

Wildcats finish runner-up at Fort Scott tourney



The Louisburg wrestling team finished second at the Fort Scott Duals Tournament on Saturday at Fort Scott High School. Members of the team (from left) are Tucker Batten, Blue Caplinger, Kyle Allen, Dylan Meyer, Terry Allen, Mason Koechner, Ryan Adams, Thad Hendrix, Austin Raetzel, Harrison Laney, Tanner Belcher, Ben Hupp and Austin Moore.

FORT SCOTT – It may have been the first tournament of the season, but the Louisburg High School wrestling team looked like it was in midseason form at times.

The Wildcats competed in the Fort Scott Duals Tournament on Saturday and came away with the runner-up trophy after rolling to four victories. After losing to Class 5A state-ranked Blue Valley Southwest to open the day, Louisburg won its next four matches by an average of 42 points.

Louisburg defeated Fort Scott (60-24), Shawnee Mission West (69-9), Anderson County (51-26) and Paola (63-18) after losing to Blue Valley Southwest (46-21) to finish in second place overall.

“I think it was definitely a nice way to start off the season,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Going 4-1 at Fort Scott was a good confidence booster for our guys.”

The tournament brought out a lot of positives for the Wildcats, which included perfect performances from senior Mason Koechner, junior Ryan Adams and sophomore Austin Moore.

Adams, who is the No. 4 ranked wrestler in Class 4A, got a big win against Blue Valley Southwest's Matt Stack, who is ranked No. 5 in Class 5A. Adams went into overtime before pulling out a 3-1 decision in his first match of the day. He finished the day 5-0 with two pins to go along with the overtime win.

Koechner, who is currently the No. 2 ranked heavyweight in Class 4A, had an easy day with three pins to go undefeated. Moore also had a big day at 170 pounds as he wrestled five matches, with four of those coming by pin.

"Ryan's first match against the (Stack) was a great test for him," Bovaird said. "It went to the wire with Ryan winning in overtime. Between the Osawatomie dual and Fort Scott, Mason had two forfeits and four pins. He's only been on the mat a little over three minutes in total. I think he's going to have some dominant wins up at 285 this season.

"Austin had four pins and one tech fall, outscoring his opponents 28-0. That's pretty good for a sophomore. With his strength, speed and coachability, I can see him having one heck of a season this year."

Junior Tucker Batten (132 pounds), senior Ben Hupp (182) and senior Austin Raetzel also had strong performances as all three wrestlers picked up four wins on the day. Hupp and Raetzel each tallied three pins, while Batten had a pair of pins.

"Tucker's only loss was 4-0 to a Southwest kid," Bovaird said. "Ben was beating his Anderson County opponent 8-5 when he got caught and pinned. That kid had beaten Ben out at regionals last year in the match to go to state. I've seen a lot of confidence and technique improvements in him already.

“Austin is a tough kid to wrestle. He stronger than he looks, and he looks pretty strong. He’s stubborn to move and he’s been working on some areas in the off-season that are already showing with his wrestling this season.”



Senior Dylan Meyer pulls an Osawatomie wrestler to the mat for a takedown Thursday in Louisburg.

Five other Louisburg wrestlers had winning records on the day. Junior Thad Hendrix (106), junior Kyle Allen (126), sophomore Tanner Belcher (138), sophomore Blue Caplinger (160) and senior Terry Allen (220) ended the tournament 3-2.

The Wildcats’ lone loss came against one of the tougher teams they will see all season. Blue Valley Southwest is currently ranked seventh in Class 5A, but Louisburg bounced back nicely for the runner-up finish.

"Blue Valley Southwest is definitely the real deal this season," Bovaird said. "They're ranked in Class 5A, and they have 6-7 kids ranked in the top six at state. Four matches we lost were by decisions – Kyle Allen lost 5-3, Tucker Batten lost 4-0, Dylan Meyer lost 10-4, and Blue Caplinger lost 3-1 in overtime. We were open at 120, also, with no back-up there.

"Considering things, I was feeling positive about the dual, but I also want to be able to get out there against a team like that and compete head-to-head. I want it to come down to the wire. That's when we know for sure that we're making progress. Right now, I have a good feeling about where we're going as a program, but I'm still looking for concrete proof to affirm that."

Louisburg will get another tough test starting Friday when it competes in the Eudora Tournament of Champions. The tournament begins at 1:30 p.m. and will continue through Saturday.

LOUISBURG WINS OPENER AGAINST OSAWATOMIE

Louisburg would have liked to wrestle a few more matches, but the Wildcats put together a solid performance in their debut Thursday against Osawatomie.

The Wildcats defeated the Trojans 57-18 in their first dual of the season at Louisburg High School. Osawatomie was open at several weight classes and the Wildcats wrestled just eight varsity matches.

Thad Hendrix opened things up at 106 pounds and lost a tough 9-8 decision in a back-and-forth match. At 138 pounds, Tanner Belcher picked up a 7-3 decision and Dylan Meyer followed that up with a pin at 152 pounds.

Blue Caplinger lost a close 9-6 decision at 160 and Ben Hupp was pinned at 182. The Wildcats finished the day strong as they got pins from Terry Allen (220) and Mason Koechner (285).

Not only did the Wildcats celebrate a win, they also welcomed back several former Louisburg wrestlers as they hosted an alumni reunion. Close to 30 alumni were on hand to watch the Wildcats.

"I love the idea of having an alumni reunion every year, and I've gotten so much positive feedback from our alumni," Bovaird said. "We have some guys talking about getting it planned out even earlier next year – send out letters several months in advance, doing a dinner for the alumni and their families, etc. It's pretty exciting, too. I have a limited amount of artifacts from throughout the years (pictures, newspaper clippings, etc.), and I'd love to have more stuff to set out for the guys to look at and reminisce.

"I loved having the season start off so well – we had a great crowd considering it was a single dual, the student body presence was pretty fantastic, the drum line played before the meet and between matches, and we were able to recognize the alumni who could make it. There were some competitive matches against Osawatomie, too, at both JV and varsity. That's always a positive for the team and our program."