

# Koechner leads Wildcats at Baldwin



Louisburg junior Mason Koechner locks his opponent up as he tries to get some back points, and eventually a pin, Saturday during the Baldwin Invitational. Koechner won the 220-pound weight class and was also the recipient of the Gorrarian Award.

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BALDWIN CITY – Ever since the Louisburg wrestling team entered the Baldwin Invitational Tournament, the Wildcats have been slowly working their way up the team standings.

On Saturday, Louisburg had its highest finish ever at what is a competitive 16-team tournament. The Wildcats finished eighth overall with 126.5 points, but they were just a few points away from cracking the top five.

In all, the Wildcats had three wrestlers finish in the top three and one – Mason Koechner – which finished at the top of his weight class. Freshman Hunter Bindi came in second and senior Anders Vance was third.

“We’ve consistently improved in our performance at this meet,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “This is our highest finish since we added the Baldwin Invitational to our schedule. Prairie View and Burlington were just ahead of us,

tied for sixth with 127.5 points. Smoky Valley was 5th with 130.5 points. Holton, the 2013 and 2014 state champions, was ninth with 104 points.

“We had a major point scorer, Nathan Keegan, sitting out this tournament, too. Although we theoretically could have done even better, I’m still pretty proud of how well we competed.”

That included Koechner, who pinned his way to the top spot at 220 pounds. The Louisburg junior was 4-0 on the day with four pins, including one of Santa Fe Trail’s Trent Moore in the third period of the championship match. Koechner is currently ranked No. 3 at 220 pounds in Class 4A.



**Freshman Hunter Bindi works for a pin Saturday during the Baldwin Invitational.**

For his performance, Koechner (31-4) was also presented with the Gorrarian Award, which is given to the wrestler with the most pins in the least amount of time. This was the second year in a row a Louisburg wrestler has earned the honor, with Vance winning it a year ago.

“Mason had a pretty solid tournament,” Bovaird said. “He had four pins with a total mat time of just over 14 minutes. He is becoming pretty dominant this season, especially when he is on top.”

The Wildcats almost had another champion as Bindi (29-7) nearly pulled off the upset of the tournament. Bindi, who wrestles at 106 pounds, had two quick first period pins that set up a match with Santa Fe Trail junior Christian Davis in the championship round.

Davis, who is the No. 1 ranked wrestler in Class 4A, got all he wanted from the Louisburg freshman. Bindi reversed Davis to his back and got two back points to cut the lead to one, and nearly got a third back point to tie the match, but Davis got off his back before the five-count.

“Hunter’s finals match was definitely an exciting one,” Bovaird said. “The kid he wrestled is tough and experienced. You don’t find many juniors at the 106 pound weight class. Hunter held his own with him. That match could have gone our way on another day. Hunter is a competitor and I think he is going to surprise some people this month at regionals and state.”

Vance also competed in a couple tight matches himself. The Louisburg heavyweight went 4-1 on the day to finish third and nearly made it to the finals match.

Vance, who won his first two matches, went up against Goodland’s Luis Ledesma in the semifinals and eventually went to overtime before Ledesma won a 4-1 decision.

The Louisburg senior didn’t get much time to rest as he went up against Santa Fe Trail’s Gabe Forrest in the consolation round. Vance had to go to extra periods again, but he outlasted Forrest in two overtimes for a 4-3 decision.

For third place, Vance defeated Wamego’s Tylar Patrick for a 4-0 decision to improve his record to 33-7 on the season.

“I think it was great that Anders got so much mat time this weekend,” Bovaird said. “He only had one pin, which normally might concern me since he’s been so dominant. However, at the

state level, heavyweight matches often go the distance and into overtime. Anders needs to be pushed at this point in the season so that he's used to these tight matches. We want him to be calm and clear-headed going into overtime and tie-breakers. In those matches, the wrestler with the coolest head seems to prevail.

“Even though Anders took a tough loss in the semis, he bounced back really well. A weekend like this one has done a lot to prepare him mentally for the big matches coming up soon.”



**Sophomore Tucker Batten flattens his opponent as he waits for a pin to be called Saturday in Baldwin.**

Several other Wildcats got plenty of mat time as well.

Junior Lyndon Smith (195) finished sixth overall, while sophomore Kyle Allen (120) and senior Bradley Trageser (285) each came in seventh. Allen had three wins on the day, with all three coming by major decision. Trageser also had three wins, including two by pin.

Sophomore Thad Hendrix (113), freshman Blue Caplinger (145) and junior Ben Hupp (170) finished eighth.

Louisburg returns to the mat Wednesday for its final home dual

of the season. The Wildcats host Lawrence High School for a 6:30 p.m. start.

It will also be a homecoming of sorts as the program will recognize Louisburg wrestling alumni during the varsity dual along with an alumni social at 5:30 p.m.