

Wildcats qualify 11 for state track



Louisburg's Ben Hupp hands the baton off to teammate Michael Minster in the 4×800-meter relay Thursday during the Class 4A regional track meet at Prairie View High School. The 4×800 relay finished third and qualified for state.

LA CYGNE – Louisburg boys track and field coach Gary Griffin isn't psychic, but he did have a good feeling about his team the day before the regional meet.

"I told them at practice that we are taking 11 guys to state," Griffin said.

It was kind of a bold statement considering how there is so much unknown at any track meet, but during the Class 4A regional Thursday at Prairie View High School, his vision became a reality.

Louisburg qualified 11 athletes for the state meet and scored points in every event the Wildcats competed. Those athletes will travel to Wichita on Friday for the Kansas State Track and Field Championships at Wichita State University.

The Wildcats finished third in the team standings with 71 points. Paola won the team title with 92 points and Girard was a close second with 90.

Seniors Sean Dennis and Connor McMullen headlined the Louisburg qualifiers as both will be busy at the state meet this week. Dennis qualified in four events and McMullen qualified in three.

Dennis earned state berths in the 110-meter hurdles, 100-meter dash, 200 dash and was the anchor on the 4×100-meter relay. Dennis joined Mason Wilde, Kyle Green and Ben Minster to win the regional title in the 4×100 in 44.31 seconds.

“I didn’t think gold was in our view, but we really gave it our all,” Dennis said. “I am just so happy that I can help all those guys go out to state.”

By the time the meet was over, Dennis was spent. He ran preliminaries in three events and then ran finals in four events – all in a span of about three hours.

“It is awesome,” Dennis said. “It was my goal since the beginning of the season to qualify in four events and now that I have done that all that is left is to go and place.

“I did decent in the hurdles, and like always I could have done better, but the important thing is to qualify and now I have another chance out at state.”



Jarod Woodward releases a

**throw in the shot put
Thursday. Woodward
finished with a personal
record toss of over 48
feet to take third and
qualify for state.**

Dennis finished second in the 110-meter hurdles in 15.24 seconds. He later took fourth in the 100 dash in 11.39 seconds and fourth in the 200 dash in 23 seconds.

"It was a tough day for Sean because he didn't have a whole lot of recovery time, so his times weren't great but the whole goal is to qualify and run fast at state," Griffin said. "Your body isn't used to it and it is taxing. I was happy he qualified in the 100 because that was literally five minutes after he ran the hurdles. He will run faster out at state and I think he has a chance to win two or three medals."

McMullen had a good day in the throws for the Wildcats that included a regional title in the discus. Along with that, he also qualified for state in the javelin and the shot put.

McMullen won the discus with a throw of 169 feet, 3 inches to win the event by more than 25 feet and is considered one the favorites to capture the state crown in the event. The other two events were a little closer.

In the javelin, McMullen recorded a personal best throw in his first attempt with a mark of 159-01 and finished third. Not too bad for competing in the event for just the second time this year.

"I looked at the regional a couple weeks ago and the coaches and I didn't see a lot of strong throws so I thought I would give it a try and qualify for state," McMullen said. "I got two practices in before league and one practice before regionals and I was able to get third in both."

McMullen was on the outside looking in for a state berth in the shot put as he was in fifth-place going into his final throw. That last throw of 47-01 was good enough to get him into state with a fourth-place finish.

"I wouldn't be surprised if he goes out and wins a medal in the javelin," Griffin said of state. "The discus is his thing and I know he is looking forward to winning a state championship, but he is going to have to get off a good one to win it. Everyone has been gaining on him all year. He is a competitor and he has been there before."

Junior Jarod Woodward will join McMullen at state in the shot put as he picked the perfect time to record a personal best throw. Woodward recorded a toss of 48-5.75 on his second throw to finish third.

"It felt pretty good," Woodward said. "I was sick with a migraine so I missed practice but I got about 17 hours of sleep so I was definitely pretty rested. Coach (Greg) Darrington helped me throughout the week on technique that helped me throw the personal record and hopefully 50 (feet) during state."

Along with the 4×100 relay, the Wildcats were also able to qualify its 4×400 and 4×800 relays as well. The 4×400 team of Wilde, Minster, Green and Dawson Christy ran a time of 3 minutes and 35 seconds to finish fourth.

It also a new personal record as they beat their previous time by five seconds. Wilde, who is also on the 4×100 team, will make his fourth trip to state.



Mason Wilde (right) hands the baton to Kyle Green during the 4×100 relay Thursday. The Wildcat team won the regional title in 44.3 seconds.

“State is awesome,” Wilde said. “I have been lucky enough to go every year, so senior year is just like every year. All the hard work has finally paid off and it is a good feeling.”

Christy is also making a repeat trip to state and will do so with the 4×800 relay along with the 4×400. Christy, along with Michael Minster, Ben Hupp and Wyatt Reece came in third in 9:02.80.

“It does feel good,” Christy said. “It has been awhile since we had a good 4×800 team so it is great to be able to qualify in that. It won’t be my first time out at state, but for a lot of the other kids it will and hopefully I can be a leader for them.”

Junior Parker Cates will be making his second trip to the state meet in the pole vault as he finished fourth overall after he cleared 11-0. He was tied with Labette County at 11-0, but Cates won the tiebreaker to advance after he cleared 11 feet on his first attempt.

The Class 4A portion of the state meet will begin at 2 p.m. on

Friday and will continue into Saturday.