

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

administrators have been very supportive throughout this process.”

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

and students again.”

2020 Senior Spotlight: Carter Anglin



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

Carter Anglin was all geared up for his final season of track and he did the summer workouts to prove it.

Anglin, who throws the discus for the Wildcat track team, dedicated his offseason to getting better in the event and was poised to earn a spot at the state meet for the first time. He wanted to end his high school career on the best note possible in an event that had become a big part of his life.

“I’ve been throwing discus since seventh grade and I don’t really know how I got into it,” Anglin said. “It just always looked fun to me. It has become a huge part of my life and I’ve committed countless hours towards perfecting the technique. Last summer, I attended multiple summer camps to improve my skills and prepare for my last track season. One of these camps was a week-long camp at KU where I trained with former Olympians.”

He was also a member of a boys team that had the potential to have a lot of success in 2020 as the Wildcats returned several state qualifiers. It was supposed to be a season to remember.

Unfortunately for Anglin and the rest of his teammates, their season never really got started as it was cancelled due to the spread of COVID-19. Anglin and the rest of the Wildcat seniors will never get a chance at that last one opportunity at state.

“It has been extremely hard to cope with the fact that I don’t get to finish my senior year, especially since it’s something that I’ve been looking forward to forever,” Anglin said. “As far as the throwers go, we had a good chance at being extremely successful in all three events. Michael Waldron, Jay Scollin, Cole Evans and I all had potential to place at all of our varsity meets and get plenty of points for the team.”

Even with all the bad moments currently, Anglin is still trying to find the positives and think about the good times, including when he took gold at the Louisburg Invitational.



Photo by Jennifer Mullinax

Louisburg senior Carter Anglin was the team's top returning discus thrower and was hoping for his first trip to state.

"My favorite moment from track has been taking first place in discus at our home meet last year with my personal best throw," Anglin said. "I was looking forward to this season so much, especially considering I had a good shot at qualifying for state for my first time.

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

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

CA: Track season is probably what I have been missing the most, I met all my best friends through track and it's the season that I look forward to the most every year and the one season where I get to see all my friends every day.

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

CA: Marching in the Rose Parade with the band is definitely my most memorable moment since it was a once in a lifetime opportunity.

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

CA: Working on, reading about, messing around with, or anything else that involves cars. It has been a passion of mine for a long time and I hope to have a career in automotive technology in my future.

LSZ: What are your plans for after graduation?

CA: I plan to attend McPherson College to study Automotive Restoration and eventually pursue a career in the automotive field.

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

CA: Being inducted into the National Honor Society, obtaining the rank of Eagle Scout, and being awarded a number of college scholarships purely based on my ACT score and GPA. I think all the achievements demonstrate perseverance and hard work and it feels great to be recognized for that hard work.

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

CA: My parents took me to Vegas for my 16th birthday.

Carter's Favorites

Pro athlete: Ken Block

Pro team: Kansas City Royals

College team: Pitt State Gorillas

Movie: Talladega Nights

TV Show: Breaking Bad

Song: Second Chance by Shinedown

Band/Musician: Shinedown

Pregame meal/snack: Footlong turkey and cheese Subway sandwich

Class/subject: Algebra

Teacher and why: Mr. E (Ebenstein) because I admire the way that he makes something as boring as Government fun.

Previous Senior Spotlights

Drake Varns – Golf

Trinity Moore – Soccer

Andrew Krause – Baseball

Kayla Willey – Softball

Anthony Davis – Track and Field

Garrett Rolofson – Golf

Shayla Aye – Swimming

Allie Boles – Softball

Michael Waldron – Track and Field

Avery O'Meara – Soccer

Ryan Haight – Golf

Andie Masten – Soccer

Lauren Cutshaw – Softball

Trent Martin – Track and Field

Erin Lemke – Soccer

Luke Wickersham – Golf

Skylar Bowman – Soccer

Gabby Dugger – Softball

Sydni Keagle – Track

Olivia Chase – Soccer

Colin Cook – Golf

Morgan Messer – Soccer

August Daniels – Softball

**Gassman excited for
opportunity at Northern Iowa**



Louisburg senior Carlee Gassman, who recorded three state medals last year and is the school's record holder in the 300 hurdles, signed to run track at the University of Northern Iowa on April 20.

As a freshman in high school, Carlee Gassman knew what her ideal college was, but at that time there were a lot of unknowns.

A lot can happen in three years. For Gassman, however, everything seemed to fall into place.

The Louisburg senior found her perfect school and will get the opportunity to compete in the athletic arena on top of it all. Gassman made it all official on April 20 when she had a signing ceremony outside of Louisburg High School and signed her letter of intent to run track at the University Northern Iowa, a Division I program in the Missouri Valley Conference.

"I was a freshman and my best friend and I at the time really wanted to be teachers, and if you know anything about UNI it's that they have the best teaching program," Gassman said. "That's really when I started dreaming of running at UNI. My best friend and I are now going to college together and I get to compete in the 400 hurdles. How could it get better? It was always a dream to run in college, but I wouldn't say at a D1 level. I honestly don't care at what level as long as I'm able to continue to hurdle."

She will definitely be able to do that as Gassman made a name for herself when she joined the Wildcat track team as a sophomore. Early in that sophomore year, Gassman went on to

break the school record on four different occasions in the 300-meter hurdles and finished at second at state.

As a junior, Gassman earned three state medals, including a fourth place finish in the 300 hurdles and had hoped to compete for a state title in the event this year before spring sports were cancelled due to the spread of COVID-19.

All that success led to options for different college choices for Gassman, but in the end there was one that stood out among the rest.



Carlee Gassman (middle) signed her letter of intent with her family in attendance to run track at the University of Northern Iowa. Seated next to Carlee are her parents Tara and Brent Gassman. Standing (from left) is her sister Bree and her brother Cade.

“It honestly wasn’t that hard of a decision,” Gassman said. “After I visited UNI I already knew that’s where I wanted to continue my adventures. I did have another college interested in my athletics and what was appealing about that one is I would’ve been able to compete in both track and soccer. Being

able to play soccer and run track in college made the decision a bit harder.

“However, they didn’t have my major and I would’ve had to take some rough paths to get to where I wanted to go. And with UNI they offered the exact major I wanted so I chose my education over athletics and I couldn’t be happier. The only downfall is I’ll be five hours away from my family.”

Currently, Gassman is trying to get in as much training as she can as she begins her transition from the 300 hurdles to the 400’s in college. There could also be other options for her once she arrives on campus.

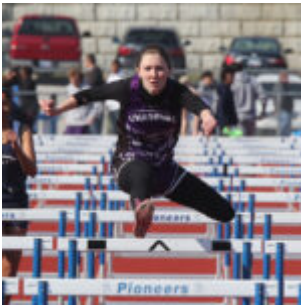
“As of right now I’m not sure what they are going to have me do,” she said. “I know 400 hurdles is my top event and I could be doing some long jumping and 800s. As of right now everything is on schedule and hopefully it stays that way.

“Right now I’m on the bubble of being able to score points for the team, so my top goal is to bring my time down in the 400 hurdles to be able to score points. I would also like to see what I can do in the 800.”

Education was also a big factor in her decision and Northern Iowa seemed like the perfect fit for Gassman.

“UNI is not too big and not too small,” she said. “It’s location was also appealing to me and having extended family around there is an extra bonus. Another thing that makes UNI such a great fit is the major I want to go into. At UNI, they offer the nitty gritty specifics that go along to my major. I want to go into communication disorders specializing in American Sign Language. I imagine myself teaching children in the deaf community or even being an interpreter and they have a clear cut path for that.”

2020 Senior Spotlight: Sydni Keagle



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

Sydni Keagle loved soccer – in fact – it was her favorite sport all the way up through middle school.

However, when she reached the seventh-grade, she wanted to give track a try. She looked at the hurdles, and although it would be challenging, she thought she might be able to have some success in it.

Not everyone had the same views Keagle had.

“I mentioned to someone that I was interested in trying them and was told that it probably wouldn’t end well,” Keagle said. “I was a pretty clumsy and uncoordinated person at that time so it kind of made sense.”

Six years later, everything seemed to turn out just fine for Keagle and her hurdling adventure.

Last season, the Louisburg senior became the school record holder in the 100-meter hurdles and qualified for state for

the first time. It was a year to remember for Keagle and she was looking to make more memories for her senior season.

Keagle was one of many key pieces to the Louisburg girls track and field team this year and some preseason rankings had the Lady Cats ranked in the top five in the state with several returning state qualifiers.

“I remember still being in volleyball season and asking Carlee Gassman if she was as ready for our last season as I was,” Keagle said. “Ever since the end of state, I had been physically and mentally preparing to put in the work to not only qualify for state again, but also place and earn an individual state medal.

“There was a good chance that we could send multiple girls to state and we had the goal of placing this year. This season would have been one of the best that our team has had in a long time and we were all so excited to compete.”

Like all the other schools across the state, the spread COVID-19 took away those goals and potential memories with the cancellation of spring sports. The news hit everyone hard and Keagle was no different.

“I actually found out in a text from Delaney (Wright) to Rain (Pugh), Carlee and I,” Keagle said. “She sent a message saying how much fun she had with all of us and that she would miss us and wished we could have had one more season. Immediately after I read the words, I started crying to the point where I couldn’t stop. A little while later I realized that no track meant no school, and no school meant no prom and then it was just one thing after another that just had a snowball effect on my emotions.

“I talked to the girls for a while and it made me feel a little better but it was hard to really grasp that the whole year was over. I’m now at the point that I’ve accepted what’s happening and have started to just focus on school and

spending time with family.”



Photo by Kristin Davis

Louisburg senior Sydni Keagle was hoping for her first state medal in the 100 hurdles this season.

Keagle had quite the junior season as she not only broke the school record in the 100 hurdles, she was also a part of the team's 4x100-meter relay that finished fourth in the state. She also came within one spot of taking a state medal in the hurdles after she came in ninth.

That one spot had been a motivator for Keagle going into the 2020 season as she was hoping to get on the state medal stand in her favorite event. Still, she has plenty of memories during her time with Louisburg track and is excited for what is to come – including a spot on the Southwest Baptist University track team.

“My favorite part of track is the people,” Keagle said. “I don’t remember most of the workouts we did in practice, but I remember running with Delaney Wright, Rain Pugh and Carlee Gassman and how even when we were all out of breath and wheezing we could still manage to make each other laugh. The people are what make track fun and worth participating in. Even if I’m warming up for an individual event, 99 percent of the time there is another teammate either warming up with me or talking to me to calm my nerves.

“Track has definitely become a big part of my life, and while I don’t practice year-round it is the thing that I have set the most goals for. It has also become a big part of my family’s life, especially during season. They come to every meet they can and have supported me through all of my ups and downs. Without them, I seriously doubt that I would have come as far as I have in just a few years.”

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

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

SK: I’ve mostly been missing the opportunity to spend time with friends and actually see people. There are ways to still talk to them and communicate through technology, but it’s not the same as being able to hang out in person.

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

SK: My most memorable moment was when I not only qualified for state but also broke the school record for the 100 hurdles in the same race. The reason it was such a big deal was because my original goal was to qualify for state junior year and then break the school record by the end of my senior year and I was

able to do both at the same time. It was unexpected and exciting.

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

SK: I really enjoy reading because it's a chance for me to slow down and just relax for a while. I don't have to worry about anything other than the story I'm reading and I can take a break from everything else I have going on.

LSZ: What are your plans for after graduation?

SK: I plan to go to Southwest Baptist University and study Elementary Education so that I can teach kindergarten or first grade. I also plan to run track.

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

SK: The accomplishments that I am most proud of are maintaining my grades throughout high school and being a member of National Honor Society. I'm usually pretty busy during the week so being able to have good grades, while still participating in athletics, going to church and volunteering, babysitting, and spending time with family, is something I'm really proud of.

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

SK: I was a dancer for six years when I was younger. I did ballet, jazz, and tap, but tap was my favorite.

Sydni's Favorites

Pro athlete: Stephen Curry

Pro team: Kansas City Chiefs

College team: KU Basketball

Movie: Aladdin

TV Show: Gilmore Girls

Song: If Today Was Your Last Day by Nickelback

Band/Musician: Jonas Brothers

Pregame meal/snack: Gatorade and a Subway sandwich

Class/subject: History

Teacher and why: Mrs. Quinn. She has been my advisory teacher for the past four years and I also had her for AP Lang, but she always makes a point to ask how I'm doing and to check in with me when she can tell that I maybe haven't had the best day. She also keeps me on task and makes sure I have all my work done.

Previous Senior Spotlights

Drake Varns – Golf

Trinity Moore – Soccer

Andrew Krause – Baseball

Kayla Willey – Softball

Anthony Davis – Track and Field

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Shayla Aye – Swimming

Allie Boles – Softball

Michael Waldron – Track and Field

Avery O'Meara – Soccer

Ryan Haight – Golf

Andie Masten – Soccer

Lauren Cutshaw – Softball

Trent Martin – Track and Field

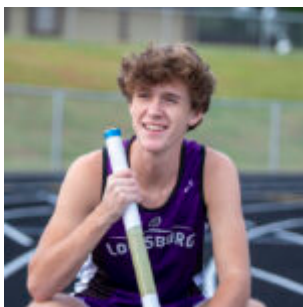
Erin Lemke – Soccer

Luke Wickersham – Golf

Skylar Bowman – Soccer

Gabby Dugger – Softball

2020 Senior Spotlight: Trent Martin



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

For the last two years, Trent Martin has found himself on the biggest stage in Kansas high school track and field and he was ready for a third opportunity.

Martin, a pole vaulter for Louisburg High School, was making sure his final season as a Wildcat was a good one as he had

been prepping for one last trip to the state meet. He already had one state medal under his belt, but he was looking for more.

“I was really excited for my last year of vaulting for LHS and I felt like this year was going to be a good year,” Martin said. “I was hoping for my second state medal.”

Instead, Martin won't ever get that sense of closure. The spring sports season was canceled due to the spread of COVID-19 and his pole vaulting career came to a premature end.

“When I found out the season was canceled, I was pretty upset,” Martin said. “It was my last year to do the sport I love.”

Pole vaulting has been a big part of Martin's life. He has been working on the event since middle school – and not just during the school season – but doing off-season workouts and instructional work in the Kansas City area. It had become a passion of his.

Martin took a big step forward as a sophomore as he medaled eighth at the Class 4A state meet in Wichita and returned as junior. He finished 12th overall in his final trip state.

It is a part of his life Martin is truly going to miss.

“I started pole vaulting in seventh grade,” Martin said. “I just wanted to try pole vault because my dad was a good pole vaulter in high school. I have put a lot of time and effort into this sport throughout the years.”

As for the team itself, the Wildcat boys returned several state qualifiers from a season ago were ready to infuse a lot of young talented athletes to the mix as well. It was all set to be a special year.



Louisburg senior Trent Martin was a two-time state qualifier for the Wildcat track team.

Even though the 2020 season won't happen, Martin still has plenty of good memories to fill the tough times.

"I think the boys team would have done great things this year," Martin said. "I think my favorite moment from track was placing at state my sophomore year because it was a big accomplishment for me. It showed that all my hard work had paid off."

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

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

TM: I have missed having social interactions with my friends, teachers and coaches.

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

TM: One of the most memorable moments was taking a trip to Wichita for state track with my teammates and friends.

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

TM: Fishing is my main hobby outside of sports, work and school. Fishing is a calming and relaxing activity to do either by yourself or with other people.

LSZ: What are your plans for after graduation?

TM: I am attending Pittsburg State University to major in Business Marketing

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

TM: One accomplishment was rebuilding the dock on my pond. It was in bad condition and it felt good to do something productive with our time off.

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

TM: Most people know quite a bit about me, but one thing not many people do know is I work at Home Depot.

Trent's Favorites

Pro athlete: Mondo Duplantis

Pro team: USA Track Team

College team: KU Basketball

Movie: Superbad

TV Show: Tiger King

Song: Graduation by Juice Wrld

Band/Musician: Juice Wrld

Pregame meal/snack: McDonald's

Class/subject: Coding

Teacher and why: Mr. Holloway – he was a great teacher in middle school and a great principal now.

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Avery O'Meara – Soccer

Ryan Haight – Golf

Andie Masten – Soccer

Lauren Cutshaw – Softball

Pickman named as new LHS activities director



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

allow him to spend more time with family.

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

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

2020 Senior Spotlight: Michael Waldron



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Fifteen inches.

That is all that stood between Michael Waldron and his first state medal last year at the Class 4A Kansas State Track and Field Championships in Wichita.

Although he was a little frustrated at the time, Waldron recorded a personal-best throw in the javelin and it was a good way to go into his senior season. Not too bad for an event he only had two years of experience in – and one he nearly gave up on.

“I gave up baseball after my freshman year and went back to track, this time I was competing in the discus throw only, until my mom begged me to try javelin,” Waldron said. “I decided to take her up on her offer and I tried it. I was terrible. I barely threw it 60 feet and for two straight weeks I couldn’t figure it out. I told my parents I was done throwing javelin, but my mom insisted I keep trying.

“That next week, everything finally clicked and I threw one just around 100 feet. We were also measuring that day to see who would go to the first varsity meet and coach (Pete) Skakal gave me a chance. So yes, javelin is a huge part of my life at the moment. It has taught me that even when a situation or life seems hopeless and there’s no light at the end of the tunnel, you still have to power through and have faith.”

Waldron is using those words, now, more than ever.

Right before the start of his senior track season – that was all set to give him his first state medal – spring sports across Kansas were canceled due to the spread of COVID-19. Seniors everywhere were left speechless and angry, Waldron included.

“It was a slap in the face – a sucker punch,” Waldron said. “At first, I couldn’t believe I wouldn’t have a senior track season, senior prom or graduation day. Just recently, I thought of how there is also no senior skip day or senior prank day and how there was just so many more activities left in this school year. The hardest thing was thinking about how that last day before spring break, might have been the last time I see some of my fellow seniors for the rest of my life.

We are all going our separate ways and for some people that is far away from Louisburg.

“My so-called therapy for all this is just hoping that this pandemic comes to an end soon and maybe just maybe some of these events will be rescheduled, we may have a half-season possibly, who knows. The last thing, I can do is just be ready and stay positive, whether that’s staying in shape or throwing my javelin.”

Waldron was one of several returning state qualifiers from a season ago and the Wildcats were not only poised for individual success, but team success as well.

“Personally, I think with the addition of a few freshmen jumpers and sprinters, I think we could have won a league championship this year as a team,” Waldron said. “On top of that, I think we could’ve had at least 15 or more boys qualify for state this year. But with the amount of ‘point-getters’ we had returning this year, I believe we had a chance to win every meet this year. We had some returning state qualifiers and placers from last year ready to rock and roll this year. Adding those guys and the platoon of newcomers this year, I was excited to see where we would compete as a team at league and regionals.”

It has been a busy senior year for Waldron already as he was a starter on the Louisburg football and basketball team and it was a year that featured a lot of highs and lows. Even through all that, he was looking forward to the spring the most.



Louisburg senior Michael Waldron was poised for his state medal this year in the javelin.

“Let’s just say I have always loved all my sports equally but this year, in terms of track, I was ecstatic,” Waldron said. “I have my own javelin, so I would be throwing it and practicing in my backyard even during my other sports seasons as long as the weather was good. I could not hold back my excitement for the season and having new uniforms was even more thrilling. On top of that, 12 of the 16 javelin throwers last year at state were seniors, so I was ready to shine and hopefully make it back to state and take a step on that podium to receive a state medal.”

Waldron’s state medal dream, unfortunately, will stay just

that. He still has a lot of good memories to hold on to, and that helps during the difficult times as he prepares to throw in college at the University of Central Missouri.

“My favorite moment would have to be the opportunity to throw at KU relays last season,” he said. “I mean the state track meet and everything that was included with it was memorable, no doubt, but KU relays was just so surreal. I was throwing against the best of the best in all classes in the state, like multi-time state champions and the nation’s leading high school thrower from Manhattan High. I felt like I didn’t belong there and that’s what made it so special to me.

“To add onto that, having the opportunity to see all the collegiate throwers compete was also extremely cool. I went to this week-long KU Track and Field camp in the summer before my junior year and I met a ton of kids my age doing all sorts of different events and those memories and friendships I created there carried over into this meet. Every 15 minutes, I saw one of my friends from camp and getting to watch them compete and seeing them in the crowd when I was competing was just really special and honestly one my favorite parts of the moment.”

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

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

MW: Besides missing track the most, I definitely miss seeing my friends and teachers. Also, not being able to go to the gym, movie theater, or simply leave my house is also a huge bummer. I like having school in session, because not only do I see my friends but I feel like I just understand the material and subject better while learning at school. Online school is definitely weird, mostly because I have never taken an online

class, but you are also missing that face to face instruction. I guess, you could say I'm missing the "usual" or everyday life. I just feel out of routine.

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

MW: I know this isn't spring sports related, but I want to say my most memorable moment as an athlete would be the 25-7 victory (2018) over Paola on their home football field. Both teams were undefeated and fighting for a league championship. We were able to pull off a win there but it wasn't that close of a game. Sure, we didn't score a lot of points but we just dominated. That would be a game and memory I will never forget. As a student, I want to say my most memorable moment would be the Homecoming Day Talent Shows, just remembering all of my classmates up there performing their songs, dances or special talents. But also being able to be up there with my friends my senior year and doing that Mr. LHS pageant was definitely something ingrained into my mind.

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

MW: I think most boys can agree with me on this one, my favorite hobby outside of sports would be just playing video games. It's even better playing with your friends because then there's the laughter and the fun that comes with playing the game. It is just a good way to get your mind off of the busyness that surrounds high school athletes and the amount of homework. Now, I only play video games when I have the free time, but it is definitely my favorite hobby.

LSZ: I know you are going to throw at Central Missouri next year, but how tough has it been to kind of stay in throwing shape and have you been able to work on that at all on your own?

MW: Well, being able to go throw at Central Missouri next year

is a blessing, but the preparation surprisingly hasn't been stopped, since I have my own javelin and just about 75 yards of open space in my backyard, I can just throw in my backyard every day. Now, obviously it is different, because not having the instruction that I would have had this track season and not being able to have a coach telling me what I am doing wrong or what I need fix, makes training and preparing a little bit harder. Also, in terms of staying strong and keeping my body in shape, workout equipment is slim at my house which makes workouts difficult to come up with. It's hard not having a weights class or the local gym open, but I do what I can. The positive is that having some equipment rather than none is good and owning a javelin is great, so I can take this extended time and really perfect some techniques before my first collegiate season.

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

MW: Well, being on the honor roll and getting good grades every year has always been a thing I work for. My GPA is something I am proud of, but I think there is always room for improvement. Taking the advanced science and math classes throughout high school was definitely challenging and I'm glad I could say I had a 3.8 GPA in classes like physics, AP Biology and AP Calculus. But definitely, being a member of National Honor Society would be my favorite achievement. Lastly, finishing with so many college credits in AP courses and my Accounting classes was my biggest accomplishment, I think, as a student because now I am just more ready for college and the next step in life.

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

MW: Honestly, I don't think that most people know I was originally born in California. I moved here when I was 3, so like it isn't that big of a deal. I have been around here for

a bit so no one really knows. All of my relatives are out in California, so not having any of them around throughout my life has been weird. Most people I see have their grandparents at sporting events or awards ceremonies but no one has really asked me about my grandparents, so most people may not know that I grew up in Southern California.

Michael's Favorites

Pro athlete: Well, my all-time favorite would be Kobe Bryant, but my current favorite would be Mike Trout.

Pro team: Kansas City Chiefs

College team: My beloved Kansas State Wildcat Football Team

Movie: Remember the Titans

TV Show: The Office

Song: Stayin' Alive by The Bee Gees

Band/Musician: The Bee Gees

Pregame meal/snack: My meal would definitely be a chicken bacon ranch sandwich from anywhere. My snack would be a Nature Valley protein bar with a glass of milk.

Class/subject: Anything history because it comes easy to me.

Teacher and why: Mrs. Lane is definitely my favorite, not only because I have a lot of classes with her, but I just took accounting my junior year not knowing what would become of it. She helped me find what I wanted to major in, I ended up loving accounting and that's what I want to do with my love and that's because of her.

Previous Senior Spotlights

Drake Varns – Golf

Trinity Moore – Girls Soccer

Andrew Krause – Baseball

Kayla Willey – Softball

Anthony Davis – Track and Field

Garrett Rolofson – Golf

Shayla Aye – Swimming

Allie Boles – Softball

2020 Senior Spotlight: Anthony Davis



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

Running has been a way of life for Anthony Davis, especially the last two years.

A season ago, Davis qualified for the state track meet for the first time in the 1,600-meter run and was the top runner on the Louisburg boys cross country team. Distance running had quickly become a passion of his.

"I have actually only been in track two years," Davis said. "I started in eighth grade, quit freshman year, skipped sophomore year and then was all in junior year. The thing that I love about it so much is how little experience I have. Every single race was still a learning experience. I would consider track and cross country to probably be two of the biggest things in my life right now. The feeling of setting a new personal record is unmatched, or just the look on someone's face who hates running when you tell them you ran 12 miles at 6:30 pace."

Davis was ready to make amends for a difficult ending to his cross country season after coming up short of qualifying for the state meet. Once that was over, he began his training on making sure the same thing wasn't going to happen in track.

He was the top returning distance runner on the Wildcat team this season and was hoping to improve his time enough to possibly earn a medal at the state meet in Wichita in late May.

"I was probably looking forward to this track season more than any other sport season I've had," Davis said. "It was a big deal for me for a lot of reasons. First off, my cross country career had not ended the way I wanted it to on that golf course in Baldwin where I'd had one of the worst races of my life and missed my ticket for state.

"I had pretty much taken one week off of running and then gotten right back into it, running all winter to get myself ready for this year in track. I had a lot of hopes and aspirations for a few state medals. In addition, this year was a big one for me to prove myself to some colleges and get some money to do what I love in college."

However, once the team parted ways for spring break, little did they realize it would be the last practice they would have as the season would later be canceled due to COVID-19.

Davis had an inkling that, at the very least, the season would be delayed, but he tried not to think about it.

“I ignored it and trained as well as I could,” Davis said. “It was literally the last thing that I wanted to happen. A delay would be okay, no fans would be whatever. But there’s nothing I wanted more than to run for one last season. I took a few days off, then went right back into running because I knew I had a future in a college somewhere and it has all worked out for me, and I’m so blessed.

“The cancelation of school was out of nowhere. The biggest blow to me was no more prom, but then I realized, as cliché as it is, I miss all the little things. Isolation is no fun and seeing all the friends you’ve had since elementary school is pretty special no matter how sick and tired you may get. Saying hi to your locker neighbor every morning – it’s all special – and it’s a shame none of my fellow seniors will experience this again.”

All the time off has given Davis a chance to reflect on his high school career and think about all the good memories track has given him – especially his favorite from a year ago – when he qualified for state for the first time.

“It was a huge accomplishment for me to qualify for state in the 1,600, but man I would’ve been lonely there,” Davis said. “My favorite part was right when I crossed the finish line, and my teammate and good friend, Ryan Rogers, was right behind me. I had no idea what happened at first, then I heard all of our Louisburg guys go crazy and I turned around and saw Ryan crossing the finish line, qualifying right beside me. I was so incredibly proud of him and happy he’d be there to accompany me in Wichita.”



Anthony Davis was a returning state qualifier in the 1,600 meter run for the Wildcat boys track team.

Davis was going to be a vital part of the distance group for the Wildcat boys track team. Along with Rogers, they also welcomed junior Carson Houchen to the group and they had hoped to put a 4x800 relay together. It was just one of many events the Wildcat boys could have place in this season.

“I can guarantee you this would’ve been a historic year,” Davis said. “The addition of Carson Houchen was gonna be huge for Ryan and I. We had a lot of hope for a state 4x8 team. Carson has some wheels to him as well as a lot of stamina, obviously, and I think we would make a deadly trio. Not sure

who our fourth would've been, but I'm proud of all the distance guys and gals and I know I'm excited for what they do next year."

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

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

AD: If I am being honest, I can't really say I've been self-quarantining too much. I've gotten to see my best friends quite often so I'm grateful for that. I do miss being able to go out to Overland Park and actually have stuff to do (and be within my legal limits) and once this is all over I've compiled a list of things I really want to do – starting with climbing Pikes Peak this summer.

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

AD: My favorite memory is a tough one... but it would probably have to go to when I did eighth grade track with my best bro Deven Wieland and all the shenanigans that went with it. I remember one week where we both sucked at long jump, but did it anyway and so we decided to goof off that time and try to re-create Eric Berry's bow and arrow celebration. So as he was doing his jump, I pretended to throw up a ball and he shot the pretend bow midair. Safe to say coach wasn't pleased with that one.

A second experience that comes to mind is probably some of the memories I've had during select choir, like sophomore year perfecting the song 'Abide.' Because of the performance, we were picked to go to New York the next year and that was probably the most fun I've had in my life.

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

AD: I really love to walk countless laps at the lake, especially with my new pup, Toby (golden retriever and an angel). I also really, really love music. I took drum lessons for a few years back in middle school, but I'm also involved with the choir so I love to sing. Playing Animal Crossing is a lovely way to pass the time as well.

LSZ: What are your plans after graduation?

AD: Going to Baker to run cross country and track with Louisburg graduate, Wyatt Reece.

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

AD: My best accomplishment is probably the fact that I made it through an entire year of AP Lit without touching a book

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

AD: Something everyone probably doesn't know about me is that I'm actually ranked No. 3 in the world in Gunfight in Call of Duty: Modern Warfare.

Anthony's Favorites

Pro athlete: Patrick Mahomes

Pro team: Kansas City Chiefs

College team: Baker Wildcats

Movie: Cat in the Hat

TV Show: How I Met Your Mother

Song: Everlong

Band/Musician: Taylor Swift

Pregame meal/snack: Fruit Snacks

Class/subject: History or AP Gov

Teacher and why: That is a tough one. Not a single teacher I don't like, but I really like Mrs Staab. She's very selfless, sweet and persistent.

Previous Senior Spotlights

Drake Varns – Golf

Trinity Moore – Girls Soccer

Andrew Krause – Baseball

Kayla Willey – Softball

Players, coaches mourn loss of spring sports season



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

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

spread of COVID-19.

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

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

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

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

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

GIRLS SOCCER

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

Instead, she found herself focused on social media, constantly checking updates on what

was going to happen with the rest of her senior year. She was scared that her final soccer season was going to be taken away from her.

Turns out, those fears became a reality.

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

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

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

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

“The decision absolutely broke my heart,” Conley said. “I couldn’t in a million years fathom something

like this could happen. I honestly felt the cancellation was harsh this early, but would have rather like to have seen a postponement and then reevaluate at a later date.

This group of 12 seniors was going to be very special. If they would have

returned to the state final four this season, they would have been one of only

two 4A-1A teams to do this improbable feat. This group was 44-18-1 in their

three years. I would be willing to bet this is the most successful program over

those three years in regards to win percentage. Obviously, winning state

championships would trump that, but we were extremely successful."

The one thing that has helped players get

past this disappointment is that there are so many seniors to lean on and they

have done a lot of that this past week.

"The amount of support from this team has

helped me so much," Scholtz said. "As soon as we found out that we would no

longer play, all of us seniors were sending nothing but love to one another as

well as to the whole team. Individually, there were many messages sent showing

how much we love each other and that this would get better. Coach Conley and

the younger girls also shared a lot of great messages as well. Hearing positive

words is really helping me get through this whole thing."



The 2020 Louisburg High School girls soccer team

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

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

BASEBALL

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

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

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

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

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

Rutherford, who is a two-time All-Frontier

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

“Personally I was just ready to just play ball again,” Rutherford said. “My football season ended with an injury, and two surgeries later I was just starting to get back into the swing of things. I was excited for the baseball team this season; we had a different looking coaching staff and a different mentality which was evident at practice. I’ll always be left wondering what could have happened.”



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

As

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

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

“To go with the seniors, this is also horrible for the juniors,” Larson said. “Junior year is a big recruiting time and a lot of these guys are missing that. So all around this just is a bad time for an athlete, but I know they will work through it and come back next year ready to go.”

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

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

TRACK AND FIELD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GOLF

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

Still, he wanted a lot more.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

“One positive that comes from this situation is the gratitude we will now have for our everyday lives,” Dillon said. “You never know when something catastrophic like this can happen, and we need to be thankful for the life we do have.

Although this situation is disappointing for us, it was ultimately God’s plan.

He is the one that is in control, and if we seek him in this time of discomfort, we will find the closure and satisfaction that we lost along with our senior season.”

GIRLS SWIMMING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOFTBALL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

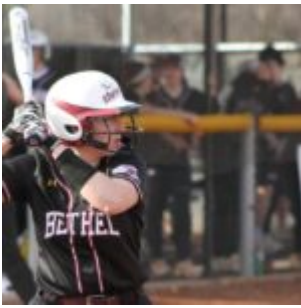
The seven seniors consisted of Ratliff-Becher, Allie Boles, Lauren Cutshaw, Kayla Willey, Kat Coolidge, Gabby Duggar and August Daniels. Some of those seniors were a big part of the Lady Cats’ state run a year ago, while others were looking to make an impact on the varsity level this year.

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

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

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

Local college athletes watch as seasons canceled due to COVID-19



Bethel College junior Emalee Overbay was off to a great start to her softball season with the Threshers before she saw her season canceled thanks to the COVID-19 virus.

Before the Kansas High School Activities Association announced it would be canceling the spring sports season Wednesday, colleges and their athletes were already days in to a horrible realization.

Both the NCAA and NAIA canceled all spring sports and their postseasons last week due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus that has left the entire country scrambling for an ounce of normalcy.

Louisburg High School graduates

Emalee Overbay and Isabelle Holtzen are still trying to find it.

Overbay, Holtzen and college athletes across the country were shocked when they were informed their seasons that they had prepared for months for, was taken away in the matter of minutes.

Although Holtzen and Overbay are considered underclassmen, and still have the opportunity to compete next season, the loss of the next two months of competition has been hard to swallow.

It was a life no one saw coming.

All was going well for Holtzen, who is a sophomore pole vaulter at the University of Northern Iowa. She competed in the indoor season over the winter and achieved some personal bests in the process.

Holtzen finished her indoor campaign on top as she took third at the Missouri Valley Conference meet with clearance of 3.63 meters (close to 12 feet). That placing earned her all-conference honors for the first time in her career.

“Indoor season this year was honestly a bit of a challenge for me,” Holtzen said. “Early on in the year, I was able to PR, but then kinda fell into a slump about halfway through. It was extraordinarily frustrating as I was dealing with a bit of an injury and wasn’t performing as well as I wanted. Luckily, I have amazing teammates, coaches

and family that helped me figure it out. I was very excited to be able to receive all-conference honors, especially since it ended up being my last meet of the year.”



Northern Iowa sophomore Isabelle Holtzen had just competed her indoor track season with all-conference honors before she found out her outdoor campaign was shut down.

The thought of canceling the season hadn't even crossed Holtzen's mind as she found herself at practice just days later getting ready for a team meeting to talk about the upcoming outdoor season. It was there where she heard the news.

“It truly was a surreal moment, looking around at my fellow athletes and seeing the disbelief, disappointment and sadness in everyone's eyes,” she said. “No one could believe that it was real. It was so sad to see the seniors realize that they

would never get to put their uniform on and compete for UNI again.”

The same could be said for Overbay.

She had already kicked off her softball season for the Bethel Threshers and was off to a promising start herself. Overbay had put up some good numbers and was recently named as the Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference Player of the Week.

All that optimism quickly went away when the team was informed on a Friday morning that their season was over.

“None of it felt real, it still doesn’t,” Overbay said. “I never would have guessed that my season would have been cut short, or soon evaporated completely. When the news came out there other schools/colleges were shutting down, I was confused. I guess I didn’t understand how serious the issue was. I was still very disconnected from the problem, assuming that nothing like that would happen to us.

“The news flooded me with emotion as there goes the possibility of playing my junior year. What was I going to do with softball, something that has been so consistent in my life, confusion as to why all this was happening, why are people canceling our sports, and I couldn’t

help but to think what was going to happen to my seniors. I met up with the three seniors after the announcement and we all cried together.”

To help athletes try to get through the difficult time, the NCAA approved an extra year of eligibility for those spring sports athletes that are affected.

As nice of an option as that was, going back for an extra year of school to compete in a sport that doesn't provide a full scholarship in many cases might not make sense for those involved.

“A lot of seniors already have jobs lined up and cannot afford to go to school for another year,” Holtzen said. “While for some this extra year offers some relief, with my current plan I will not be able to utilize that year because I plan to graduate in four years.”

The NAIA did much of the same the NCAA did, but like those athletes, it doesn't make much sense for them to attend college for another year when it isn't in their plans.

“This is great for the people who didn't have plans for the following year,” Overbay said. “Looking at it through a seniors' perspective, it is hard to put one's life on hold, to put money towards another year of tuition when they could be finding a job, and starting a new chapter of their lives.

“A lot of this is just so inconvenient. I'm not sure what the girls are going to do, I'm not sure of what I myself will

do. It's all such a confusing time. All I can do is have faith that God has a plan."

It has been difficult adjustment for athletes all across the country and is something no one could have planned for.

Instead, they find themselves trying to make the best of a bad, unfortunate situation.

"My teammates and I have definitely been leaning on each other to get through this," Holtzen said. "Our blood, sweat and tears go into competing and hopefully getting a PR to earn a spot on the podium. To have that goal ripped away from us this year was heartbreaking.

"It really brought into focus to never take a minute for granted because you never know when it will be the last time you compete. Life is like a track meet – full of obstacles. This is just another bar to get over."