisburg to a state tournament appearance a year ago as a catcher and outfielder.

Male Athlete of the Year Nominees



Garrett Rolofson – Senior – Soccer, Basketball, Golf

Garrett is a three-sport athlete for Louisburg as he was a member of the soccer, basketball and golf teams. In soccer, Rolofson served as the Wildcats' goalkeeper and helped Louisburg to a regional title and a school record 16 wins.

Rolofson was named to the All-Frontier League first team and to the all-state second team. He posted eight shutouts on the season and allowed only 17 goals, four of which came from penalty shots. He also finished with 78 saves on the season and allowed the second fewest goals in Class 4-1A.

In basketball, Rolofson was a starter on the Wildcat basketball team and this spring he was all set to help the Wildcat golf team to their second consecutive state tournament

appearance. He was the team’s No. 3 golfer a year ago.



Madden Rutherford – Senior – Football, Baseball

Madden was a multi-sport athlete for Louisburg as he was a key member of the Wildcat football and baseball teams.

Rutherford, who was a team captain on the football team, was selected as a first team All-Frontier League quarterback. Rutherford finished the year with 671 yards passing with eight touchdowns and he also added 245 yards on the ground and four more scores.

On the baseball team, Rutherford was also a returning all-league player and was slated to be the Wildcats’ No. 1 starter this spring.