

Reece earns state cross country bid



Louisburg High School sophomore Wyatt Reece qualified for the state cross country meet Saturday when he finished 13th overall at the Class 4A regional meet in Garnett. Reece will run at the state meet this Saturday in Wamego.

GARNETT – When Wyatt Reece opened the cross country season in early September, he did so at the Garnett Golf Course.

His result left him frustrated and a little disappointed.

So when Reece and the rest of the Louisburg High School team made their way back to Garnett on Saturday for the Class 4A regional race, the Wildcat sophomore wasn't sure what to expect.

Needless to say, his mood was a lot better once it was all over.

Reece qualified for the state meet as he finished 13th overall in the regional race with a time in 18 minutes and 16 seconds. The finish was good enough to become the fourth individual qualifier for state.

The top three teams qualify for the state meet in Wamego along with the top five other individuals not from those teams.

Happy was one way to describe Reece after the finish, but nothing matched the mood of his coach – and dad – John Reece.

“Honestly I was excited, but my dad was more excited,” Wyatt said. “I came into this year not knowing how it would end up, but about half way through the year that idea started to change. After my run at Wellsville everything started to line up. My time kept dropping or was consistent and all my races felt good.”

Wyatt put in a lot of work in practice with his coach, but also put in some extra time with his dad in order to be as prepared as possible.

“Wyatt qualifying for state is unbelievable,” coach Reece said. “As a coach, I saw the potential early in the season and it was a matter of developing it. As a dad, I was there for moral support and our long runs on Sundays were spent talking about races, strategies and how proud I was of what he was accomplishing.”

The Louisburg sophomore put together a strong race from the start, stayed with the pack of the top 15 runners and saved his best for last.

“The race started off fast, almost too fast,” Wyatt said. “I came in at the mile around 14th and just stayed with the group I was with till about the two-and-a-half-mile mark. The end of a race is like my bread and butter. I can just let things go and run hard which I did. The finish is uphill for about 150 meters. There was some runners up ahead of me and I went for them.”

Wyatt was joined by two other runners on the Wildcat team as seniors Devyn Small and Eddie Murphy ran their final race for the Wildcats. Small came in 50th in 20:10 and Murphy was 74th in 22:02.

“They competed very well and ended their season with a

positive experience,” coach Reece said. “I could not have asked for anything more and they did a great job for four years.”

Louisburg’s girls squad suffered a little heartbreak during their race as the Lady Cats’ top runner, Isabelle Holtzen, stumbled and fell about a mile into the race. Holtzen was in contention to take one of those individual spots for state, but wasn’t able to recover in time.

The Louisburg sophomore did run hard at the end and finished the race in 35th place in 23:38.

Junior Madelynn Yalowitz led the Lady Cats in 29th overall with a time of 23:01. Fellow juniors Kaitlyn Gaza (24:15) and Liz Hildreth (24:26) came in 44th and 49th, respectively.

Freshman Alex Miller (55th), sophomore Lilly Mick (60th) and junior Mara Justesen (64th) rounded out the Lady Cat lineup. As a team, the Lady Cats came in seventh overall with 183 points.

“The girls team continued their strong season,” coach Reece said. “They all ran well to end the season and have definitely set the bar higher for next year. Isabelle did go down at about 1.3 miles and walked a bit then got going again to finish strong for the team even though she was not where she wanted to be. The girls race was very strong with individual runners.”

The season does continue for Wyatt as he prepares to run at the Class 4A state meet at 1:45 p.m. on Saturday at the Wamego Golf Course and he is looking forward to the challenge.

“Saturday at Wamego will be hard,” Wyatt said. “The course is tough, although I’ve never ran it before, but I’ve seen it. It’s my first time at state and I’m not looking to run my best time. During state track my dad told me ‘The first time at

state you're there for the experience, the second time for the medal, the third time for the podium.' Am I looking for a good run? Of course, but am I looking to get a personal record? No."