

Koechner, Bindi take second at Wildcat Classic



Louisburg junior Mason Koechner pins his opponent during a 220-pound match Saturday at the Lousiburg Wildcat Classic. Koechner finished second at 220 pounds and the Wildcats finished seventh overall at their home tournament.

Mason Koechner was one victory away from winning the championship at 220 pounds at his home tournament.

The only wrestler standing in his way was a familiar opponent.

Koechner squared off with Baldwin's Jake Katzer during the championship match Saturday at the Louisburg Wildcat Classic. Katzer was ranked No. 1 in Class 4A at 220 pounds, but Koechner has wrestled him well several times in the past.

Saturday was no exception and Koechner took Katzer to the final seconds, before falling in a 2-1 decision to finish second overall. Koechner looked to have two points on a takedown late in the first period but was called out of bounds.

It was a scoreless match into the third period when Katzer got two points on a reversal. Koechner scored a point late on an escape, but couldn't get the takedown he needed.

Koechner (18-4) put together a strong tournament as he was 4-1 on the day with four pins and has since moved up to No. 3 in the Class 4A rankings.

“He competed with that Baldwin kid,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Seeing him lose 2-1 was tough. The match was definitely winnable, but that’s where Mason has grown quite a bit from last year to this year. He’s getting into those tight matches, keeping them close, and putting himself in a position where he can win a clinch match.

“Mason is coming along pretty well this season. He’s working on improving his repertoire of moves – what he’s comfortable hitting in a good match, moves that are effective and work well on good kids.”

Koechner’s teammate Hunter Bindi also found his way to the finals, but like Koechner, ran up against a top-ranked wrestler. Bindi, a freshman, faced off with Olathe South’s Jace Koelzer in the 106 pound championship match and fell 17-1. Koelzer is the No. 1 wrestler in Class 6A.



Freshman Hunter Bindi works for a pin at 106 pounds during the Wildcat Classic on Saturday. Bindi finished second overall.

Bindi (16-5) still had a big day for Louisburg as he picked up three victories and all three were by pin, including a 12-second pin of Blue Valley West's Josh Goldstein to start the tournament. He also pinned Leavenworth's Spencer Janson in 55 seconds.

With his performance, Bindi is now ranked No. 6 in the latest Class 4A rankings.

"That Olathe kid was an All-American last summer in Fargo," Bovaird said. "We knew it would be a tough match. Hunter has been growing quite a bit. He's figuring out what works at the high school level. Having seen quite a bit of success at the youth level, he's learning to adjust his style. Each week we see areas of improvement. He's getting more serious in the practice room, and it's paying off on the mat."

As the team standings go, Louisburg finished seventh overall with 119 points in the 12-team tournament. Rockhurst, out of Kansas City, Mo., finished first with 197.5 points and Pittsburg was second with 191.

"It's great hosting a meet, especially one that's grown into a pretty competitive tournament," Bovaird said. "We had the No. 1 ranked team in 4A (Baldwin) and the No. 5 team in 5A (Pittsburg), along with lots of ranked wrestlers. Our finals were pretty exciting to watch with some top-level wrestling."

"I love having the chance to showcase our facility and where our wrestling program is at with its development. I wish we would have had a better showing individually, but considering the caliber of wrestling, I'm pretty pleased with our performances."



Freshman Austin Moore works for some back points during the fifth-place match at 160 pounds.

Junior Nathan Keegan also found the medal stand in what was a tough 120-pound bracket that featured two state-ranked wrestlers and two state qualifiers. Despite that Keegan (11-7), a returning state qualifier himself, finished fourth overall with a pair of wins, including a pair of pins to start the tournament.

The Wildcats also had several wrestlers who just missed out on a medal. Senior Anders Vance (285), freshman Austin Moore (160) and Thad Hendrix (113) all came in fifth.

Vance, who currently has a 21-4 record, was in a competitive bracket himself that featured four opponents who were ranked in either Kansas or Missouri. Vance picked up two victories to start the day with a pair of pins, but was pinned himself in the next two rounds by the eventual champion, Vincent Spalitto of Rockhurst, and runner-up Keenan Dodd of Parsons.

Vance won the fifth-place match as he pinned Leavenworth's Jordan Cogdill in 2 minutes and 46 seconds.

"Anders got stuck in a tough bracket, that's for sure," Bovaird said. "It was probably the toughest weight of the tournament. It pinpointed some areas we need to focus on. He'll see the Parsons kid again, and he'll see wrestlers with

styles similar to the Missouri kids, too.

“Nathan’s bracket was also pretty tough. He got after it for the most part. A couple brief lapses in some matches kept him from getting his arm raised.”

Moore, a freshman, got off to a rough start losing his first two matches, but he responded in a big way. The 160-pounder won his last three matches.



Thad Hendrix tries to throw his opponent from Wyandotte on Saturday during the 113-pound match.

Moore (11-9) pinned Pittsburg’s Keyth Waltrip in 2:22 and then followed that up with a 5-2 decision over Leavenworth’s Drew Sachen. In the fifth-place match, Moore found himself in a battle with Tonganoxie’s Cody Knight and escaped with a 6-5 decision.

As for Hendrix, he defeated Wyandotte’s Janvier Irakoze by pin in 3:41 in the fifth-place match. Hendrix (5-7) also defeated Irakoze earlier in the day by a 15-10 decision.

Others wrestling for the Wildcats were Kyle Allen (126 pounds), sixth; Lyndon Smith (195), sixth; Tucker Batten

(132), seventh; Blue Caplinger (145), seventh; Ben Hupp (170), seventh; Bradley Trageser (285), seventh; Chris Turner (138), eighth; Dillin Roberts (160), eighth; Austin Raetzel (182), eighth; Zach Jones (152), ninth; Jacob Felder (182), ninth; Owen Staver (170), 10th; Garrett Caldwell (182), 14th.