

Wildcat wrestlers continue busy summer with camp



Garrett Caldwell pushes teammate Thad Hendrix up the hill on a sled with weights during a strongman workout Thursday during the final day of the Louisburg High School wrestling team camp.

Last season was a special run for the Louisburg High School wrestling team and it hopes to capitalize on that momentum.

The Wildcats won their first Frontier League crown in 19 years last year and ended up sending five wrestlers to the Class 4A state tournament. Louisburg also had two bring home state medals in Mason Koechner and Nathan Keegan.

It was a season to remember. Now the Wildcats are back to work to try and make this coming season an even bigger one.

Louisburg hosted its team camp last week at the high school as head coach Bobby Bovaird conducted a beginners and advanced camp for four days.

“I think that a lot of the boys have been able to relax and enjoy the good feelings coming off of last season,” Bovaird said. “It really was a fun season. Several guys have chosen to distance themselves from wrestling this spring and summer, and I understand that. As long as they’re active and competitive in something, I’m happy with it. It’s good to take a break

from time to time.

“We have a bunch of guys who are involved in other sports, and I’m fully supportive of them focusing their efforts there. It’s summertime in Louisburg – traditionally that means football, morning weights, 7-on-7, and other activities. I’m not worried about losing focus for next season. It’s a strong group of athletes we have here in Louisburg.”

Although numbers were down for the team camp, the ones who did attended received a lot of instruction. However, Bovaird didn’t want to be the lone voice in the room and he brought in a couple of guest instructors in LHS graduate Zach Knox and former Fort Hays State wrestler Nathan Shipley.

“For the high school group, I wanted to give them exposure to some of my typical ‘favorites,’ but from alternate perspectives,” Bovaird said. “I asked two college wrestlers to come help out. Nathan Shipley wrestled for me back in Topeka at Washburn Rural High School and grew to have a lot of success as a varsity wrestler for FHSU. Zach just came off a pretty solid redshirt season at Kansas Wesleyan University in Salina.

“I was really happy to see these two young men step up and show some great techniques. They reiterated lots of things I’ve said to the team, but they also brought a new perspective to these techniques.”

After spending the first three days on the mat, the advanced campers found themselves outdoors for a little training exercise. Bovaird called on friend Corey Scott, a personal trainer in the Kansas City area, to put his campers through a strongman workout.



Brandon Doles lifts an atlas stone over the bar Thursday during the LHS wrestling team camp.

The wrestlers worked for close to 90 minutes on flipping large tires, lifting atlas stones and other exercises. It was the second year in a row Scott has come down and Bovaird believes it is a nice change of pace.

“Corey and I go way back – he was a wrestling official in the Topeka area when I was in high school and I even coached his nephew at my previous school,” Bovaird said. “I love the ‘wrestler strong’ training program that he does. It lines up perfectly with what I want our wrestlers working on strength-wise, and it complements quite a lot of what Coach (Kyle) Littrell does with his football strength program. Corey is a passionate advocate for wrestling and he has this program that makes training a little more fun.”

Although the camp is complete, the Wildcats are still doing plenty of work in the offseason and Bovaird has tried to motivate his wrestlers by creating an ‘Ironman Program.’ Wrestlers can earn a certain number of points for attending open mats, camps or other wrestling activities over the

summer.

"I have five or six who are on track to hit 100 points, and every wrestler in the program who hits the 100-point mark will get his name on a t-shirt for the Ironman Award," he said. "It's a way to encourage off-season wrestling. There's the obvious reason for wrestling outside of the high school season – it gets you to jump to a higher level of wrestling – but sometimes teenagers need a little more motivation: getting their name on a t-shirt. We've had anywhere from 9-12 kids at each open mat the last three weeks."

Several Wildcats wrestlers have been busy this summer. Garrett Caldwell and Kyle Allen attended the Penn State wrestling camp at Baker University and learned from Penn State coach Cael Sanderson.

Junior Ryan Adams, who missed most of the season last year due to an injury, wrestles in Topeka on Wednesdays and competed in the Titan Games in Parkville, Mo., two weeks ago.

Senior Ben Hupp went to the Oklahoma State wrestling camp last week, while Mason Koechner, Hunter Bindi, Hunter Millbern, Jacob Felder Brandon Doles, Caldwell and Allen will be traveling with Bovaird to the Outdoor Challenge Camp in Valentine, Neb., next month.

It is that camp in which the Wildcats are trying to raise money. The team will be hosting a spaghetti feed at 5 p.m., on July 9 at First Baptist Church. The all-you-can-eat dinner is \$8 for adults and \$4 for children.