

Moore named 2025 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year



Louisburg senior Ashton Moore was voted as the 2024-25 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year.

For Ashton Moore, life on the football field and on the wrestling mat was a good one in his final campaign at Louisburg High School.

Whether it was all-league or all-state honors, postseason football awards or selections to all-star matches, Moore had a long list of accomplishments during his senior season.

As memorable as those things were, he found himself more focused on other things. He was a team captain for both the football and wrestling teams and wanted to be leader to those around him.

That turned into on-the-field success as he finished his football career as one of the top players to come through the

Wildcat program and earned scholarship to join the Kansas State football program.

Moore experienced that same type of success in the wrestling arena where he was one victory away from winning a state championship. It is those reasons, among others, that Moore was voted as the 2025 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year.

The award was given based on a vote by Louisburg High School coaches as Moore was recognized for his achievements with the football and wrestling programs.

"It means so much to me to be named Athlete of the Year," Moore said. "We have a lot of great athletes, so to be considered one of the best means a lot to me."

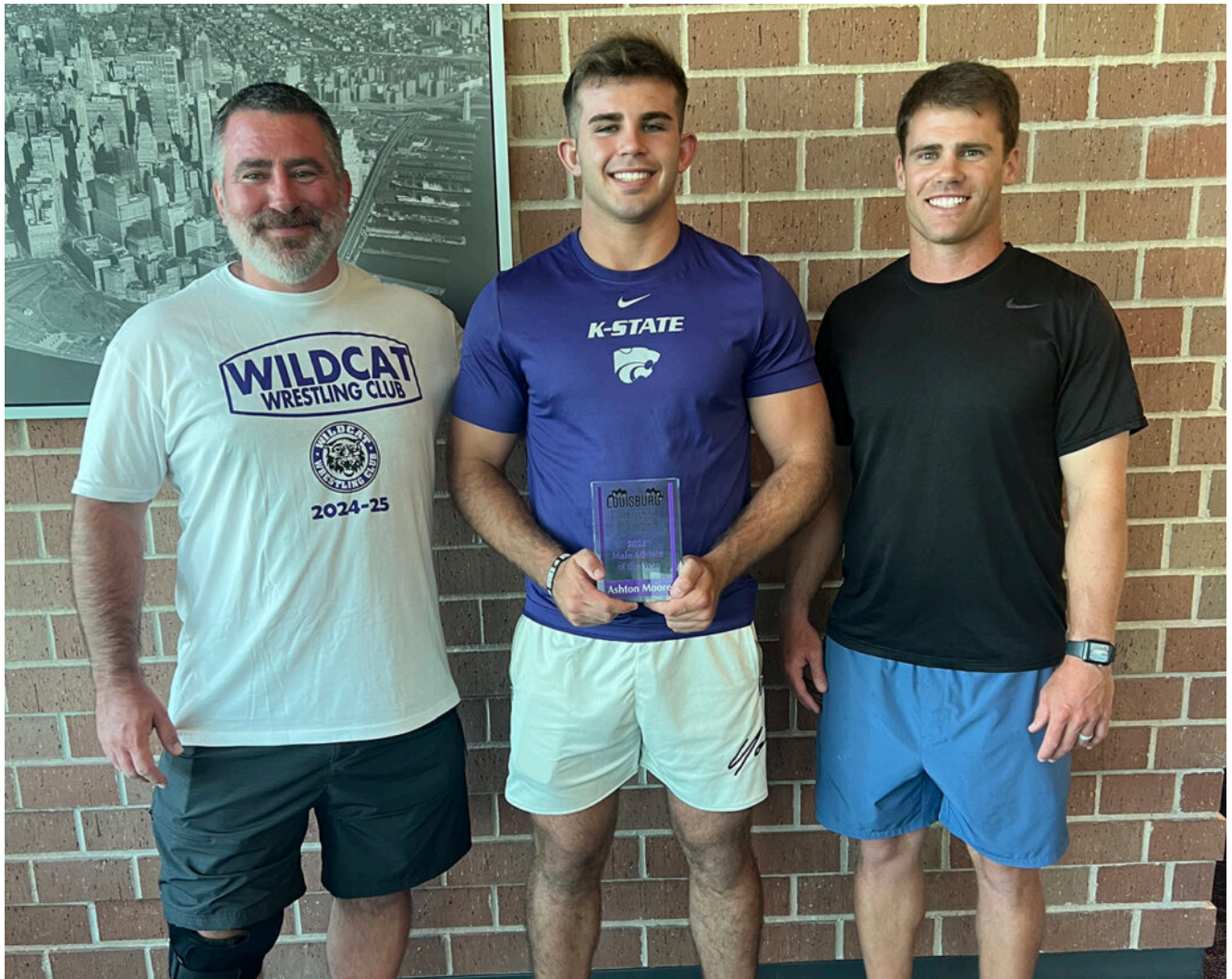
On the football field, Moore was a first-team All-Frontier League selection on both sides of the ball and earned first team All-State honors as the team's starting linebacker.

Moore was a first team all-league running back as he led the way with 611 yards on the ground and 11 touchdowns. He also had 14 catches for 132 yards and another touchdown to amass 750 yards of total offense, despite only playing defense for the first few games of the season.

He was also named a first team all-league linebacker as the K-State commit led the Wildcats with 80 tackles on the season and had 6.5 tackles for loss.

Moore also became the program's all-time leading tackler with 324 stops, surpassing Garrett Griffin's mark of 274 that ended with the 2011 season.

He also received the Bobby Bell Award, which is given to the best small-class defensive lineman/linebacker in the Kansas City metro area, along with being selected to play in the Kansas Shrine Bowl.



Louisburg senior Ashton Moore receives his athlete of the year award along with former wrestling coach Bobby Bovaird and football coach Drew Harding.

“Ashton is very deserving of being named athlete of the year based on how he has impacted both the wrestling and football programs this past year,” Louisburg football coach Drew Harding said, “For the football team, Ashton was the leader of our team and always set a positive example for his fellow teammates to follow. He always carried himself the right way and was always representing himself and Louisburg in a positive light.

“He had just a phenomenal year for the football team. He battled through a hamstring injury all year that very easily could have made him sit out. Ashton finished his career as the all team leading tackler in Louisburg history as well as being a key factor in our offense being successful. He was a

tremendous part of our team's success over the past few years and we are extremely excited to see him continue to represent Louisburg while playing at K-State."

On the wrestling mat, Moore cemented himself as the one of the program's best wrestlers. At 215 pounds, Moore advanced to the state title match and finished as the Class 4A state runner-up.

He finished his season with a 41-3 record and ended his Wildcat career as a 2-time state medalist and a 4-time state qualifier. Moore was a team captain the last two seasons and was selected to participate in the Metro Classic. He also did work in the classroom as a 3-time academic all-state recipient.

However, it was more than just his talent on the mat that made Moore stand out among the rest.

"Ashton's accomplishments on the wrestling mat speak for themselves," former Louisburg wrestling coach Bobby Bovaird said. "He's one of the most decorated wrestlers in school history. But what truly sets him apart is his heart as a leader. He mentored younger and less experienced teammates with compassion and humility, and he made every kid, regardless of sport or ability, feel seen and valued.

"Ashton didn't just lead by performance – he led with integrity, inclusion, and relentless work ethic. That's why he's not just our athlete of the year – he's our standard."

Representing Louisburg has been a privilege for Moore and one that he will remember for a long time.

"I loved every second of playing sports in Louisburg," Moore said. "From a very young age I was at almost every Louisburg sporting event watching my cousins or siblings play. Making it to high school and getting to be the one playing was such an amazing feeling. There's something very special about playing

for Louisburg and being able to feel the support of the whole community. I know there's not many other places like that."

Moore, who was a 3-sports athlete his first three years of high school, decided to just do two his final year to focus on resting and healing up for the start of his college football career.

However, playing multiple sports throughout his high school career was something that led to all his successes.

"Playing multiple sports was very important to me," Moore said. "Football was always my main sport, but I wouldn't have been the player I am without the other sports I've played. I would say out of all the sports I played, wrestling helped me with football the most. Not just physically, but it made me much more mentally tough.

"I think every athlete should play as many sports as they can in high school. It will not only develop you into a better athlete, but also give you so many great memories you'll have forever. There aren't many schools where you have the opportunity to be a part of multiple sports teams like you do in Louisburg. It's a very special thing and you should take full advantage of it."

Previous winners:

2018: Austin Moore

2019: Blue Caplinger

2020: Garrett Rolofson

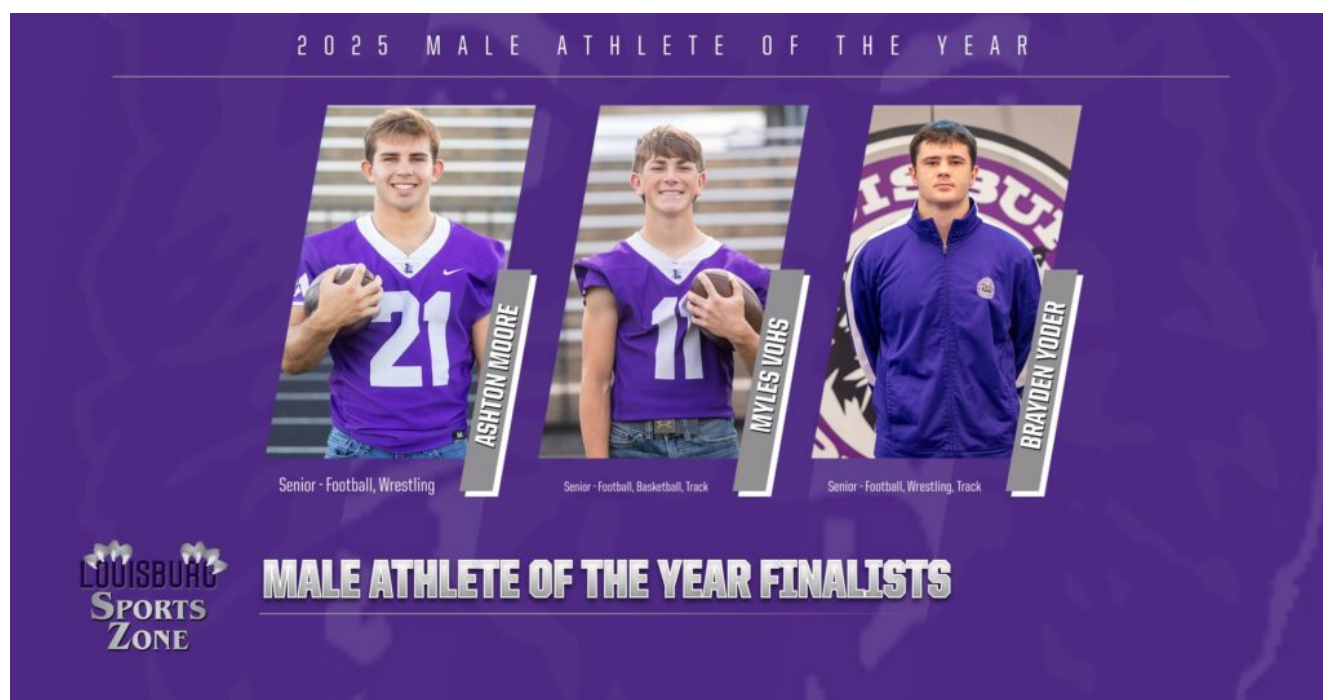
2021: Weston Guetterman

2022: Tom Koontz

2023: Mason Dobbins

2024: Declan Battle

2025 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year Finalists



Louisburg seniors Ashton Moore, Myles Vohs and Brayden Yoder are the finalists for the 2025 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year Award.

For the eighth 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. Then I sent the nominations back to the coaches and they voted for their top 3 male and female athletes. The recipient will be announced in

the coming days.

Below are the three finalists for the Male Athlete of the Year award in alphabetical order by last name.



Ashton Moore – Senior – Football, Wrestling

Ashton was a letterwinner for both the Louisburg football and wrestling teams this past season. On the football field, Moore was a first-team All-Frontier League and All-State selection at running back and linebacker for the Wildcats as he led Louisburg to a 7-2 record.

On defense, he became the Wildcats' all-time leading tackler with 324 stops and he is second in program history with 26.5 tackles for a loss. He also earned the Bobby Bell Award this past season as the Kansas City area's top small class

linebacker/defensive lineman. At running back, he led the Wildcats with 611 yards on the ground to go along with 12 total touchdowns. He was also selected to play in the Kansas Shrine Bowl.

Moore was also the Class 4A state runner-up in wrestling at 215 pounds. Moore is a 4-time state qualifier for the Wildcats and a 2-time state medalist. He finished the 2025 season with a 41-3 record and has 128 career wins for the Wildcat program. Moore was also a team captain for both the football and wrestling teams.



Myles Vohs – Senior – Football,

Basketball, Track

Myles was a 3-time letterwinner this season for the football, basketball and track and field teams. On the football field, Vohs was the Wildcats' favorite target at wide receiver as he had 41 catches for 852 yards and 9 touchdowns. He also averaged more than 20 yards per catch. He was an All-Frontier League first team selection and honorable mention all-state.

On defense, Vohs was an honorable mention all-league selection at cornerback with 20 tackles, 7 pass break-ups and he also had an interception for a touchdown. For his efforts, Vohs was also named to the All-Simone Team and was selected to play in the Greater Kansas City Football Coaches Association all-star game.

On the basketball court, Vohs was the team's starting point guard and was one of the top scorers on the team with nearly nine points a game to go along with a team-best 56 assists and 32 steals.

On the track, Vohs earned three state medals this past season, including two in a pair of relays. He ran on the 4×100 and 4×400-meter relay teams and both earned a sixth place finish at the state meet. Vohs also placed at state in the long jump as he was fifth with a jump of 21-6.5.



Brayden Yoder – Football, Wrestling, Track

Brayden was a 3-time letterwinner for Louisburg this past season in football, wrestling and track and field. In football, Yoder was a first-team All-Frontier League selection on defense and was a fixture on the Wildcat defensive line. He was second on the team with 68 tackles, including 6 for a loss and a team-high 5.5 sacks.

He was also a second team all-league selection on offense as a lineman. Yoder was one of the leaders on the offensive line that amassed nearly 3,000 yards of total offense. He also earned honorable mention all-state honors.

On the wrestling mat, Yoder was a state qualifier for the Wildcats and finished the season with a 35-12 record at 190 pounds. He was also a regional champion and finished one win

shy of a medal during the Class 4A state tournament.

On the track, Yoder was one of the Wildcats' top javelin throwers on the season and his best throw was just under 150 feet.

Crossley excited to lead Louisburg wrestling as head coach



Shawn Crossley was hired as Louisburg's new head wrestling coach during the board of education meeting earlier this month. He takes over from Bobby Bovaird, who spent the last 14 seasons as head coach.

Wrestling has always been a big part of Shawn Crossley's life.

Whether it was as a high school wrestler, or later becoming a coach, the passion for the sport has never left Crossley.

Now, he gets to use that passion to lead the program at his alma mater.

During the Louisburg USD 416 Board of Education meeting earlier this month, Crossley was hired as the new head coach for the Wildcat wrestling program. Crossley takes over from former coach Bobby Bovaird, who resigned his post last month after 14 years in the position.

"I couldn't be prouder and more excited to take over the Louisburg wrestling program," Crossley said. "I am honored and extremely grateful that the administration and the school board entrusted me with this opportunity."

Crossley has served as an assistant coach for the Wildcat program for the last several seasons, so he is already a familiar face in the wrestling room.

It is a transition that he believes will be a smooth one as he tries to continue to build up the program – not just at the high school level.

"The fact that I have been an assistant coach at the middle school and high school levels for quite a few years will be incredibly beneficial for myself, our coaches, our parents, and our wrestlers during the transition," Crossley said. "I've also coached a large number of our wrestlers since they started in the sport through our youth club."

"One of the best decisions Coach Bovaird made, and he and I worked to achieve together, was aligning the wrestling program from top to bottom. Having the opportunity to coach them at the beginning of their wrestling journey, and also being lucky

enough to coach them up until their high school wrestling career ends is a blessing. I think it was imperative to keep this alignment and cohesiveness.”

Crossley has also been very involved in the Wildcat Wrestling Club and helped start the kids program back in 2016. He still helps coach the club, along with the East Kansas Eagles Club.

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"I just love the sport of wrestling and am extremely passionate about this sport," Crossley said. "I'm thankful for what the sport provided me. I'm passionate about providing kids in our community, our state, and our region the opportunity to wrestle at the local and national level. I'm passionate about Louisburg wrestling and giving back to the school and community that has always supported me, my daughter, and my family. Being a wrestling coach is not a seasonal thing for me. I coach this sport year round."

Getting an opportunity to coach his alma mater was something Crossley couldn't pass up. Crossley, who is a 1998 graduate of Louisburg, was a 3-time state qualifier and a member of two Frontier League championship teams.

"As an LHS wrestling alumni, this program is very important to me, and obviously very near and dear to my heart," Crossley said. "It is unbelievably special to come full circle like it has. With that being said, I don't think I ever could have envisioned becoming a head coach while wrestling in high school. I turned down opportunities to wrestle in college after graduation, and at that time felt like I was walking away from a lifelong commitment with a little bit of relief. That's a decision I have regretted for a long time. This sport has a funny way of sucking you back if you give it a chance."

Crossley believes there will be a lot of similarities between his coaching style and with that of Bovaird's. The expectations that have always been within the program will stay the same.

"Coach Bovaird has done an incredible job with this program," Crossley said. "He and I share a lot of the same philosophical ideals when it comes to coaching. We both believe in coaching the student athlete as a whole. He has been a great mentor,

leader, and friend to me throughout the years. I plan to continue the path we've been on, which aligns our program K-12, and has proven to be the successful model to increasing our numbers year in and year out.

"It will be of the utmost importance to continue our academic success in the classroom. What people should expect from our team in years to come is accountability, discipline, mental/physical toughness, aggressiveness, and that we will be the hardest working team in the state."

Moore leads Wildcat wrestling with state runner-up finish



Louisburg senior Ashton Moore wrestles in the 215-pound state championship Saturday in Salina. Moore finished second overall.

SALINA – In the final match of his wrestling career, Ashton Moore found himself competing for a state championship.

It was exactly the place he envisioned himself being, even before the season started. The result, however, was a different story.

Moore's dreams of a state title were dashed Saturday at the Class 4A state wrestling tournament in Salina. Smoky Valley's Parker Gardner ended his run with a 13-5 major decision at 215 pounds.

As disappointing as the loss was for Moore, looking back on his long wrestling career helped ease the pain – as did the second place state medal.

"It was tough taking that loss," Moore said. "I was pretty down about it, but then I had a moment that put things more into perspective for me. After our practice on Friday, Coach (Bobby) Bovaird took us up to the top of the arena to talk about the tournament. Sitting there I remembered being in that same spot as a sixth grader watching the championship round there. At that age I thought those guys were amazing and the toughest people I'd ever seen.

"So after my loss I thought back to that moment being a sixth grader and I was able to realize how far I've come. To see myself at that level now made me very proud I was able to make it to that stage."

Moore, who finished the season with a 41-3 record, had a successful first day on Friday. He opened with a pin of Hiawatha's Gabriel Johnson in the first round.

In the quarterfinals, Moore earned a 4-2 decision over Augusta's Devin Carroll. Then, in the semifinals, Moore faced

off with a familiar Frontier League foe in Ottawa's Seth Ferguson.



Louisburg senior Ashton Moore earned a second place medal Saturday at the Class 4A state tournament in Salina. He ended his season with a 41-3 record.

Moore took care of business as he won an 8-4 decision over Ferguson to advance to the championship against Gardner.

Gardner got on the board early against Moore as he registered three takedowns of the Louisburg senior to build a big lead.

"That championship match was a tough one," Moore said. "I hadn't seen that kid at any other tournaments, so I didn't know a ton about him. He had a quick single leg and you don't see that much at heavier weights like 215.

"Overall I really enjoyed this year. I was lucky enough to have a full season and be able to finish out my season

healthy. It was a very bittersweet moment when that last match was over, but I'm very grateful I got to spend these last four years with such great teammates and coaches."

Despite the loss, it was still a successful season for Moore who recorded his second straight state medal and became the ninth Wildcat to wrestle for a state crown.

"Watching Ashton earn his way to the state championship match was incredible," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "He put in so much work throughout the season and he's been an outstanding leader for our program. Being able to sit in his corner at that level on the biggest stage was really special.

"Finishing as the state runner-up is a huge accomplishment, and I couldn't be prouder of how he competed and represented our program. This is the seventh straight year our program has had a state semifinalist, and Ashton is now one of nine Louisburg wrestlers who have earned the title of state finalist."

The Wildcat program also had six other wrestlers compete at the state tournament, including two on the girls side.

Louisburg senior Brayden Yoder went 1-1 on Friday at 190 pounds after a close 3-2 loss to Mulvane's Cameron Hagerman in the first round, but Yoder bounced back to get a 11-3 major decision over Goodland's Logan Franz.



Louisburg senior Brayden Yoder finished 1-2 at the Class 4A state wrestling tournament in Salina.

In his first match on Saturday, Yoder was eliminated by Abilene's Pierce Casteel. Yoder lost by a 4-1 decision ending his season with a 35-12 record.

Seniors Canaan Clayton (120), Mika McKitrick (132) and sophomore Levi Cotter (106) each finished the tournament with an 0-2 mark.

On the girls side, sophomore Leola Eslinger went 1-1 on the first day at 145 pounds. After she was pinned in her first match by Marysville's Ella Johnson, Eslinger responded with a pin of her own against Prairie View's Kimberlee Eastwood in the first round of consolation to earn the program's first state win.

Eslinger (23-19) saw her season come to a close in her first match Saturday after she was pinned in the second period by Pratt's Miranda Webb.



Louisburg sophomore Leola Eslinger records a takedown Saturday at the state tournament in Salina.

Freshman Brooklyn DeWeese (31-13) went 0-2 at 115 pounds in what was her first state tournament.

"It's always tough when you see kids put in the time, the effort, and the sacrifice, only to come up just short of their goal," Bovaird said. "In that way, wrestling can be a pretty brutal sport. Thursday night after we had our last practice, I talked to the team about the idea of competitive greatness, inspired by the great John Wooden. I told them that they needed to be prepared, to be disciplined, and to be focused.

"This one tournament will not define their season or who they are as competitors; they've accomplished great things already and they've prepared themselves for something much bigger than just a single tournament like state. Each of them grew and improved, and that's what really matters in the long run."

The state tournament ended what was a successful season for

the Wildcat program as they try and build for the future.

“It has definitely been a season of growth for our program, and we’ve made a ton of huge milestones,” Bovaird said. “I’m especially proud of how this group of wrestlers has contributed to the foundation of our program. We had wrestlers pushing themselves to new levels, we had a strong presence at the state tournament, and we continued to make an impact in our sport. While we always aim for more, I’m proud of the work these athletes put in. The young men and women in this program are building something special, and this season was definitely another major step forward for us, for a lot of reasons. We had our first girls state qualifiers with Brooklyn and Leola. We boasted our biggest numbers ever (65 total, with 54 boys and 11 girls). We had our first ever girls dual. We had another winning dual season, and we finished in the top 3 at Frontier League after several seasons toward the bottom.

“The season motto was ‘Carpe Diem’ (Seize the Day), and from day one, that’s what we asked our kids to do. They learned to step up and face adversity, take on opportunities, and be fearless in the face of challenges. In the bigger scheme of things, that’s what it’s all about. Not winning matches, medals, or trophies, but learning how to be champions in life. I’m proud to say that the young athletes who stick it out through our tough sport will emerge much better prepared for being successful beyond the mat.”

Bovaird steps down as head coach of Louisburg wrestling



Louisburg wrestling head coach Bobby Bovaird announced this past season would be his last with the Wildcat program.

After 14 years as the head coach of the Louisburg High School wrestling program, Bobby Bovaird has resigned from his position.

He made the announcement Wednesday (Mar. 5) in a post on social media and it was a decision he didn't make lightly.

"Wrestling has been a major part of my life for 33 years," Bovaird said. "First as a competitor, then as an assistant coach, and then as a head coach. However, coaching three programs—boys' soccer, boys' wrestling, and girls' wrestling—has been a tremendous commitment, and I know when it's time for a change. This choice is about doing what's best for the program, my family, and myself.

"Before this season began, I knew it would be my last, and now that it has come to an end, I feel it's the right time to hand the reins over to someone new."

Bovaird took over the Wildcat wrestling program during the 2011-12 season and has coached multiple state qualifiers and medalists during that span. He also helped start the Wildcat Wrestling Club.

"I am incredibly proud of what we have built together," Bovaird said in his post. "From the Wildcat Wrestling Club to the middle school and high school teams, Louisburg wrestling has never been stronger. This year's season motto, Carpe Diem, was no coincidence—I wanted our wrestlers to embrace the importance of stepping up, seizing opportunities, and tackling challenges head-on. And that's exactly what you have done.

"More than the wins, medals, and trophies, my greatest hope is that the lessons you've learned—the resilience, discipline, and fearless mindset—will stay with you far beyond the mat."

Bovaird, who will stay on as the boys soccer coach next season, went on to thank those who have helped better the Wildcat program.

"To my wrestlers, past and present—you are the heart of this program, and I can't thank you enough for your hard work, dedication, and belief in what we've built," Bovaird said. "The class of 2025 will be the last senior class I coach in wrestling, and I have no doubt they—and the wrestlers who follow—will continue to push this program forward.

"I don't yet know who the next head coach will be, but that doesn't matter. The foundation is strong, the culture is set, and the future of Louisburg wrestling is bright. Keep working, keep believing, and keep competing. While I am stepping away from wrestling, I will continue to teach at LHS and coach boys' soccer. Louisburg is home, and I am grateful for every athlete, family, and supporter who has been part of this journey."

Yoder, Moore win regional titles as Wildcats qualify five for state



Louisburg senior Brayden Yoder pounds his chest after his upset victory over Chanute's Cade Small in the semifinals of the 190-pound bracket Saturday at the Class 4A regional tournament.

ALTAMONT – In a day full of competition, five Louisburg wrestlers saw their season extended for another week.

Ashton Moore and Brayden Yoder earned regional titles Saturday at the Class 4A regional tournament Saturday at Labette County High School, while Mika McKitrick, Canaan Clayton and Levi

Cotter all punched their tickets as well to the state tournament.

In a day full of ups and downs, Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird was happy to see those five move on to the final week of the season.

"Regionals is always a tournament where we experience the highest of highs and the lowest of lows," Bovaird said. "Seeing kids like Mika, Brayden and Levi qualify after having such awesome seasons was awesome to witness. The guys who did make it through to state earned their way, and I'm so excited for how they get to end their season this weekend in Salina."

Maybe no one had a better day than Yoder, who came in as the No. 5 seed in the 190-pound bracket and upset his way to a regional crown.

Yoder (34-10) opened the tournament with a 4-1 decision over Frontenac's Alonzo Burke and then squared off with Chanute's Cade Small, who was also the tournament's No. 1 seed.

The Louisburg senior jumped out to an early 3-point lead on a takedown in the semifinals and held off Small for a 4-2 decision to earn his first-ever state berth. It was also a big win for Yoder in the rankings as Small was No. 4 in the state.



Brayden Yoder gets a takedown of Paola's Maxwell Worden in the finals of the 190-pound bracket.

"Qualifying for state was my main goal going into the regional tournament," Yoder said. "I had gotten so close in years past so to be able to finally reach that milestone, especially in such a big way, was really special."

That one win wasn't enough for Yoder, however. He squared off with Paola's Maxwell Worden for the regional championship. Worden knocked off Yoder in the Frontier League title match two weeks earlier, but Yoder got the best of him this time in a 13-6 decision to win his first regional title.

It was a special moment, not only for Yoder, but also for his teammates, including Moore.

"Watching Brayden win his own regional title was probably my favorite part of the whole tournament," Moore said. "We've

been practice partners since third grade, so me and Brayden have gotten to be really close. Everyday I see the hard work and dedication he put into it. So, to see all that pay off at the perfect time was awesome.”

Last season, both Moore and Yoder were in opposite weight classes. Moore was 190 and Yoder was forced to wrestle at 215, while giving up a good amount of weight. The two have flipped this season and the change has been a perfect fit for the both of them.

“I think wrestling 215 last year really just taught me how to deal with adversity,” Yoder said. “Giving up the amount of weight that I did was definitely a challenge. Still, I prided myself on working hard despite my struggles, so to finally see my efforts pay off is a really gratifying feeling.”

As for Moore, he came into Saturday’s tournament as the No. 1 seed at 215 pounds and the favorite to win it. The Louisburg senior, and No. 2 ranked wrestler in the state handled his business with a 4-0 record and three pins.



Louisburg senior Ashton Moore picks up an opponent for a takedown Saturday at the 4A regional tournament at Labette County.

Moore (38-2) opened the tournament with a pin of Iola's Alston Nelson and did the same in the quarterfinals against Chanute's Karter Naff. He got a test in the semifinals against Columbus' Kash Smith.

It was a close match into the third period, but Moore was able to get the pin late in the match to move onto the finals. It was there where he met Prairie View's Parker Schwarz for the third time this season and Moore earned the 4-1 decision for the regional title.

"I was super grateful to win my first regional championship," Moore said. "Being at different regionals throughout high school, it's always been a big deal to me watching the guys in

the championship compete, so to be the one there winning it this year was a great feeling. Overall I feel like I wrestled solid on Saturday. I got to wrestle several guys I haven't seen before and I think that was a great opportunity to feel out some of the other competition."

McKitrick (32-15), who wrestled at 132 pounds, qualified for his first state tournament and overcame some early adversity to do it. The Louisburg senior was pinned in his first round match after taking an early lead.



Louisburg's Mika McKitrick celebrates after qualifying for state at 132 pounds.

He worked his way through the back side of the bracket as he rattled off four consecutive wins, including a pin of Osawatomie's Dayne Odgen in his blood round match. He then earned a technical fall over Girard's Gage Short in his third place match to avenge his lone loss of the day.

As for Clayton (24-15), he earned a second straight trip to

the state tourney. At 120 pounds, he went 2-2 on the day, but won his consolation semifinals match with a 7-2 decision over Parsons' Mario Zacarias to punch his ticket.

In the third place match, Clayton battled Osawatomie's Caden Peterson, but was pinned.



Louisburg senior Canaan Clayton picks up the leg of an opponent Saturday at 120 pounds.

Cotter was the lone underclassman to qualify for state as he took fourth at 106 pounds. Cotter (34-12) advanced to the semifinals, where he lost by pin to Paola's Sawyer Blue.

In his blood round match, Cotter earned a second period pin of Coffeyville's Jarvis Hall to qualify for state. In the third place match, he lost a 15-8 decision to Prairie View's Ryan Nickell.

"Levi has been a strong wrestler for us over the last couple seasons, and I'm so happy that he made it to state," Bovaird

said. "He's the kind of wrestler who got a later start in the sport, but he's making huge strides to catch up with the kids who've been wrestling a long time. He's so strong on his feet, and that nearly got him into the finals. Canaan has been such a great addition to the program. I've coached him since he started the sport with our club years ago, and to see him earn his way to become a 2-time state qualifier is an awesome thing.

"Mika had a heartbreaking loss in the quarterfinals to a Girard kid he'd beaten earlier in the season. That made his road to state a little more difficult, but along the way he got a revenge win against an Osawatomie wrestler and then a rematch in the consolation finals against the Girard kid. This time, he put aside all doubt with another revenge win."



Louisburg sophomore Levi Cotter puts an opponent on his back Saturday at 106 pounds.

Even with all the good news, several Wildcats saw their

seasons come to a close. Senior Jay McCaskill, junior Vance Hahn and freshman Parker Showalter all made it to the blood round, but finished one win short of state.

It was especially tough for McCaskill, who was trying to qualify for his third straight state tourney, but ended his Wildcat career in a tough 165-pound bracket.

“Jay got hurt with a serious ankle sprain in the league finals,” Bovaird said. “We were worried that it might have been something worse, but thankfully we got good news from his doctor. He worked his way back to as strong a place as he could get over the last two weeks, but that sprain was still something nagging at him.

“Jay has had a very successful career with the program – a 100-match winner, having two 30-win seasons, and a 2-time state qualifier. The other two years he didn’t qualify, he was in the blood round and so close. He’s been a workhorse for us, and a silent leader. Talk about a heartbreaking end to his career. I feel horrible for him, but I hope he knows that we are so proud and he is going to have a whole lot more success in his life beyond the mat.”

Now those five Wildcats will prepare for the state tournament this week that begins at 9 a.m. Friday morning in Salina. The double elimination tournament runs through Saturday.

“This tournament is always one of the most exciting events of the season, and I’m looking forward to seeing our wrestlers leave it all on the mat,” Bovaird said. “Every year, I remind myself to take in these moments and appreciate the hard work and dedication that goes into getting here. It’s a special experience, and this one, in particular, feels even more meaningful.”

DeWeese, Eslinger punch tickets to state tournament



Louisburg freshman Brooklyn DeWeese works for a pin during the Class 4A East Regional tournament Friday in Paola. DeWeese and Leola Eslinger became the first Wildcat girls to qualify for state.

PAOLA – For the first time in school history, the Louisburg girls wrestling program will have a representative at the state tournament – well, make that two.

Freshman Brooklyn DeWeese and sophomore Leola Eslinger punched their tickets to state Saturday at the Class 4A East Regional tournament at Paola High School as the top eight in each weight class earned a spot at the state tournament in Salina

on Feb. 28

It was a moment many in the Wildcat program won't soon forget.

"It was such an incredible moment – not just for Leola and Brooklyn, but also for the LHS wrestling program," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "Having our first state qualifiers for the girls wrestling program is such a huge milestone, but it's an even bigger testament to all the hard work they've put in to the sport.

"Watching them reach this milestone in our program's history was very emotional, not just for me, but for all the coaches – Shawn Crossley, Heather Eslinger, and Andy Wright. All three of them have had a hand in these girls' growth before they ever got to high school. Leola and Brooklyn are raising the bar for our future girls wrestlers, and I have no doubt that they're not even close to being finished with what they intend to accomplish in their careers.

DeWeese was the first Wildcat to qualify after going 1-1 on the first day of action on Friday at 115 pounds. In her blood round match Saturday, DeWeese pinned Holton's Khloe Black in the second period to secure her spot.

In the battle to reach the fifth place match, DeWeese lost by pin to Wellsville's Brinlee Hartman. In the seventh place match, DeWeese then lost a tough 1-0 decision to Frontenac's Abby Albright to finish in eighth overall.

As for Eslinger, she battled her way through the 145 pound bracket. After losing her first match of the day Friday, she bounced back to end her day with a pin of Labette County's Katy Tyler to advance to the blood round Saturday.

In that match, Eslinger upset No. 4 seed Adalize Arevalo from Bishop Ward with a 12-4 major decision. After losing by pin to Paola's Shaelynn Smail, in the next consolation match, Eslinger ended her tournament with a win in a 11-6 decision

over No. 3 seed Brooklyn Collingsworth of Columbus to take seventh overall.

“Both girls wrestled their hearts out,” Bovaird said. “I can’t even begin to describe how much heart and determination they showed. Brooklyn (DeWeese) was aggressive and stayed composed in tough matches, really showcasing her growth this season as a freshman. Leola fought through some challenging moments and never backed down, showing resilience and grit. Both of them stepped up when it mattered most, and they absolutely earned their spots at state.”



Louisburg sophomore Leola Eslinger pulls her opponent to the mat Friday in Paola. Eslinger finished 7th at the Class 4A East Regional and qualified for state.

The Wildcats nearly had two others qualify for state as well. Freshman Brianna Caraway (130 pounds) and sophomore Maliya Collins (140) both lost their blood round matches.

Caraway went 1-1 on Friday, but in her blood round match Saturday, fell to Holton's Jacey Willard as she lost by pin. Collins also went 1-1 on Friday, but was pinned in her blood round match by Fort Scott's Kynlee Hampton.

"Brianna and Maliya had outstanding seasons," Bovaird said. "When you think about it, they're both relatively new to the high school level. Brianna is a freshman with a couple years experience at the youth level and Maliya is a sophomore with this being her first year on the mat. They both made huge strides with their technique, confidence, and mat awareness.

"Coming that close to state – wrestling in the "blood round" – is a tough accomplishment, but it also speaks to how competitive they have been all season long. They put in the work, battled hard every match, and showed that they're right there with the best. I have no doubt they'll use this as motivation for next season."



Louisburg sophomore Maliya Collins works for a pin Friday during her regional match in Paola.

It also marked the end for Wildcat wrestlers Allison Martin and Nora Smith, who also saw their season come to a close.

"All of our girls showed an incredible amount of growth over the season," Bovaird said. "Allison Martin finished her second season with a 15-16 record for us, and Nora Smith showed more courage and toughness than nearly anyone else on the team with her commitment. Our six girls who competed in the regional tournament couldn't have done any better representing our program, and that's a huge testament to their character, their dedication, and their parents' guidance along the way. Girls wrestling in Louisburg has been a long time coming, and I think with these girls' seasons, you can say it's finally landed."

Week 9 Athlete of the Week: Leola Eslinger



Here is the Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Week for week nine of the winter sports season, sponsored by Edward Jones-Craig Holtzen.

LEOLA ESLINGER, SOPHOMORE, WRESTLING

Louisburg sophomore Leola Eslinger made history Saturday at the Class 4A East Regional Tournament at Paola High School. Eslinger joined freshman Brooklyn DeWeese as they became the first Wildcat girls to qualify for the state tournament. At 145 pounds, Eslinger went 3-2 on the day and finished seventh

overall as the top eight in each weight class qualify.

Eslinger defeated Bishop Ward's Adalize Arevalo, the No. 4 seed, in the blood round by major decision. She earned a convincing 11-6 victory in the seventh-place match against No. 3 seed Brooklyn Collingsworth of Columbus. Both Eslinger and DeWeese will represent Louisburg at the state tournament on Feb. 28 in Salina.

The athlete of the week award is announced every Wednesday morning during the winter season and the winner is selected by Louisburg Sports Zone with the help of nominations from coaches.

Previous winners:

Week 1: Gavin Lohse

Week 2: Colin Brown

Week 3: Jay McCaskill

Week 4: Brayden Yoder

Week 5: Andrew Jamison

Week 6: Ashlyn Kuhlman

Week 7: Ashton Moore

Week 8: Brooklyn DeWeese

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Louisburg girls wrestling has historic day at league meet



Louisburg freshman Brooklyn DeWeese finished second overall Saturday at the Frontier League Invitational in Ottawa.

OTTAWA – It was an historic outing for the Louisburg girls wrestling team Saturday at the Frontier League Invitational.

In the program's short existence, the Wildcats recorded three medalists for the first time in school history and had their first wrestler make the league finals. It was a strong start to their postseason journey at Ottawa High School for a team that consists of only freshmen and sophomores.

"It was an emotional day with a lot of highs and lows," coach Heather Eslinger said. "First of all it was rough having my girls split into two gyms and therefore I wasn't able to watch all of their matches. Thank goodness (coaches) Bobby (Bovaird) and Shawn (Crossley) are so great.

"I was thrilled with our showing at league from our three girls who placed. It's great to see their confidence on the mat."

Freshman Brooklyn DeWeese had a finish to remember as she became the first Wildcat to earn a spot in the league finals and did so at 115 pounds.

DeWeese (29-8) advanced to the semifinals where she pinned Bonner Springs' Kyle Enriquez in the second period. In the finals, DeWeese faced off with the No. 3 ranked wrestler in the state – Tonganoxie's Stella Bradley – and lost by pin the second period.



Louisburg freshman Brianna Caraway took third at 130 pounds Saturday at the league meet in Ottawa.

Another freshman, Brianna Caraway, also found her way to the medal stand as she put together a 3-1 day and finished third at 130 pounds.

Caraway (14-6) opened with a pin of Ottawa's Kylea Brewing, but lost in the semifinals when she was pinned by Spring Hill's Kendall Anderson.

On the back side of the bracket, Caraway pinned Baldwin's Keziah Moses in the consolation semifinals and then pinned Paola's Kylie Parke in the third place match.

Sophomore Maliya Collins earned her first league medal as she took fourth at 140 pounds. She finished the day with a 2-2 record.

Collins (22-13) earned a spot in the third place match with an overtime victory over Spring Hill's Morgan Hinton in the consolation semifinals. In that third place match, Collins fell by pin to Paola's Layla Anthony.



Louisburg sophomore Maliya Collins earned a fourth place medal Saturday at the league meet in Ottawa.

"Brooklyn is making quite a mark her freshman year and I'm excited to see what regionals holds for her," Eslinger said. "Brianna has had a rough start to the season missing a lot of practices and I'm happy that she didn't let that hold her back at league."

Louisburg also suffered some injuries in the tournament as freshman Bella Pickman, Emma Duckworth and Allison Martin all had to exit the tournament early. Pickman and Duckworth saw their seasons come to a close.

Martin ended up finishing sixth at 135 pounds, while sophomore Leola Eslinger was fifth at 145 pounds.

“We had a lot of obstacles at league,” coach Eslinger said. “We had some injuries that ended the season for Emma and Bella. Emma suffered a concussion from an illegal mat return and Bella had a shoulder injury aggravated at league and was decided it was best to end her season rather than injure herself in a way that takes her out next season.

“Allison and Leola both struggled with some issues at league and didn’t have the showing I had hoped for, however I’m confident this week before regionals will be a time for rest and rejuvenation.”

This postseason does ramp up for the Wildcats on Friday as they take part in the 2-day regional tournament at Paola High School. Action begins at 1 p.m. and will continue into Saturday.

**Wildcats finish third at
Frontier League tourney;
medal 9 overall**



Louisburg senior Ashton Moore won the 215-pound Frontier League title Saturday in Ottawa.

OTTAWA – The Louisburg boys wrestling team showed why it is one of the top teams in the Frontier League last Saturday in Ottawa.

The Wildcats finished third out of eight teams at the Frontier League Invitational with 163 points. Paola won the league title with 232 points and Tonganoxie was second with 188.5.

Louisburg also had nine league medalists and had five wrestlers in the finals. Senior Ashton Moore won an individual league crown at 215 pounds as the Wildcats put together one of their better league performances in recent memory.

“The league continues to be tough-as-nails, and with teams like Tonganoxie, Paola and Spring Hill, it’s going continue to be tough every year,” Bovaird said. “There was a while when we were really pushing Tonganoxie for second place. Our finals round didn’t quite work out how we wanted to it be, but I know

we had them nervous.

“There were some years when we had the dual tournament for league, and we ended up with lots of champs and runners-up. Since we moved back to the individual tournament format, this is the most finalists we’ve had since 1998. Putting that many in the finals and bringing home so many medals feels pretty good. This is the best we’ve done in the last eight years, which was the last year we had a dual tournament format.”

Moore (34-2) won his fifth tournament title in a month as he took care of business in the 215-pound bracket. The Louisburg senior, and the No. 2 wrestler in Class 4A, won all three of his matches.

He opened with a pin of Tonganoxie’s Jaxon Dominic, and in the semifinals, he pinned Spring Hill’s Logan Alexander in the third period. In the finals, Moore won by medical forfeit over Ottawa’s Seth Ferguson.

Sophomore Levi Cotter (106 pounds), senior Mika McKitrick (132), senior Jay McCaskill (165), junior Vance Hahn (175) and senior Brayden Yoder also made the league finals, but each finished second.

Cotter (32-10) finished with a 2-1 record including a pair of pins, but squared off with Paola’s Sawyer Blue, who is ranked No. 6 in the state and lost by a 16-5 major decision.



Louisburg junior Vance Hahn finished second at 175 pounds Saturday at the Frontier League Invitational.

McKitrick (29-15) was 1-1 on the day, including a pin of Spring Hill's Braden Cannally in the semis, but was pinned by Tonganoxie's Silas McCloy in the finals.

McCaskill (27-8) opened the day with a pair of dominant performances with two wins by technical fall and set up match with Baldwin's Max Harvey in the finals. The Louisburg senior fell 14-3 to take second overall.

As for Hahn (26-16), he also opened the tournament with a tech fall win and then won a 6-4 decision over Paola's Elijah Younger in the semis. Hahn would get pinned in the finals by Baldwin's Keldyn Cox.

Yoder (31-10) received a bye in the quarterfinals, but got a pin of Baldwin's Hank Beard in the semis. He squared off with Paola's Maxwell Worden in the finals, but was pinned in the third period.

Louisburg senior Canaan Clayton medaled third for the Wildcats at 120 pounds, while sophomore Spencer Mattison (144) and senior Miles Meek (285) finished fourth overall.

Clayton (23-13) finished the day 1-2, but won his final match with a pin over Ottawa's Mason Ingram to earn the third place medal.

Mattison (15-22) ended with a 2-2 day that included a pair of pins. He fell to Spring Hill's Chase Wilson in the third place match by a 13-2 major decision.

Meek (16-22) went 1-3 in the heavyweight division, including a pin of Ottawa's Will McCombs in his first match of the day.



Louisburg sophomore Spencer Mattison medaled fourth at 144 pounds Saturday at the Frontier League Invitational.

"It seems like we've struggled to be at full strength as a team for the league tournament the last few years," Bovaird said. "We had 2-3 guys out last year with injuries and

illness, and the previous years we just couldn't rise up and compete how I wanted us to do.

"This year, it was a different story. Guys like Levi, Mika and Vance making the finals was a great step. Then we had Jay, Brayden and Ashton perform pretty well, too, making the finals in their weights. On the back side of the brackets, Canaan, Spencer, and Miles all stepped up their game."

Louisburg will now prepare for its quest to earn a state tournament bid. The Wildcats have this week off before traveling to Labette County on Feb. 22 for the Class 4A regional tournament.

The top four finishers in each weight class will secure a spot at state.

"Getting some time off will be nice," Bovaird said. "The guys need to heal up and recover a little, and there are lots of little things we need to work on refining. Jay suffered a nasty sprain in his lower leg, but he should be good to go by regionals. Recovery time is always a nice thing – we just need to make sure we're not getting complacent with how we've been doing. If we go into regionals with the right mindset, we can really achieve some phenomenal things as a team."