

Wildcats hope to bring home state medals



Louisburg junior Blue Caplinger is one of six Wildcats wrestlers who will be competing in the Class 4A state tournament this weekend in Salina.

SALINA – The Louisburg wrestling team has had its fair share of success when it comes to the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships.

The Wildcats have a board full of medalists and state champions in their practice room to help document their history. They hope to add a few more names to that list after this weekend.

Thad Hendrix (106 pounds), Cade Holtzen (113), Tucker Batten (138), Ryan Adams (145), Blue Caplinger (160) and Austin Moore (195) will all compete at the highest level beginning at 10 a.m. Friday in Salina at Tony's Pizza Event Center when state action gets underway.

Each wrestler will have their own fair share of obstacles to get through if they want to reach the medal stand. For starters, it will be the most competitive tournament they have competed in all season.

Despite that, Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird believes his wrestlers have a good chance to be recognized among the top

wrestlers in their weight class.

“At the end of the day after regionals, I talked to each of the guys who qualified,” Bovaird said. “I told them, ‘You have a choice to make. You can choose to be satisfied with qualifying for state, or you can choose to make the most of your trip.’ Each of them said he wanted to bring home a medal. I think they understand that if they never set a goal for winning a state title, then they never will win a state title. Those kinds of achievements don’t happen by accident.

“I think these guys are all ready to go. We could have an historical state tournament, or we could have a lackluster tournament. It’s in the hands of the wrestlers, and I’m confident that they’re going to be ready to make some history.”

Although four of the six Louisburg qualifiers have competed in the state tournament before, only one have them has ever taken home a state medal as the top six in each weight class earn medals in the double elimination tournament.



Ryan Adams, 145-pound bracket

Adams, a senior and a 3-time state qualifier, finished sixth at state last season at 138 pounds and he is hoping for an even higher placing this time around. Adams, who is 32-6 on the season and ranked No. 5 in the state, will have a tough match in his first round against Basehor-Linwood’s Kaden

Jacobson (32-6), who is ranked No. 3 in the state.

Should Adams get past Jacobson, he will meet the winner of Ark City's Jake Beeson (22-0), who is No. 1 in the state, and McPherson's Jonah Clarke (26-10).



Thad Hendrix, 106-pound bracket

Hendrix (30-15) is another 3-time state qualifier for Louisburg and is hoping to bring home his first state medal. Hendrix, who finished as a regional runner-up last week, will face Augusta's Gabe Fox (33-9) in the first round, and should he advance, will meet the winner between Bonner Springs' Cruz Lara (33-5), who is ranked No. 2, and Hays' Jordan Zimmerman (25-13).

"I definitely know what I am going to be getting into at state this year," Hendrix said. "I am not new to it and I know how the days work. I know what I need to do to place and it is all about whether I can accomplish that or not."



Cade Holtzen, 113-pound bracket

Holtzen qualified for state for the first time as a freshman and has made statement in his first year. He is currently No. 6 in the state at 113 pounds and has posted a 42-3 record, with two of those losses coming to a defending state champion.

Still, Holtzen, a regional runner-up, will have a difficult road as well. He will square off with Tonganoxie's Hunter Harris (17-21) in the first round and then would meet the winner between Abilene's William Stroda (39-2) and Pratt's Kaiser Pelland (23-15). Stroda is currently the No. 2 wrestler in the state.

"I am really excited for it," Holtzen said. "I can't wait and I feel that I can do pretty well. I am looking for a state medal, so hopefully I can get that. We will just have to see what happens.

"It is great to see about half of our team being able to go to state. It means we still have a lot of people in the practice room and that we can still get better. It is not just an individual thing, it is about the team too and it is always nice to have more teammates cheering you on."



Austin Moore, 195-pound bracket

Moore (41-5), a regional runner-up, will be making his second

trip to state and be looking for his first state medal at 195 pounds.

If he gets past his first round match against Wichita Trinity's Tucker Trevett (23-16), Moore will square off with the winner between El Dorado's Braden Morgan (36-1) and Holton's Killian O'Connor (19-18). Morgan is currently the No. 1 ranked wrestler in the state.

"I am really happy to see my teammates qualify too and see their hard work pay off," Moore said. "All of us that made it to state have worked really hard, especially this past week.

"My goal is to place at state. It has been a goal of mine for a long time and hopefully I can achieve it this weekend."



Tucker Batten, 138-pound bracket

Batten and Caplinger will be making their first state tournament trip.

Batten (30-12), a senior, will have a tough first round matchup as he will square off with No. 2 ranked Darryl Rylant (39-1) from Clearwater.



Blue Caplinger, 160-pound bracket

Caplinger (33-12) will have a difficult first round opponent as well. He will meet No. 1 Storm Slupianek (33-2) from Marysville.

Even if the Wildcats' lose one match, each of them will have an opportunity to medal by winning matches on the backside of the bracket.

The state tournament will run into Saturday, with the consolation rounds starting at 9 a.m.