

LHS coaches thankful, excited about KSHSAA ruling on fall sports



Coaches, parents and athletes held their collective breath last week during the Kansas High School Activities Association's executive board meeting.

People around the state watched to see what KSHSAA would recommend for fall sports during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Back to school will be different than normal, and for some, will start after Labor Day due to a high number of positive cases.

Still, many have wondered what was going to happen to fall activities around the state and they got their answer. A motion by KSHSAA failed 5-4 in the executive board session, which in turn allowed the fall sports season to continue as scheduled.

"I am relieved that we know a definite start date and there will be no changes to the start of games," Louisburg High School activities director Michael Pickman said. "The kids and coaches worked all summer, and I didn't want to see that start date delayed and lose that progress. However, there will be some changes due to the pandemic so the focus turns to safety. The last thing I want is for the athletic events and protocols to create the spread of COVID that affects the academic side, so it will be very important that we take the

recommendations of the health organizations and KSHSAA to make the athletics and competitions as safe as possible for this year.”

During the meeting, KSHSAA had proposed keeping the original start of practice date of Aug. 17 for all activities. For activities being able to allow social distancing and minimal contact, such as girls golf, girls tennis, cross country, debate and scholars bowl, no modifications were recommended.

However, the proposal called for moving the start dates for competition in football, volleyball and boys soccer to begin no earlier than Sept. 8 – which basically took a week of their season.

It would have made football an eight game season, instead of the normal nine. For soccer, number of games would have been reduced from 16 to 14 and volleyball would have been reduced from 36-30 points.

For many of the Wildcat head coaches, the vote of the executive board was a breath of fresh air in what has been a challenging spring and summer for local athletes.

“I really think it was a good decision,” Louisburg football coach Robert Ebenstein said. “The kids deserve a chance to be able to play their season. It could be different than we have seen before, but I think we have done a good job of keeping the exposure down. They deserve this opportunity and activities like football will keep kids focused on school as well. I believe it is something they need.

“It was also good decision for the whole state. Yes, we are close to the metro, but you have schools like Smith Center or somewhere else in the state where the exposure is low. Starting the season on time was the right thing to do, and if there are cancellations, it gives schools an opportunity to reschedule if they need to.”

Louisburg's boys soccer program is looking to have another big season as it tries to repeat as a Frontier League champion and their 16 wins from a year ago. Although, the Wildcats are looking forward to getting their season underway, they realize things could change on a daily basis.

"I was extremely excited," Louisburg soccer coach Kyle Conley said. "There were so many rumors and recommendations that were flying I was worried. The vote at least gives this group an opportunity to actually get some games in. This gives the boys soccer team a chance to back up the season they had a year ago. I am excited to see us at least get a chance to start the season.

"I will be honest, I was extremely worried over the summer. In fact, a comment was made in the KSHSAA executive board meeting that still has me worried. They said let's start the season as soon as possible, because we are not sure how long it is going to last. It will also be interesting to see if the CDC or local health departments change their protocols when someone may have it, otherwise teams will be shut down right and left because they might have the virus."

Cross country is a sport that considered somewhat safe when it comes to the spread of COVID-19. Louisburg head coach John Reece has treated this summer like normal.

Reece had 35 runners out for the first day of their daily morning runs, and have averaged 20 a day since then. It is considered a "socially-distanced" sport, and one that KSHSAA had no problems with starting their schedule on time.

"Very excited for our seniors to have a fall season," Reece said. "I'm not gonna hold my breath as who knows what could happen in a month. For now it is go time, and we will be ready.

"We have been able to transition into some workouts on Wednesdays to get some quality work in. The rest of the time

we are running this town and getting in the miles. It is going to be another fun year for both boys and girls teams. We want to get both to state and we will work hard to accomplish this goal."

Volleyball is the one indoor sport in the fall, which has some worried about how social distancing will work in the gym and how many teams will be invited to tournaments. As for now, nothing has changed in that department, and head coach Jessica Compliment is looking forward to working with her team in a couple weeks.

"It's nice to know what the season is going to look like," Compliment said. "The uncertainty and the unknowns for the upcoming school has been a little unnerving, but I am happy to see that the players will have a season.

"I do not know of any changes to our schedule as of right now. I have been told the schedule will go as scheduled until we hear differently. I have not heard from tournament host schools on whether or not they plan to change anything."

As far as spectators go, there has not been a limit set as of yet as members of the school district are working on protocols to use during the season. For now, the obvious guidelines are the ones people experience on a daily basis.

"There will be guidelines more than restrictions as related to Covid-19 safe practices that align with each sport and specific to that sport," Pickman said. "Universal aspects like wearing masks to practice and during periods of inactivity will apply to all. Cleaning equipment schedules and protocols to have water bottles and cease use of water fountains, etc, along with others are sport specific guidelines for both practice and game day. These documents are being drafted and will be communicated once final.

"We are following the Executive Order 20-59, so if the event is outside, there will not be masks required, but we will

still encourage social distancing. If the event is inside, masks will be required as well as social distancing encouraged.”

The district has had to make one change to the start of the fall season and that is the cancellation of the Fall Sports Pep Rally that has annually been held at the high school.

“The Community Pep Rally was a hard decision because it is a great school and community business partnership that the community and our coaches, players, and students look forward to, but it was more important to avoid these extra opportunities for mass gathering to place focus on opening school and activities on time and healthy as possible,” Pickman said. “We are looking to reschedule possibly during the buffer week at the conclusion of the fall season. No other events have been cancelled at this time.”

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.



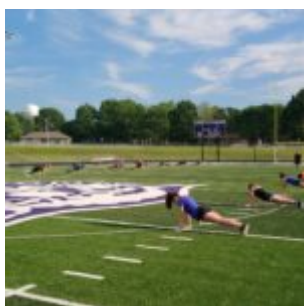
Madden Rutherford – Senior – Football, Baseball

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.

Wildcat athletes report back for summer conditioning



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

To start the day, each athlete is screened before the start of

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

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

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

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

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

Dennis leaves lasting legacy in Louisburg, LHS athletics



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

A Small Beginning

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

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

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

Louisburg High School would not be the same.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

friends.

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



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

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

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

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

Beyond The Call of Duty

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

community know what Doc D has meant to the district.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

No, Doc – thank you...

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.”

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."

Rutherford, McMullen given national recognition



Louisburg senior Madden Rutherford (left) and sophomore Rinny McMullen were both given honorable mention honors for their performance this past season.

A pair of Louisburg High School athletes were recently recognized for their athletic achievements by a couple national organizations.

Senior Madden Rutherford and sophomore Rinny McMullen were both given honorable mention awards in their respective sports for their achievements in the athletic arena.

Rutherford, who was slated to be the No. 1 starter this spring for the Wildcat baseball program, was named as a Perfect Game/Rawlings preseason Central Region honorable mention All-American.

Although, he won't get a chance to play the spring season with the Wildcats due to COVID-19, Rutherford played a lot over the summer with Building Champions, his club team. He also played in Perfect Game/Rawlings events and saw a lot of success as a pitcher.

His success over the summer also helped Rutherford earn a spot on the Washington University (St. Louis) baseball program as he will be playing Division III baseball next season.

Rutherford was a two-time All-Frontier League performer as a member of the Wildcats and he was ecstatic to be honored among the best players in the country.

"I was happy to receive the honor, but it motivates me to work even harder," Rutherford said. "I'm super excited to hopefully play this summer in the Ban Johnson League, along with next fall and spring at WashU."

As for McMullen, the Lady Cat setter had a big season for the Louisburg volleyball team as she helped her team to a fourth-place finish at the Class 4A state tournament. With that, McMullen earned high honorable mention recognition by prepvolleyball.com for the sophomore class.

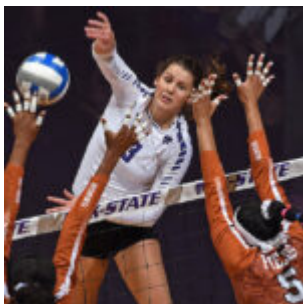
"It's always special to be honored nationally for the sport that I love," McMullen said. "I really enjoyed the role that I played last year for my high school team and I look forward to the coming season. I was happy for my nomination from my coaches and look to build on last season's success."

McMullen, who was a part of a two-setter offense with teammate Davis Guetterman, finished the year with 504 assists, 179 digs, 90 aces and 59 kills. She was also a second-team All-Frontier League and all-state player last year and was also named to the Class 4A All-State Tournament team.

Following the season, McMullen was playing with the Dynasty Volleyball Club, but their season was postponed due to the spread of COVID-19.

“Sadly, our club season ended until further notice, but we showed the promised of being a top team in the nation and hope that we get the chance to play at nationals in June,” McMullen said. “I continue to work with my teammate/friend Davis Guetterman during the off-time. I look forward to getting back on the court.”

Dixon to leave Kansas State and transfer to Missouri



In her first season at the collegiate level, Anna Dixon saw herself grow in several different areas on the volleyball court at Kansas State.

The Louisburg High School graduate shined in many matches throughout the season, earned all-conference honors for her efforts and enjoyed the comradery with her teammates. As

difficult as freshman seasons are, it became even harder for Dixon after it was over.

Dixon had some tough choices to make following the 2019 campaign and made a decision that will lead her to a different destination in 2020.

On a Twitter post on New Year's Day, Dixon announced that she was transferring from Kansas State and will make the move to the University of Missouri volleyball program beginning next season.

Dixon will join a Missouri program that finished with a 22-8 record last season and made the NCAA Tournament, before falling in the second round to No. 5-ranked Nebraska in a 3-1 loss.

"Going through my second recruiting process, I knew where I belonged and that was Mizzou," Dixon said. "They have a great nursing program that works well with student athletes, an awesome new coaching staff who was very welcoming, and great connections for post-college. I'm really excited for the opportunity."

Leaving the K-State program wasn't easy one. Dixon committed to the Wildcats as a sophomore in high school after receiving several Division 1 offers and eventually signed two years later.

Dixon's freshman season began in the summer as she joined the Wildcats on a trip to Brazil and eventually earned a starting role later in the season where she played all six rotations.

"The

decision to leave K-State was one of the hardest decisions I've had to make,"

Dixon said. "The people there will forever have a place in my heart. I was given a lot of amazing opportunities and experiences that helped me grow this last year and I'm thankful for that."

Dixon was selected to the All-Big 12 Rookie Team in a year that saw her turn in 292 kills with a team-best 2.89 kills per set. Her 3.14 kills a set during conference play ranked seventh in the Big 12 and her overall and league kills-per-set averages were tops among Big 12 freshmen.

She also turned in 84 digs, 47 blocks and nine aces in her first collegiate season.

Nine times she led the Wildcats in kills, including a stretch seven straight matches and had double figure kill numbers in 12 consecutive outings. Dixon had career high 21 kills in back-to-back outings against Oklahoma and West Virginia.

Still with all that success, Dixon realizes there is still a lot more growth to come and she hopes to become a better player in the years ahead.

"This season was a huge growing experience for me," she said. "Being a young player, I was expected to make mistakes on the court. I think my biggest growth was in my consistency and understanding that it is okay to make mistakes and learn from them. This is an area I can still greatly improve in and I'm hoping to get

better at with more experience.

"I was so grateful to earn postseason honors. There are so many amazing young players in the Big 12, so to be named apart of the All-Rookie team was a huge honor."

Top 10 Louisburg Sports Stories of 2019



It was a successful, and eventful, 2019 for Louisburg High School athletics and for those who are connected to the Wildcat program. This past year created a lot of school history for LHS and several programs brought back state hardware.

Below are the Top 10 stories from 2019, 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. There were stories that I had to leave off that normally would easily make it. 2019 was that successful of a year for Wildcat athletics.

This year was a blast to cover and I was blessed to have the opportunity to go along for the ride with many of these. As much fun as it was, I can't wait for 2020 to begin. Looking forward to it!



10. Tucker, Ratliff-Becher win powerlifting titles,

Tucker breaks state record.

Two Louisburg High

School weightlifters made their way to the top of the podium in March during

the Class 4A State Powerlifting Meet at Basehor-Linwood High School.

Louisburg senior Kiefer Tucker and junior Reilly Ratliff-Becher both earned state championships in their respective weight class. Senior Jonathan DePriest finished third overall and several other Wildcats also earned individual medals.

Not only did Tucker

win a state title in the 220-pound division, he also broke a 24-year state bench

press record as he recorded a bench of 375 pounds to surpass the old mark of

365. He also won the squat competition at 505 pounds and had a total of 1,165

pounds to run away with the crown.

Tucker's total was the

highest three-lift mark at the entire state meet in all weight classes.

"I had messed around with 375

and 385 before on bench, so I was confident that I could lift it if I had the

chance," Tucker said. "I was more worried about my first lifts on bench at 345

and 365 because if I messed up on those attempts then I would not have had the

change to even attempt 375. It was definitely a sigh of relief when I finally

locked it out.

"It was a great feeling to beat the state

record. To put Louisburg up on the record chart definitely

brought a smile to
my face.”

Ratliff-Becher had a big day
in the women’s division as she won a state crown in the 180-
pound weight class.
She finished with a three-lift total of 575 pounds.



The Louisburg junior took first in bench press with 155 pounds,
first in clean at 150 pounds and second in squat with a 270-pound lift.

“Winning the state title meant a lot to me,” Ratliff-Becher said. “I have put in a lot of time and effort in weights class, so it’s nice to see it has paid off. But, also because I feel as if I put out a message to girls that it’s cool to be strong physically. I know that being sometimes the only girls in a class with a lot of strong guys is intimidating. Weightlifting is all about your own personal growth and seeing how far you can push yourself.

“I was honestly surprised I won because there are lots of very strong girls there and it’s good competition. It’s also fun to meet new people that have the same interests and motivation as you.”



9. Golf qualifies for state, Dillon medals for third straight season

As the scores trickled in to the clubhouse at Paola Country Club, the Louisburg golf team could hardly stand it.

The Wildcats were nervously waiting to hear if they had qualified for state, but they knew it was going to be close. Louisburg had to be in the top three of the team standings to earn a spot and the Wildcats had some tough competition amongst them.

As it turned out, the Wildcats had nothing to worry about.

Louisburg recorded a team score of 352 during the Class 4A

regional tournament in May and finished third overall by nine strokes over fourth-place Ottawa. The Wildcat team of Calvin Dillon, Drake Varns, Garrett Rolofson, Ryan Haight, Noah Hill and Colin Cook all competed in the state tournament

Topeka-Hayden won the regional title going away with a 332 and Louisburg was just three strokes behind runner-up Tonganoxie, which had a 349.

“It feels great, especially with all the hard work we have put in the offseason and last few months,” Dillon said. “It was our goal coming in and we did it. I felt like we had a good chance. It was borderline with those four teams being as close as we are. I knew we had a chance, but it was nice to actually qualify. It was definitely a little nerve-racking waiting for the scores to come in.”

As impressive as that feat was for the Wildcats, Dillon’s performance blew away the rest of the competition.

The Louisburg junior won his first individual regional title as he carded a 1-over 73 to win the tournament by six strokes. Dillon’s 73 was his best score on the season and he has now won all but one tournament on the year.

Dillon went on to record his third consecutive state medal and finished 11th overall in Dodge City after the tournament was postponed several times, and eventually moved due to weather.



8. Wildcat wrestling sends six to state, Moore earns first state medal

Back in early November of 2018, Austin Moore was in a sling with a broken collarbone and he wondered why all this was happening.

Moore suffered the injury during the regional football playoffs and he didn't get to finish his final high school season. Not only that, his hopes of getting his first state wrestling medal was in serious jeopardy.

A little more than four months later, Moore was on the medal stand with some of

the state's best
wrestlers in his weight class.

The Louisburg senior earned a fourth-place medal at 220 pounds during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in February at the Tony's Pizza Events Center in Salina. It was his first high school state medal and it marked the end of a long journey for Moore.

"It was pretty special
for me to get a state medal, especially because it has been a
goal of mine ever
since I started wrestling," Moore said. "Overall, I felt like
I wrestled pretty
well, but I just wish I could've ended it on a win."

The Wildcats qualified six wrestlers for state, had three regional champions and took third place in the team standings during the regional tournament in Paola – all while not being able to field a full team.

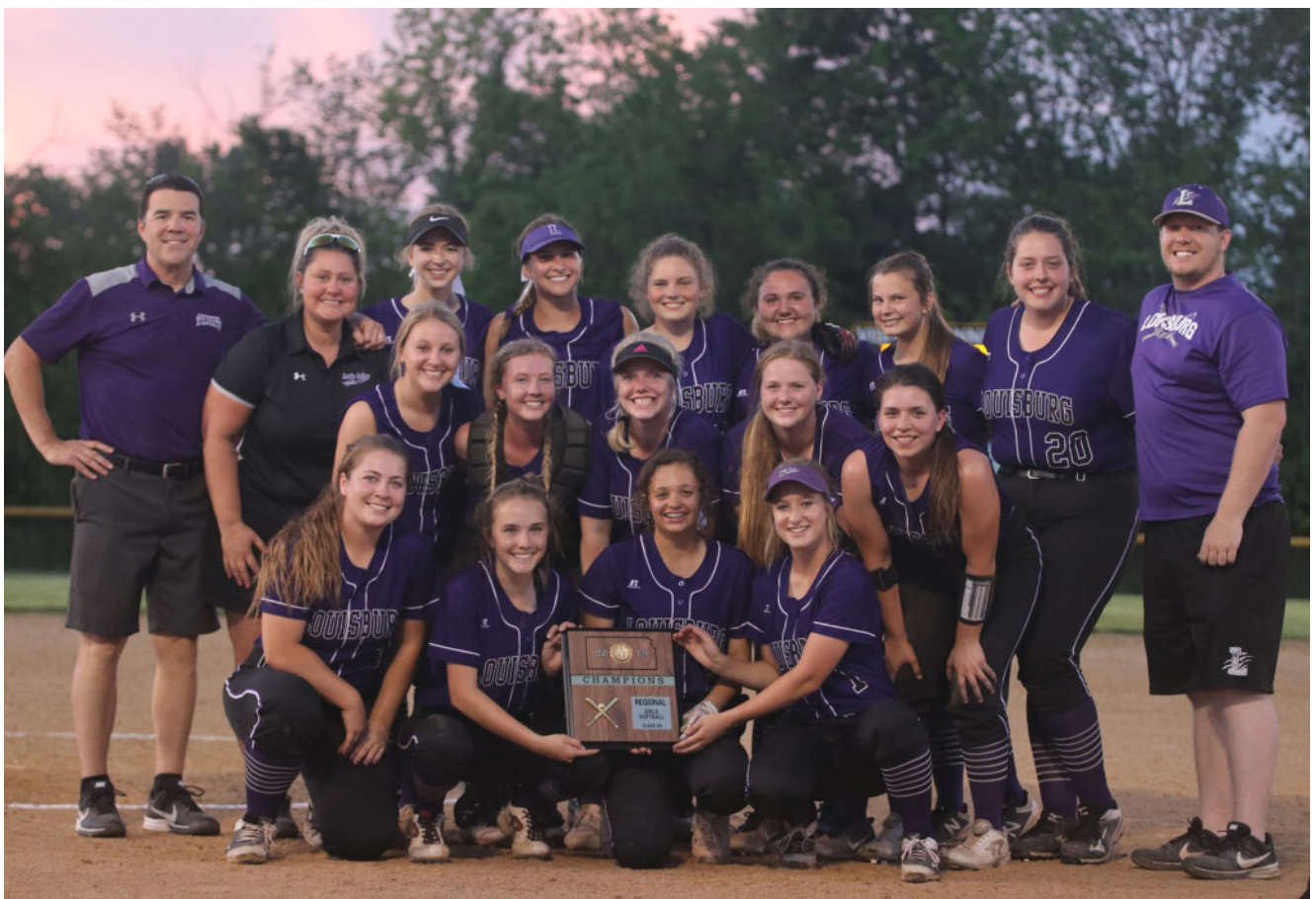
Louisburg's talent was
certainly on full display during the two-day tournament.
Brandon Doles, Blue
Caplinger and Austin Moore won regional crowns, Cade Holtzen
was a regional
runner-up, while Gabe Bonham and Ryan Owens also qualified for
state by placing
third and fourth, respectively.

As a team, the
Wildcats ended up with 138.5 points and was just 2.5 points
out of second
place. Ottawa won the regional with 149.5 points and Eudora
was second at 141.
It was the highest regional team finish for Louisburg since
1998.

"The way these guys

wrestled this weekend shows that the program has been doing so many things right this season,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “We’ve had the obstacle of low numbers, which hurt us in our duals, but when it comes to tournament time, we have a bunch of guys who are placing high and that gives us a lot of team points. Taking six to state feels pretty encouraging, and finishing third at regionals is an awesome statement for this team.

“If a few things had gone the other way, we would have been in second as a team. On paper, we weren’t supposed to be in the race for a regional plaque. Almost all of our guys stepped up and scored huge team points for us.”



7. Louisburg softball captures regional title

OTTAWA – Madison

Svoboda could feel her heart starting to come out of her chest.

Karson Griggs was a feeling a little nauseous.

Those are some of the same feelings that were flooding the Louisburg softball's team dugout during the final inning of the Class 4A regional championship game against Chanute on Tuesday in Ottawa.

Louisburg held a one run lead, but Chanute had the tying run on third, two outs, and a trip to the state tournament was on the line. On the mound was sophomore Brooklyn Diederich, and with two strikes, the Chanute batter fouled five straight pitches.

The tension was mounting.

Finally, on the 10th pitch of the at-bat, Diederich got what she was looking for – a swing and miss.

The strikeout sealed the Lady Cats' trip to state with a 6-5 victory over No. 7 seed Chanute and sent shockwaves throughout Class 4A softball.

"I want to cry, but at the same time I am just really happy," Griggs said. "It is exciting because I

never thought something like this could happen, especially this year. It feels really nice and now maybe people will actually start taking us seriously.”

Not many gave people gave the Lady Cats a chance as they entered the Class 4A regional tournament with just five wins and were forced to begin tournament action in the play-in game.

After a 17-2 win over Parsons last Monday in the play-in game, No. 15 Louisburg advanced to the regional semifinals and upset No. 2 seed Ottawa, 9-7, which helped set up the Lady Cats’ first state tournament appearance since 2014.

“I think a lot of other teams underestimated us,” Diederich said. “The fact that we came out and played our hardest ball showed what type of team we actually are. It is just crazy.”

At the state tournament in Salina a week later, the Lady Cats faced off against Andale and lost to the eventual state champion in the first round, 10-0.



6. Cross Country qualifies for state, Moore breaks school record and takes third at state

BALDWIN CITY – One by one, members of the Louisburg girls cross country team crossed the finish line and coach John Reece was unsure whether or not his team did enough to qualify for state.

The Lady Cats had made school history by qualifying the last two seasons, but the third time was a little bit in jeopardy – that was until the results were released.

As it turned out,

Reece didn't need to be so worried.

Louisburg finished third overall with 96 points in October at the Class 4A regional meet at the Baldwin Golf Course, and beat out Bishop Miege by six points to earn a spot at the state meet this weekend in Wamego.

The team of Trinity

Moore, Carlee Gassman, Reese Johnson, Claire Brown, Ruth Minster, Kennady

Wilkerson and Bree Gassman competed for the Lady Cats at state.

"This group of girls runs

well, they race well and they train well together," coach Reece said. "They are

a good group and this is just as exciting as the other two times. The

competition was a lot tougher than the previous two times. We had to run our

races and we did. From our third to fifth runners was about an eight point

spread."

Trinity Moore has left a

lasting impression on the Louisburg cross country program over the last four

years, but she saved the best moment for her final act.

Moore broke her own school record with a time of 19 minutes and 39 seconds to finish third overall at the Kansas Class 4A State Cross Country Championships at the Wamego Country Club a week later.

The Louisburg senior

recorded the program's best ever state finish as she eclipsed her fourth-place state

medal from a season ago.

"It meant so much to me to finish with such a great race for my high school career," Moore said.

"Going into the race, I didn't know how well I would finish. This race had the best competition that I have ran against all year and I think that is what really pushed me.

"When I saw my time crossing the finish line, I was ecstatic. I felt great the entire race and was able to control everything I did. Finishing third was icing on the cake. I was surprised but so incredibly happy to be able to place in such a great spot, but I also knew that this was what I had worked for all year."

This made the fourth state medal for Moore in her high school career and she improved on her state finish every year. Last season, she took fourth overall and bested her state time from a year ago by more than 30 seconds.



5. Boys Soccer wins league, regional titles to earn No. 1 seed in playoffs.

For more than 70 minutes, the goals for Louisburg were hard to come by and it started to leave an eerie feeling on Halloween night.

However, the Wildcats got their treat when it was all over.

Louisburg scored two goals in the final seven minutes of the match to earn a 2-0 victory over Kansas City Christian in the Class 4-1A regional championship game Thursday. The Wildcats (16-2-1) earned their third regional title in the last four years and advanced to the state quarterfinals.

"This group is special," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "It is going to be tough when it is

all over. This group has changed our culture. They came back to what this program believes and they have bought in to what we are teaching them. They have worked so hard since June. For these seniors, this is their third title in four years and I think it is a lot of fun for them.

A school record 16 wins, a Frontier League championship and a regional title are all something worth celebrating, but following the state quarterfinal match with Bishop Miege, all Louisburg could think about was the finality of it all.

Despite all those accomplishments, the Wildcats fell one win short of their main goal – a spot in the state final four.

Louisburg saw its season come to a close with a 3-0 loss to Bishop Miege at the Wildcat Sports Complex. The Wildcats lost to the eventual state champion, as Miege went on to defeat Wichita-Trinity on Saturday, 3-1, for the Class 4-1A state championship – the Stags' fourth in a row.

As difficult as the loss was for Louisburg, there was no forgetting how big of a jump the Wildcats made from the season before as they went from a 6-win team to one that earned the East's No. 1 seed in the state playoffs.

"Going 6-11 last year and seeing this Miege team almost mercy-ruling us in the regional championship last year in the rain, was a program changer," Louisburg coach

Kyle Conley

said. "After that was over, we talked about how things needed to change and it starts now. For our first practice in June, I told them that they are the ones that has to change them. Since day one, they have played for each other, played hard in practice and it was a total mindset change. When someone got hurt, it was the next guy up. We missed two starters for half of the year and it was always the next guy up taking advantage of his opportunity to fill in. The freshmen stepped up huge for us.

"This team is special.

16 wins is a school record and only two losses is probably a school record.

This team is incredible, played so hard and did everything I asked them to do.

They were always there to pick each other up and that is what this soccer

family is all about. It will be tough to say goodbye to these kids."



4. Volleyball knocks off Miego to win regional title, takes fourth at state

ATCHISON – The sub-state semifinal game between Louisburg and Bishop Miego had all the feels of a state tournament match.

Partially because a year ago, it was.

Louisburg met Miego in the state championship match only to see the Stags send the Lady Cats to a runner-up finish in two sets. Then three weeks ago the two teams met again, and like before, Miego dispatched of Louisburg in two sets.

However, Bishop Miego saw a different Louisburg team during the sub-state tournament at Atchison High

School – one they didn't expect.

The Lady Cats came out on fire and never let up in a 25-18 and 25-22 win over Miego to end the Stags' season. It marks the first time in at least 12 years, if not longer, that Miego will not be at the state tournament.

Since the state tournament began in 1971, Bishop Miego has made 39 state appearances during that time in either Class 5A or 4A and is the most in Kansas history.

"Our energy was going to be the difference in that match, so we knew we had to bring it," Louisburg senior Erin Lemke said. "We knew we had the same skill set as Miego, but our energy was what was going to pull us through there in the end. To get there, we just had to believe in ourselves and work hard this past week to give us the confidence that we needed."

However, even after pulling off a big revenge win that expended a lot of energy, the Lady Cats still had a sub-state championship match to play against No. 2 seed Atchison. The No. 7 seed Lady Cats took care of business as they won in straight sets, 25-12 and 25-15, at Atchison High School.

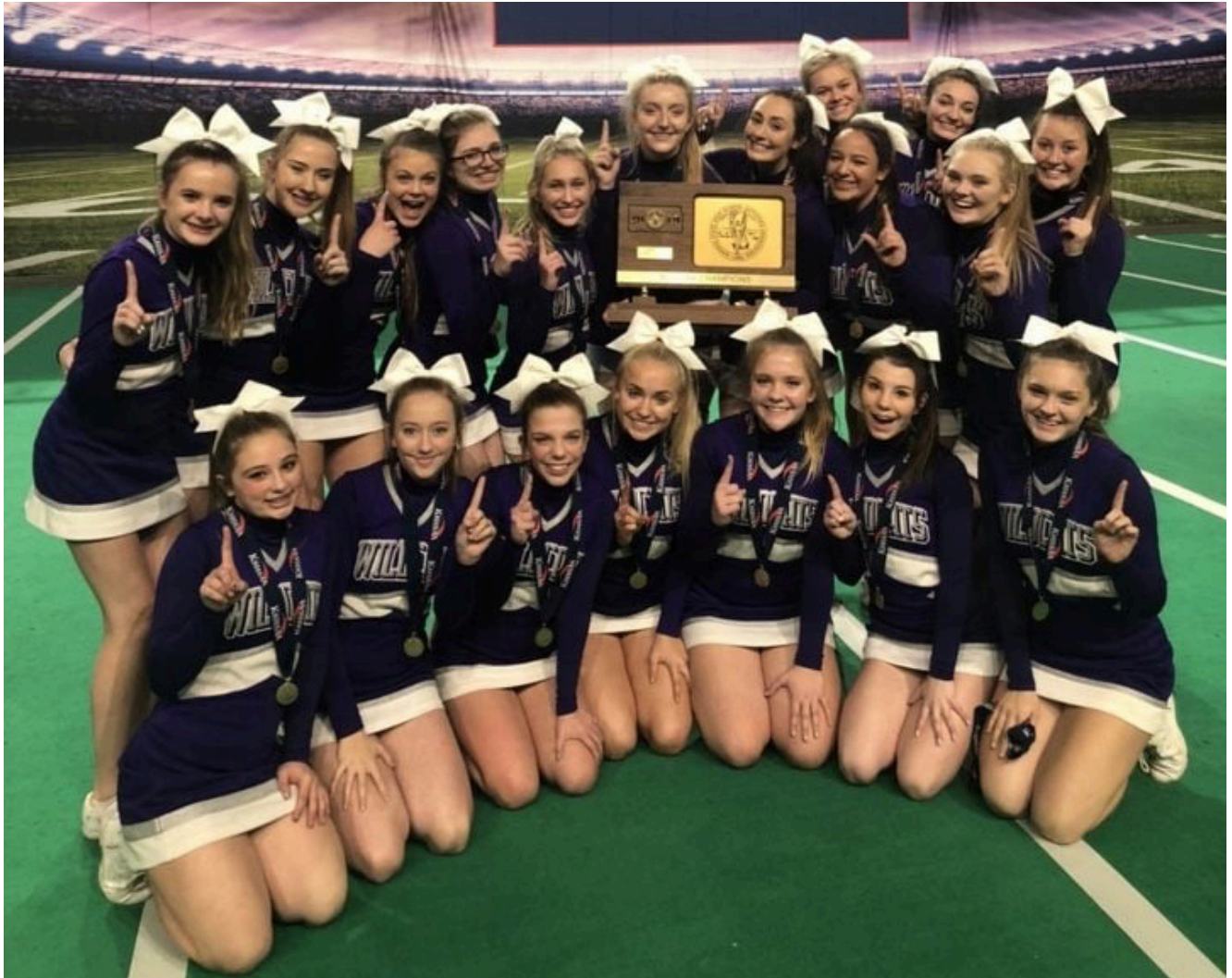
Louisburg lost its final two matches of the season, but those setbacks didn't take away from what the Lady Cats accomplished during the Kansas Class 4A State Championships.

For the third straight season, the Lady Cats were among the last four teams playing

and brought home a little hardware for their efforts. Louisburg took fourth overall after losing its third place match to Towanda-Circle, 2-1, in October at Hutchinson Sports Arena.

“Every season our goal is to put ourselves in the best position to qualify for state and then to hopefully advance to bracket play on Saturday,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “Leading up to state, we talked about how nothing is guaranteed and in order to make it to bracket play, we have to show up and play our best from the first whistle to the last whistle. If we play our game, then hopefully the winning will take care of itself and we’d advance.”

“The eight teams at state this year were all very talented. I was happy that we qualified for the semifinals because that put us one step closer to the championship. Even though we didn’t reach the championship match and finished fourth, I was still very proud of how the team played throughout the tournament.”



3. Louisburg cheer wins first state championship

The Wildcat

cheerleaders competed at the Class 4A KSHSAA Game Day Spirit Showcase

Competition on Nov. 23 at the Stormont Vail Events Center in Topeka and came back home with a big trophy in tow.

Louisburg edged out runner-up Augusta with a point total of 82.25 to 81 in the finals to secure what is just the third athletic team state title in school history.

"I was so nervous at the awards," Louisburg senior Lauren Vincent said. "We were all holding hands and had our heads down. We thought that we would get second

place at best, most likely third. We were content because we put everything out on the mat and did the best we could. But when they called out second place and it was Augusta, we screamed, cried, and hugged each other because we knew that we had just won.

“When our name was called for first, we jumped up and hugged each other. Then I ran out onto the mat and grabbed the trophy and we held it up and jumped around victoriously. It was the best feeling in the entire world. Knowing that all of our hard work had finally paid off was indescribable feeling of joy.”

The Louisburg cheerleaders that competed are Lexi Pena, Lauren Vincent, Ashlyn McManigal, Brooklyn Mitchell, Gabby Tappan, Andrea Gaza, Eleanor Willming, Jayden Trester, Lacie Kallevig, Sammy McDaniel, Mable Graham, Anna Morrison, Bella Feikert, Audrey Anderson, Sydney Dudzik, Kaitlyn Vest, Jolie Hendrickson, Abby Bradley and Zoe Cutshaw. Louisburg’s head coach is Jayna Guerra.

Not only were the Wildcats the third team to win a state title in school history, they were also the first female squad to win a team crown as well. All the history just added to what was a special day for the program.

“It means so much to me and all my teammates,” Tappan said. “As someone who’s been a part of a variety

of sports my entire life, I know how hard each of our teams work to do their very best in whatever sport they're a part of. We are so thankful that we got to make history for Louisburg and it is something that I can guarantee that each and every one of us will remember it for the rest of our lives."



2. Girls soccer takes second at state, Conley named coach of year and Scholtz, Buffington awarded players of year.

When it was all said and done, the Louisburg girls soccer team held its trophy high in front of the Wildcat faithful and the tears were easy to spot.

After nearly 200 minutes of soccer in a nine-hour time period, including one

match that ended in penalty kicks, the Wildcats were spent. They gave everything they had.

For the second consecutive season, Louisburg earned the Class 4-3-2-1A state runner-up trophy after a wild victory over Topeka-Hayden in the semifinals and then were shutout by Bishop Miege in the championship game, 4-0. It was the third consecutive state final four appearance for Louisburg.

Frustration and sadness was easy to see following the Wildcats' loss to the defending state champion, but the team realizes what they have accomplished in just four years of existence is to be celebrated.

"Being in this situation two years in a row is something that doesn't happen very often," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "There are a bunch of teams that haven't been to a state final four and we have been to three in three years. It is pretty cool and it is special."

It was a wild 24 hours for the Wildcats. Louisburg was supposed to play Hayden on Friday in the semifinals, but severe weather forced the postponement to early Saturday morning.

The Wildcats battled Hayden through four overtimes and eventually led to penalty kicks. After an intense first five penalty kicks that left the match still tied, senior goalie

Carson Buffington recorded a big save and then senior Hallie Hutsell converted the sixth penalty kick to break the tie and give Louisburg a 2-1 win over Hayden.

“We usually play 80 minutes, but this time we had to play 110 minutes and we were gassed,” Conley said. “We were holding on and had some chances at the end to win it, but then we went to overtime and then to penalty kicks. It was all about to see if we could survive. Emotionally it was just a high for us and an unbelievable response and a great finish. Carson making a big save, Hallie putting it in for the win – it was just a great game.”

In the championship match, the Stags were just too much for the Wildcats and junior Sophia Stram provided a big spark. Stram scored all four goals for Miego in the title game, all of which came in the first half, and the Wildcats didn’t have an answer.

“They are just so freaking good,” Conley said. “I think the girls were mentally ready, but I don’t think their legs were quite ready, but we lost to one of best teams in the state of Kansas. They have great players, they are well-coached, but our girls played their butts off.

Coming off its second consecutive state runner-up appearance, Louisburg had some positive repercussions from its historic season.

However, none bigger came when the all-state teams were released by the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association. Not only did six Wildcats earn all-state selections, but they were honored with some of the highest awards out there.

Junior Mackenzie Scholtz was named as the Co-Offensive Player of the Year in Class 4-1A with Bishop Miege's Sophia Stram after she led the Wildcats in scoring.

Louisburg was also recognized on the other side of the ball as senior Carson Buffington was named the Class 4-1A Goalkeeper of the Year.

"Seeing Mackenzie and Carson recognized for their positional player of the years was fantastic," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "They both had incredible years."

The Wildcats weren't done, as for the second consecutive season, Conley was named as the Class 4-1A Coach of the Year as he guided Louisburg to a 17-4 record. He also led the Wildcats to three consecutive final four appearances.



1.4×400 boys wins state championship, Wright wins four state medals and team breaks six school records at regional meet.

Three days after arriving in Wichita for the Kansas State Track and Field Championships, Justin Collins, Blue Caplinger, Ben Wiedenmann and Chris Williams finally got the chance to get on the Cessna Stadium track.

The four Wildcat runners had the top time in Class 4A going into the 4×400-meter relay, but weather threw a little wrench into their plans. The meet, which was supposed to end on a Saturday, was postponed to Sunday morning and all

races were judged by
times with no preliminaries.

It wasn't the ideal
situation, but they made it work – and it worked well.

Collins, Caplinger, Wiedenmann and Williams won the state championship in a time of 3 minutes and 25.39 seconds as they edged Chapman at the finish line, which ran a 3:25.61. It was the first state track championship for Louisburg since 2015 when Connor McMullen won the discus.

That was just one
event in what was an historic week for Louisburg track.

Louisburg freshman Delaney Wright earned four state medals, while junior teammate Carlee Gassman finished with three as the Lady Cats went on to finish 10th in the team standings. The Lady Cats earned several other medals at the state meet coming off an impressive performance at regionals.

During the Class 4A
regional meet at Paola High School, Wright qualified for state in four events,
broke two school records and earned a regional title in her first postseason
track meet.



Wright won a regional title in the long jump and finished second in the 200 and 400-meter dashes. She also helped Carlee Gassman, Rain Pugh and Sydni Keagle to a second place finish in the 4×400-meter relay.

"I am so grateful for everything," Wright said. "I had been having trouble with my hip this week and I just wanted to come out and make state in at least one event. I didn't realize I would make it in four. It is an unbelievable feeling."

Wright's day was just one of the many positives for the Lady Cats as they broke four school records, had four regional

champions and qualified for state in 10 events.

As a team, the Lady Cats nearly earned the regional runner-up trophy as they racked up 86.5 points and finished a half a point behind second place Baldwin and Bishop Miege, who tied for second. Paola won the regional title with 107 points.

The Wildcat boys also broke two school records and would end up qualifying for nine spots at the state meet.