

Moore wins title in first tourney back to lead Wildcats at Baldwin



Louisburg senior Austin Moore rolls an opponent to his back Saturday during the Baldwin Invitational Tournament. Moore won the 220-pound crown.

BALDWIN CITY – It's been more than two months since Austin Moore broke his collarbone during football season and the Louisburg senior has finally found his way back to the wrestling mat.

Moore was cleared for action last week and he was prepared to ease back into grind of the wrestling season. As it turned out, he picked up right where he left off a year ago.

Moore, who was a state qualifier last season, made quick work of his opponents Saturday during the Baldwin Invitational. He recorded three pins in a total mat time of 2 minutes and 28 seconds to win the 220-pound title, including an 11 second pin of Baldwin's Toby Thomas in the championship match.

The victory shot Moore up the state rankings as he is currently the No. 2-ranked wrestler in

Class 4A at 220

pounds. He made his official return Thursday in a dual with Ottawa where he won by decision.

"After Austin's first match Saturday, I shook his hand and told him how glad I was to have him back," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "I missed his style – strong shots to dominant turns. He spent less than three minutes total on the mat Saturday. I think he's definitely ready to be back, and after his first match jitters on Thursday, he looks like he's hardly missed any time on the mat. Thursday's match was against a tough kid, and we could see that Austin wasn't quite in wrestling shape, but it didn't cause him to make mistakes. It only made him a little more conservative.

"I told him not to worry about match outcomes these next few weeks. He just needs to focus on the process of getting back to where he needs to be to be his strongest for league, regionals, and state."

Moore wasn't the only Wildcat to have success Saturday at Baldwin as senior Blue Caplinger (170 pounds) and sophomore Cade Holtzen (113) both earned a spot in the championship match. Freshman Brandon Doles (145) also medaled and finished third.

Holtzen, who won by technical fall and a pin to reach the finals, squared off with Osawatomie freshman Chance Mitzner, who was undefeated. Holtzen (No. 4 in Class 4A) and Mitzner

(No. 5 Class 4A) provided lot of dramatics, but Holtzen lost a tough overtime match in a 7-5 decision that saw two state-ranked foes going at it.

“I think that loss was more damaging for his confidence than anything, but the great thing about Cade is that he’s a smart kid,” Bovaird said. “He’s a resilient kid. He’ll take a loss like that and it’ll bug him, but he won’t dwell on it. He’ll watch match footage, he’ll refocus his mental game, and he’ll double his efforts in the practice room.”

As for Caplinger, he picked up two big wins on his way to the finals.

Caplinger earned a pair of quick pins to reach the semifinals and went on to earn a tough 3-1 decision over Prairie View’s Hunter Boone.

That set up a finals match with Storm Slupianek from Marysville. Slupianek is ranked No. 5 in the state and Caplinger is No. 6, and the finals match remained close in the third period when Caplinger was down just two points. Caplinger ended up falling in an 8-1 decision to finish second overall.

“Blue came through with a great semifinals win against a very strong kid from Prairie View,” Bovaird said. “He continues to keep himself in every match with his physical strength and his self-discipline. You don’t see Blue get out of position too often, and because of that, kids struggle to score on him. That’s what opened up the finals match against the Marysville wrestler.

“It was 3-1 midway through the third period. Blue took a risk, opened up a little, and got caught. That match, along with his semis match, highlighted a few key areas we need to focus on these next few weeks.”



Freshman Brandon Doles works for positioning during a match Saturday in Baldwin.

Doles had a difficult road at 145 pounds, including a loss to the eventual champion in the semifinals, but he responded with a close 1-0 decision over Marysville's Keegan Caudillo and then went on to defeat Rock Creek's Hunter Nold for the second time in the tournament by a 7-2 decision.

“Brandon has been one of the most coachable kids on the squad this season,” Bovaird said. “He’s got extensive youth wrestling experience, but here he is as a freshman scrapping with some of the best in the state. As the No. 5 seed in the tournament, he had to face a tough kid in the quarterfinals. He upset that kid 5-3, and ended up having to wrestle him again for third. That kid had been ranked in state earlier this season, so I’m really happy with Brandon’s progress.”

Four other Wildcats also earned places at Baldwin. Senior Gabe Bonham (138 pounds) finished in sixth place overall and sophomore Ryan Owens (120) was seventh. Anthony Welborn (138) and Jacob Briley (160) each took eighth.

Louisburg finished sixth in the 11-team tournament with 123 points. Marysville won the tourney title with 204 points and Santa Fe Trail was second at 139.

“We wrestled really well, and I was pretty happy to see them bounce back strong after the tough dual loss Thursday and the snow day on Wednesday,” Bovaird said. “I feel like the focus was definitely in line at Baldwin.”

The Wildcats will host their final home meet of the season Thursday when it squares off with Piper on Senior Night. Matches are set to start at 6

p.m. as the Wildcats will honor their five seniors – Gabe Bonham, Blue Caplinger, Brian Houck, Austin Moore and Hunter Day.