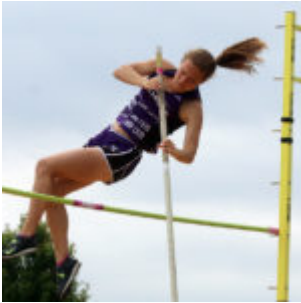


Holtzen, Renner win regional crowns to lead Lady Cats



Louisburg sophomore Isabelle Holtzen clears a mark in the pole vault during the Class 4A regional track meet Friday at Chanute High School. Holtzen won the event after she cleared 9 feet, 6 inches. In all, the Lady Cats qualified in six events for this week's state meet.

CHANUTE – Isabelle Holtzen and Chloe Renner couldn't believe their eyes.

In two separate events at the Class 4A regional track meet, going at the same time just feet apart, the unthinkable was happening for both Louisburg athletes.

They were about to become regional champions.

Holtzen watched as one of the state's top pole vaulters failed to make a height, while Renner took off in the triple jump and recorded the best mark of her life – by far.

Both of those developments gave them a regional title and got the day started right for the Louisburg girls track and field team in Chanute.

Along with Holtzen and Renner, the Lady Cats qualified for state in six events. Louisburg will send all three relays to this weekend's state meet at Wichita State University, while sophomore Sophie McMullen also qualified in the discus.

The top four in each event earn a spot at the state competition.



Junior Chloe Renner lands in the sand pit following an attempt in the triple jump Friday in Chanute.

As a team, the Lady Cats finished fifth overall with 40 points and Paola won the regional team crown with 144 points. Chanute was second with 92.

Holtzen, a sophomore, became the first to punch her ticket to state as she cleared 9 feet, 6 inches in the pole vault – which tied a personal best. Holtzen and Paola’s Samantha Van Hoecke were left at 10 feet.

Although Holtzen went out at 10, Van Hoecke didn’t enter the competition until 10 feet and was unable to clear the mark.

“I was not expecting her to get out and it really surprised me,” Holtzen said. “I really feel bad for her. We are friends and we have been to a lot of meets together so I have gotten to know her. When she got out it really hurt me too.

“At the same time I was really excited that I won, but I really wanted to get 10 feet. That is ok though because I know I still did well so I was pretty happy with that.”

Just across the way at the triple jump, Renner got the mark she has always been looking for. Renner, a junior, recorded a jump of 33-9.5 to win the event by three inches.

Renner's mark was a personal best by more than a foot and she will make her first ever state appearance. She nearly qualified in the long jump as well, but finished fifth at 15-10.5, losing a state spot by two inches.

"I did a lot better than I expected to do, that is for sure," Renner said. "My expectations weren't that high this year and I was so thrilled to finally get a compliment from (jump coach Kyle) Littrell.

"I am excited to go. It will be good to focus just in the triple jump all week in practice, so I hope to go even further and Littrell said I could have a good shot at medaling at state."

McMullen continued the good run for the Lady Cats she recorded her best throw of the season in the discus. The Louisburg sophomore had a toss of 105-8 to take fourth.

"It is nerve-racking but at the same time I am really excited to go to state," McMullen said. "Last year I didn't spin at all, and this year I am really working on my spin so I can hopefully get a better mark at state.

"I just want to go and see what happens. Just like this time, this is my first regional meet and I just wanted to come out and compete."



Louisburg sophomore Reilly Alexander runs stride for stride with a Paola runner during a leg of the 4×400 relay Friday in Chanute.

The Lady Cats continued their success on track as all three relay teams qualified and each came in fourth overall.

Two of those races provided a lot of drama as the 4×100- and 4×400-meter relays held off competitors at the end to earn that state berth.

The 4×400 team of Kaitlyn Gaza, Mikayla Quinn, Reilly Alexander and Megan Lemke recorded a time of 4 minutes and 18 seconds to shave five seconds off their previous best time.

“I think the last meet we came out and coach (Greg Darrington) told us to come out and run a 4:18 and we all looked at him like he was crazy,” Gaza said. “I knew that when I handed off to Mikayla that I kept us in a good spot.”

Quinn and Alexander kept Louisburg in the top four before Lemke took the baton on the anchor leg. Lemke actually came out fast and took the lead for a few seconds before the other three teams – Girard, Paola and Anderson County – were able to make up ground.

“Even my mom came up to me and asked why I ran so fast and then lost it,” Lemke joked. “I just wanted to beat Paola because they beat us in everything. I started out really fast because I had a lot of adrenaline going, but I kind of died at the end but it was worth it because we got a PR (personal record).”

The 4×100 team of Gaza, Lemke, Jordon Leach and Hanna Becker also ran a good time of 52.59 to take fourth.

It was Gaza’s sprint in the anchor leg that sealed it for the Lady Cats as she passed two teams in the final 100 meters to edge Spring Hill at the finish line.

“When I got the baton, we were either in fifth or sixth, so I knew that I really had to step it up and I just started going,” Gaza said. “I knew that I was running for more than myself. I was running for three other people as well. I passed the Spring Hill girl on my right and I knew that we had it and was such a good feeling.”

Leach, a freshman, has provided the Lady Cats with a little extra boost as she joined the team a few weeks ago.

“Jordon jumped in as a freshman and has taken to it really well,” Lemke said. “She was a little timid at first but she is really talented and really improved our times.”

It was less of a dramatic finish for the 4×800 team of Holtzen, Lauren Becker, Shaylor Whitham and Liz Hildreth as they knew they had already qualified before the race began. Since only four teams entered, the Lady Cat team was assured a berth barring a disqualification.



Megan Lemke (left) takes a handoff from teammate Jordon Leach during the 4×100 relay Friday at the Class 4A regional meet in Chanute.

That fact didn't make it any less exciting for the four runners.

"It is awesome," Hildreth said. "I have gone to state the last couple of years and watched and that track is just a dream with those grandstands there. I can't believe I get to run there.

Lauren Becker concurred with her teammate.

"This is the first time going to state in anything besides choir so it makes me feel like we accomplished something," Lauren said. "We have been practicing since Feb. 29 and it is a great feeling to know that it has paid off."

Preliminaries for some events will begin Friday morning at Wichita State's Cessna Stadium and the meet will finish up on Saturday.

Other Wildcat results are:

100 dash: Jordon Leach, 7th, 14.17

200 dash: Kaitlyn Gaza, 10th, 28.21

400 dash: Mikayla Quinn, 5th, 1:04.36

800 run: Liz Hildreth, 8th, 2:39

100 hurdles: Klara Riester, 7th, 18.63

300 hurdles: Riester, 7th, 51.79