

Wildcats win first league title in 19 years



The Louisburg wrestling team gathers around the Frontier League championship trophy following Saturday's league title victory at Spring Hill High School. It was the Wildcats' first league title in 19 years.

SPRING HILL – The last time Louisburg won a Frontier League wrestling title, none of the current Wildcat wrestlers were even born yet.

It has been nearly two decades since the Wildcats were last crowned league champions. Louisburg can't say that anymore.

For the first time in 19 years, Louisburg captured the Frontier League crown with a 6-0 dual record over the two-day tournament that ended Saturday at Spring Hill High School.

"It is awesome. It just shows how much the team has grown and how much better we have gotten," senior Anders Vance said. "It was great to see how everyone stepped up because every point matters. Not getting pinned is a big deal and trying to get pins is a big deal too."

It has been a gradual process for the Wildcats, who under head coach Bobby Bovaird, have made strides in the league standings. Bovaird, who is in his fifth year, remembered how

tough it was to field a full team, much less contend for a title.



Senior Chris Turner works for a pin during a 138-pound match Saturday in Spring Hill.

"My first year at Louisburg we took seven wrestlers to compete in a dual tournament," Bovaird said. "Statistically speaking, we were supposed to take last. Our numbers worked out just right against Eudora that we had several double forfeits and we matched up just right with them head-to-head, and we were able to win one dual. We took sixth as a team that year. Last year, we had a chance to take second, but dropped a tough one to Paola. This year was our year to come through on top."

The Wildcats did come out on top, and it wasn't even close.

Louisburg breezed through the rest of the league with a full roster. The Wildcats routed Eudora (66-13) and De Soto (69-10) on the first day and then returned Saturday with victories over Baldwin (56-18), Spring Hill (49-21), Paola (78-6) and Ottawa (39-25).

The Wildcats' six victories was also noteworthy as they now have a 17-3 dual record on the season, which is the most dual wins in program history.

“It is awesome after 19 years to finally get a win here at league,” junior Mason Koechner said. “We have been working hard all year and we have really come together this year as a team.



Junior Nathan Keegan finished as a league champion at 120 pounds

“We had guys from every grade level come out here and win matches for us to win this title. There is a lot of good competition here in the Frontier League.”

The dominance continued individually as well. Louisburg finished the tournament with four league champions and the Wildcats had a wrestler finish in the top four of every weight class.

Freshman Hunter Bindi (106 pounds), junior Nathan Keegan (120), Koechner (220) and Vance (285) all ended the day as league champions.

Senior Chris Turner (138), freshman Blue Caplinger (145) and freshman Austin Moore (160) finished as league runner-up. Sophomore Kyle Allen (126), senior Zach Jones (152), senior Dillin Roberts (170) and junior Austin Raetzel (195) took third, while sophomore Thad Hendrix (113), sophomore Tucker Batten (132) and junior Jacob Felder (182) took fourth.



Luisburg High School wrestling team poses with their Frontier League Championship trophy following Saturday's tournament at Spring Hill High School.

However, the tournament wasn't without some adversity. Before it even started, junior Ben Hupp, who normally wrestles at 170 pounds, was out sick with the flu and Bovaird called on Roberts to fill his spot from the junior varsity roster.

Also, Lyndon Smith was unavailable at 195 pounds due to a prior obligation and Bovaird put Raetzel in to fill his spot. It all turned out OK as both wrestlers provided the team with big wins.

"We wrestled tough," Bovaird said. "Ben got hit with the flu Friday morning so I called Dillin at the last minute to

come weigh in and wrestle up a weight. Lyndon had a prior obligation so Austin stepped up and gave up 13 pounds to fill that gap. Both Roberts and Raetzel were 4-2 and took 3rd in their respective weight classes.



Mason Koechner pins his opponent from Spring Hill on Saturday.

"I'm especially proud of the unity, the teamwork, the enthusiasm, and the confidence our guys wrestled with this weekend, and I'm excited for next weekend. The assistant coaches (Robert Ebenstein and Andy Wright) have been doing a phenomenal job helping plan and run practice, and we're going to be working more in-depth with individuals to help them peak the right way."

Vance took a big step forward in the heavyweight class as he avenged a loss from earlier in the season to Spring Hill's Sam Christy. Vance, who had two quick pins earlier Saturday, faced off with Christy and won a 3-2 decision to win the league crown

Koechner also made up for a loss earlier in the season. The Louisburg junior, who is ranked No. 4 in Class 4A, met Paola's Jake Miller, the No. 3-ranked wrestler.

Koechner lost a 3-2 decision to Miller in the first tournament

of the season in December, but responded with a pin of Miller in the second period and followed that up with a 1-0 decision over Ottawa's Brent Hornbuckle in his final match.



Hunter Bindi had two pins during the league tournament, including this one against Spring Hill.

As for Bindi and Keegan, they had a little easier path. Bindi wrestled in two matches and won both by pin. Keegan went 4-0 over the tournament as he picked up three first period pins and a 5-0 decision over Baldwin's Ricky Norval.

"I would have liked to see Hunter and Nathan get more competition, but all-in-all, they wrestled well and scored the points we needed them to score," Bovaird said. "Both of them are sitting in good positions for their regional brackets. Anders' win over Christy was a nice revenge win, and when he came off the mat he had a surge of confidence because he figured out a key element in his wrestling technique and was able to successfully apply it against a tough opponent.



Louisburg senior Anders Vance picks up Spring Hill's Sam Christy by the leg for a takedown Saturday.

"Mason's win was also a revenge win. He just dominated kids on top this weekend, the Miller match included. Anders' win was a lot about pride and confidence, and it may have significance with regional seeding, but Mason's definitely helps him at regionals with his seeding."

Louisburg will now use this week to prepare for its most important tournament of the season. The Wildcats will travel to Columbus to compete in the regional tournament beginning Friday.

The top four in each weight class will qualify for state and the Wildcats hope they can send even more than their five qualifiers from a year ago.

"It's a fun time of the year, especially if the kids have the right mindset," Bovaird said. "With our varsity group, I think that everyone really pulled together in pursuit of the team title. I think that magic is still with us, and we're ready to peak at regionals and state. Too often, teams hit this point in the season and kids are ready for it to be over. With a

surge like the one we got at league, I think we're ready to make an impact at regionals."



Hunter Bindi,
106, Champion



Thad Hendrix,
113, 4th



Nathan Keegan,
120, Champion



Kyle Allen, 126,
3rd



Tucker Batten,
132, 4th



Chris Turner,
138, 2nd



Blue Caplinger,
145, second



Zach Jones, 152,
3rd



Austin Moore,
160, second



Dillin Roberts,
170, third



Jacob Felder,
182, fourth



Austin Raetzel,
195, 3rd



Mason Koechner,
220, Champion



Anders Vance,
285, Champion

RESULTS AND NOTES FROM LEAGUE TOURNEY

- 106 – Hunter Bindi, 6-0, 2 pins, CHAMPION
- 113 – Thad Hendrix, 3-3, 4th place
- 120 – Nathan Keegan, 6-0, 3 pins, CHAMPION
- 126 – Kyle Allen, 4-2, 1 pin, 3rd place
- 132 – Tucker Batten, 3-3, 2 pins, 4th place
- 138 – Chris Turner, 5-1, 3 pins, 2nd place
- 145 – Blue Caplinger, 5-1, 2 pins, 2nd place
- 152 – Zach Jones, 3-3, 2 pins, 3rd place
- 160 – Austin Moore, 5-1, 3 pins, 1 tech fall, 2nd place
- 170 – Dillin Roberts, 4-2, 3 pins, 3rd place
- 182 – Jacob Felder, 3-3, 4th place
- 195 – Austin Raetzel, 4-2, 2 pins, 3rd place
- 220 – Mason Koechner, 6-0, 4 pins, CHAMPION

285 – Anders Vance, 6-0, 2 pins, CHAMPION

- Anders Vance moves into 7th on the all-time career wins with 88 wins
- Mason Koechner moves into 11th on all-time career wins with 84 wins
- Vance has 40 season wins, which ties Austin Hood with the most season wins
- Koechner has 32 pins this season, 1 shy of the team record he set last season
- Hunter Bindi joins the 30-win club with a record of 35-7 heading into regionals
- 10 Wildcats currently have winning records: Bindi, Nathan Keegan, Blue Caplinger, Austin Moore, Dillin Roberts, Jacob Felder, Austin Moore, Lyndon Smith, Koechner, and Vance