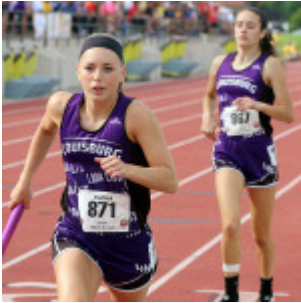


Lady Cats gain experience at state meet



Louisburg senior Ashley Ruder makes the turn around the track after getting the baton from teammate Kaitlyn Gaza in the preliminaries of the 4×400-meter relay Friday in Wichita.

WICHITA – There were no trips to the medal stand for the Louisburg girls track and field team but that didn't mean the Lady Cats didn't gain anything from their experience at the Kansas State Track and Field Championships.

Louisburg competed in three events during the meet on Friday and Saturday at Wichita State University.

Isabelle Holtzen had the highest finish of the three as the Louisburg freshman finished 12th overall in the pole vault after she cleared 8 feet, 6 inches. It wasn't the best of conditions either as Saturday morning was blustery and cold inside Cessna Stadium.

“I think with the conditions and everything I thought Isabelle did very well,” Louisburg coach Greg Darrington said. “She has had a great season and I couldn't be prouder of her. I think state was a great experience for her and there are only better things to come.”

Holtzen has steadily improved over the last month in the event as she has set several personal records. She cleared 9-0 at regionals to finish second and qualify for state after starting the season clearing 7 feet.



Louisburg freshman Isabelle Holtzen clears the bar at 8 feet, 6 inches in the pole vault Saturday at the Class 4A portion of the state meet in Wichita. Holtzen finished 12th overall.

“She is a tremendous competitor and hard worker and that is why she has had so much success this year,” Darrington said of Holtzen. “She works hard in practice and she is very coachable. If she keeps that up she is going to be really good.”

Freshman Bailey Belcher took to the track on Friday for the preliminaries of the 200-meter dash and competed against the state’s best sprinters. Belcher came in 13th in 26.87 seconds.

Belcher had a strong season for the Lady Cats as she scored several points in the sprints all season. She had her best performance in the 200 at regionals when she broke the school record in the preliminaries in 26.17 seconds.

“The thing that impressed me the most about Bailey is how much of a competitor she is and it showed by how disappointed she was that she didn’t run her best time,” Darrington said. “I think that says a lot about Bailey. She wanted to go out to state and compete against herself and hopefully get a PR (personal record). She was disappointed she didn’t do that, but she is a great kid and had a good season.”

Also on Friday, the 4×400-meter relay of Kaitlyn Gaza, Ashley Ruder, Makenzie Kallevig and Megan Lemke competed in the preliminaries of the event.

The Lady Cat team ran a time of 4 minutes and 21 seconds to finish 15th overall against some of the state’s best. The four runners came off a regional meet where they ran a personal best 4:17, but still had a good season according to Darrington.

“At state it is always difficult if you are just doing one event because there is a lot of standing around and waiting, so it might have been a little tough on them, but I thought they ran ok,” Darrington said. “Anytime you get to state it has been a good year and it was a great experience for them.”