

LHS cross country has state aspirations



Louisburg junior Isabelle Holtzen is one of several returning runners from last season's girls cross country team and she, and the rest of the Lady Cat runners, hope to earn a spot at the state meet this season.

After members of the Louisburg High School girls cross country team came up short of earning a spot at the Class 4A state meet last season, those same runners only had one thing in mind when preparing for the upcoming season.

It is what has been driving them during workouts all summer.

"For the girls team, we did not set a goal," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "We made a statement – 'State' – no exceptions."

The Lady Cat runners have high expectations this season – and they should – as they have almost their full team back from a year ago. Seniors Madelynn Yalowitz, Kaitlyn Gaza and Liz Hildreth, along with junior Isabelle Holtzen, return to lead the experienced group of runners.

Junior Lilly Mick, sophomore Alex Miller and senior Mara Justesen also competed at the regional meet a year ago and will be vying for a spot on the varsity roster. According to Reece, it will be difficult to decide on what his final team

will look like as he has a few newcomers that have thrown their name into the mix as well.

“The girls are up in numbers and this will make it tough for coach A (Arianne Seidl) and I to pick a top seven for our first meet,” Reece said. “Hopefully it will create competition among teammates to perform well to claim a varsity spot. We will be looking to our past varsity runners to lead the way.”



Louisburg's Wyatt Reece hopes for an even better junior season after qualifying for state as a sophomore.

What won't be difficult for the coaches to figure is who the top boy runner will be. Junior Wyatt Reece returns after earning a spot at the Class 4A state cross country meet last season.

Reece finished 71st at the Wamego Country Club last October and the experience left him wanting more.

“Wyatt's state qualification definitely motivated him,” coach Reece said. “He has been working hard all summer and attended a cross country camp in Colorado Springs, along with Isabelle

and Madelynn, to continue to improve on his training. He wants to go to state again and move up way in the places. I hope to see him compete at the front of the field in all of our meets and really push himself."

As far as the boys team goes, the Wildcats will be low in numbers compared to the girls side. Louisburg lost several varsity runners from last season due to graduation and the Wildcats return several inexperienced runners.

One of those runners is sophomore Tim Smith, who ran the distance races for the Louisburg track team last spring, and coach Reece hopes he, along with several others, can get better. Senior Austin Raetzel also looks to provide some experience for Louisburg as he is the lone senior boy runner.

"Numbers wise the boys team is a little down, but we do have several new runners this year," coach Reece said. "It could be awhile before we field a complete varsity team."

The Wildcats are ready to see if all the hard work over the summer has paid off when they open their season Thursday in Garnett for the Jerry Howarter Invitational. The meet is set to begin at 3:30 p.m.

They will also get an opportunity to run on their home course when they host the Louisburg Invitational on Oct. 6.