

# Wildcats face tough competition at Paola Invite



Louisburg senior Megan Lemke hands the baton off to sophomore Mikayla Quinn during the 4×100-meter relay Thursday at the Paola Invitational. The Louisburg girls finished sixth overall with 42 points and the boys were fifth with 38 points.

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PAOLA – Usually this far into the season, the Louisburg High School track coaches can start to get some sort of an idea of what they have and who fits best in a certain event.

Now they are almost three weeks into the season and there are still plenty of questions to be answered thanks to Mother Nature. In the three meets the Wildcats have competed in, they have run, or thrown into a stiff, brisk wind each time.

During the Paola Invitational on Thursday, it was much of the same as the Wildcats faced tough competition to match the rough weather.

The Louisburg boys finished fifth in the team standings with 38 points and the Lady Cats took sixth with 42 points in the 11-team meet. Paola won the boys team title with 139.5 points and the girls with 215 points.

“I thought overall we kind of took a step backwards in some events,” Louisburg boys coach Gary Griffin said. “I didn’t

think we competed great. We have not had a good day yet for a meet so we are still trying to figure out what we have. I think overall our runners are improving and we will find out how much when we get a good day. Our young kids are still showing improvement and that is what I would expect from everyone on the team. We just need to be more consistent from week to week."

The Lady Cats earned points in eight events on both the track and field events.

Louisburg's 4×400-meter relay led the way as Megan Lemke, Kaitlyn Gaza, Reilly Alexander and Mikayla Quinn finished runner-up in 4 minutes and 34 seconds. Alexander was a late addition to the team

"Reilly Alexander did a great job stepping in with only five minutes to warm up and ran a great leg for the conditions in the 4×400," Louisburg girls coach Greg Darrington said. "She showed me she had a lot of guts and earned some respect from her teammates."

The Lady Cats 4×800 relay of Liz Hildreth, Lauren Becker, Isabelle Holtzen and Shaylor Whitham came in fourth in 11:41. It would be the first of three events that Holtzen scored in.

Following the relay, Holtzen went on to finish third in the pole vault after she cleared 9 feet, which was her best of the season. The Louisburg sophomore also took fifth in the 800-meter run in 2:47.

"I really believe our best performer this meet was Isabelle, who came home with three medals," Darrington said. "She did well in the pole vault and 800 run. She was very instrumental in the 4X800 relay to finish third."

Along with Holtzen's mark in the pole vault, the Lady Cats also scored points in the discus. Junior Ellie Katzer was fifth overall with a toss of 95-7.



**Sophomore Wyatt Reece (left) rounds the curve at the start of the 4×800-meter relay in Paola.**

Hanna Becker, Lemke, Gaza and Quinn came in sixth in the 4×100-meter relay in 56.09. Quinn and Gaza both ran a time of 1:08 in the 400-meter dash to take fifth and sixth, respectively.

On the boys side, senior Jarod Woodward had another strong performance in the shot put. Woodward took second overall with a toss of 49-2 to lead the Wildcat point-getters.

Freshman Chris Williams ran a strong 400-meter dash in 53.9 seconds to come in fourth. Williams, along with Scott Murphy, Quinn Rigney and Michael Minster, came in fourth in the 4×400-meter relay in 3:42.

In the high jump, Christopher Light also took fourth after clearing 5-6.

Minster, Wyatt Reece, Ben Hupp and Tanner Belcher helped the 4×800 relay take fifth in 9:22. In the 4×100 relay, Jackson Ewalt, Rigney, Brandon Cooper and Williams came in sixth (47.07).

Jacob Jensen rounded out the Wildcat point scorers as he took

sixth in the javelin with a toss of 131-0.

Louisburg returns to the track Thursday when it travels to the Anderson County Invitational in Garnett. It is set to begin at 3:30 p.m.