

McMullen wins state title in discus



Louisburg High School senior Connor McMullen lets the discus fly on his final attempt of the Class 4A discus competition Saturday at Wichita State University. McMullen won the state title on that attempt with a throw of 173 feet and 1 inch.

WICHITA – Connor McMullen walked into the back of the discus ring and took a deep breath.

McMullen had one last throw left. One last throw as a Louisburg Wildcat and one last chance to win a state title.

Going into his final throw of the Class 4A state discus competition, McMullen was trailing Baldwin's Christian Gaylord by two feet Saturday at Wichita State University. On his final attempt, McMullen gathered himself spun and let the discus fly.

The Louisburg High School senior truly saved his best for last.

McMullen recorded a toss of 173 feet and 1 inch to surpass Gaylord and capture his first state championship – an event four years in the making.

“It was definitely a relief when I got that last throw out

there and I knew that it was going to do the job," McMullen said. "I have been looking forward to this for a long time and it is a great feeling. A lot of hard work went into this."



Connor McMullen shares a hug with his father Scott after winning the Class 4A discus title Saturday in Wichita.

Believe it or not, McMullen's last throw of the finals wasn't even the most nerve-racking moment of the competition. That moment came in the final throw of the preliminaries.

McMullen, who came in with one of the top throws in the state this year, scratched in his first two attempts of the preliminaries. Another scratch would mean his season would be over and so would his dreams of a state title.

"Scratching the first two is never fun and is probably one of the worst feelings in competition," McMullen said. "But I knew I only had to throw around 150 (feet) to get in the finals. So I just gathered myself and threw one out there."

That one throw was pretty good. He ended the prelims with a

throw of 161-2, which vaulted him to second place behind Gaylord's throw of 163-7.

Then came the finals, and just like the prelims, McMullen got off to a rocky start. He scratched on his first two throws of the finals, which set up his last attempt.

"I really wasn't too nervous coming in," McMullen said. "I think the most nervous I got was in that final throw to get into finals. The first throw in finals was short so I just went ahead and scratched it. I was hoping to get one good throw going into my last one, but it just so happened that it went out the right side. I just got into the back of the ring, took a deep breath and just tried to do what I do and what felt naturally."

McMullen's family and friends couldn't bear to watch his final attempt and several of them had their eyes covered just waiting to hear the reaction from the crowd. When they heard a loud chorus of cheers, they knew it had to be good.

Unlike his second attempt in the finals, McMullen's final throw was straight on and he all but shored up a state title. Gaylord had one final attempt, but came up several feet short in his last toss.



Connor McMullen looks down on the Cessna Stadium crowd atop the medal stand Saturday after receiving his

first-place medal.

“Connor made it a little more dramatic than I liked, but it showed the competitor he is to win like he did,” Louisburg coach Gary Griffin said.

McMullen became the first Wildcat to win a state track title since Garrett Griffin won the javelin in 2011. After winning two state medals in the discus in previous years, McMullen was happy to finally grab the gold.

“There is a lot of pride in that,” McMullen said. “It is nice to represent my school and win state.”

That state title came after McMullen won his first state medal in something that wasn't discus. Despite being seeded 13th coming into the javelin competition Friday, McMullen rose to the occasion.

McMullen medaled eighth with a throw of 164-02 and put together his best series of throws of the year. He set personal records with every attempt in the finals to secure the medal.

“That was a fun one because there was no pressure for me,” McMullen said. “I knew that I had a bigger throw in me than what I had done previous. I like throwing on the track surface better than grass so it was good to be able to break out my javelin cleats.



McMullen got his first state medal in the javelin Friday in Wichita with a throw of 164-02 and finished eighth.

“It was just icing on the cake. I was keeping the arm speed up and improving every time. I wanted to get another medal in either shot put or javelin. The shot put didn’t go as I would have hoped so I was happy to do it in the javelin.”

It was a strong performance since McMullen had only thrown the javelin the last three meets of the season.

“I was happy for him in the javelin too,” coach Griffin said. “It was a bonus for the amount of time he put in on that event. It is amazing he won a medal.”