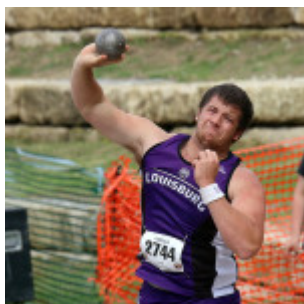


Louisburg track gears up for season



Louisburg senior Jarod Woodward is looking to make his second straight trip to the state track meet this season after qualifying in the shot put a season ago. The Wildcats open their season Tuesday at Mill Valley High School.

The Louisburg High School track and field team is going to have to replace some key pieces from last season's team that competed at the state meet.

Gone is Connor McMullen, a state champion in the discus and medalist in the javelin, along with state medalist hurdler Sean Dennis. Despite that, however, the Wildcats return several state qualifiers from a season ago.

Louisburg returns many key pieces from relays that qualified from state a season ago, along with qualifiers in the field events.

On the boys side, the Wildcats have approximately 60 out for track this year according to coach Gary Griffin, including 38 freshmen and sophomores.

Last season, Louisburg qualified all three relays for the state track meet, but did lose quite a few participants. In the 4×100 and 4×400-meter relays, sophomore Ben Minster is the

lone member from both teams to return, while senior Michael Minster, junior Ben Hupp and sophomore Wyatt Reece come back to help the 4×800 team.

Along with those four runners, Griffin hopes other runners such as Quinn Rigney and Chris Williams will be able to fill those gaps.

“Ben, Michael, Quinn, Chris and Wyatt will be the mainstays on our relays, but we are not sure about how the teams are going to look yet,” Griffin said. “It will probably be a fluid situation for the first few weeks.”

Reece will also be looked to lead the Wildcats in the distance races as he is slated to compete in the 1,600 and 3,200-meter runs, while Hupp is the team’s lone returning hurdler.

As for the sprints, Louisburg will have youth on its side as the Wildcats will count on several underclassmen. Ben Minster, Rigney and Jackson Ewalt are the most experienced runners and Griffin hopes several freshmen progress as the season goes in the field events.

In the field events, senior Jarod Woodward is the lone state qualifier to return as he hopes to build off his state appearance in the shot put. Senior Bradley Trageser, junior T.J. Dover and sophomore Garrett Lowry will give the Wildcats some depth in the shot put and discus.

Juniors Jacob Jensen and Dustyn Rizzo also hope to give the Wildcats some points in the javelin.

“I hope Jarod steps up because he needs to be the leader of the throwers,” Griffin said. “I am expecting all those other guys to score some points in the throws as well.”

The Louisburg girls team also had a good season a year ago, including state appearances in the 4×100 and 4×400 relays and the pole vault.

Coach Greg Darrington has seen a rise in numbers this season as he has 43 girls out this year and believes the Lady Cats will be able to do some good things.



Sophomore Isabelle Holtzen will try for her second straight trip to state this season in the pole vault.

“This is more girls than we have had in several years,” Darrington said “So far it has gone well in practice. I am looking forward to this year and I really feel these girls will step up and be competitive by the end of the year.”

The Lady Cats return two members from their 4×400 relay team in senior Megan Lemke and junior Kaitlyn Gaza. Sophomore Mikayla Quinn will look to fill one of those spots after having a solid year in the 400-meter dash a year ago.

They also hope to score some points in the distance races as well as Madelynn Yalowitz, Lauren Becker, Liz Hildreth and Isabelle Holtzen all return to strengthen the 4×800 relay team, along with the 800, 1,600 and 3,200-meter runs.

Louisburg's strong suit, however, might be in the jumps – specifically in the pole vault. Holtzen returns after qualifying for state a year ago in the pole vault, while teammate McKinley Mathews will also be a strong vaulter for the Lady Cats as she vies for a spot at state this year.

In the long and triple jumps, Kaitlyn Urban, Haley Earl and Chloe Renner will look to improve off last year's marks. Also, Ellie Katzer and Lexie Reece are making strides in the throws.

"I think the jumpers could be one of our strong areas this year," Darrington said. "Coach (Kyle) Littrell is doing a great job with those girls. I think in pole vault, Holtzen will push Mathews this year and both girls could qualify for state. Also Urban, Earl, and Renner have all been working really hard.

"All my throwers are young, but Ellie is looking good out of the gate. Lexie is showing signs of progress and is working very hard on her form to be able to hit some of her goals this year."

Louisburg will begin its season Tuesday when it travels to the Leavenworth Invitational, which is held at Mill Valley High School. Field events are set to begin at 3:30 p.m.

2016 LOUISBURG HIGH SCHOOL TRACK SCHEDULE

Mar. 29 at Leavenworth
Invitational 3:30 p.m.

Apr. 7 at Paola
3:30 p.m.

Apr. 14 at Anderson
County 3:30 p.m.

