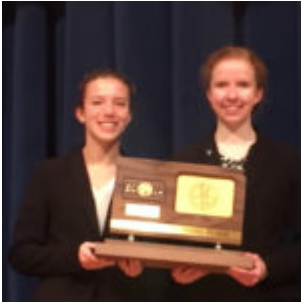


Anderson, Holtzen take third at state debate



Louisburg High School's Isabelle Holtzen (left) and Grayson Anderson pose with their Class 4A third-place trophy following the state debate tournament on Jan. 21 at Lyons High School.

LYONS – Greyson Anderson and Isabelle Holtzen were filled with negative thoughts in one of the most important times of their season.

In most competitions, that kind of pessimism can spell doom and gloom. Not debate.

Anderson and Holtzen argued on the negative side of things during the final day of the Class 4A state debate tournament Jan. 21 in Lyons. Those arguments served them well as the Louisburg High School duo finished in third place for the second consecutive season.

When it was all over, there was nothing but positivity.

“At the beginning of the year, Grayson and I were both hoping that we would have a good year,” Holtzen said. “We were hopeful that we could make it to state again. When we got to state and made it to the semifinals, we couldn't believe it. Grayson and I were extremely excited that we were blessed enough to take third place again.”

The road to another third place state trophy wasn't an easy

one. The LHS debate team left Louisburg around 5:45 a.m. that Friday to head to Lyons and the team didn't return until 2 a.m. the following Sunday morning.

State didn't get off to a great start as Holtzen and Anderson began the tournament with a 1-3 record in the preliminary rounds. On Saturday, they picked up it up by winning two preliminary rounds to even their record and advanced to the elimination out-rounds.

Holtzen and Anderson went on to win the double octofinal, octofinal and quarterfinal round that eventually helped them to that third-place trophy.

"State debate is very intense and rigorous," Anderson said. "We suffered a pretty severe setback after the first day so that really challenged our character and tenacity. The tournament was emotionally and mentally exhausting but I was very proud of our team and coming from behind made the success that much sweeter."

The key to the debaters' success Saturday was arguing to their strength. Anderson and Holtzen argued the negative side in each of their rounds.

"This year being able to debate with Grayson throughout the year helped a lot because we were able to become more comfortable with each other," Holtzen said. "On Friday we had four rounds and we argued both the affirmative and negative sides, but on Saturday we only argued the negative.

"Both Grayson and I prefer the negative side. In the state tournament we only lost one round while arguing negative. Being able to argue that all day Saturday really contributed to our success because we are better at it."

Saturday was a long day for the entire Wildcat debate team as competition lasted from early morning until late in the evening. But the Wildcat pair got a lot of help from teammates

who came up short in their competitions.

Brooke Talmage, McKenzie Vanmeerhaeghe, Calvin Cassida, Nathaniel Mason, Janae Kuhlman and Flynn Langner all did work throughout the day.

“Even though the three other teams didn’t break to out-rounds, every one of our teammates played a key role in our success,” Anderson said. “Brooke, McKenzie, Flynn, Calvin, Nathaniel, and Janae were in other rounds scouting cases and strategies for future rounds. There was a whole group of people that contributed to that trophy and I am very proud to call them my teammates.”

Holtzen couldn’t agree more.

“Throughout the day having teammates and a coach helping you stay focused is very helpful,” Holtzen said. “They were always there between rounds to keep our energy up and they were really key in our success.”