

Wildcats win first team title in six years



Louisburg freshman Austin Moore pins an opponent during the Wildcats' dual with Gardner-Edgerton on Wednesday. Moore was one of five individual champions to come out of the Topeka High Invitational on Saturday. In the process, the Wildcats won their first team title in six years.

TOPEKA – For the first time in six years, the Louisburg High School wrestling team returned home as champions.

The Wildcats ventured to the Topeka High Invitational on Saturday and left with their first team title since the 2009-10 season. Louisburg racked up 204.5 points and blew away the 10-team field.

Topeka High was runner-up with 139 points and Highland Park was third with 112.

“Going to a meet like Topeka allows for so many of our guys to have success,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “This was a huge team effort – bringing home our first team title in six years was phenomenal. I don’t care about the level of the tournament. For these guys, they’ve never experienced that. They’ve never been to the top of the mountain, so having them work together to do that was a major step forward for the

program.

“Every Louisburg wrestler scored team points or blocked other teams from scoring. We had three junior varsity wrestlers compete unattached, and one of them placed in the top three. We had four freshmen place in the top four, with two of them winning titles. Three sophomores and six juniors also wrestled. We’re still young, and that bodes very well for the future.”

Along with the team title, five Wildcat individuals also found their way to the top of the medal stands. Freshman Hunter Bindi (106 pounds), sophomore Tucker Batten (132), freshman Austin Moore (160), junior Austin Raetzel (182) and junior Mason Koechner (220) all won their respective weight classes.



Louisburg sophomore Tucker Batten won the 132-pound bracket Saturday at the Topeka High Invitational.

In all, Louisburg had 14 of its 17 wrestlers place in the top four.

Bindi (20-5), who was close to getting that first place medal a couple different times this season, put together a strong performance as he went 4-0 with a pair of pins. He also earned a technical fall and defeated Topeka High’s JP Gallegos in a 4-1 decision to complete his undefeated day.

As for Batten (11-10), he picked the perfect time to not only win his first varsity tournament of the season, he also got his first medal of the year. He defeated Council Grove's Chase Corgill by a 13-3 major decision to open the tournament and then defeated Holton's Lawson Henry by a 5-1 decision to reach the championship match.

In the first-place match, Batten held off Topeka's Conner Champney in a 4-2 decision to finish his best day as a Wildcat.

Moore (15-9) also earned his first varsity medal of the season as he breezed through the 160-pound class with pair of pins to start and then defeated Highland Park's Myles Dean by an 8-4 decision in the title match.

At 182 pounds, Raetzel (12-6) pinned his way to win his first varsity tournament with a 3-0 record on the day, while Koechner (21-4) did the same in the 220-pound bracket.

"I think it's huge for two freshmen and a sophomore to win a varsity championship," Bovaird said. "Bindi has been close in previous tournaments, but this was Moore's first varsity medal and Batten's first medal of this season. For all three, it was a huge morale booster. Hunter has consistently proven himself one of the toughest freshmen 106 pounders in the area. Moore is the type of kid who is going to make some waves later in the season. Batten has been in a tough weight class all season, and one major thing he needed now was a surge in confidence. The way he wrestled this weekend, I think he got just what he needed.

"Raetzel has had some success already this season, and this was a great boost for him, too. Come regionals, I think he'll be in a good position. Koechner is getting some good mat time. I don't see him getting complacent in his matches; instead, I see him trying new things. He's always working on getting himself into better positions and using better techniques."

Junior Lyndon Smith also made his way to the championship match at 195 pounds, but was pinned by Gardner-Edgerton's Tristen Martin. Before then, Smith recorded three pins of his own to improve his record to 7-5 on the season.

Senior heavyweight Anders Vance also advanced to the first-place match with pins of Holton's Clay Baumgartner and Washington's Isaiah Vigil. Vance (23-5) was later pinned by Parsons' Keenan Dodd to finish runner-up.

Sophomore Thad Hendrix (113 pounds), junior Nathan Keegan (120), senior Chris Turner (138), freshman Blue Caplinger (145) and senior Dillin Roberts (160) came in third overall. Freshman Brandon Cooper (152) and junior Conner Green (170) finished fourth.

The tournament was also a big victory for Bovaird, who is a Topeka native.

"It was a proud moment for me because Topeka is my hometown and I had coached there for eight years before coming to Louisburg," Bovaird said. "The Topeka West and Highland Park coaches were coaching back when I was in high school, and the Topeka High coach is a good friend of mine and a long-time high school rival. He and I battled back and forth on the mat all through high school. There's still a lot of Topeka wrestling families at that tournament, and I was just really proud to bring our Louisburg Wildcats there and win the title."

Louisburg is now about halfway through its season as it will prepare for the Parsons Duals on Friday and then the Baldwin Invitational on Jan. 30. On Jan. 28, the Wildcats host Ottawa for dual, which is also senior night.

"There's always the risk of the guys becoming complacent, of thinking they can coast once they reach a peak in their season," Bovaird said. "What they need to learn is that there's a time to go 100 percent and there's a time when the

body and mind need to recover. There's a huge difference between recovering and coasting.

"We've got a lot of tough tournaments still ahead of us: the Parsons duals, which will give us five tough matches; the Baldwin Invitational, which boasts some of the top 4A schools in the state; and the Frontier League Tournament, which will be 6 matches in two days, and our league is consistently loaded with some of the top individuals in the state."

LOUISBURG FALLS IN GARDNER DUAL

Louisburg traveled to Gardner-Edgerton High School on Wednesday for a midweek dual with the Blazers, but the Wildcats came up short in a 47-21 loss.

After losing the first two matches, Louisburg junior Nathan Keegan (120 pounds) got the Wildcats on the board as he earned a win by a 4-2 decision. Following two more losses, senior Chris Turner (138) picked up a pin.

Freshman Austin Moore won by pin at 160 to keep the Wildcats close, but Louisburg lost its next five matches. Senior heavyweight Anders Vance ended the dual on a good note for Louisburg as he recorded a third-period pin.