

# Lady Cats get season started strong with win over Paola



**Louisburg senior Liz Jacobs goes up for a kill in between two Paola blockers Tuesday during the Lady Cats' season opener at Paola High School.**

PAOLA – The Louisburg volleyball team is ranked toward the top in the state again in Class 4A this season, and on Tuesday, Paola found out exactly why.

The Lady Cats got off to a hot start and never let up in a 3-0 dual win over the Panthers in their season opener at Paola High School. It was exactly the start Louisburg was looking for as it begins its quest to get back to the state title game for the third straight season.

“For the first time out, I think they did well,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “We knew coming in that Paola is always tough, and it is a good rivalry, and the girls were ready for that. We obviously have some ideas of some things that we can work on, and how we can keep building from here.”

Louisburg opened with a 25-14 victory in the first set after jumping out to a big lead and then followed it up with a 25-13

win in the second. Paola made things interesting in the third set, and the match was tied at 23-all late, before Louisburg scored the final two points to complete the sweep.

“They had high energy in those first two sets and some in the third,” Compliment said of her team. “That resilience in that third set was good to see, instead of just throwing in their hat and saying we will win the next one. To finish the match out like that was important.”



**Senior libero Reilly Ratliff-Becher digs up a ball Tuesday in Paola.**

The Lady Cats had balance all over the floor as several girls chipped in and made impacts.

At the net, seniors Liz Jacobs and Erin Lemke each finished with a team-high six kills, while senior Riley Kallevig and junior Carleigh Pritchard each added five in the win.

Sophomore setters Rinny McMullen and Davis Guetterman ran the offense well as they recorded 11 and nine assists, respectively. Sophomore Chase Kallevig had a big game from behind the service line as she tallied a team-high four aces and senior Haley Cain added three.

Defensively, the Lady Cats were strong as well. Senior libero Reilly Ratliff-Becher had a team-best nine digs. Chase and Riley Kallevig were right behind her as they had eight each.

Cain and Pritchard also had strong games in the middle for Louisburg as they each had three blocks to lead the team.

“I think Reilly did a really good job getting to balls, and on the front row, I thought Haley had some big plays at the net and so did Carleigh,” Compliment said. “They both had some good blocks and were key up there. I thought Rinny did a good job with her serves and moving things around offensively. Davis did a great job as well from the setter spot.

“To be honest, we are just a well-balanced team and I thought each of the girls did something well out there. We are just

more spread out offensively and it could make us more of a threat down the road.”



**Sophomore setter Davis Guetterman sets up teammate Carleigh Pritchard for a kill Tuesday in Paola.**

As well as they played at times on Tuesday, the Lady Cats know it will get tougher as the season goes along. That begins today when they travel to De Soto High School for a triangular with Olathe West. Those matches begin at 5 p.m.

“We hit aggressive and we blocked aggressively,” Compliment said of her team’s performance on Tuesday. “The thing I really like about this group is that they just have so much fun, as has been the case with the team’s past. They just enjoy playing

together.”

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# After two runner-up finishes, Lady Cats want elusive state title



Senior middle hitter Haley Cain is one of several returning players from last year’s state runner-up volleyball team for Louisburg.

In the last two seasons, the Louisburg volleyball team has found itself one win away from capturing its ultimate goal – a state championship.

Most programs would relish the opportunity to play in one state championship game – much less two. Still, as proud as the players are of their accomplishments, they have concluded each season with a rotten feeling in their stomach.

That feeling provided the Lady Cats with extra motivation as they head into the 2019 season – trying to get that elusive first state title.

“The players understand that nothing has been given

to them in the past," Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. "Because of their past experiences, they understand how important summer weights/conditioning/open gym/camps, etc are. They've been working really hard and have set high expectations for themselves this season. They also understand the history and tradition of Louisburg volleyball and want to continue that tradition of not only qualifying for state, but for placing at state."

The Lady Cats have had a big advantage on their side the last two years as they have had the Class 4A Player of the Year on their roster in Anna Dixon. After putting up big numbers as a four-year starter for Louisburg, Dixon has moved on to play for Kansas State and left a big hole to fill on the Lady Cat team.

Although one player might not be able to replace her production, Compliment is looking to several players to fill that role.

"Anna has probably been the best volleyball player to come through Louisburg in my 13 seasons, so losing her is huge," Compliment said. "However, I think this year's team could be just as good, if not stronger, because each player is taking more ownership and owning their role on the team more."



**Senior Riley Kallevig is one of six seniors returning for Louisburg this season.**

Louisburg will continue to run its 6-2 offense with returning setters Rinny McMullen and Davis Guetterman. The two Lady Cat sophomores played well last season as freshmen and their coach has seen them take a big step forward in the offseason.

McMullen was a second-team All-Frontier League selection a year ago, and both her and Guetterman, were considered among the best setters in nine-team league.

“They did a great job last year as freshmen, and they each continue to get better and better,” Compliment said. “They were both awarded with the ‘Best Setter Award’ at Nebraska’s team camp. We have five players that are versatile across the net and that gives us lots of options to run different offensive

plays. Our key defensive players are returning as well, and a few new faces are going to make our defense stronger.”

Defense also will be another strength for the Lady Cats as they return all of their defensive specialists – including senior libero Reilly Ratliff-Becher. Senior Riley Kallevig will also play a big role in the back from her 6-rotation spot, as will sophomore Chase Kallevig, who will see full-time varsity action for the first time this season.

“We are a versatile team with players who are comfortable and willing to play at any position,” Compliment said. “That is huge when I can play with rotations, and it gives the setters multiple options at the net. Reilly Ratliff-Becher has had a great summer. She was good last year, but this summer and so far this season, I’ve been really impressed with her go-get-it attitude and her leadership. Riley Kallevig is returning and is solid as a 6-rotation player.”





**Reilly Ratliff-Becher returns to lead the Lady Cat defense from the libero spot.**

Louisburg also

returns its two middle hitters as senior Haley Cain and junior Carleigh

Pritchard both bring experience to the position and the Wildcats will have

several options on the outside with senior Erin Lemke, senior transfer Liz

Jacobs, senior Sydni Keagle, Riley Kallevig and junior Alyse Moore.

Cain is in her fourth-year as a starter and will be one of the leaders at the net for the Lady Cats. Cain, Riley Kallevig and Ratliff-Becher were all honorable mention all-league players last season and Compliment expects them all to take another step forward.

“Between Haley’s leadership and experience, we’ll look to her to be more of a threat at the net,” Compliment said. “Erin Lemke and Carleigh have both improved their play since last season as well. I’m really excited to see what they can bring to the team.”

“We also have a few new faces. Liz Jacobs is a transfer senior who joined us this summer and fit right in with the team. She’ll be able to help us both offensively and defensively. There is a lot of depth in positions this season, which is awesome. These players have great chemistry and are unselfish.”



**Senior Erin Lemke will be one of several options at the net for Louisburg this season.**

The Lady Cats, which are currently No. 4 in the Class 4A

preseason rankings, will have some competition for their second consecutive Frontier League title as they will play a difficult schedule in and out of league.

Louisburg

begins its season at 6:30 p.m., on Tuesday as it travels to Paola. The Lady Cats open their home schedule Sept. 12 against Bonner Springs.

“Spring Hill

and Eudora will be two strong teams in league this season,” Compliment said. “The

Lansing and Emporia Tournament will continue to be tough, and we’ve added a few

different teams to our schedule this year. I’m excited to kick the season off

Tuesday at Paola.”

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## Numbers up for all LHS fall programs as athletes battle through heat



Last fall, each of the four Louisburg High School athletic programs had something to brag about.

Whether it was football's 10-1 season that ended with a regional championship, volleyball's state runner-up finish, cross country's two state medalists and state qualifying girls team or the boys' soccer regional championship appearance – the Wildcats had plenty to cheer about and several athletes took notice.

Numbers are up for all four programs following the first day of practice Monday and the coaches and athletes are excited to get the season started after last year's successes.

The Wildcat football team saw a big jump in numbers as they have 70 students out this season and football coach Robert Ebenstein and has liked what he seen through the first couple days of workouts.

“Our numbers are up and based on the numbers at the middle school and youth programs and I expect them to keep growing,” Ebenstein said. “I am very excited for practice to get going. When you finish the season off with a loss in the playoffs it sticks with you and the opportunity to go play another game creates that energy and that eager feeling to get going. So far I am very pleased with our kids' focus and effort. We need to continue to get better every day.”

Louisburg volleyball has also seen a spike in its numbers as 40 athletes have attended tryouts. Those tryouts will go through Wednesday and head coach Jessica Compliment believes those high numbers will be beneficial down the road.

“The players are excited, but I think some are nervous as well with tryouts and cuts these first few days,” Compliment

said. "Forty is the most we've had tryout for quite some time. Generally we have around 35. The higher numbers leads to more competition for uniforms and playing time."

Cross country head coach John Reece is pulling double duty this season as he, and assistant coach Paul Restivo, will also be leading the new Louisburg Middle School program. The Wildcats have a combined 59 runners out between the two programs, including 37 on the high school side.

Louisburg returns a majority of its girls team that qualified for state a year ago, including its two state medalists in senior Trinity Moore and sophomore Reese Johnson.

Despite a little hiccup with the heat during the first two days of workouts, coach Reece likes what he sees from both teams.

"It was great to get started, and yes the heat caused us to change our workout a little bit, but we still got in our miles," Reece said. "We had a good turnout during summer running, so as a whole they are ready to get to the good stuff and go compete."

"There is definitely a huge difference with LMS joining the crew. Two coaches managing 59 kids is a lot, and we might need more help for supervision as we get more personalized with workouts for different levels of runners, but this is a good thing for Louisburg's cross country program. It is going to be a fun year."

Soccer also saw a big increase in interest as the Wildcats have 44 athletes trying out this season and they will continue the tryout process through Thursday. It is a good problem to have for head coach Kyle Conley and he has liked what he has seen so far as the Wildcats look to take another step forward this year.

“The kids worked hard, but showed we have a lot of work to do,” Conley said. “We had a really, really good summer, but we got a little rusty with the month off. This year we are getting back to focus on our culture and getting back to playing for each other. The boys have been focused and determined to improve this season.”

However, the first two day of practices weren't without their challenges as intense heat and humidity caused some of the programs to change their schedules, including soccer, which moved its practice to the evening on Tuesday and spent some time indoors Monday.

“The heat was an interesting factor to go along with the late start due to the KSHSAA schedule,” Conley said. “We started in the AUX gym for the first hour and 15 minutes then transitioned outside for an hour. It was frustrating but the boys handled it very well.”

With the heat advisories, teams had to take precautions with their athletes and everything seemed to go smoothly with the hot weather.

“There is nothing you can do about the heat, and it is not centralized to Louisburg, so everybody has to deal with it,” Ebenstein said. “So you just do what you have to do when it comes to moving practice to the evening or whatever. I do not mind these hot early practices as it sets the tone that athletes need to take care of their bodies, and the acclimatization process gets going from the beginning. I would much rather have it this way instead of it being cool and the first hot week comes on a game week.”

With the first day of practice starting later than normal, the start of competition will also be pushed back. Team scrimmages will be the Friday before Labor Day and actual competition won't start until Sept. 3.

Soccer will host Fort Scott in its season opener on Sept. 3 and volleyball will travel to Paola for dual on the same day.

Cross country opens its season on Sept. 5 at the Anderson County Invitational and football will travel to Spring Hill on Sept. 6.

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## **Two LHS students help MAVS to national volleyball championship**



**Louisburg's Wyatt Axmann (left) and Ben Ratliff-Becher pose for a picture after helping the Kansas City-MAVS volleyball team to a national championship earlier this month.**

In a packed and deafening arena in Dallas, Texas, Louisburg's Wyatt Axmann and Ben Ratliff-Becher looked around and couldn't believe what was about to happen.

With the rest of their Kansas City-MAVS volleyball teammates, Axmann and Ratliff-Becher were on the verge of completing memorable journey – one they weren't sure was always possible.

In the 16 USA Volleyball National Championship match on July 5, the MAVS huddled up one point away from winning the biggest trophy either player had ever seen. When the MAVS forced a side out and took the second set in a 25-22 win, the bench emptied and they celebrated their USA Division National Championship.

"The experience was amazing," Ratliff-Becher said. "There is nothing else like it. You're out on the court and there are announcers and huge stands and it feels like you are playing in an Olympic game. I don't think I'll ever forget that moment."

Playing for six years, Ratliff-Becher is a veteran to the sport of boys volleyball and has dreamed to be in this position. For Axmann, he didn't join Mavs program till February of 2018 and had little volleyball background.

That didn't stop him from



contributing in a big way to the Mavs this season as he played on the front left side and also saw some time in the middle of the back row.

“It meant the world to me and my team to win a national title,” Axmann said. “We had worked so hard together for such a long time and it was amazing to see all of our hard work pay off.”



Louisburg’s Ben Ratliff-Becher (front row, second from left) and Wyatt Axmann (front row, second from right) helped the MAVS to a 10-1 record in the tournament.

Ratliff-Becher was a defensive specialist for the MAVS and was a back-up libero. Both Louisburg players saw significant time during the 11-match tournament as they played big roles on the floor and off.

“I was also a really big cheerleader on the bench,” Ratliff-Becher said. “The entire experience was awesome.

I love volleyball so much and winning a national title means so much to me. It

was such a great experience and it’s one to remember for a lifetime.

“Going into the year, we knew we could win it. We honestly had all the right players at the right time. Everyone

on the team had a role to play and they played that role perfectly.”

The MAVS finished the tournament with a 10-1 record and rallied back to avenge their only loss later in the competition.

Volleyball has been a fixture in both players’ lives this past year as they also both played for the Louisburg High School boys team that was started this year and played in a league in Kansas City.

“The tournament was crazy from beginning to end,” Axmann said. “We ended 10-1 so we didn’t lose much, which

was crazy. Our team just had to keep talking with each other and making sure

our heads were on straight.

“Playing volleyball for MAVS and our Louisburg team has been on the biggest blessings in my life. I would

encourage anyone and everyone to at least give it a try.”

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# Dixon named to U-20 Junior National Team, will play in World Championships



Louisburg High School graduate, and Kansas State freshman, Anna Dixon was recently selected to the Junior National Team and will represent Team USA in the World Championships in Mexico.

Anna Dixon hasn't officially played in her first collegiate match with Kansas State yet, but Dixon has spent this summer traveling all over the world honing her volleyball skills.

Earlier this week, the Louisburg High School graduate received even more good news.

Dixon was selected to the Under 20 Junior National Team that will compete in the World Championships in Mexico later this week. Dixon will represent Team USA as she will go up against some of the best the world has to offer.

"It is a huge honor to make the Junior National Team," Dixon said. "It has been a goal of mine since I started playing volleyball competitively, so accomplishing that goal was an amazing

feeling. I'm very excited to compete for a gold medal in Mexico. We have some tough competition, but it will be a wonderful experience and I can't wait."

Dixon and Team USA will begin pool play on July 12 against Mexico, then follow it up with matches against Italy and Cuba to complete action. The national team will be led by University of Texas head coach, Jerritt Elliott.

Dixon was one of 20 players invited to train in Colorado Springs earlier this month for the Junior National Team and the roster was eventually whittled down to 12. Those 12 will participate in the 2019 FIVB Women's U20 World Championship July 12-21 in León Guanajuato & Aguascalientes, Mexico. The U.S. qualified for the World Championship by winning the 2018 NORCECA Women's U20 Continental Championship.

Hosts Mexico will be up against USA, Italy and Cuba in Pool A, while reigning WU-20 champions China will take on Poland, Egypt and Peru in Pool B. Pool C includes 2017 runners-up Russia, Turkey, Argentina and Serbia. The last edition of the competition's bronze medallists Japan are in Pool D with Brazil, who with six titles have won the competition more than any other nation, the Dominican Republic and Rwanda.

In June, Dixon traveled with the Kansas State volleyball team to Brazil where they trained with the Brazilian U20 National

team and also played several exhibition matches. Brazil is considered one of the best countries in the world for volleyball as it won Olympic gold medals in 2008 and 2012.

Dixon was also chosen to train with the Collegiate National Team in Anaheim, Calif.

“My experience in Brazil was incredible,” Dixon said. “Not just getting to play against different teams there, but actually building relationships down there and getting to understand and respect their culture.”

When the hectic summer for Dixon has finally ended, she knows she will be ready when her collegiate season gets underway in the fall.

“I feel like my experiences over the summer has pushed me to grow as a player and a person, tremendously,” Dixon said. “Seeing high level competition that resembles the Big 12 play gave me an idea of what to expect going into my college career and made me more prepared. I’m very excited to see what our team can do in the fall.”

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## **Stiles, Lohse, Burk and Bowes to be inducted into LHS Hall**

# of Fame



**Dennis Stiles (top left), John Lohse (top right), Jason Burk (bottom left) and Krystal (Bowes) Grojean will be inducted into the Louisburg High School Athletic Hall of Fame this fall.**

It has been 11 years since Louisburg High School had inducted a class into its athletic hall of fame, but the wait for a new class is finally over.

The USD 416 Endowment Association, which oversees the LHS Athletic Hall of Fame, has announced a new 4-member class. Dennis Stiles (Class of 1969), John Lohse (1995), Jason Burk (1999) and Krystal (Bowes) Grojean (2001) were the top four vote getters in this year's hall of fame voting and will be honored in an induction ceremony sometime this fall.

“Louisburg has a history of great athletes,” said Damon Dennis, a USD 416 Endowment Association board member. “We had a good cross-section of both young and older voters this year that really took their job seriously. The four athletes chosen represent several generations of former Wildcats and each one were dominant in their particular era and sports. The Endowment Association is excited to get the Hall of Fame going again and plan on some big things in the future.”

More than two dozen voters, that includes current members of the hall of fame, long-time Louisburg residents, teachers and coaches, voted on the class in June. Each voter was asked to

submit their top four choices for the hall and votes were then tabulated.

To be eligible for the hall of fame, the inductee must wait at least 10 years following graduation to be nominated.

The last class that was inducted was in 2008 and Dennis, and the rest of the Endowment Association, is committed to making this a yearly occurrence moving forward.

Here are the accomplishments of each of the newest hall of fame inductees. Look for more information on an induction ceremony in the coming weeks.



**Dennis Stiles**

## **Dennis Stiles – Class of 1969 – Football, Basketball, Track**

Stiles

lettered 4 years in football and track and 3 years in basketball. His senior year he was named all-league and all-state in football and was co-captain on the Wildcat team that finished the year 4-4.

As sophomore, he played on the varsity basketball team which was 12-0 in league play, finished the year 19-3 and were district champions. He earned honorable mention all-state honors his sophomore and junior seasons and was second-team all-state his senior year. Stiles was at one time the school's career scoring leader.

Stiles competed at the state track meet as a junior and senior where he placed fourth in the discus his senior year. He previously held school records in the discus and triple jump. He also received a football scholarship to Kansas State University.



**John Lohse**

## **John Lohse – Class of 1995 – Football, Basketball and Baseball**

Lohse lettered all four years in baseball and was selected to represent Kansas in the all-star baseball classic his senior year. He was an all-league



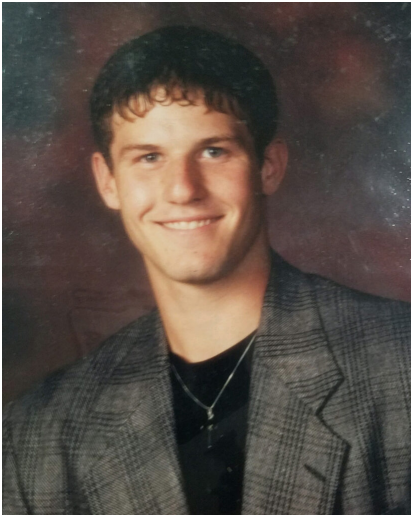
pitcher and centerfielder for the Wildcats his sophomore through senior years.

He had a .510 average his junior and senior seasons with 10 home runs his junior year and 12 more his senior season.

In football, Lohse was a 3-year letterwinner. He was an all-league wide receiver his junior and senior seasons. In his senior year, he had 850 yards receiving and 11 touchdowns and was later selected to represent Kansas in the Metro Classic All-Star Game.

Lohse was also a 3-year letterwinner in basketball and was an all-league selection his junior and senior seasons. He averaged a double-double his junior and senior years.

Post-graduation, Lohse attended Pittsburg State on a baseball scholarship and played on the Gorilla team for four years. He was selected to the all-MIAA team his sophomore and junior seasons before injuring his shoulder his senior year. He had a .315 average his junior and senior seasons. In his first collegiate at-bat his freshman year, Lohse hit a game-winning grand slam to give Pitt State its first win over Missouri Southern in five years.



**Jason Burk**

## **Jason Burk – Class of 1999 – Track and Football**

Burk was a 4-year letterwinner for the Louisburg track and field team and qualified for state in all four years in four events. He accumulated 12 state medals, 16 regional track medals and 14 Frontier League medals. Burk was selected to the Kansas City All-Metro track team in 1998 and 1999.

During his senior season, Burk was a state champion in both the triple and long jump. He won the triple jump with a leap 48 feet and the long jump with a mark of 22-5. He also finished fifth in the 100-meter dash and sixth in the high jump. As a junior, Burk won a state championship in the triple jump with mark of 46 feet and won three more state medals. He took second long jump, fourth in the 100 dash and sixth in the 200 dash. As a sophomore, Burk won state medals in the triple jump (second), long jump (fourth)

and 4×100 relay

(third). He was a member of the 4×100 team that took second at state as a freshman in 1996.

At one time, Burk held seven school records. He currently holds school records in the triple jump, high jump and long jump. Burk holds the school record for most points in a season with 326.

Burk also played football, where he was a part of bi-district, district and regional championship teams.



**Krystal (Bowes) Grojean**

## **Krystal (Bowes) Grojean – Class of 2001 – Volleyball, Basketball, Track**

Bowes was a 4-year letterwinner in track before she was offered a scholarship on the Wichita State track and field team.

In her senior season at Louisburg, Bowes earned three state medals, including a second-place finish in the javelin with a throw of 145-10. She was also third in the discus with a toss of 126-9 and fifth in the shot put at 37-5. As a sophomore and junior, she finished sixth in the discus at state. In all, Bowes racked up five state medals in her high school career before moving on to Wichita State. She is the current Louisburg record holder in the javelin (146-10) and discus (137-11).

At Wichita State, she earned academic All-American honors and was a team captain all four years. Bowes was a two-time NCAA national qualifier and finished fifth in the javelin and was second in the Missouri Valley Conference in 2006. In 2004, Bowes took first in the MVC in the javelin and fourth in the discus. In 2003, she won the Missouri Valley Conference discus title, was second in the javelin and fourth in the hammer throw. Bowes was also a member two Shocker teams that won conference titles.

In volleyball and basketball at LHS, Bowes was a 3-year letterwinner in each sport and earned first-team all-Frontier League honors each season.

Current members of the LHS Hall of Fame

#### **Class of 2005:**

Tom  
Stevens – 1934 – Track and Field (High Jump)

1947/48

Undefeated Football Teams

Richard

Meiers – 1949 – Basketball/Football

Don

Meek – 1965-1998 – Coach/Administrator

Larry

Harding – 1976-1994 – Volleyball/Golf Coach

Amy

Dodson Goode – 1986 – Volleyball/Basketball

**Class of 2006:**

Jim

Wells – 1936 – Track and Field (Pole Vault)/Football

Doug

Eaton – 1971 – Wrestling

Sue

Truman Apple – 1974 – Track and Field/Volleyball/Basketball

Mike

Meek – 1985- Football/Wrestling/Track and Field

Jamie

Waite – 1991 – Track and Field (Pole Vault)/Football/Basketball

**Class of 2007**

Alan

Taylor – 1949 – Football

Tim

Dozier – 1987 – Wrestling/Football

Beth

Dodson Dixon – 1989 – Volleyball/Basketball

Jeff

Lohse – 1991 – Baseball/Football/Basketball

### **Class of 2008**

Greg

Kahmann – 1987 – Baseball/Football/Basketball

Mark

Buckingham – 1994 – Basketball

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# **Buffington named 2019 Louisburg Sports Zone Female Athlete of the Year**



Not many athletes had the opportunity to experience the success Carson Buffington did during the 2018-19 school year.

Buffington found herself in two state championship matches and was a team captain in all three seasons. The 2019 Louisburg High School graduate played at a high level in all

the sports she competed in and did so with the respect of her teammates of coaches.

Those are just a few of the reasons why Buffington was chosen as the 2019 Louisburg Sports Zone Female Athlete of the Year.

The award, which is in its second 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 three choices and the number of votes were added up, which decided the winner.

Buffington began her memorable senior year on the volleyball court as she helped the Lady Cats to a state runner-up finish for the second consecutive season. She was an outside hitter on the 2018 squad, which was a position she had to learn on the fly.

She spent the last two seasons as the team's starting setter and Buffington made the move to the front line – which gave her team the best chance to win.

Along with her state runner-up finish, Buffington also earned second team All-Frontier League honors and was named to the Greater Kansas City Volleyball Coaches Association Senior All-Star match.

“Carson was a great leader again this

past season and played a vital role on the team,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “She handled transitioning to a new position with a lot of grace and was bound and determined to learn the ins/outs of being a hitter, than a setter. She previously ran our offense as the setter for two years. But as with each new season, new players are added to the mix and the possibility of changing positions/rosters arises.



**(From left) Louisburg girls assistant soccer coach Michael Pickman, Louisburg head volleyball coach Jessica Compliment, Carson Buffington, Louisburg head girls basketball coach Shawn Lowry and Louisburg head girls soccer coach Kyle Conley**

“I was very proud of how she ‘handed’ over the reins of the offense to two freshmen and how she encouraged and pushed them every day in practice. She was a great role model. Carson added a lot of emotional energy when we needed it and made huge plays at important times throughout matches.”



Buffington was also a big part of the Lady Cat basketball team this past season, despite finishing short of a state tournament. She earned all-league and all-state honorable mention honors after she averaged eight points, seven rebounds and three steals per game.

She currently holds a school record with 864 career rebounds and was an all-league player for her entire four year stint with the Louisburg basketball team.

“Carson is one of the hardest working players that I have worked with coaching basketball, boys or girls,” Louisburg girls basketball coach Shawn Lowry said. “She never took a day off and always led by example. Carson was relentless as a player and was always the first one on the floor for a loose ball. As good an athlete, she is an even better young woman with great character, integrity, unselfishness and passion.”

Buffington might have had her most successful season, both team-wise and individually, in the spring as the Wildcats’ starting goalkeeper on the Louisburg girls’ soccer team.

For the second year in a row, the Wildcats were the Class 4-1A state runner-up and Buffington was a big reason why. She started all 20 games and set school records in shutouts (13), saves in a season (115), goals against average (.952) and wins (17).

With all that success, Buffington was named the Class 4-1A Goalkeeper of the Year by the Kansas Soccer Coaches

Association.

“Carson in her first year as the starting goalkeeper was unbelievable,” Louisburg girls soccer coach Kyle Conley said. “She kept us in a lot of games and even won us a few. Carson is in her third year ever playing soccer as well. She started her sophomore year and has grown so much. She is a gifted three sport athlete and it shows in her ability to play goalkeeper. She has a fantastic attitude and work ethic.”

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## **2019 Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Year nominees**



For the past three 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 second 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.”

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 will then vote for their top 3 male and female athletes and then I will tabulate the results and determine the winner. In the next week, I will announce this year's recipients.

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**



### **CARSON BUFFINGTON – SENIOR – BASKETBALL, SOCCER, VOLLEYBALL**

Carson was a 3-time letter winner in her senior season and was named as a team captain in volleyball, basketball and soccer.

In volleyball, Buffington earned second team All-Frontier League honors as she helped lead the Lady Cats to a Class 4A state runner-up performance. She also moved from her starting setter position to the outside hitter spot and had a lot of success for the Lady Cats as she tallied 130 kills in her new position. With all that success, Buffington was also selected to the Greater Kansas City Volleyball Coaches Association Senior All-Star Match.

Buffington also wrapped up a strong career for the Louisburg basketball team as she averaged eight points and seven rebounds to go along with three steals a contest. She was named as a Frontier League honorable mention this past season, and she also was selected as an all-state honorable mention.

In girls soccer, Buffington was the starting goalie for Louisburg in all 20 games. She posted 13 shutouts, which is a school record and had a .952 goals against average, which is also a school record. Buffington had 90 saves on the season that ended as a Class 4-1A state runner up for the second consecutive year. For her efforts, she was also selected second team All-Frontier League. Buffington was also named first team all-state goalie and was named Goalkeeper of the Year.



## **ANNA DIXON – SENIOR – VOLLEYBALL**

Anna wrapped up her fourth volleyball season as a varsity starter for the Lady Cats and guided Louisburg to its second consecutive Class 4A-state runner-up finish.

Dixon, who is currently with the Kansas State volleyball team, ended her senior season with 584 kills and had a hitting percentage of .260. She also added 325 digs, 50 aces and 42 blocks as she played all six rotations. With those lofty numbers, Dixon earned several big time honors in her final season.

She was selected as an All-Frontier League first team player and was also named to the 4A State All-Tournament Team. Those honors continued as she was named the Kansas Volleyball Coaches Association Class 4A Player of the Year and earned a spot on KVA All-State First Team.

Following the season, Dixon was also named as an Under-Armour All-American also earned MaxPreps/American Volleyball Coaches Association Player of the Week honors.



## **ALYSE MOORE – SOPHOMORE – BASKETBALL, SOFTBALL, TRACK AND FIELD**

Alyse is a 3-sport varsity letter-winner this past year as she earned letters for the basketball, softball and track and field teams. This past spring season, Moore went to state in two different sports and became the first Wildcat athlete in recent memory to do so.

In her first season in track and field, Moore threw the javelin for the Lady Cats and went on to become regional champion as she

eclipsed her personal best throw by almost 25 feet in just her third competition of the season. The following week, she medaled fourth at the Class 4A state tournament with a personal best throw of 131 feet and 9 inches.

Moore was also the starting shortstop for the Lady Cats as she helped Louisburg to its first regional championship since 2014.

During the basketball season, Moore was a starter for the Lady Cats and averaged six points, five rebounds and three steals a game.



### **TRINITY MOORE – JUNIOR – CROSS COUNTRY, SOCCER**

Trinity is 2-sport letter-winner for Louisburg this past year as she had state performances in both cross country and soccer.

During the fall, Moore was the top runner on the Louisburg

girls cross country team as she helped the Lady Cats to a regional runner-up finish and qualified for state as a team for the first time in school history. Moore medaled fourth at the Class 4A state meet in Wamego and currently holds the school record for the fastest time in program history. She also earned first-team All-Frontier League honors for her third place finish at the league meet.

In soccer, Moore was a starter on the Wildcat team that recently finished as the Class 4-1A state runner-up for the second consecutive year. At the midfield spot, she finished the season with 12 goals and six assists and was also named to the All-Frontier League first team.



**DELANEY WRIGHT – FRESHMAN – BASKETBALL, CROSS**



## **COUNTRY, TRACK AND FIELD**

Delaney is a 3-sport letter-winner as she took part in cross country, basketball and track and field and competed at the state level in two of those.

Wright found most of her success in track and field as she earned four medals at the Class 4A Kansas State Track and Field Championships in Wichita this past month. She medaled in the long jump, 400-meter-dash, 200-meter dash and as a member of the 4×400-relay.

During the regional meet, Wright broke two school records (long jump, 400 dash) and earned a regional and Frontier League title in the long jump. She also earned a medal in the long jump at the Kansas Relays earlier in the season.

In cross country, Wright was a member of the Louisburg team that finished as a Class 4A regional runner-up and qualified for the state meet as a team for the first time in school history. In basketball, Wright saw playing time at the varsity level as a freshman at different points throughout the season.

## **MALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR NOMINEES**



## **BLUE CAPLINGER – SENIOR – BASEBALL, FOOTBALL, TRACK AND FIELD, WRESTLING**

Blue is a 4-sport letter-winner in football, wrestling, baseball and track and field and competed at the state level in two of the sports.

In football, Caplinger was an All-Frontier League player on both sides of the ball as he was named to the first team defense as a defensive back and second team offense as a multi-purpose player. On defense, Caplinger, who helped Louisburg to a 10-1 record and a regional championship, had 31 tackles from the safety spot and also had two tackles for a loss, two fumble

recoveries and an interception. Offensively, he had 544 total yards and six touchdowns.

On the wrestling mat, Caplinger was a regional champion at 170 pounds and finished his season with a 33-5 record. The Louisburg senior fell one match short of state medal with a 2-2 record at the Class 4A state tournament. He currently holds the school record for most career reversals (72) and most career escapes (86). Following the season, he was also named to the KWCA Academic All-State first team.

Caplinger split time between baseball and track and field in the spring. Although he spent time as a reserve and pinch-runner on the baseball team, Caplinger found a lot of success on the track.

He qualified for state as a member of two relays. Caplinger was a member of the 4×400 relay team that won the Class 4A state championship in 3 minutes and 25 seconds. Caplinger also helped the 4×100 relay to a fifth place finish and went on to garner two state medals.

Caplinger will join the Benedictine football team this fall.



## **AUSTIN MOORE – SENIOR – FOOTBALL, TRACK AND FIELD, WRESTLING**

Austin is a 3-sport letter winner in football, wrestling and track and field and was among the state's best in two of the sports.

Moore thrived on the football field for the Wildcats as he helped Louisburg to a 10-1 record and a regional championship. Moore was a first team All-Frontier League player on both sides of the ball and was the league's leading vote-getter. He went on to rack up all-state awards as the Louisburg senior earned Class 4A first team all-state honors as a running back from the Topeka Capital-Journal and the Kansas Football Coaches Association. Moore was also named as a Class 4A first team all-state linebacker from the Wichita Eagle.

When the season was all said and done, Moore tallied 1,554 total yards from the running back spot, including 1,428 yards on the ground, and had 21 touchdowns before he broke his collarbone during the regional championship game.

With those numbers, he was named the Kansas Small Class Player of the Year by 810 Varsity and was All-Purpose Player of the Year by Kpreps.com. Earlier this year, Moore was also named to the Kansas Shrine Bowl roster.

On the wrestling mat, Moore missed more than half of the season with his broken collarbone, but came back in a big way. Moore won his first 14 matches when coming back at 220 pounds, which included a regional championship. He went on to earn his first state medal as he finished fourth at the Class 4A state tournament with a 3-2 record. He was also named to the KWCA Academic All-State first team.

During the spring, he was a member of the Louisburg track and field team and threw the javelin for the Wildcats. He was also on the throwers relay that ranked Top 5 nationally at one point in the season.

Moore will join the Kansas State football team this fall.



## **KIEFER TUCKER – SENIOR – FOOTBALL, TRACK AND FIELD, WEIGHTLIFTING**

Kiefer is a 2-sport letter winner in football and track and field and also went to state competition in two activities.

Tucker was a presence on the line of scrimmage for the Louisburg football team as he was a first team All-Frontier League player on both sides of the ball and helped the Wildcats to a 10-1 record and a regional championship.

The Louisburg senior was among on the leaders on the offensive line as he helped pave the way for more than 3,500 yards of total offense. On defense, Tucker recorded 55 tackles from the defensive end spot, including three tackles for a loss, three forced fumbles, a fumble recovery and a sack. Those numbers helped earn him honorable mention all-

state honors and was also named to the all-state team by the Kansas Football Coaches Association.

The honors kept coming for Tucker as he was recently selected to participate in the Kansas Shrine Bowl.

During the winter, Tucker was a member of the Louisburg powerlifting team and certainly made his mark there as well. Tucker won the Class 4A state championship in the 220-pound class and broke a 24-year-old record in the bench press with a lift of 375 pounds.

In track and field, Tucker qualified for state for the first time in the discus. He finished as a regional runner-up and went on to take ninth at the Class 4A state meet in Wichita, just one spot away from earning a state medal.

Tucker will join the Emporia State football team this fall.

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## **Dixon excited for opportunity with U.S. Collegiate National Team**



**Kansas State freshman, and Louisburg graduate, Anna Dixon**

## **sends a shot over the net during tryouts for the U.S. Women's Collegiate National Team in March in Colorado Springs, Colo.**

Six months ago, Anna Dixon had just finished guiding the Louisburg High School volleyball team to its second consecutive state runner-up trophy.

Dixon was always one of – if not the best – player on the court whenever the Lady Cats took the floor.

Back in the present, Dixon has now positioned herself as one of the best players in the nation at the collegiate level. On April 1, it was announced Dixon was named to the U.S. Women's Collegiate National Team after having yet to play a game as a college player.

She was named to Anaheim National Team roster and Dixon will train and compete for five days in late June as the coaches will split up the 24 players on the roster.

“It is really exciting,” Dixon said. “I honestly didn't expect anything to happen, but I was excited, especially that I can go with three of my other teammates and that we are in California.”

Dixon, who graduated from Louisburg in December, joined the Kansas State volleyball program the next month and began training with her new teammates. The K-State coaches then gave Dixon the opportunity to try out for USA Volleyball in March in Colorado Springs, Colo.

So in early March, Dixon and some of her new Wildcat teammates made the journey and took part in the 3-day tryout at the U.S. Olympic Training Center.



Looking around the gym, Dixon was in disbelief at the different coaches and players she was competing against. The game was being played at a different level than she was used to, and it was a little stressful at times.

“We had two sessions the first day and three the second day,” Dixon said. “They usually evaluate you in one session and then regroup you with some other girls. Whenever I got moved up to the top group it was really nerve-racking because you are playing with All-Americans and girls who have been in the Final Four. The pace of the game was faster than I have ever played. They were really helpful with the adjustment.

“I got used to the pace after a while. I actually usually play better when I am nervous and that helped me a lot. At first it was hard, but I had to just trust my training.”

Trust it she did.

Dixon continued to impress her coaches with her play as an outside hitter. After the tryouts were over, and before the rosters were officially released, she actually earned a spot on a higher-level team.

USA Volleyball has four collegiate national teams with the top team that goes to compete in Italy and a second-tier team will journey to Japan. Dixon earned a spot on the No. 3 team that goes to Anaheim, but was originally selected for the Japan squad.

Due to a conflict with Kansas State, Dixon was unable to make the trip to Japan and was put on the Anaheim roster instead.

K-State is traveling to Brazil over the summer to compete against the Brazilian collegiate team, which overlapped with the Japan trip.

“The 20-and-under Italy team is basically the ‘A’ team for the collegiate national team so I made the second team that was going to Japan,” she said. “It was mostly girls who are juniors and seniors in college and there might be a couple sophomores. Japan would have been cool, and it was an honor to be named that high, but I get to go to Brazil with my team and I am really excited about that. We will be there for two weeks and it should be a lot of fun.

“I like getting to experience different things in different areas. It has helped me meet a lot of people and build connections with them. My goal at the end of college is to go overseas and play volleyball, so I am excited about all these opportunities.”

Dixon hasn’t actually competed in an official event for USA Volleyball yet, but she is excited for the opportunity and what she has experienced so far.

“It was really cool,” she said. “I got a chance to meet a lot of the girls that I had been looking up to or watching on TV the last couple years, so being around them and playing with them was a great experience. We were playing with some of the best players in the country, and some former All-Americans, so it was cool to see how they learn and get to know them more.”

Dixon has been trying to get acclimated to her first semester in college and being a collegiate athlete. She has spent a lot of time training with the Wildcat team and hasn't had much free time to herself.

Working under the guidance of K-State head coach Suzie Fritz, Dixon has enjoyed her time in Manhattan so far and has learned a lot in just a few months time.

"It has been good," she said. "It was overwhelming at first. Every day I leave my house at about 6:15 in the morning and I won't get back until like 7 at night. The time management has been a huge adjustment, but my teammates have been really helpful and made it pretty easy."

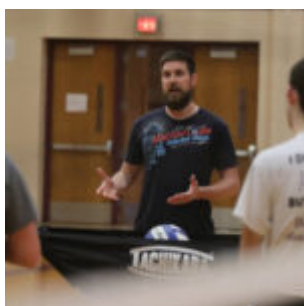
As if playing on the collegiate national team wasn't enough, Dixon is currently waiting on a decision to see if she will earn a spot on the USA Junior National Team. The roster will be announced later this month.

If she earns a spot, Dixon will go to Colorado Springs for training and then will travel to Mexico to compete in the 2019 World Championships. Not too bad for a player who hasn't played an official collegiate match yet.

"It is a bigger deal for me because we will be playing teams from all over the world," Dixon said. "I am crossing my fingers that I will make it, but we will see."

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# Newly-formed boys volleyball team excited for home debut



Louisburg boys volleyball head coach Jeff Harris talks to his team during a practice Monday. The newly-formed Wildcat team will host Blue Valley and St. Thomas Aquinas in their home opener Wednesday at Louisburg Middle School.

When it comes to volleyball, it has been the girls that have dominated the court in Louisburg.

Success has been a staple of the Louisburg High School volleyball program as the Lady Cats have recorded numerous top 3 state finishes, including a pair of back-to-back state runner-up performances the last two years.

Now, there are a group of boys who want to get involved in the fun.

Eleven Louisburg students have joined together to create the town's first boys high school volleyball team. Louisburg is a member of the Kansas City High School Boys Volleyball League, which is in its inaugural season as several schools in the area want to create interest in having boys volleyball become a sanctioned sport within the Kansas State High School Activities Association.

“There are 26 teams right now in Kansas and Missouri,” assistant coach Geoff Branine said. “Some of them have junior varsity programs involved so there are 21 schools involved and 26 teams. It was better than expected. We are pretty excited and Missouri doesn’t have a big step to take to get it into the schools because St. Louis has several.

“The Heart of America Volleyball Association is trying to build boys volleyball in the region. In Minnesota, they started this club-type volleyball program two to three years ago and next year will be their first year of having it be a true varsity sport, which is awesome.”

However, before they can get to that point, the Louisburg club team is trying to draw interest within the community and the Wildcats are already off to a good start.

Louisburg is currently 2-2 in league play as the Wildcats have played in two different triangulars. The next one will come Wednesday when Louisburg will have its home opener at Louisburg Middle School.

Head coach Jeff Harris and Branine, who are both Louisburg residents and former collegiate volleyball players, are excited for the opportunity to show what their players can do.

“It was slow starting out because they have never played together on the same team because of the mix of age groups,” Harris said “We are coming together well and this will be our fifth match Wednesday and the boys look great right now.

“We have 11 on the team right now, four of which have never played before. They are all great athletes and are picking the game up very well.



**Ben Rangel works on his serving during practice.**

The Wildcats are made up of Louisburg High School and middle school students as the league can have seventh through 12<sup>th</sup> graders on their roster and the Wildcats are one of the youngest teams in the league. Their oldest player is a sophomore and they have eighth-graders that see a lot of playing time.

One of those players, Louisburg freshman Ben Ratliff-Becher, has played club volleyball for several years and is excited for the opportunity to compete with others from the same town.

“It is really fun, actually,”

Ratliff-Becher said. “There has only been volleyball for girls in Louisburg and there hasn’t been much volleyball-wise for boys to do in Louisburg. Having a boys volleyball team is awesome and I think it opens doors for other high schools to do the same.

“I think probably about 80 percent of our team has played volleyball before, but it is also really fun to have those that haven’t played at all. Watching them get better and better is so much fun.”

Louisburg will host Blue Valley and St. Thomas Aquinas at 6 p.m. on Wednesday and the Wildcats want as many members of the community to come to Louisburg Middle School to see what they are about.

Free hot dogs will be provided thanks to Dixon Contracting Services and Prairie Shield Roofing until 7 p.m., and the Wildcats are doing all they can to try and get the word out.



**Assistant coach Geoff Branine works with Isaiah Leonard on his serving technique Monday during the team's practice.**

"It is going to be great," Harris said. "We have started Facebook pages, we are having a free barbecue and we are trying to do everything we can to draw a crowd to support the boys. We just want to spread the momentum for boys volleyball here. The girls program always has a great team and we just want to continue that tradition in Louisburg."

Although they know this is a process, the Wildcats hope this venture will help create an awareness for boys volleyball in the high school setting.

"Even after talking with the schools and other principals and such, it is just really about interest," Branine said. "As far as fitting into the school program, it could happen



pretty easily. They already have the gym, the nets, balls and the gym time is available in the spring because this is the time for boys volleyball. The only thing you have to worry about is pulling kids away from track and baseball when it turns into a school sport. We think there is interest and it could work.”

Although that possibility is still a ways away, the Wildcats are focused on the task at hand and will try and get some revenge. Louisburg lost to St. Thomas Aquinas in three sets to begin the season and it is hope to avenge that tough loss in front of its home crowd.

“It will be so fun,” Ratliff-Becher said. “I am excited. I think a lot of people are coming, so I am definitely proud of that. I think we are going to get Aquinas this time.”

Members of the Louisburg team are Ben Rangel, Brett Rangel, Braden Branine, Jay Scollin, Bryce Gage, Wyatt Axmann, Ben Ratliff-Becher, Matthew Sword, Dawson Barnes, Isaiah Leonard and Jacob Sanders.

For more information on the new league, visit [kcboysvb.org](http://kcboysvb.org)