

# Wildcats wrestle tough at Parsons Duals



PARSONS – It was Friday night and the Louisburg wrestling team found itself in a different situation than most weeks.

Instead of competing in a usual Saturday tournament setting, the Wildcats traveled to Parsons to participate in a tournament that saw them compete in five duals in one night. It made for an exhausting ride home, but it was well worth it.

Louisburg finished second overall at the Parsons Duals as they took a 4-0 record into the championship match against Lebanon, Mo., before eventually falling 42-29.

This was the third consecutive season for the Wildcats to compete at Parsons and Louisburg head coach Bobby Bovaird could tell a big change out of his group.

“Ultimately, we had a great night of wrestling at Parsons,” Bovaird said. “We gave Lebanon a much better dual this year than in the past, winning 6 of 14 matches. Last year, the score was 63-15 and we only won three matches. We lost by points instead of pins. It shows we’re stepping up and being more competitive than we’ve done in the past.”

The Wildcats asserted themselves early as they defeated the Lebanon junior varsity to open the dual tournament with a 43-27 victory. Louisburg went on to roll Labette County (74-3) and Parsons (56-15) before rallying for a big victory (37-29) over Wichita West.

Louisburg had four wrestlers go undefeated on the evening. Freshman Hunter Bindi (106), senior Zach Jones (152), junior Lyndon Smith (195) and junior Mason Koechner (220) were all perfect.

Bindi recorded five wins with two pins and a major decision. Smith and Koechner each had five wins as well with four and three pins, respectively. Jones was a 3-0 with a pin and a major decision.

Junior Nathan Keegan (120), junior Jacob Felder (182) and senior Anders Vance (285) each finished with a 4-1 record to lead the Wildcats. Keegan had four pins, Vance had a pair of pins and Felder had a technical fall and a major decision.

"The last two years, we've gone up against some teams that had multiple open weight classes, so a lot of our wins had been forfeits," Bovaird said. "This year, every team we faced – with the exception of Parsons – had nearly full line-ups. That means our victories were earned.

"Lyndon, Hunter, and Mason each had a forfeit, but the rest were legit matches. It's a huge confidence booster for them. Zach had a pretty good day, splitting time with Connor Green at 152, and Jacob got in some great mat time. This point in the season, we just want a lot of matches for the boys."

As for Vance, it marked the third week in a row he had to go up against Parsons' Keenan Dodd, who is ranked No. 2 in Class 4A. The first two times Vance and Dodd squared off, he was able to pin Vance, but this time the Louisburg senior was a tougher out as he lost a 5-3 decision.

"It's tough to beat a kid 2-3 times in a season," Bovaird said. "We'll see the Parsons kid again. A major lesson Anders learned is that the third period is crucial in a match against a kid like that. We saw some weaknesses and I think come regionals, Anders will be ready to get the win against him."

Maybe the most competitive match of the night came against Wichita West as Louisburg found itself down 24-9 early in the dual before the Wildcats starting chipping away. Junior Conner Green won by decision at 152 pounds and Wichita West was open at 160 pounds to make it just a 24-18 deficit for Louisburg.

Wichita West picked up a pin at 170 pounds to extend its lead to 12, but Felder won by major decision at 182 pounds and Smith got a big pin at 195 pounds to make it just a two-point match. Koechner won a tough 3-1 decision at 220 pounds to give the Wildcats a 31-30 lead.

The match would come down to Vance and Wichita West heavyweight Zane McPherson and Vance pulled out the victory for his team. Vance won by pin in a high-intensity match that eventually cost Wichita West a team point for unsportsmanlike conduct.

“In a dual like the Wichita West one, it came down to the heavyweight match, but everyone had a hand in getting us the dual win,” Bovaird said. “Nathan Keegan and Blue Caplinger had key matches. Wichita West is full of tough kids who know how to pin. I told the guys that if we wanted to win that dual, we had to keep the scores close and stay off our backs. Those two wrestled very tough against good opponents.

“Bindi, Jones and Koechner won clench matches, too. Throughout the dual, we won some key bonus points – Felder got a major decision instead of a regular decision, and we picked up pins from Kyle Allen, Smith and Vance. It was a competitive dual, and I was pretty proud of the guys for how they did. They carried themselves like winners and young men, and they didn’t lose their heads and do anything to cost us valuable team points.”

Against Lebanon in the final dual, Bindi got Louisburg off to a good start with a 12-3 major decision and Keegan followed with a first period pin to put Louisburg up 10-4. However,

Lebanon rattled off four wins in a row to take a 24-10 lead.

Jones responded to win by decision at 152 pounds, but Lebanon recorded three straight pins to go up 42-13 and all but seal the win. Following the match, the Wildcats now have a 9-3 dual record on the season.

Louisburg will hit the mats two times this week as it hosts Ottawa for a dual Thursday, which is the Wildcats' senior night. Matches are set to begin at 5:30 p.m.

The Wildcats will travel to the Baldwin Invitational on Saturday as they get back into tournament action. Matches are set to begin at 9 a.m.