

LHS debaters have busy first weekend



The Louisburg High School debate team had a busy start to its season as the Wildcats competed in two tournaments last weekend.

Wildcat head coach Brian Weilert divided his teams up and sent his more experienced group north to the Washburn Rural tournament in Topeka, while the rest of his team traveled south to Coffeyville in a tournament that saw three different divisions.

Washburn Rural is the top tournament to kick off the season as it draws the best debate programs from the state trying to compete for DCI (Debate Coach Invitational) bids.

"I always like to take my top teams to this two-day tournament to see where we stack up," Weilert said. "Many of the competitors are coming from long summer camps and have a distinct advantage. Getting wins there are tough but the experience pays dividends later on in the year."

At the top varsity (DCI) division, Carson Tappan and Ashley Allen, in their first experience at speed-debate, came away with a couple of wins against Manhattan but failed to pick up a DCI bid.

In the open division (traditional style varsity debate), sophomores Isabelle Holtzen and Skylar Keaton just missed the quarterfinals, ending with a 4-2 record. Zach Waite and Curran

Conklin also made the trip, losing three close split-ballots, to finish 2-4.

The Wildcats found a lot of success in Coffeyville as they were able to come away with a second place sweepstakes finish. The open debate partners Lexi Shaner and Nathaniel Mason finished fifth overall.

The junior varsity debaters (2 or fewer years of experience) placed as well. Parker Perentis and Flynn Lagner's 4-1 record placed fifth, while novice debaters Elijah Brown and Garrett Mills bumped up a division in their very first tournament to also go 4-1 and medaled fourth.

In the novice division (1st year only) Louisburg finished with four placers. Hallie Hutsell and Clara Casebeer led the charge with a 5-0 record and just missed out on first place (speaker points tie-breaker) and came in second.

They were followed by Noah Hill/ Brooke Talmage (4-1) who finished third, Harley Olson/Demi Vanmeerhaeghe (4-1) who came in fifth and Sydney Vanmeerhaeghe/Julianne Finley (4-1) who finished sixth overall. Peyton Shaffer/Camdyn Clark (4-1) earned honorable mention honors.

The other competing novices Tanner Belcher/ Beckett Rasmussen and Jonathan Ventre/Leia Shaffer also had winning 3-2 records.

"It really is *entering the unknown* for them and to see nerves and fear from the start of the day turn to confidence and pride by the end of the day is something I never get tired of," Weilert said. "We are a very young team with no four-year debaters and just a few with three years of experience so we will grow as the year progresses.

"Between the two tournaments we won over 50 rounds of debate and I think that is something we can build upon. We have 56 on the team this year and with budget cutbacks we were not able to allow everyone out who wanted to compete opening weekend,

but a few of them made the long trip to Coffeyville to watch and learn. I am really proud of everyone that went out."