

Wildcat wrestlers ready for big season



Louisburg junior Mason Koechner, who is ranked No. 4 in the Class 4A preseason rankings at 220 pounds, is one of four returning state qualifiers for the Wildcats this season. The Wildcats return several experienced wrestlers from a season ago.

It was a season to remember for the Louisburg High School wrestling team a year ago.

Last February, the Wildcats took a big step forward in their program as they qualified five wrestlers for the state tournament. The good news for Louisburg, four of those state qualifiers are returning this season and are bringing an experienced group with them.

“Up and down the lineup, we’re looking strong,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “I have lots of guys with varsity experience, and there are several weights that are going to be battles to see who will wrestle varsity each week. I think we’ll have some depth with our lineup – the kind of depth we haven’t had in a long time.

“Last year, we earned three tournament plaques, but we have yet to come out on top with a team title. This year, I think

we're in good position to bring home a team championship."

Three of the returning state qualifiers were named as captains for the upcoming season. Senior Anders Vance, along with juniors Mason Koechner and Nathan Keegan will be looked to lead the squad, along with senior Dillin Roberts.

Koechner is looking to build off his state bid a year ago and the wrestling coaches across the state think he can do it. He is currently No. 4 in Class 4A at 220 pounds in the preseason rankings put out by the Kansas Wrestling Coaches Association.

Vance, the team's heavyweight, also cracked the preseason rankings at No. 6 in the state. Keegan (120 pounds), along with another state qualifier in sophomore Ryan Adams (145), will also have a shot to crack those state rankings at some point this season.



Senior Anders Vance hopes to make a return trip to state this season. Vance is the No. 6 ranked wrestler in the heavyweight division in Class 4A.

"We'll see how things go the rest of the season," Bovaird said. "I like what I see from these guys. I think that when it comes to pressure, they're going to be harder on themselves than anyone else will be."

There will be plenty of competition for a lot of weight classes this season, and the final varsity lineup will be decided tonight during the team's annual scrimmage as some of those classes will have wrestle-offs.

At 106 pounds, sophomore Thad Hendrix is currently competing with freshman Hunter Bindi, while Kyle Allen is battling it out with Keegan at 120 pounds. David Bindi and Tucker Batten will wrestle at 126 and 132 pounds, respectively.

Junior Dylan Meyer and freshman Brandon Cooper are battling for the 138 pound spot. Adams currently holds the top spot at 145 pounds, but senior Chris Turner, sophomore Jackson Owens and freshman Blue Caplinger are competing there as well.

Zach Jones, Roberts and freshman Austin Moore are battling at 160 pounds, while juniors Ben Hupp, Owen Staver and Connor Green are vying for the slot at 170 pounds.

Juniors Austin Raetzel and Jacob Felder will slot in at 182 pounds and junior Lyndon Smith will wrestle at 195 pounds. Senior Bradley Trageser will compete with Koechner at 220.

Bovaird likes the mix of experienced wrestlers and newcomers he has this season.

"We have some very athletic freshmen coming in this season," Bovaird said. "Hunter Bindi was a 2-time kids state champion, and he's placed in the top 6 at kids state several times, too. Austin Moore missed placing at kids state last year by one match, and Blue Caplinger also has experience at the state level. Tucker Batten and Lyndon Smith were each one match from qualifying for high school state last year."

The Wildcats also have a little different look on their coaching staff as well. Robert Ebenstein returns for his fourth season with the program, while Louisburg also welcomes Andy Wright as a new assistant. Wright was previously the head coach at Wellsville for six years.

So far there has been no change in the practice room, but Bovaird likes what he has seen so far and is excited for the season to get underway.

“Our guys have a great deal of confidence that I haven’t seen since I got here,” Bovaird said. “Last year’s successes have definitely enabled us to get started much more strongly. I think that the last few years, there’s been hope and enthusiasm to start the year – guys working their tails off because they hope they can earn a trip to state. This year, there’s more than that. There’s a confidence – a firm belief – that we can build from last year’s successes rather than just starting over and hoping for the best when February hits.”

The Wildcats begin their journey for what they hope is a successful season Thursday when they travel to Osawatomie for a dual. Matches are set to begin at 6 p.m.

On Saturday, Louisburg will then travel to Fort Scott for its first tournament of the season.

2015-16 LOUISBURG HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING SCHEDULE

Dec. 3 at
Osawatomie 6
p.m.

Dec. 5 at Fort Scott Dual
Tournament 9 a.m.

Dec. 11 at Eudora
Tournament 1:30 p.m.

Dec. 12 at Eudora
Tournament 9 a.m.

Dec. 19 at Tonganoxie
Invitational 9 a.m.

Jan. 9 LHS)	Wildcat Classic (at 9 a.m.
Jan. 16 Invitational	at Topeka High 9 a.m.
Jan. 22 Parsons 3:30 p.m.	at
Jan. 30 Invitational	at Baldwin 9 a.m.
Feb. 12 Hill)	Frontier League (at Spring 4 p.m.
Feb. 13 Hill)	Frontier League (at Spring 10 a.m.