

Lady Cats finish third in season opener at Wellsville



Louisburg runners (from left) Trinity Moore, Carlee Gassman and Reese Johnson all earned individual medals Thursday during the Wellsville Invitational. The Lady Cats also earned team medals as they finished third overall.

WELLSVILLE – The wait is finally over, and for the Louisburg High School cross country team, it couldn't have come soon enough.

Mother Nature dampened the start of the Wildcats' season as two meets were cancelled to begin the year and delayed their 2018 campaign by two weeks. Despite that, Louisburg was more than ready to run Thursday at the Wellsville Invitational – especially on the girls side.

The Lady Cats earned team medals in their first time out as they finished third overall with 67 points and edged out Fort Scott by a point. West Franklin won the meet with 49 points and Spring Hill was second with 51.

Trinity Moore, Reese Johnson, Carlee Gassman, Delaney Wright, Shaylor Whitham, Emily Williams and Kaitlyn Lewer were all a part of the third-place finish.

"The girls ran well and our young runners learned a lot from their first race," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "They

worked together for the first mile or so and then took what the race brought to them. It was a solid finish placing third in a good field of schools."

Moore, who finished fifth at the state meet last season, ran a strong opening race as she took second with a time of 21 minutes and 26 seconds. The Louisburg junior led for much of the back end of the race before being overtaken by Fort Scott's Gabbie Clements.

Johnson, a freshman, didn't let the big stage of her first high school race bother her as she took sixth overall in a time of 22:02 to earn her first varsity medal. It was also the fourth fastest time in program history.

Junior Carlee Gassman also earned an individual medal for the Lady Cats as she took 14th in 22:46.



(From left) Carlee Gassman, Trinity Moore, Emily Williams, Kaitlyn Lewer, Reese Johnson, Shaylor Whitham and Delaney Wright get off to a good start Thursday in the Wellsville Invitational.

"Trinity ran well for her first race out and she knows she has a ways to go, but she will get there," Reece said. "Reese

showed she has got it. She ran in the front of the pack well into the third mile and finished strong."

Wright, who was also competing in her first high school race as a freshman, took 30th overall in 24:47. Williams (24:59) and Whitham (25:01) took 33rd and 34th, respectively, while Lewer (26:07) was 41st

It wasn't the typical start for Louisburg as it normally begins the season on a course that features several difficult hills, but the Wellsville course was a little different and presented some different obstacles.

"It was great to finally race," Reece said. "The kids did great and were all equal or better than their times last year which is very encouraging. Wellsville is not a difficult course, hills wise, but its curvy nature does pose a few challenges. With that said, it was a good course to start the season."

On the boys side, sophomore Cade Holtzen led the group of Wildcat runners in 37th with a time of 20:19. Junior Evan Murphy was next in 57th with a time of 21:06.

Junior Anthony Davis (21:12) and sophomore Carson Houchen (21:16) finished 59th and 60th, respectively. Seniors Jackson Staab (24:09) and Gareth Baus (24:15) took 73rd and 74th.



Louisburg's Cade Holtzen (left) and Anthony Davis race toward at the front of the pack at the start of the race Thursday in Wellsville.

"The boys did a good job and competed great," Reece said. "We will look to continue our efforts to improve individually as well as a team and start taking the race to the other teams instead of letting them take the race to us."

Louisburg also picked up a pair of medals in the junior varsity races.

Freshmen Ben McKain and Ruth Minster each earned a medal for their top 15 finish in their respective races. In the boys competition, McKain took seventh overall in 21:06 and Minster was 15th overall on the girls side in 26:41.

The Wildcat runners return to action Thursday when it travels to the Prairie View Invitational. Races are set to begin at

3:30 p.m.