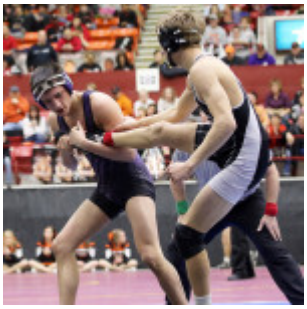
Wildcats come up short of medals



Louisburg freshman Ryan Adams battles Frontenac's Brandon Miekus during a 138-pound match Saturday at the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in Salina. Adams went 2-2 on the day and finished a win short of a medal.

SALINA – As a freshman, Ryan Adams set a pretty high goal for himself.

Adams wanted to be a four-time state medalist and eventually a state champion for the Wildcats. One of those dreams is still alive, while the other was dashed Saturday during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships.

The Louisburg 138-pounder came up one win short of a medal when he was pinned by Holton's Tyler Price in the first period of the consolation quarterfinals. Adams finished the tournament at 2-2.

"We talked about what it means that he fell short of one of his goals," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "I told him that falling short of one goal should make him all that much more motivated to pursue the other goals. Now that he can't be a 4-time placer, he's got more motivation to pursue his goal of being a state champion. He's a talented kid."

Adams wasn’t the only Wildcat to end his season with a loss. Anders Vance (285), Mason Koechner (220), Brenton Wrigley (195) and Nathan Keegan (113) also came up short of a state medal at the Salina Bicentennial Center.

All four wrestlers ended their state runs with a 1-2 record, and even though they didn’t reach the medal stand, winning a state tournament match meant something to them and their coach.

“It was such an exciting weekend,” Bovaird said. “I’m so proud of the fact that not only did five wrestlers make it to state, but all five went down there to compete for a medal. They all gave 100 percent in their matches. Each guy won at least one match. Technically, that put each of them in the top-12 of their weight classes. However, I had a sinking feeling in my stomach after it was all over.

“The last two years, I’d felt so low after not qualifying anyone for state. That was a solid blow to my ego as a coach. This year, I was pretty happy to take five kids to state, and I was so proud that they all won at least one match at state. When it was done, it hit me that this was the first time as a competitor or coach that I’d been at the state tournament and left without a state placer. I didn’t like that feeling, and I’m disappointed. The good thing is that I have reason to be disappointed. The boys are such great kids to be around, and they’re very talented and hard-working. I’m not disappointed in them – I’m disappointed for them. I know they can do great things, and I just wanted the best for them. Next season will be something different. I love how these guys are feeling motivated already, and I’m feeling that motivation, too.”

Adams opened his state tournament run Friday against Wamego’s Dalton Carley, an eventual state medalist. Carley, who beat Adams earlier in the year, had a little more difficult time as he eventually beat Adams by a 4-2 decision.

Later on in the day, Adams beat Tonganoxie’s Garrett Martin by an 8-0 major decision after losing to Martin earlier in the year. He then followed it up with another revenge win Saturday when he pinned Frontenac’s Brandon Miekus, who he lost two in the final seconds of the regional semifinals.

Adams finished the year with a 37-12 record, many of which came thanks to wrestlers who made it far in the state tournament.

“When we were watching the 138-pound state semifinals, we figured out that with the four wrestlers on the mat, they accounted for 8 of his 12 losses, including three to Baldwin’s Thomas Lisher, who was the eventual state champion,” Bovaird said. “Even though Ryan fell short of his goal, he definitely gave it everything he had. With all the time he dedicates to wrestling in the offseason, he’s definitely on the right track to be our next state champion, and because he’s a great team member, I expect his passion to rub off on his teammates.”



Louisburg heavyweight Anders Vance works for position on Towanda-Circle's Austin King on Saturday at the state tournament in Salina. Vance finished his season with a 27-9 record

The tournament got off to a rough and controversial start for Vance, who lost his opening round match to Ulysses' Austin Ochoa in a 7-6 decision in overtime. The match was tied at 6-all but Vance had Ochoa in a headlock, but it slipped and was called for an illegal hold, giving Ochoa a point and the match.

Vance rebounded to pin Jefferson West's Michael Majors in the first period Friday before falling to Towanda Circle's Austin King by decision in his first match Saturday.

"I wasn't happy with how the officials called his first match Friday, but then again I've always told the team to do everything they can to keep the match result out of the hands

of the officials," Bovaird said. "Anders had a much better second match, but in his third, I think that he just hit an obstacle he couldn't overcome. His opponent, a kid from Circle, had been a state qualifier the year before, and I think that experience gave him an advantage over Anders. Next year, however, Anders is going to be able to take his experience from this season, plus his confidence, and use it to push him through any obstacle in the way as he tries to win state."



Louisburg senior Brenton Wrigley ties to hold down Rock Creek's Colton Hill on Saturday in Salina. Wrigley lost the match by a 4-2 decision and ended his Wildcat career with a 35-9 record.

Wrigley, a senior, was able to get his first ever state victory when he opened the tournament Friday with a 7-3 victory in overtime over Hugoton's Noel Camacho. In the

quarterfinals, Wrigley fell in a close 7-4 decision to Chapman's Jacob Stoneberger, before falling again in the consolation round Saturday by a 4-2 decision to Rock Creek's Colton Hill.

The loss ended his season and Wildcat career with a 35-9 record.

"It was definitely bittersweet," Bovaird said. "He's been such a strong leader for the team. His sophomore and junior seasons, he had some setbacks with minor injuries and he couldn't build up the confidence that he should have had. This year, after having a great week at the Nebraska Outdoor Challenge Camp and a solid football season, he walked onto the mat with all sorts of confidence. He won three tournaments (Tonganoxie, Topeka, and League), had 35 wins, and beat state-ranked kids throughout the season. I'm very proud of his growth, although I wish the season had ended differently."



Louisburg's Nathan Keegan stops at shot from Chanute's Gage Leedy during a 113-pound match Saturday at the state

tournament in Salina. Keegan ended his season with a 30-19 record

Keegan and Koechner both sophomores, also picked up their first state victories. Both wrestlers lost their first match, before rebounding to win their next.

Keegan, after losing to Tonganoxie Patterson Starcher in overtime Friday, came back with a pin of Clearwater's Jake Thomas in the consolation round. He was eventually pinned by Chanute's Gage Leedy in the third round of his next match.



Sophomore Mason Koechner battles Smoky Valley's Jarod DeMott Saturday in Salina. Koechner was 1-2 at the state tournament at 220 pounds and finished the year with a team-high 39 wins.

As for Koechner, he fell to Colby's Austin Hart, the eventual

state champion in the first round. He responded with a pin of Holton’s Nathan Shields in his next match Friday.

On Saturday, however, Koechner’s season came to an end when he fell 10-4 to fourth-place finisher Jarod DeMott from Smoky Valley.

“We made the trip to state, and simply qualifying wasn’t good enough for the guys who went,” Bovaird said. “They wanted to win matches and bring home medals. Next year, we’re not just gunning to send people to state; we’re gunning to bring home medals and to get Louisburg to the top of Kansas Class 4A.”