

# 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 bloopers 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 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.

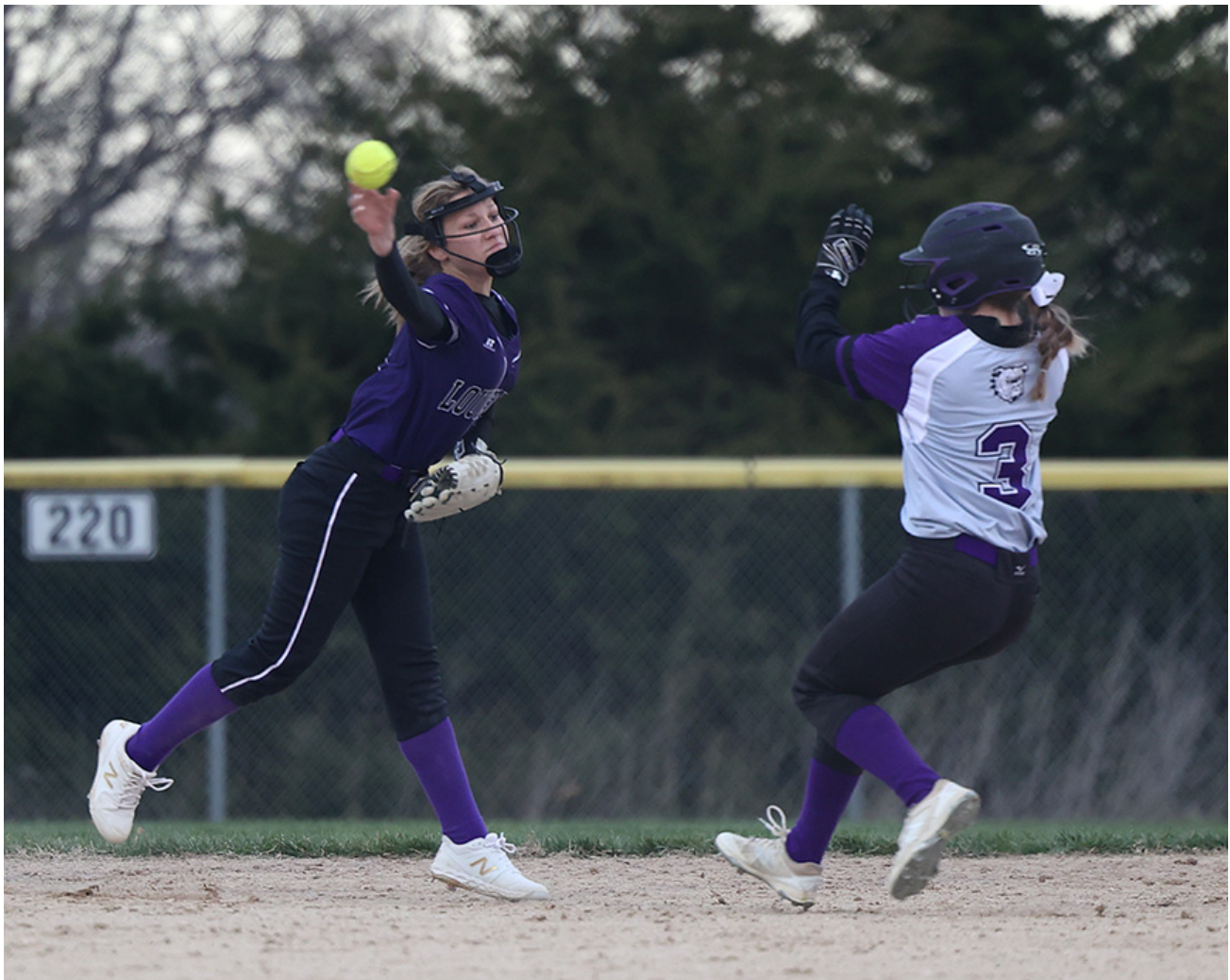
"Hats off to Baldwin, we threw everything we could at them and they just found the places where we weren't," Chapman said. "They have some solid hitters. It was nice to see where our pitching staff is at right now and what we need to work on.



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 be 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 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 is affectionately known – opened Louisburg Chiropractic Office 28 years ago and has served as the



Louisburg High School athletic team doctor for almost that same amount of time.

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

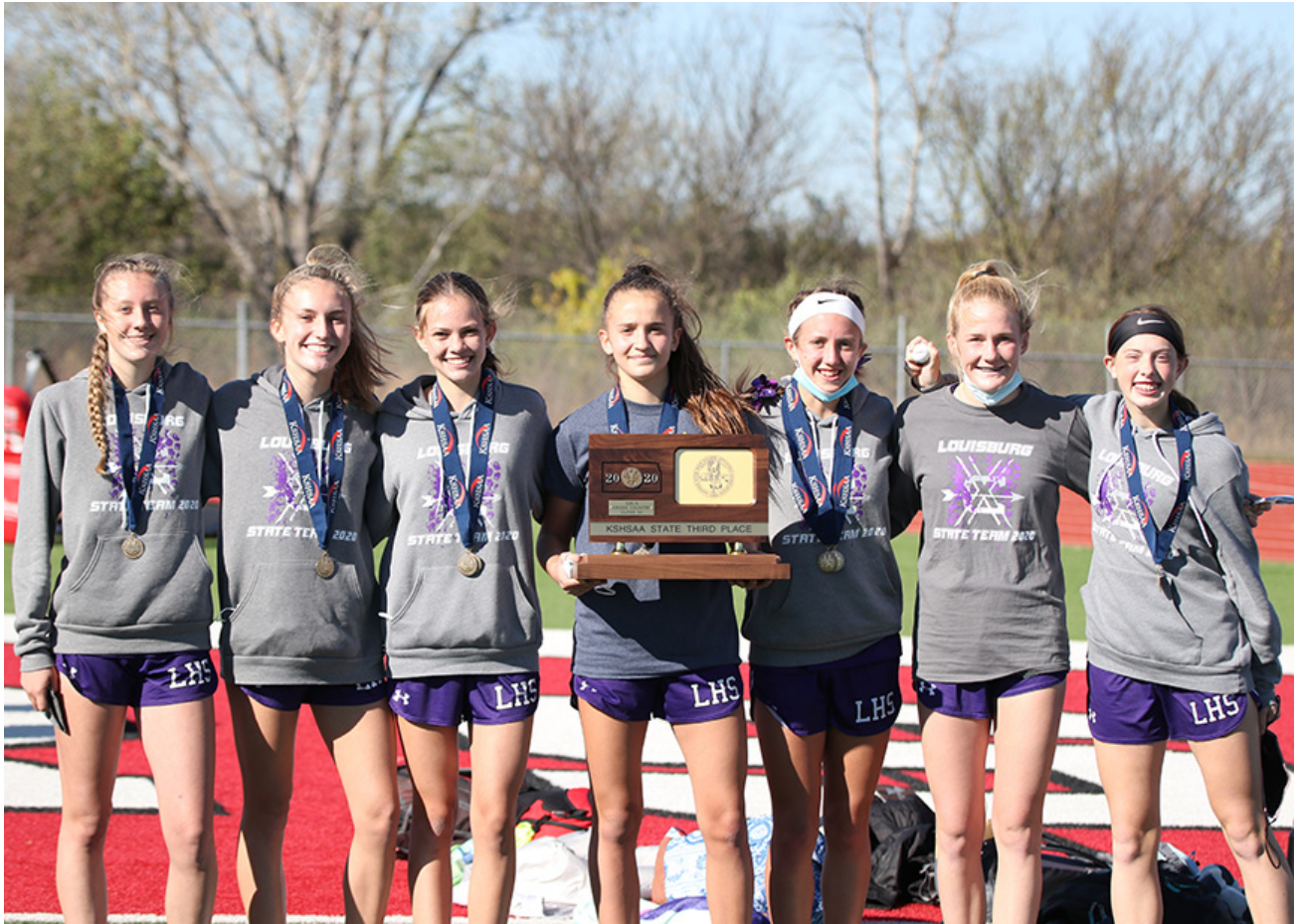
He has taped thousands of ankles, seen even more patients and has touched many lives during his time in Louisburg. That is why this week is one of the more emotional times in his life.

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 it 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.

---

# Lady Cats get a chance to play one final game



The Louisburg girls softball team played in the “One Last Game” event last week at Blue Valley Recreation in Overland Park. Members of the team are (front row, from left) Mia Wilson, Brooklyn Diederich, Jordan Mynsted, Maggie Ming, Jada Frazier, Jenna Terry; (back row) coach Nick Chapman, Allie Boles, Lauren Cutshaw, Kat Coolidge, Gabby Dugger, Reilly Ratliff-Becher, Kayla Willey, August Daniels and assistant coach Megan Balke.

The game in no way replaced what could have been for the 2020 season, but for the Louisburg softball team, last week’s contest was the next best thing.

The Lady Cats got to play together for the first – and last – time on June 24 when they took part in the “One Last Game” event at Blue Valley Recreation Sports Complex. The event was put on by Midwest Sports Productions (MSP) and gave 30 high schools and their seniors a chance to play for their school one final time.

Louisburg took on St. James Academy, and although it lost 13-3, the game itself meant so much more than the result. It gave a group of players a chance to play one game after their season was lost to COVID-19.



Add to that, seniors Lauren Cutshaw, Reilly Ratliff-Becher, Allie Boles, Kat Coolidge, Gabby Dugger, Kayla Willey and August Daniels were able to end their careers in a somewhat proper way.

"Honestly, taking that field in general flooded my mind with memories of when I first started playing in middle school on the club team I was on with Allie, Lauren and Kayla," Ratliff-Becher said. "It made me realize why I fell in love with this game. It was bittersweet. I was so happy to play with my, what would have been, senior season team. We would have been a really solid group."

It also gave Nick Chapman an opportunity to lead his team for the first time, as this was his inaugural season as the Louisburg head coach.

"Honestly, I didn't think much of it," Chapman said. "Any day on the ball field is a great day to me. I was happy to be out there with the girls and seeing them play. I kind of took a step back and just let them enjoy playing together. The result wasn't ideal, but the girls played hard and I saw glimpses of the great team we could have been this year."

Louisburg put some of that talent on display early thanks to third baseman Allie Boles. With St. James threatening to score with runners on the corners and no outs, Boles caught a line drive near the third base bag, touched the base to catch the runner off third and then threw to first baseman Kat Coolidge to get the runner at first and turned the rare triple play.

Although Louisburg was able to get out of that jam, St. James scored five runs in the next two innings. The Lady Cats scored their first run in the fourth when Coolidge singled home Boles.

They added pair of runs in the fifth when Maggie Ming led off with a triple and scored on a Brooklyn Diederich single. Diederich later stole second and scored on an error.

August Daniels started the game for Louisburg, while Diederich and Mia Wilson both pitched as well against the Class 5A school in St. James, who had played a game earlier that day.



**Louisburg senior Gabby Dugger beats out a throw to reach on bunt single.**

Despite the loss, it was still a memorable moment for the entire Lady Cat squad.

"This definitely brought closure for our team and for some of the seniors, with it being our last time ever playing competitively with girls we grew up with," Ratliff-Becher said. "I'm glad I participated or I would have definitely regretted it."

The event was started when Piper High School senior Bella Gravatt reached out to MSP after her softball season was

cancelled due to COVID, much like other high school softball players in the state of Kansas. The event was hosted to provide seniors a chance to play with their teammates one last time and give them a ceremony to be recognized.

In what has been a difficult year for many high school seniors, the event helped ease the pain of a lost season.



**Senior Allie Boles gets ready to make contact with a pitch last week during the Lady Cats' 'One Last Game'**

"I think this was the best ending to a strange year," Chapman said. "I missed being around this group every day. Being at practice was always the best part of my day because we were playing the game that I love and they were just a fun, hard working group to be around. There was never a dull moment with them.



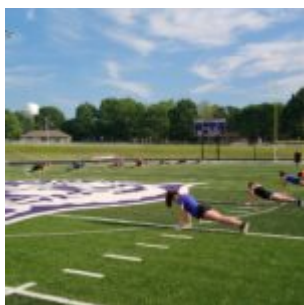
"I'm glad the seniors got this one last game as a Wildcat. They helped me set the tone at the beginning of the year of what this program is going to be about. I hope when they come back to visit, they are proud of where we are as a program. I know they are all going to do big things in the future and they will be greatly missed."

With the 2020 season in the rearview mirror, Chapman is already focusing on what they hope will be a 2021 season.

"If everything holds up, we will have our camp on July 10 and then scrimmage on the 15th to start working with our new team and developing our fundamental skills this summer," he said.

---

## **Wildcat athletes report back for summer conditioning**



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

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

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



State High School Activities Association.

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

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

Several coaches were in attendance running athletes through drills in three separate stations that would allow some space between everyone. Football coaches Robert Ebenstein, Ty Pfannenstiel, Joel McGhee and Drew Harding were on hand to lead drills, along with other staff from within the USD 416 school district.

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

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



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

To start the day, each athlete is screened before the start of conditioning with a temperature check and then they are divided into three groups. Each of them will participate in three stations that focuses on different workouts. There are no more than 45 athletes in a group and the coaches design workouts to promote the six feet of distance.

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

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

Whenever the athletes have completed their 10 sessions, they are allowed to participate in team activities the rest of the

summer. As of right now, everything is on track to allow athletes to begin attending camps after June 29.

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

---

## **Boles excited to join Temple College softball program**



**Louisburg senior Allie Boles signed her letter of intent to play softball at Temple College, a junior college program in Temple, Tex. Sitting next to Allie is her mother, Leisa.**

It has been about a year since Allie Boles officially decided where she wanted to continue her softball career, but that hasn’t changed her excitement much.

In fact, it is only growing as the day gets closer for her to leave to home in Louisburg and make the move down to Texas – a

move she has been looking forward to for quite some time.

Last year, Boles signed her letter of intent to play softball at Temple College, a junior college program in Temple, Tex., that is filled with winning tradition as of late.

“Being able to sign to play in college means a lot to me because I want to go far with this game,” Boles said. “I was excited to sign there.”

Temple is known for having a lot of success and recently won the junior college World Series in 2018 and made it back to the national tournament again the following year. Boles is hoping that success that will carry over to her stay with the Leopards and that she can advance further in the world of college softball.

“I knew Temple was the right fit because of the way it felt when I was down there,” Boles said. “The campus and town has a small town feel to it and it made me feel like home. Softball in Temple is very big and they are ranked No. 4 in the nation for juco schools. They have a lot to offer in the softball world and they have some of the best coaches that lead their girls to succeed in higher divisions like Oklahoma State and Oklahoma University.”

Softball has been a big part of Boles’ life ever since she was a little, and a big reason for that was her father, Dave. He coached her for several years with their Mustangs team and he helped grow her love of the game.

Last year, Dave passed away unexpectedly and left a large void in the Boles’ family that was difficult to get through at times. Despite that, Allie is determined to honor her dad in the one way she knows how – on the softball field.

“My dad was not only a dad, he was a fantastic coach that taught me everything I know, on top of all that he made the game fun by being a great friend to all of the athletes he has



coached," Allie said. "He made the game fun, relaxing and got me out of my head. We would talk about softball on the field and off the field till late at night.

"Looking back now, he was the person that taught me to move forward after making a mistake and sometimes you just gotta laugh at the mistakes you make in the game. I wanna do the best I can in my softball career for both him and myself, along with the people I love. I want to inspire people the way he did."

Allie saw it first hand as her dad coached her on the Mustangs and then she eventually moved on to Advanced Fastpitch Academy to hone her skills even more. Those are two times in her life that helped mold her into the player she is today.

"The Mustangs taught me more about the living in the game part rather than the techniques and skills part," Boles said. "This made me love the game more and more. Later on I transferred to a big organization called Advanced Fastpitch Academy, and just like the Mustangs, they taught me what it's like to feel like a family when you are on a team. This academy has made me improve a lot over the years. They have taught me plenty of new skills and knowledge of the game for the next level."

Boles was all set to play for Louisburg High School in her senior year, but with the COVID-19 pandemic, her season was cancelled. Although it has been another difficult couple months for Boles, she is trying to look toward the future.

She will join Temple later this year, where the Leopards hope to use her in the middle infield and outfield at times. Boles is looking forward to playing for Temple in however they want to use her.

"I think my strength is in the outfield, primarily, but I love both the grass and the dirt," Boles said. "I hope to show them a good perspective of the game. I want to succeed in everything with the team, work hard and stay committed to the

game. I hope to help them with another World Series.”

---

## Dennis leaves lasting legacy in Louisburg, LHS athletics



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

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

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

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

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

On Saturday, he will officially leave Louisburg Chiropractic Office and hand the reins over to Dr. Jake Polzin. Add to that, Dennis is also stepping away as LHS' team doctor and will leave an absence on the sidelines and behind the mic that many in Louisburg have come to know.

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

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

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





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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

## **A Small Beginning**

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

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

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



Louisburg High School would not be the same.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

friends.

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



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

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



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

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

## **Beyond The Call of Duty**

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

community know what Doc D has meant to the district.

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

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





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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

No, Doc – thank you...