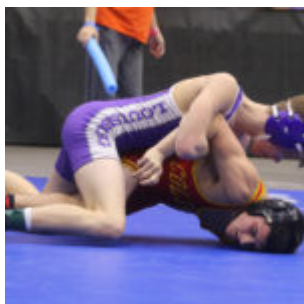


# Wildcat wrestlers excited to get season underway



Louisburg's Cade Holtzen had a memorable freshman season that finished with a state medal and a school record for wins in a season. Holtzen hopes to improve on that this season as a sophomore.

It was another solid season for the Louisburg High School wrestling team last year as the Wildcats sent six to the state tournament and one came away with a state medal.

The 2018-19 season has the same type of promise for the Wildcats as three of those qualifiers return to lead Louisburg, including the team's lone state medalist from last season – Cade Holtzen.

Although Louisburg has a chance to make a statement at the state tournament against this season, the Wildcats were delivered a couple different blows prior to the season.

Returning state qualifier Austin Moore was lost for at least half of the season with a broken collarbone he sustained during the football season. On top of that, participation numbers came down from previous years, but the Wildcats are trying to make the best out of a tough situation.

"The sport of wrestling is like a roller coaster for a lot of reasons, and that applies throughout a season as well as from

one season to the next," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "This year we have 17 wrestlers on the roster, which is the lowest I've had in the past 8 years. It's tough to stomach at first because we're not retaining kids like we need to be doing, and we're not getting a lot of new kids to try out the sport.

"On the other hand, of all the kids on the roster, only one is brand-new to the sport. Everyone else has wrestled for the program at least a couple of years. Practices have been very smooth, and I feel like we've been picking up and taking off at a quicker pace than in previous seasons."

Holtzen will look to take another step forward off of what was a successful freshman season. He finished sixth overall in the 113-pound division at state and also broke a program record for wins in a season with 45.

The Louisburg sophomore will look to take another stab at the 113-pound division this year and is hoping for an even higher finish at state.

"You'll see kids have a successful season one year and then walk into the next with a huge ego and a sense of entitlement," Bovaird said. "Not a kid like Cade. He put in the time over the summer, attending various camps and a few competitions on his own. He's as focused as ever, and the best part is that he's totally bought into the 'wrestling mindset' approach we're taking this season. He's a smart kid, which will help him with goal setting, staying focused, evaluating his progress throughout the season and recovering when he gets knocked down."

Seniors Blue Caplinger and Moore are the other two returning state qualifiers and both have a chance to end their Wildcat wrestling careers with a state medal.



**Louisburg senior Blue Caplinger finished one win away from earning a state medal last season.**

For Caplinger, he has been making steady progress since his freshman year and he was two victories away from earning a state medal last winter. It is that consistent improvement that will put Caplinger over the top, according to Bovaird, as he will bounce back and forth between 170 and 182 pounds to start the year.

"Blue has been a staple in the program for three years now, and one thing I can tell you about him is that he's one of the toughest kids to score on," Bovaird said. "From his freshman year through last year, I don't think there were any other wrestlers who saw as much overtime or 1-point matches as he did. He wrestles smart, keeps matches close, and puts himself in great scoring positions to win those tight matches. He's been training to win key matches, like a regional semifinal or

a state quarterfinal, by focusing on crisp technique and positioning.”

As for Moore, he will have a tough road back to try and get ready in time to prepare himself for the regional tournament in February. He also finished one win away from a state medal last season and will look to try for that first medal this year at 220 pounds.

With everything going against him, Bovaird believes Moore will be ready to go when the time comes and is excited to see what he can do.



**Austin Moore hopes to return for the second half of the season after suffering a broken collarbone during the football season.**

“Every year you’ll see tough wrestlers sidelined by football injuries, and then they’re able to make a solid comeback to

salvage the remainder of their wrestling seasons,” Bovaird said. “Austin is so physically and mentally tough that you can bet on seeing him finding success in February. Not having him on the mat and in our lineup will hurt us a little, but he’s still a captain and will be there to help lead the team.”

Caplinger, Moore and senior Hunter Day were all voted on as team captains for this season and the Wildcats will put out close to a full lineup, especially early in the schedule that features a lot of dual competitions.

Sophomore Ryan Owens will hold the 106-pound spot, while Holtzen and sophomore Luke Kelly will compete at 113 and 120, respectively. Sophomore Anthony Welborn and freshman Nathan Hamilton are battling for the 132 spot.

Senior Gabe Bonham returns after a solid season last year for Louisburg and will wrestle at 138 pounds, while freshman Aiden Barker, junior Dalton Hilt and sophomore Jacob Briley are competing for the 145 pound spot.

Freshman Brandon Doles will make his high school debut on the varsity level at 152 pounds, while senior Brian Houck will try for 160 pounds. Caplinger and sophomore Ben Wiedenmann, who saw a lot of varsity action last year, will flip-flop between 170 and 182 pounds to start the season.

Sophomore James Nelson, who is also recovering from a football injury, will be at 195 pounds and junior Sam Kratochvil will have the 220 spot until Moore returns. Day also returns as the team’s heavyweight for this year.

Even though there are some new names to the varsity lineup this year, Bovaird is excited for the potential of his group.

“I’m excited for Ryan Owens to get a shot at full-time varsity this season,” Bovaird said. “He was a USAWKS kids state champ last year, and always gave Thad Hendrix a close match. He’s stronger and more confident this year. Aiden Barker, Nathan

Hamilton and Brandon Doles are three freshmen who have a lot of kids wrestling experience, and they were pretty dedicated summer wrestlers. Doles won USAWKS kids state two years ago. Gabe Bonham and Hunter Day will be in position to have good seasons, too. Both of them were state qualifiers for the Wildcat Wrestling Club last March."

Louisburg will open its season Saturday when it travels to the Fort Scott Dual Tournament. The first dual is set for 9 a.m.