

Louisburg volleyball falls to De Soto, Olathe West



Louisburg's Evyn Richardson (left) and Hailey Sword team up for a block during a match earlier this season.

DE SOTO – Going against bigger programs can be difficult and the Louisburg volleyball faced its fair share of challenges Thursday.

The Wildcats traveled to De Soto for a triangular with Olathe West and left with a pair of setbacks. Louisburg lost to Olathe West 24-12 and 25-16 and also fell to De Soto 25-19 and 25-20.

"Thursday presented a couple of tough opponents for us," Louisburg coach Leanna Willer said. "I thought we did a good job of keeping ourselves in the game and battling throughout the night. There were also a couple of key things that we worked on in practice Wednesday after last Tuesday's game that I was happy to see improvement in on Thursday."

Louisburg senior Hailey Sword led the Wildcat offense at the net with 10 kills on the night and senior Madie Williams finished with seven.

Middle blockers Izzy Moreland Evyn Richardson also played strong as Moreland finished with six kills to go along with a team-high four blocks. Richardson had three blocks on the night, as did senior Katie Elpers.

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“Both middles, Izzy and Evyn, did a good job of making themselves available in the offense and capitalizing on their opportunities,” Willer said. “Also, I thought that Megan had a great defensive night as she actually led our team in digs. Very proud of her.”

Senior libero Bronwynn Williams and Madie Williams each tallied 10 digs on the night, while senior Ashlyn Berck led Louisburg from behind the service line with three aces.

Louisburg (0-3) is back in action tonight as the Wildcats host Burlington and Piper in a triangular. The Wildcats will play Burlington at 4:30 p.m., and Piper at 6:30.

Wildcats fall in home opener to Baldwin in four sets



Louisburg senior Madie Williams sends the ball over the net Tuesday during the Wildcats' season opener against Baldwin at Louisburg High School.

In its season opener Tuesday, Louisburg found itself in a rematch of the sub-state championship match from a season ago.

The Wildcats hosted Baldwin, a team they defeated on their way to a fourth-place state tournament finish.

Unfortunately for Louisburg, the result wasn't quite the same this time around.

Baldwin won the first two sets and held on for a 3-1 victory (25-20, 25-18, 19-25, 27-25) over Louisburg. Despite the early deficit, the Wildcats battled back to almost force a fifth set.

"I thought we played pretty well for the first match of the year," Louisburg coach Leanna Willer said. "We saw some nerves for sure in that first set, but I think we settled in pretty well and fought hard throughout the match. There were some impressive rallies and great plays made by both teams, which made for a fun night. Regardless of the outcome, I am proud of how hard we fought and how we stayed together working as a team throughout the match."

Through the first two sets, the Wildcats had a tough time slowing down the Bulldog attack at the net – more specifically Fisayo Afonja.

The Baldwin senior, who is one of the top players in Class 4A this season, made an impact all over the floor. Afonja

finished with a team-high 31 kills and also had 21 digs with her play in the back row as she made things difficult on the Wildcats.

“She is a truly impressive player all around,” Willer said of Afonja. “The toughest thing about her is that she can come from anywhere and hit any tempo set. She also has a crazy high vertical, and with that extra hang time she can turn in the air to find the open court. We started to do a better job of finding her in the third and fourth sets to put up a better block, so that helped us compete better with their strong offense.”



Louisburg seniors Katie Elpers (left) and Izzy Moreland team up for a block Tuesday against Baldwin.

The Wildcats got out to a shaky start with the back-to-back 25-20 and 25-18 losses, but gathered themselves and put together a strong performance the rest of the way.

After a convincing 25-19 win in the third set, Louisburg found

itself in a back-and-forth match with the Bulldogs, but after forcing extra points, fell 27-25.

Louisburg senior Madie Williams had a big night to lead the Wildcats as she finished with a team-high 26 kills as she had plenty of opportunities from both the front and back rows. She also led the team defensively with 19 digs.

“Madie had an awesome night,” Willer said. “She established herself early, and continued to be the go to hitter for both of our setters. They know that they can give the ball to her at any time and she’s going to make the most of it. I was also pleased to see her court awareness shine through as she made some very smart decisions with her attack choices. She’s not afraid to go up and take a huge swing or mix in a tip, and we saw how successful that can be.

“Additionally, I thought she passed very well and made some big plays on defense. She has a natural ability to read the court and anticipate what’s coming next, which is huge for us.”

It was also the first time the Wildcats implemented their two-setter offense with senior Megan Quinn and freshman Adelyn Moore. Quinn finished with a team-high 25 assists and Moore had 19 of her own. Quinn also had a strong game defensively with 12 digs.

“I think they both did a great job,” Willer said. “They spread the ball around, but also found a way to find our hot hitters as much as they could. I love seeing their relationship in between plays, time outs, and sets as well. Megan is a wonderful leader and has really taken Adelyn under her wing to help our team be the best we can be.”

Senior Hailey Sword also had a big game at the net with 11 kills, and defensively she was second on the team with 17 digs.



Louisburg libero Bronwynn Williams chases down a ball Tuesday against Baldwin.

Also on defense, senior libero Bronwynn Williams tallied 17 digs, while senior Izzy Moreland finished with a team-high five blocks from her middle blocker spot.

“I thought our serve receive passing was pretty strong for the majority of the night, and I loved our defensive effort,” Willer said. “I think every person on the floor stepped up in moments where they were able to shine a little bit, so I love seeing that well-rounded aspect of our team.”

Louisburg will try and bounce back today as the Wildcats travel to De Soto for a triangular with Olathe West. Matches begin at 5 p.m.

Louisburg volleyball hoping for another state run in 2023



Louisburg senior Hailey Sword is one of three returning starters off of last season's state tournament team that finished fourth overall.

Last year, the Louisburg volleyball team was one of the few teams left standing when the season came to a close.

After the Wildcats upset No. 1 seed Baldwin for a sub-state title, Louisburg made a nice run through the state tournament and eventually ended with a fourth-place finish.

However, the Wildcats had to say goodbye to four senior starters off that team and head coach Leanna Willer has had to do a little bit of reshuffling – like many coaches do from year to year.

As tough as some have it, the Wildcats still return three starters from a year ago and have a seven-member senior class in hopes of reaching the state tournament, yet again.

“We did lose four amazing seniors, but we also have a lot of experience coming back,” Willer said. “This team will be a good mix of ‘old’ and young as we will have all four classes represented in our starting rotation. It’s great to have strong senior leaders as well as talented underclassmen come

together as one unit.

“We are really working on that team chemistry right now to solidify our group. We do have three senior returners maintaining a similar role that they had last year, but the other four are stepping up into bigger roles to fill some of the holes left by last year’s graduating class.”

Louisburg has a good foundation to build from with those three returning starters. Seniors Madie Williams and Hailey Sword will return as starting outside hitters and will play all six rotations after playing similar roles last season.

Senior setter Megan Quinn returns to lead the Wildcat offense after eclipsing 1,000 assists a year ago.



Senior Madie Williams returns as an outside hitter for the Wildcats and will play all six rotations.

"Having Megan, Hailey, and Madie return is huge for us as they gained tons of experience at a high level, especially toward the end of the season," Willer said. "They have stepped up as our go to players all summer long as leaders on the court and

the ones we look to to 'get the job done' in tough situations.

"Hailey and Madie will hold down the fort for us on the outside, playing all the way around, so their defense and serve receive is just as important as their work at the net. Megan has done a great job thus far of running our offense and she will continue to have a big role as our setter and as a defender."

One difference this year is the Wildcats will be running a two-setter offense and Quinn will be joined by freshman Adelyn Moore.

Throughout the summer and the beginning of practice, the Wildcats have worked Moore into the varsity lineup and she has learned a lot along the way from her senior counterpart.

"Megan and Adelyn will be 'co-piloting' our team this year as our setters," Willer said. "Running a system with two setters allows us to bring in more offensive weapons and a stronger defensive look as we will be able to have bigger blockers with our right sides against other team's outside hitters. Megan and Adelyn have done an awesome job this summer working together to create a cohesive style for our players, so that hitter/setter connections can be established."



Louisburg senior setter Megan Quinn eclipsed the 1,000 assist mark last season.

"I love having Megan there to mentor Adelyn and show her the ropes with the varsity team, and Adelyn is stepping up with no hesitation to play at a high level right away. We are very excited about this duo for the season."

Other than Sword and Williams, the Wildcats will have some new faces at the net. They feature a pair of middle hitters in senior Izzy Moreland and junior Evyn Richardson. Moreland has seen some varsity time the last two seasons, Richardson is in her first season at varsity, while sophomore McKenna Lohse could also see some varsity time there.

Sophomore Caileigh Kilgore and senior Katie Elpers will swing from the right side this year, as will sophomore Delaney Nelsen, who is recovering from an injury. Nelsen also saw some

varsity playing time last season.

Defensively, the Wildcats will be anchored by a pair of seniors. Bronwynn Williams will be the team's starting libero, while Ashlyn Berck will start as a defensive specialist. Both players were in the varsity rotation at times last season and Williams saw playing time in 25 matches.

"The strength of this team will be our athleticism and versatility," Willer said. "We have girls at all positions who could play a variety of positions on the court, and we have very strong offensive weapons who can be a threat from anywhere. With one lineup, we are able to get a lot of different looks offensively, which works to our advantage. Additionally, running a two-setter system allows us to have more hitters on the court at all times, and we have the depth to be really strong across the board."

Although the Wildcats have several new faces on the court this season, they still have the same goal, and that is to end their season at the state tournament in Hutchinson.

"As a team, we are maintaining high expectations for ourselves based on last year's finish," Willer said. "While we recognize areas for growth and improvement, we are returning with confidence that we can get back to the state tournament again at the end of the season if we play to our potential. The key for us is to maintain high expectations without putting too much pressure on ourselves. We plan to take the season one day at a time, focusing on just one match at a time and getting better every day."

Louisburg will begin that journey today as the Wildcats host Baldwin for a Frontier League dual. Varsity is slated to begin around 6:30 p.m.

"Practices have been going well," Willer said. "At all three levels, we have a great energy and sense of competitiveness every time we walk into the gym, and the girls are getting

after it with a sense of purpose. I think we are all amped and ready for the season to truly begin this week. Getting a few games under our belt is always good so that we can have specific things to focus on each practice.”

Wildcat fall teams underway with successful first week of practice



Louisburg senior Wyatt Holland takes a handoff from backup quarterback Alex Saad during a practice last week.

Before the record setting heat and humidity that is currently smothering Louisburg and the surrounding areas came in, the Wildcat fall sports teams got in a solid first five days of practice last week.

The first day of practice opened the fall season on Aug. 15 as the Wildcat football, boys soccer, cross country and volleyball programs officially kicked off the season.

Participation numbers were up for most of the sports, while football, soccer and cross country had a good week's worth of practice outdoors. With heat and humidity at record levels this week, all outdoor sports will be forced to hold practices early in the morning.

It was a successful season for all four teams last year and it started with the Wildcat football program as they ran through the Frontier League with an undefeated record and earned its first league title since 2018.

The Wildcats currently have 76 players out for football under second-year coach Drew Harding, which about 10 more than a year ago.

"First couple days of practice have been going well," Harding said. "There is a lot of energy on the field during practice, which is great to have. You can tell they are happy to be back playing football again."

Harding kept his players busy over the summer to help prep them for the season. The Wildcats took part in several scrimmages, 7-on-7 and skill sessions, to go along with their normal team camp and weights.

"This allowed everyone to get on the same page and be ready to roll once we started practice in the fall," Harding said. "The goal is that everything over the summer carries over and we can just continue to get better at what we do once the season starts."

"We want to continue to come together as a team and continue to build camaraderie. We also want to make sure we have the base schemes in all three phases installed and understood before we start putting in opponent specific plans. We want to see athletes compete and separate themselves from one another to show who is ready to play on Friday nights."



Louisburg sophomore Caileigh Kilgore goes through a hitting drill last week during tryouts.

The Louisburg volleyball program is coming off another state tournament run that saw the Wildcats finish fourth at the Class 4A tourney. That success brought a lot of interest as 39 players tried out, and 32 are currently rostered between the three teams.

“The first three days of the season with tryouts were pretty great,” Louisburg coach Leanna Willer said. “Everyone came with positive attitudes and high energy to push through the challenges of tryouts. After the team was finalized, we got to work right away on Thursday. The energy in the gym is great, and everyone is aware of the high expectations we have for ourselves heading into the season. Both the girls and the coaches are excited to be back in the gym getting better every day.”

Wildcat volleyball also had a busy summer schedule the held a

team camp to start, before competing in a summer league and held several open gyms in June and July.

Varsity level players traveled to the University of Nebraska team camp and also competed a tournament in Andale.

“While summer is busy with all kinds of activities, vacations and summer jobs, we appreciate the time and effort all of the girls put in to dedicate themselves to the team and the sport of volleyball,” Willer said. “It also gives us coaches more time to get to know them heading into the season and to develop relationships earlier on so we can get right into volleyball here in August.

“During these first few weeks we hope to foster a culture of competition in our gym where the girls are all challenging each other every single day. We are all on the same page with where we want to be at the end of the season, so during these first few weeks we are focused on building a strong foundation that will help us get there with an emphasis on team bonding/connections, fundamentals, and conditioning.”



Louisburg senior Emma Vohs is a returning state medalist for the Louisburg cross country team.

The Louisburg cross country team also had a big season last year, especially on the girls side. The Wildcat girls qualified for state and Emma Vohs left Wamego with a state medal.

As far as numbers go, the cross country group is a little down this year with 22, but they still have high aspirations again.

“The runners are excited for the season,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “The girls team is planning for big things again this year and the ‘young’ boys team is looking great.”

Many of those runners have taken to the streets over the summer to get their work in as they prepare for another difficult slate of meets in 2023.

“We had a consistent group of both LHS and LMS runners all summer,” Reece said. “Because of the good turnout, we can get

going on the harder workouts earlier in the season.

“The beginning of the season always creates a challenge with runners being at different points of their base building. We look to build base for all and start working on racing skills and workouts as the weeks progress.”



Louisburg junior Emmett White goes through a drill last week at practice.

The Louisburg soccer team will have some rebuilding to do this season as the Wildcats had to say goodbye to 15 seniors from a year ago.

There will certainly be several players to help fill the void as 41 athletes came out for soccer this fall.

“There’s been a huge precedent set with the program, and it’s definitely something that’s been instilled in the players for quite some time,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Since I’ve joined the program, the junior and senior leaders have

been outstanding at organizing summer workouts and activities for the team. It's been great seeing that sort of self-motivation and leadership from them. We've had enough time together as a program over the summer that the first days of tryouts have been smooth as can be. Very little instruction needed, and the guys have been able to jump right in with what we're asking from them."

The Wildcats opened their summer hosting a youth camp and then went right in to summer workouts. Louisburg also held its annual team camp to go along with weights sessions.

"With only two returning starters from last year, we're going to have some growing pains for sure," Bovaird said. "The first couple of weeks will need to be spent getting in match shape and gelling as a team with so many players being in new positions or at a new level. We open our season with Leavenworth, who was our final regular season game last year. Back then, both varsity and JV had awesome games, but those were totally different teams. We'll see how well we've reloaded for this year, but I'm feeling pretty good."

Ross named Louisburg Sports Zone Female Athlete of the Year



Louisburg senior Adyson Ross was voted by the head coaches as the 2023 Louisburg Sports Zone Female Athlete of the Year.

No matter what sport Adyson Ross competed in this season, she was one of – if not the best – athlete on the field or court.

Her postseason honors more than bare that out.

Ross was a first-team All-Frontier League selection in two of those and also earned all-state honors as well. No matter the sport, she made her team better.

Her success in all three sports – volleyball, basketball and soccer – were just some of the reasons Ross was named the 2023 Louisburg Sports Zone Female Athlete of the Year.

“Being named athlete of the year means so much,” Ross said. “There are so many outstanding athletes at LHS. To be selected for this award is a huge honor and I am so grateful.”

Ross’ memorable senior year started in the fall with the volleyball program. The Lady Cats upset No. 1 seed Baldwin in the sub-state championship and eventually had a fourth-place finish at the state tournament.

However, the season didn’t start out the best. Louisburg had trouble finding that team chemistry it was looking for, and it seemed like they were missing something. Louisburg coach Leanna Willer asked Ross, who is one of the team’s top hitters, to change positions and play the libero spot.

It was shortly after Ross made the move, that the team took off and started to play some of its best volleyball – including a run to the sub-state championship.

“There were so many special moments from this year, but I think one that stands out the most was during volleyball season.” Ross said. “We were playing Baldwin for the championship and it was game point. I was on the line to serve and I just remember thinking in that moment that everything

I'd been working for had come down to that one serve. When we won the point it was just the most special and rewarding feeling. It is something that I will remember forever."

That season led to second team All-Frontier League honors as a libero as she recorded 363 digs on the season to go along with 67 kills and 41 aces.

Then came basketball where Ross was a starting guard on a Lady Cat team that reached the sub-state championship game. She was the team's leading scorer at 12.5 points per game and averaged nearly seven rebounds a contest, to go along with two assists and 1.6 steals.

With all that, Ross was named to the All-Frontier League first team and earned second team all-state honors. She was also named to the Missouri vs. Kansas all-star game. Two years ago, she was also a part of the best finish in school history when Louisburg finished third at the state tournament.

She reached the state final four with all three programs during her time at Louisburg.

"The experience was so amazing," Ross said. "I might be biased, but Louisburg is really a one of a kind place. You just don't really see the same amount of support for athletics in many other towns. To be able to play in the state final four for three different sports was so cool."



Louisburg's Adyson Ross poses with two of her coaches, Adrienne Lane and Leanna Willer, after receiving the Athlete of the Year award.

On the pitch, Ross had one of her best seasons as the team's starting midfielder. She helped Louisburg to a spot in the regional championship against Bishop Miege.

She also put together a strong final campaign as she finished the season with 16 goals and 21 assists to go along with 35 shots on goal. Ross later earned first team All-Frontier League honors and was also named second team all-state.

"Even though we didn't win that last game, I remember looking up in the stands before the game and seeing the stadium filled with purple, and the amount of student support was crazy," Ross said. "I just thought to myself, how special it is to be a part of something like that. For so many people to come out and support like they did was amazing, despite the team we were going up against."

Playing three sports at a high level does take a toll at times, and there were moments Ross wasn't sure if being a

three-sport athlete was for her.

“Continuing all three sports through high school is definitely something I’m proud of,” Ross said. “There were a lot of times when I considered dropping a sport so I could spend time to focusing on another. As a freshman I didn’t see myself continuing all three through senior year, because I didn’t think it was possible to fully commit to each sport.

“My coaches were very supportive and flexible, and all of them were totally on board with it, even though it meant sometimes missing workouts and preseason stuff due to conflicts with another sport. I feel like playing three was more of an advantage to me as an athlete. It helped me to be versatile, and not having an off-season kept me in great shape.”

Even with all her successes, Ross is putting athletics in the rear view mirror, for now. She will be attending Kansas State University and is ready to focus more on the academic side of things.

Still, Ross knows she will never forget all the memories she made during her time at Louisburg.

“Even though I’m choosing not to continue my athletic career past high school, I feel so blessed for all the memories and friendships sports have given me. They will for sure last a lifetime.”

Previous winners:

2018: Isabelle Holtzen

2019: Carson Buffington

2020: Reilly Ratliff-Becher

2021: Alyse Moore

2022: Delaney Wright

2023 Louisburg Sports Zone Female Athlete of the Year Nominees



For the sixth consecutive 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. The winner will be announced in the coming days.

Below are the nominees for the Female Athlete of the Year award in alphabetical order by last name. Congrats to all those who were nominated and best of luck!



Emma Lohse – Senior – Basketball and Track and Field

Louisburg senior Emma Lohse was a big varsity contributor for the Lady Cat basketball team and blazed the track for the Louisburg girls as the team's top sprinter.

On the track, Lohse recorded three state medals, including a pair of individual medals. She was the state runner-up in the 100-meter dash and later finished seventh in the 200 dash. Lohse was also a part of the 4×100-meter relay that medaled third and broke the school record in four straight meets. She also qualified for state in the 4×400-meter relay.

On the basketball court, Lohse was one of the Lady Cats' top defenders as she played a big role on a team that reached the sub-state championship game.



Emma Prettyman – Senior – Volleyball, Basketball, Track and Field

Louisburg senior Emma Prettyman was a starter, or key contributor on three different Wildcat teams this past school year, including the volleyball, basketball and track and field programs.

On the volleyball court, Prettyman was one of the Lady Cats' middle hitters as she helped Louisburg to a fourth place finish at the state tournament. She finished with a team-high 60 blocks and had 166 kills.

Prettyman was the starting center for Louisburg basketball as the Lady Cats earned a spot in the sub-state championship game. She was among the team leaders in rebounds with 6.5 a contest and had two assists a game. She was named to the All-Frontier League Defensive Team.

Prettyan was also the top thrower on the Lady Cat track and field team and earned a spot at the state meet in the discus. It was there where she earned her first state medal as she took sixth overall.



Adyson Ross – Senior – Volleyball, Basketball and Soccer

Louisburg senior Adyson Ross started for three different Wildcat programs this past season and it all started last fall in volleyball.

Ross, who started the season as an outside hitter, made the move to libero halfway through the year and thrived in her new role. She recorded 363 digs on the season to go along with 67 kills and 41 aces. She helped the Lady Cats to a fourth-place

finish at the state tournament and earned second-team all-league honors.

On the basketball court, Ross was a starting wing for the Lady Cats as she helped them advance to the sub-state championship game. She was the team's leading scorer at 12.5 points per game and averaged nearly seven rebounds a contest, to go along with two assists and 1.6 steals. Ross was selected first team all-league and earned a spot in the Missouri vs. Kansas all-star game. She also earned second team all-state honors.

On the pitch, Ross was one of the top goal scorers on a Wildcat team that reached the regional championship match. She finished the season with 16 goals and 21 assists to go along with 35 shots on goal. Ross later earned first team All-Frontier League honors and was also named second team all-state.



Rowan Yows – Sophomore – Soccer

Lady Cat sophomore Rowan Yows was a key part of the Louisburg girls soccer team this past season that saw the Lady Cats reach the sub-state championship game.

Yows, who played in the midfield, was the team's leading scorer with 19 goals on the season and led the team with 50 shots on goal. She also tallied 11 assists on the season.

Pfannenstiel named new LHS AD; resigns boys basketball post



Louisburg boys basketball coach Ty Pfannenstiel will take over the school's activities director role next school year. He also resigned his basketball position after coaching the Wildcats for the last six years.

Beginning next school year, Louisburg High School activities will have a little different look to it – especially at the top.

Ty Pfannenstiel will serve as the school's new activities director and will take over for current AD, Michael Pickman, who will focus on his assistant principal duties and

curriculum.

Pfannenstiel, who has been the boys basketball coach for the last six years, resigned his post to take on the activities director position. He also stepped down as an assistant football coach.

Currently the weight room instructor, Pfannenstiel will spend half his day teaching and the other half in the AD role.

All of the moves were approved during Monday's meeting of the USD 416 Board of Education.

"This is very exciting for me," Pfannenstiel said. "It's definitely going to be a change. I have been a teacher and a coach for 18 years. I still get to be a teacher half-time, and now I get to step into a new role as an administrator. It is going to be all sports and activities and I am looking forward to the new direction."

As for Pickman, he gets the opportunity to focus more on the academic side as a full-time assistant principal. He was hired as an assistant principal/ activities director in April of 2020.

"I am very excited to commit more fully to the assistant principal role as education and curriculum have always been my true passion," Pickman said. "Being able to support the teachers, students, and administrative staff by providing data, feedback, and assessing teaching and learning goals and initiatives in the building and district aligns with that passion and the opportunity arose to allow for that. I hope to enable and promote continued growth in the various curriculums and initiatives and structures that make Louisburg a fantastic district in a supportive community.

"Ty has experience and is passionate about athletics and activities. As it is where his passion is, I have every confidence he will do a fantastic job in his new role and look

forward to witnessing where he takes our programs moving forward.”

Pickman took over LHS activities at a difficult time as the school was coming back from COVID-19 and the all challenges it presented. As tough as that situation was, he appreciated the relationships he built.

“I have thoroughly enjoyed my role as activities director and was presented a fantastic growth opportunity and am grateful for being given it,” Pickman said. “I had a goal of being present for athletes and coaches and for the patrons, so I hope people saw that presence. I was blessed to have great leadership in place in our coaches and sponsors, and tried to support them best by advocating for their needs and supporting them to do their job of being great role models and passing on their passion and knowledge to students.

“Ultimately, I am most proud of our student athletes and activity participants and being part of their journey. I believe that sports are an extension of the classroom and I wanted to help ensure that character and sportsmanship were just as important and success, and I am overjoyed to have a wealth of memories where our fans, students, participants, and coaches and sponsors proved that to be true of LHS.”

While taking on the challenge of being a new administrator is one he is looking forward to, leaving his coaching roots behind was a difficult decision for Pfannenstiel.

In 2021, Pfannenstiel led the Wildcat boys basketball team to the Class 4A state championship game and finished as the state runner-up.

“That was definitely the biggest thing that was holding me back,” Pfannenstiel said. “I love basketball and the kids that I have worked with. There is a group coming up that I really enjoy coaching, and leaving that behind was one of the biggest challenges for me. Whoever takes over the program, I think it

will be good transition for them because they will have a great group of kids to work with.

“Originally, I was going to be allowed to coach a sport and they didn’t want to take coaching away from me. The more I thought about it, if I want to do a good job at this, I need to focus on being the AD and that will be something that will benefit me and all the other activities.”

Pfannenstiel believes the move is a good one for the school in general as it will allow Pickman and principal Amy VanRheen to focus more on the academic side of things.

“This is something that is definitely needed,” Pfannenstiel said. “Our administrators are so busy with all the stuff they do during the school day, but they are also going to all the activities as well. Hopefully this will be a big help for Mrs. VanRheen and Mr. Pickman.”

Although he won’t official start his new position till next school year, Pfannenstiel is already starting to transition into his new role – one that is looking forward to.

“My job in the weight room and coaching has all been about sports,” he said. “That is what entices me about this job is that I am still going to be all about sports and activities. I just want to be a support for our coaches and our athletes and be advocate for our students.”

**Dixon excited to join
University of Florida**

volleyball



Louisburg alum Anna Dixon announced her decision to transfer to the University of Florida on Dec. 23 after spending the last three years at the University of Missouri.

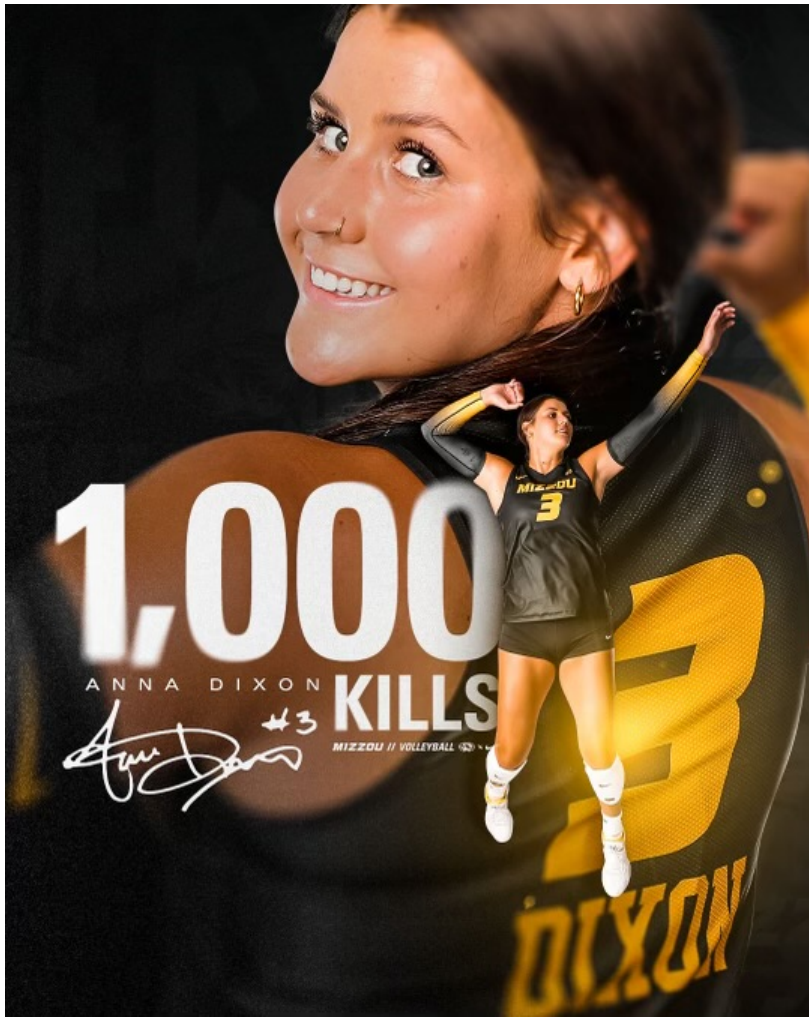
For the last three years, Anna Dixon loved her time competing at the University of Missouri and in the SEC.

With one more year of eligibility remaining, Dixon will still be playing in the SEC, but will wear a different uniform.

Last month, the Louisburg High alum made the decision to move on from Missouri and committed to the University of Florida program as a graduate transfer.

“For me, the most difficult decision was whether or not I should go far from home or not,” Dixon said. “Being so close to my family, it’s hard for me to get away, but I knew for my last year it’s time for me to get out and go somewhere I can push myself to grow the most. Being 17 hours from home and being in one of the most competitive environments, I knew Florida would be perfect for me since it’s going to push me to grow as a person and player.”

Dixon had a big senior season for Missouri as she appeared in all 28 matches for the Tigers and recorded double figure kills in 23 of those matches.



She finished the season second on the team with 353 kills, kills per set (3.30), points (381.5) and points per set (3.57). Dixon also hit a milestone this past season as she recorded her 1,000th career kill on Oct. 28 against Georgia.

Despite all those accomplishments, Dixon knows there is another level she can take her game and believes the Gator program can do that under head coach Mary Wise.

"I cannot wait to stay competing in the SEC," Dixon said. "Not only is it extremely competitive, but you get to travel to see amazing campuses. Playing against Florida the last three years, they've really been able to see my strengths and weaknesses across the net. They see me best training right side this upcoming year to use me as a blocking threat in season. I'm so excited for this transition and how much it's going to develop me as a player."

As excited as Dixon is for the next chapter in her life, she is more than appreciative of what Missouri gave her for three years. It was all recognized on Senior Night on Nov. 20 when Anna got to walk on to the Hernes Center floor with her family for the final time.



Anna Dixon celebrated Senior Night on Nov. 23 with her family in her final home game with the University of Missouri. / Photo by: Jaydyn Isiminger

“Missouri gave me so much over the last three years,” Dixon said. “I got to create some amazing memories with my friends and teammates and got to connect with many people within other sports. I was blessed with a really great community of friends in Columbia which made my decision to leave really difficult. I just knew my time there with volleyball was over, but I can’t wait to cheer them and the new head coach on from afar.”

As for what the future holds for Dixon after Florida, that remains to be seen. She is just ready to enjoy the ride that is left.

“For my last year, I’m really wanting to focus on remaining in the present moment and emptying the tank,” Dixon said. “I’d love the opportunity to go pro after my final year at Florida, but I’m just going to focus on taking things day by day and

doing what I need to do to change my game tremendously. After that, I'll see where life takes me, but I'm super excited for this opportunity to really compete my last year and train under coach Wise."

Top 10 Louisburg Sports Stories of 2022



It was a successful, and eventful, 2022 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 a few programs brought back state hardware.

Below are the top stories from 2022, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the writeup 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.

This year was a blast to cover and I am looking forward to seeing what 2023 will bring. Thank you to everyone for their support and can't wait for it all to begin again.



10. Louisburg golf qualifies for state

FORT SCOTT – As the scores were rolling in, the Louisburg golf team was a little worried.

The Wildcats were in jeopardy of not qualifying for state after a few of the golfers didn't have the scores they were hoping for in the Class 4A regional tournament in Fort Scott.

Chanute and Independence had already assured themselves of a spot, but the third place team was up in the air as the top three teams automatically qualify for state.

As it turned out, the Wildcats had nothing to worry about as they edged Paola by four strokes to finish in third with a 357 to secure their third consecutive spot in the 4A state tournament.

Seniors A.J. Arriola, Sam Wheeler, Ian Kirkpatrick, Johnny Thompson, along with juniors Jackson Olson and Nick Lancaster, advanced to the state tournament.

Arriola carded a 78 and finished as a regional runner-up, as he was just two strokes behind regional champion Drayton Cleaver of Chanute.

As for Olson, the Louisburg junior set a personal record by six strokes to shoot an 81 and took fourth overall. Those personal bests were enough to get the Wildcats into that third place spot.

At state, Arriola and Wheeler finished as the team's top two golfers. Arriola carded a 97 to take 59th overall, while Wheeler finished with a 98 and came in 66th.



9. Brueggen's earns school's first state swim medal

LENEXA – Even though she is just a freshman, Sabra Brueggen is already putting a stamp on her high school swim career at Louisburg High School.

It all came to a rousing end on May 21 as Brueggen earned her first state medal at the Class 5-1A Kansas State Swim and

Diving Championships at the Shawnee Mission School District Aquatic Center.

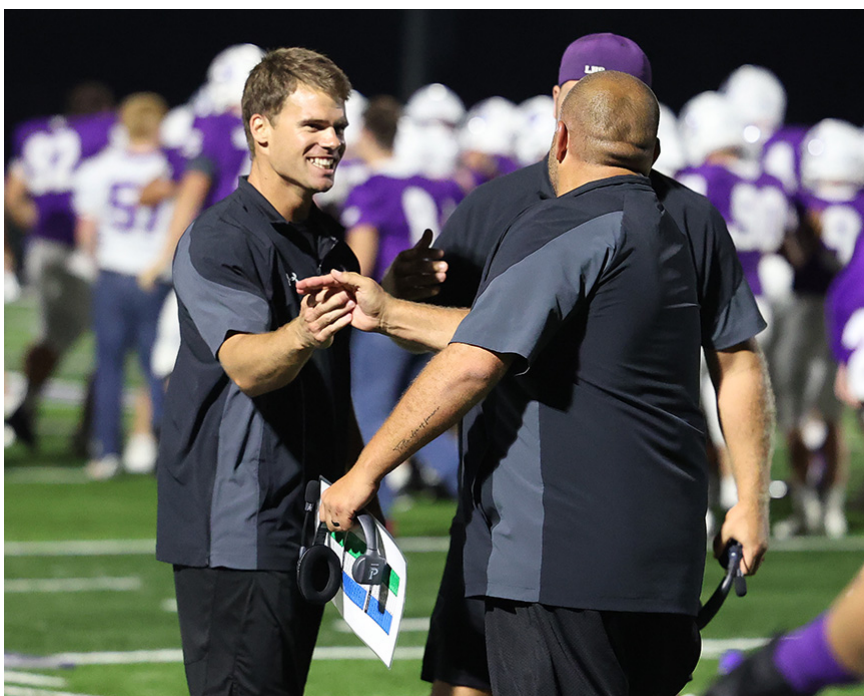
Brueggen became the first swimmer in school history to earn a state medal as she finished fifth in the 100-yard backstroke in 1:00.58.

On the day before in the preliminaries, Brueggen also took fifth in a season-best time of 1:00.15.

“Medaling as freshman means the world to me, and it proves to me that all of my hard work for all of these years, has paid off,” Brueggen said. “I feel like I performed my absolute best at state, and I was very happy with the results. It gives me confidence that I will have a bright future representing OzPaLou at the state swim meets.”

She nearly had a second medal in the 50 freestyle. Brueggen put together a season-best time of 25.26 seconds, but finished ninth overall. It was the same finish she had the in the preliminaries.

The top eight in each event earn a state medal as she was just .06 away from earning another spot on the medal stand.



8. Harding takes over as Wildcat football coach

The Louisburg football program had a different leader on the sidelines this past season.

The USD 416 Board of Education approved the hire of LHS assistant coach Drew Harding to be the team's new head coach in January after the district decided not to renew the contract of former coach Robert Ebenstein.

Harding spent the last five seasons as a Wildcat assistant coach, including time as a defensive coordinator. He is a 2010 Louisburg graduate and was a big part of the Wildcat program during his time as a student-athlete at Louisburg High School.

However, Harding didn't see himself be a head coach of any sport coming out of college.

"It means a lot," Harding said. "When I got out of school, I didn't get into education right away and started somewhere else. I decided to get into education because of the impact my former coaches at Louisburg had on me. To come full circle and to be in the position that I am in now, is pretty surreal. I am really excited for the opportunity and hopefully I can have the same type of impact on student athletes as they come through the program."

Ebenstein has been the head coach the last five seasons and helped the Wildcats to a 30-18 record during that time, including a Frontier League and regional title in 2018. He had a winning record three of those five seasons.

He was also named the KFCA Coach of the Year during that season and was selected to be an assistant coach for the Kansas Shrine Bowl. He was an assistant coach for the Wildcat program for five years before earning the head coaching job.



7. Conley resigns a Louisburg head boys and girls soccer coach

Louisburg High School head boys and girls soccer coach Kyle Conley stepped down from his position after seven years.

He was recently hired to lead the boys and girls soccer programs at Blue Valley West, where he will serve as the head coach of both teams.

Conley, who also taught social studies at LHS, informed the players and parents of his decision on May 4. The Blue Valley Board of Education approved his hire on May 9.

“Making the decision to leave Louisburg was extremely difficult,” Conley said. “The players and parents, both past and present, made this decision tough. No parents or players caused this decision. I am very thankful to Mr. (Dave) Tappan and Mr. (Darin) Gagnebin for giving me this opportunity to coach and teach at Louisburg. The amount of support that my

teams, my family and I received from Louisburg soccer parents and the community was incredible.”

Bobby Bovaird was hired as the new boys head coach, while Ben York returned to the program as the new assistant. York was also named the girls head coach after serving 13 years as the boys head coach previous to Conley.

Conley has the been head girls coach at Louisburg since its inception in 2016 and has led that program to four consecutive state final fours.

Twice, the Wildcats made the state championship game and finished runner-up on both occasions. He has guided the program to an 82-34-3 record.

Conley took over the boys program in 2016 and finished with a 77-32-3 record. He led the Wildcats to two state final fours during that span, including a third place finish in 2020.

“I am so proud of the things that our student athletes in the soccer programs have accomplished both on and off the soccer field,” Conley said. “I will always cherish the memories that we have made here with the Louisburg soccer programs.”



6. Girls cross country qualifies for state, Vohs earns state medal

WAMEGO – For the second consecutive season, Emma Vohs left the Class 4A state cross country meet with more than was she arrived with.

Vohs earned her second state medal at Wamego Country Club as she finished 10th overall with a time of 20 minutes and 51 seconds. The Louisburg junior did what she set out to accomplish.

“I was so excited to win another state medal this season and couldn’t be happier that I reached my goal for that race, which was placing top 10,” Vohs said. “The race was a tougher course, as was the competition this year, but I am blessed to run with such talented girls that push me to do better each race.”

Vohs led the Lady Cat team that qualified for state for the sixth consecutive season. As a team, Louisburg finished eighth overall with 208 points.

A week earlier at regionals, the team of Vohs, Maddy Rhamy, Lola Edwards, Nova Ptacek, Bree Gassman, Erin Apple and Madison Huggins finished third to punch their ticket to state

“It never gets old seeing the joy in the team’s eyes when they hear they qualified for state,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “The girls work hard to accomplish this goal each year, and because of their dedication to their sport, they achieve great things even if they might not make it, but they did.

“The program has built itself and I’m just glad to be a part of it. Yes, we put together a training plan to accomplish great things at the end of the season, but the runners do the work to get there. It takes self discipline, motivation and

guts to be there at the end of the season.”



5. Wildcat wrestling medals 3 at state

Louisburg wrestling has had its fair share of state medalists in its long history, but what the Wildcats accomplished in February at the Tony’s Pizza Events Center in Salina was something the program had never seen before.

The Wildcats left the Class 4A state tournament with three state medalists, the most for one year in program history.

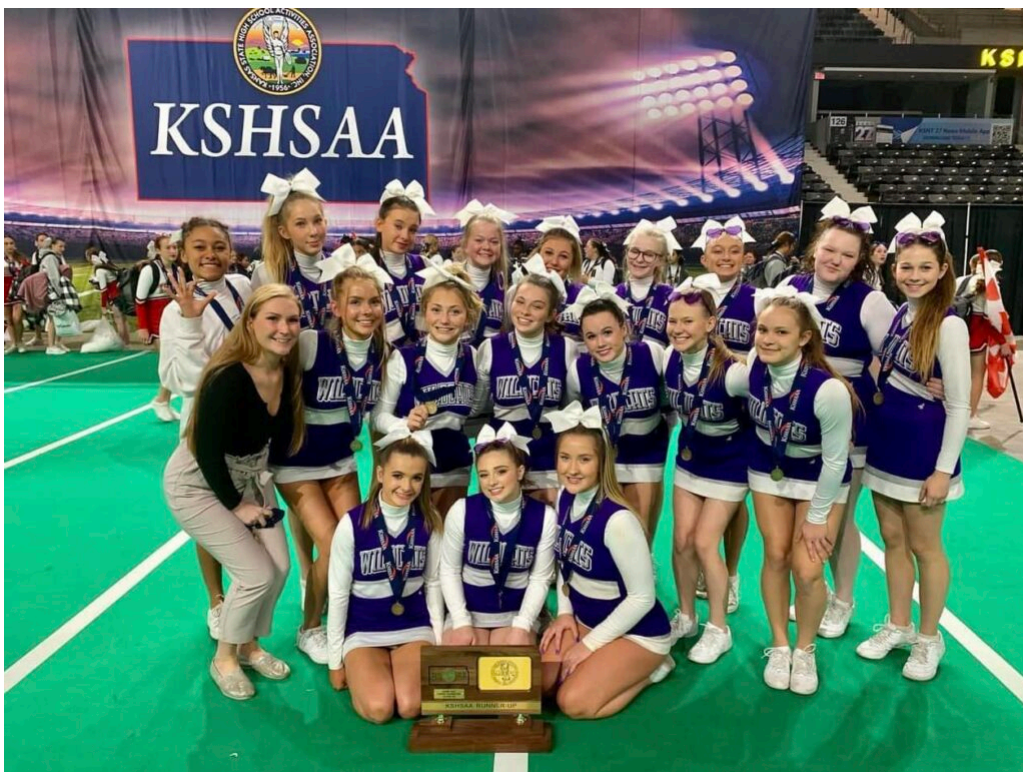
Aiden Barker (195 pounds), Kaven Bartlett (126) and Elijah Eslinger (285) each finished in the top six in their respective weight classes and put together their best performances of the season. It was also the first time each of them earned a state medal.

“This season was the most state placers we’ve had in a single year in program history,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Prior to 1992, KSHSAA only medaled the top 4 in each weight. In both 1988 and 1989, we had two top-4 placers and one top-6 placer, but this really shows how the program is progressing

and developing. We nearly had four medalists, too.”

Barker, a senior, was a favorite for a medal heading into Salina and finished fifth overall with a 13-1 major decision over Ottawa’s Jared Ferguson in the fifth-place match.

Bartlett and Eslinger also left lasting impressions on the Wildcat program as each medaled sixth overall after both nearly turned their brackets upside down as they advanced to the semifinals on Friday. They both guaranteed themselves a medal on the first day.



4. Louisburg cheer earns state runner-up performance

TOPEKA – It has almost become commonplace to see the Louisburg High School cheer squad in the finals of the Class 4A Gameday Spirit Showcase.

However, that doesn’t mean the cheerleaders are any less excited about it.

For the second straight season, the Wildcats finished as the state runner-up in the Class 4A competition at the Stormont-Vail Events Center. They finished with a score of 79.45 and were one point behind champion Paola.

It is the fourth straight season that the Wildcats have finished in the top three, which included a state championship in 2019.

"I am so unbelievably and incredibly proud of this team," Louisburg coach Marissa Morrow said. "This positivity and attitude that these girls have shown this year have been the key to our success. I had no doubt that the material and performances we brought on Saturday had the potential to do well, but it was the girls who made it possible to pull it together. They were all such competitors and left it all out on the mat, and I couldn't ask for more. We also could not have done it without the support of our amazing cheer families."

Members of the team are Sydney Dudzik, Bella Feikert, Zoe Cutshaw, Caroline Dugger, Elizabeth George, Addison Drake, Brooklyn Harmon, Adison Vargo, Maddy Carpenter-Ross, Sienna Finch, Alayna Stohs, Alaina Dudzik, Maddie O'Keefe, Liz Willming, Kayleigh Ramsey, Taryn Osborn, Anna Brizendine and Jocelyn Burk.



3. LHS football secures Frontier League title

With just over a minute left in regulation, Louisburg was staring at the possibility of their first league loss and was watching an outright Frontier League title slip away.

Spring Hill scored a touchdown and took a four-point lead with 1 minute and 12 seconds left. Things were looking bleak for the Wildcats.

As it turned out, 52 seconds was all the Wildcats needed to pull off one of the season's most memorable moments. Louisburg quarterback Declan Battle found junior Caden Caplinger in the endzone on an 18-yard touchdown pass with 20 seconds remaining to give the Wildcats a 20-17 victory.

The win was the Wildcats' seventh straight on the season and clinched the team's first Frontier League championship since 2018.

“There weren’t a lot of people who thought we could be league champions,” Louisburg coach Drew Harding said. “I don’t think it was anything that people expected out of us, and the Frontier League is really good. For this group to come to work, get better every day and to see success is pretty sweet.”

The win was extra special for 16 Louisburg seniors as they were also able to celebrate that league title on Senior Night.

Jackson Kush, Nathan Apple, Carson Wade, Isaiah Whitley, Riley Van Eaton, J.R. Rooney, Will Hutsell, Brayton Brueggen, Christian Golladay, Nathan Vincent, Jase Hovey, Mack Newell, Hunter Moore, Mason Dobbins, Corbin Hamman and Layne Ryals all got to end their final regular season home game with a win.

“The Frontier League title means so much to me and this team,” Rooney said. “As a team before the season, the seniors wrote down our goals, and league champs was on everyone’s list. To clinch it on senior night was amazing. Going undefeated at home, to win it on our field in front of our town – it was an indescribable feeling.”



2. Wildcat volleyball finishes fourth at state

HUTCHINSON – The state tournament ended the way it started for the Louisburg volleyball team – with a loss to Towanda-Circle.

Still, it was everything that happened in between that made for a lot of lasting memories for the Wildcat players.

Louisburg went 2-1 in pool play at the Hutchinson Sports Arena, which included a revenge win over Tonganoxie in the final match of the day. That gave the Lady Cats a spot in the state semifinals Saturday, where they finished fourth in Class 4A.

The Wildcats suffered a 2-0 loss to both Bishop Miege and Circle, but they still ended their season as one of the state's top teams.

"I am extremely proud of this team," Louisburg coach Leanna Willer said. "Looking at how we started this season, and our ups and downs along the way, it is a huge accomplishment for them to have come together as a team at the end of the season and play our best volleyball yet. It was apparent in the last couple of weeks that they really started playing for each other and capitalizing on the strong team bonds they built throughout the year."

It was all thanks to an upset the previous week. Louisburg defeated the state's No. 1 seed, Baldwin, in the sub-state championship match to earn the state berth.

The Wildcats, the No. 9 seed, knocked off No. 1 seed Baldwin, 25-18 and 25-19, at Baldwin High School in the finals of the Class 4A sub-state tournament. That win puts Louisburg in the state tournament for the first time since 2019.

Members of the team are Emma Prettyman, Adyson Ross, Claire

Brown, Allie Kennedy, Ashlyn Berck, Delaney Nelson, Izzy Moreland, Bronwynn Williams, Caileigh Kilgore, Megan Quinn, Hailey Sword and Madelyn Williams.



1. Wildcat boys take third at state track; Koontz, Caplinger win state titles; Lady Cats medal nine

WICHITA – For the second consecutive season, the Louisburg boys track and field team brought home hardware from the Class 4A state meet.

After winning the state championship in 2021, the Wildcats once again found their way to the podium in Wichita as they finished third overall with 67 points.

Andale won the state championship with 101 points and Chanute was the state runner-up with 71.

Louisburg got points from a lot of different areas as the Wildcats medaled in 10 events and had 12 medalists overall, including all three of their relays.

Louisburg senior Tom Koontz won a pair of state titles in the hurdles, while sophomore Caden Caplinger captured the gold medal in the pole vault.



“I am not going to complain at all,” Koontz said. “I believe we came here with less people than we did last year and everyone did their best. Even though we didn’t get exactly what we wanted, third place is still a great achievement.”

What he couldn’t believe was he had just won his first state title in the 300 hurdles and Koontz did so by breaking a 14-year-old school record. Koontz ran a time of 38.98 seconds to break R.J. Saunders’ record of 39.16 set in 2008 to earn the gold.

It turned out to be his second state title of the day as he also earned the gold medal in the 110-meter high hurdles with a time of 14.61 seconds. Koontz won the state in that event last season as well.

Caplinger cleared a lot of his marks in the pole vault and did so in convincing fashion as he was able to win a state title in just his second year with the program.



Last season at state, Caplinger medaled eighth after he cleared 12-6. A year later, the Louisburg sophomore improved his mark by two feet and is a state champion.

It was an impressive showing from Caplinger as he didn't miss an attempt until he tried for 15 feet at the end. He entered the competition at 12-6 and had five straight successful clearances.

"At first I was really nervous, but then it just kind of turned into a routine thing," Caplinger said. "I started going over heights consistently and the rest just kind of fell into place. I cleared 14-6 earlier this week twice in a row, so I knew I could do it. I was still a little nervous though."

As for the Lady Cats, Delaney Wright left the state meet with three medals. Wright, who has been coming back from a severe injury for most of the season, finished as the state runner-up

in the 400-meter dash, third place in the 200 dash and fifth in the long jump.

A season ago, Wright was the state champion in all three events, but couldn't get the repeat she was hoping for.



"Going into state I knew I still wasn't where I want to be due to my injury a couple months ago," Wright said. "But I wanted to attack it still and give it all I had. I am blessed I was there to compete and earn three medals cause in the beginning I didn't even know if I was going to compete my senior year."

In all, the Lady Cats put together a strong state performance as they medaled in nine events and finished with 40 team points and took sixth overall. They were just eight points away from the third place spot, and a plaque.

"Once again the state qualifiers did an amazing job," Louisburg girls coach John Reece said. "They all performed well and most beyond expectations. To leave the meet finishing in sixth place was outstanding. We left with lots of medals and great memories."

Kennedy named to KVA all-state volleyball team



Louisburg senior Allie Kennedy was named to the KVA Class 4A All-State second team earlier this week after she led the Wildcats to a state tournament appearance.

Allie Kennedy had a strong finish to her volleyball career as she helped Louisburg to a state tournament appearance and has been recognized for her efforts.

Honors to continue to roll in for the Louisburg senior and the most recent was a big one. Kennedy was named to the Class 4A all-state second team by the Kansas Volleyball Association.

Kennedy helped the Wildcats to a fourth place finish at state this past season and it was the program's first appearance since 2019.

Along with the all-state honor, Kennedy was also named to the KVA Class 4A All-State Tournament Team and was a second team All-Frontier League selection.

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fantastic defensive plays while she was back there serving in g."

At her middle blocker spot, Kennedy led the team with 305 kills. She also had a team-high 59 blocks to go along with 25 aces.

State champion Bishop Miege earned five spots on the team, while its coach, Lindsey Zych Franco was named the Coach of

the Year. Andale's McKenzie Fairchild was named the Player of the Year.

Five other Frontier League players also earned honors. Ottawa junior Emery Keebaugh was named to the first team.

Baldwin junior Fisayo Afonja and senior Chaney Barth were second team selections along with Kennedy. Paola senior Maggie Kauk and Tonganoxie junior Lucy Rieke were named honorable mention.