

Elite 8: Wildcats qualify record number for state



Louisburg senior Austin Raetzel was one of three Wildcats to wrestle in the championship finals of the Class 4A regional tournament in Frontenac. Raetzel was one of eight Wildcats to qualify for the Class 4A state tournament in Salina.

FRONTENAC – Sometimes good things come to those who wait and the Louisburg wrestling team has waited a long time for a day like Saturday.

For the first time in more than 30 years, the Louisburg wrestling team will have eight wrestlers compete in the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in Salina. All eight qualified for state during the two-day regional tournament at Frontenac High School.

Thad Hendrix (106 pounds), Nathan Keegan (120), Kyle Allen (126), Ryan Adams (138), Dylan Meyer (145), Austin Moore (170), Austin Raetzel (195) and Mason Koechner (285) will all compete in the state tournament beginning this Friday. Louisburg also finished fifth in the team standings

The Wildcats tied a school record of eight state qualifiers that was set in 1984 on a team led by former coach Dee Graham.

“Two years ago, I was ecstatic – and relieved – to be taking

five guys to state,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Last year, I was proud to take five again. This year, I can’t help but look back with pride on everything the program has accomplished. It hasn’t been that long since we spent two seasons without any state qualifiers. 2013 and 2014 were very humbling experiences for me as a coach, and I’m so proud of how those two seasons served as motivators for the wrestlers in the Louisburg community.”

Three of those qualifiers— Adams, Raetzel and Koechner – all wrestled for a regional title. However, all three came up short in their quest for a regional crown and each finished second.

Koechner, the No. 1 ranked heavyweight in Class 4A, squared off with No. 2 Seth Stroble of Independence. To get to that match, Koechner pinned Columbus’ Chance Meyer in 39 seconds in the quarterfinals and then pinned Prairie View’s Dylan Frederick in 40 seconds in the semifinals.

The wins set up the showdown with Stroble in what was a tight match all the way to end. Tied at 1-all with 20 seconds left in the third period, Koechner tried for a takedown and slipped, which allowed Stroble to get on top for the 2-point takedown and then added two more back points in the 6-1 loss.

“I thought Mason was in good position a lot of the match,” Bovaird said. “He was the aggressor, and we knew going into that match that Stroble could be dangerous. When Mason got an underhook in neutral, Stroble liked to lock hands and try to crack down on Mason’s elbow. When Mason stepped in for a power step, Stroble was looking to step on his foot and trip him.

“It came down to the last twenty seconds. Stroble hit a bad shot, Mason countered and got too eager on the go-behind. That late in a heavyweight match, both boys are sweaty, and Mason slipped off. It’s better to lose that match here than at state.”



Louisburg's Mason Koechner battles Independence's Seth Stroble during the 285-pound regional final match.

It was just Koechner's second loss of the season and he is 38-2 heading into the state tournament this weekend. It will be his third straight state appearance, and despite the setback, the Louisburg senior was happy with the way the team performed.

"It is awesome and to get eight guys to state is great," Koechner said. "That ties the most we have ever gotten. We have a good team this year and I am glad to see all those guys go.

"I definitely didn't wrestle my best this weekend. I felt a little gassed during my finals match and I just didn't feel like myself. (Stoble) was hard to move around. I was getting my shots set up, but I wasn't finishing. I couldn't finish anything. At the end I tried to force some things and I

shouldn't have tried to force it. Hopefully I can have a good week of practice this week and get back to state ready to go."

At 195 pounds, Raetzel opened the tournament with two consecutive pins on Friday and then defeated Anderson County's Dominic Sutton in a 9-4 decision in the semifinals to earn a spot in the finals.

Raetzel, a senior, squared off with Frontenac's Nathan Kauffman in the finals Saturday, but lost in a 13-5 major decision.

"I have one more week to refine what I need to do," Raetzel said. "I think I wrestled pretty well this weekend. The guy in my finals match was pretty tough, and it was definitely a struggle. It was a disappointing match and I feel like there were some missed opportunities for shots and some reversals, but I will learn from it. I am excited for state."



Junior Ryan Adams finished second at 138 pounds and will

make his second state appearance.

Adams also had a great start at 138 pounds Friday as he pinned Frontenac's Kaleb Kroenke in 14 seconds and then defeated Prairie View's Tre Kline in an 11-6 decision to reach the finals.

The Louisburg junior, who qualified for state as a freshman, lost in a 15-0 technical fall to Burlington's Brett Bober in the finals.

"I thought we did awesome as a team," Adams said. "I think we worked really hard this year to get to the point where we are at. The whole team has done well. We have busted our butts in the practice room and worked hard. We definitely deserved it.

"I thought I wrestled pretty well in my first three matches, but I definitely didn't show up and wrestle my last match. I just have to keep grinding and getting better."

The round where the Wildcats excelled the most was in the consolation semifinals – or better known at the "blood round." The winner of each match earned a spot in the state tournament.

Louisburg had seven wrestlers in the blood round and five came away with a win.

Hendrix opened things up with a pin in 13 seconds to earn his second consecutive state appearance. Keegan earned a third straight tournament appearance with a 3-0 decision over Prairie View's Brayden Dame.

Allen qualified for his first state tournament as he won a 10-4 decision over Paola's Noah Bowden. Meyer did the same, as he will be making his first appearance in Salina thanks to a pin of Independence's Ryan Bruce.

Moore won the battle with Osawatomie's Cody Hazlett in his

consolation semifinal match in a 12-7 decision to earn his first state bid.

Tucker Batten (132) and Ben Hupp (182) were each close in their semifinal matches, but Batten lost a 3-0 decision to Prairie View's Maeson Kehl in dramatic fashion, while Hupp lost a 12-9 decision to Anderson County's Kyle Lamb.

"The pattern has usually been one of heartache and disappointment in the blood round, but this season is where things have really turned around," Bovaird said. "It's been exciting and rewarding seeing these guys continue to step up this season. The team has shown a ton of maturity and determination as they progress through their wrestling careers. Four of our seven seniors are heading to state, and we'll have four returners on the squad next season.

"The exciting thing is that with the two matches we lost in the blood round, they were both within our reach to win. It hurt when Ben Hupp fell short at 182. He wanted to go to state, and he chased that goal with everything he had, including a quarterfinal round upset of the No. 2 seed. At 132, Tucker was trailing by three and had a cradle locked up – in fact, he was in the process of turning his opponent when the referee stopped the match and called a stalemate. That was tough to see his season end like that."



Louisburg coaches (from left) Andy Wright, Bobby Bovaird and Brandon Ott get into Dylan Meyer's 145-pound consolation semifinal match in which he earned a pin and qualified for state.

The finals and consolation finals round didn't go as well as the Wildcats had hoped as they finished with just one win in their seven matches. That lone win came from Allen at 126 pounds as he finished in third place with a 3-1 decision over Columbus' Nate Thomas.

Hendrix, Keegan, Meyer and Moore each took fourth place, but all eight Wildcats are ready for what lies ahead.

"The boys are excited to be going to state, but one perennial challenge that a coach faces is keeping them focused on state," Bovaird said. "Qualifying for state is an awesome deal – one to be proud of, for sure – but we don't want to start celebrating until we've finished our business this season."

“The record books aren’t closed yet, and we still have a chance to get out to Salina and make our mark this season. That finals round was a little brutal for us, losing all but one match. The thing is, we’ve got this week to reset and refocus, and with the group we’ve got going to state, I think we can do just that.”



Junior Kyle Allen finished third at 126 pounds.



Sophomore Austin Moore finished fourth at 170 pounds.



Senior Dylan Meyer was fourth at 145 pounds.



Senior Nathan Keegan finished fourth at 120 pounds.



Thad Hendrix took fourth at 106 pounds.

Louisburg Regional Wrestling Results

106 – Thad Hendrix (30-10) placed 4th and scored 9.00 team points.

Quarterfinal – Thad Hendrix (Louisburg) 30-10 won by decision over Gavin Daniels (Chanute) 9-17 (Dec 8-7)

Semifinal – Gabe Eades (Independence) 27-7 won by major decision over Thad Hendrix (Louisburg) 30-10 (MD 15-1)

Cons. Semi – Thad Hendrix (Louisburg) 30-10 won by fall over Johnathon Williams (Burlington) 17-21 (Fall 0:23)

3rd Place Match – Jacob Hollman (Osawatomie) 23-10 won in sudden victory – 1 over Thad Hendrix (Louisburg) 30-10 (SV-1 11-6)

120 – Nathan Keegan (20-7) placed 4th and scored 9.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Nathan Keegan (Louisburg) 20-7 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Nathan Keegan (Louisburg) 20-7 won in sudden victory – 1 over Kyle Montojo (Fort Scott) 14-12 (SV-1 3-1)

Semifinal – Evan Totty (Burlington) 32-7 won by major decision over Nathan Keegan (Louisburg) 20-7 (MD 12-2)

Cons. Semi – Nathan Keegan (Louisburg) 20-7 won by decision over Brayden Dame (La Cygne-Prairie View) 21-14 (Dec 3-0)

3rd Place Match – Brady McDonald (Chanute) 27-13 won by fall over Nathan Keegan (Louisburg) 20-7 (Fall 2:34)

126 – Kyle Allen (25-11) placed 3rd and scored 10.00 team points.

Quarterfinal – Kyle Allen (Louisburg) 25-11 won by decision over Nate Thomas (Columbus) 8-16 (Dec 3-0)

Semifinal – Logan McDonald (Chanute) 19-11 won by fall over Kyle Allen (Louisburg) 25-11 (Fall 5:17)

Cons. Semi – Kyle Allen (Louisburg) 25-11 won by decision over Noah Bowden (Paola) 20-13 (Dec 10-4)

3rd Place Match – Kyle Allen (Louisburg) 25-11 won by decision over Nate Thomas (Columbus) 8-16 (Dec 3-1)

132 – Tucker Batten (22-10) place is unknown and scored 5.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Tucker Batten (Louisburg) 22-10 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Tucker Batten (Louisburg) 22-10 won by major decision over Caleb Cline (Paola) 13-12 (MD 8-0)

Semifinal – Mason Jameson (Frontenac) 21-12 won by decision over Tucker Batten (Louisburg) 22-10 (Dec 10-5)

Cons. Semi – Maeson Kehl (La Cygne-Prairie View) 3-3 won by decision over Tucker Batten (Louisburg) 22-10 (Dec 3-0)

138 – Ryan Adams (22-7) placed 2nd and scored 18.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Ryan Adams (Louisburg) 22-7 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Ryan Adams (Louisburg) 22-7 won by fall over Kaleb Kroenke (Frontenac) 3-5 (Fall 0:14)

Semifinal – Ryan Adams (Louisburg) 22-7 won by decision over Tre Kline (La Cygne-Prairie View) 26-15 (Dec 11-6)

1st Place Match – Brett Bober (Burlington) 39-8 won by tech fall over Ryan Adams (Louisburg) 22-7 (TF-1.5 4:49 (15-0))

145 – Dylan Meyer (22-18) placed 4th and scored 12.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Dylan Meyer (Louisburg) 22-18 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Dylan Meyer (Louisburg) 22-18 won by major decision over Anthony Keaton (Parsons) 20-12 (MD 9-1)

Semifinal – Colby Johnson (Burlington) 37-0 won by fall over Dylan Meyer (Louisburg) 22-18 (Fall 1:35)

Cons. Semi – Dylan Meyer (Louisburg) 22-18 won by fall over Ryan Bruce (Independence) 21-16 (Fall 4:26)

3rd Place Match – Gavin Cullor (La Cygne-Prairie View) 15-7 won by decision over Dylan Meyer (Louisburg) 22-18 (Dec 6-0)

152 – Alec Maler (4-14) place is unknown and scored 0.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Jordan Ishimura (Frontenac) 28-7 won by fall over Alec Maler (Louisburg) 4-14 (Fall 1:37)

Cons. Round 1 – Tyler Metcalf (Parsons) 19-18 won by fall over Alec Maler (Louisburg) 4-14 (Fall 1:28)

160 – Blue Caplinger (22-17) place is unknown and scored 3.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Blue Caplinger (Louisburg) 22-17 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal – John Diediker (Osawatomie) 19-7 won by decision over Blue Caplinger (Louisburg) 22-17 (Dec 8-3)

Cons. Round 2 – Blue Caplinger (Louisburg) 22-17 won by fall over Logan Hall (Fort Scott) 0-6 (Fall 1:52)

Cons. Round 3 – Dalton Duke (Garnett-Anderson County) 21-14 won by decision over Blue Caplinger (Louisburg) 22-17 (Dec 2-1)

170 – Austin Moore (32-9) placed 4th and scored 11.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Austin Moore (Louisburg) 32-9 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Austin Moore (Louisburg) 32-9 won by fall over Tavon Blazek (Iola) 23-12 (Fall 1:18)

Semifinal – Andrew Mays (Frontenac) 17-7 won by fall over Austin Moore (Louisburg) 32-9 (Fall 5:52)

Cons. Semi – Austin Moore (Louisburg) 32-9 won by decision over Cody Hazlett (Osawatomie) 22-9 (Dec 12-7)

3rd Place Match – Ridge Smith (Columbus) 24-8 won by decision over Austin Moore (Louisburg) 32-9 (Dec 6-4)

182 – Ben Hupp (22-18) place is unknown and scored 5.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Ben Hupp (Louisburg) 22-18 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Ben Hupp (Louisburg) 22-18 won by major decision over Quiency Jones (Altamont-Labette County) 25-7 (MD 17-4)

Semifinal – Jesse Henry (La Cygne-Prairie View) 28-12 won by fall over Ben Hupp (Louisburg) 22-18 (Fall 4:09)

Cons. Semi – Kyle Lamb (Garnett-Anderson County) 32-7 won by decision over Ben Hupp (Louisburg) 22-18 (Dec 12-9)

195 – Austin Raetzel (30-11) placed 2nd and scored 20.00 team

points.

Champ. Round 1 – Austin Raetzel (Louisburg) 30-11 won by fall over Sam Chamber (La Cygne-Prairie View) 13-20 (Fall 1:49)

Quarterfinal – Austin Raetzel (Louisburg) 30-11 won by fall over Gary Lower (Iola) 6-13 (Fall 0:34)

Semifinal – Austin Raetzel (Louisburg) 30-11 won by decision over Dominic Sutton (Garnett-Anderson County) 29-9 (Dec 9-4)

1st Place Match – Nathan Kaufman (Frontenac) 29-8 won by major decision over Austin Raetzel (Louisburg) 30-11 (MD 13-5)

220 – Terry Allen (11-19) place is unknown and scored 1.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Terry Allen (Louisburg) 11-19 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Jake Miller (Paola) 11-0 won by fall over Terry Allen (Louisburg) 11-19 (Fall 0:22)

Cons. Round 2 – Terry Allen (Louisburg) 11-19 won by decision over Rich Garris (Independence) 8-11 (Dec 3-0)

Cons. Round 3 – Ben Daniels (Fort Scott) 12-12 won by fall over Terry Allen (Louisburg) 11-19 (Fall 3:37)

285 – Mason Koechner (38-2) placed 2nd and scored 20.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Mason Koechner (Louisburg) 38-2 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Mason Koechner (Louisburg) 38-2 won by fall over Chance Meyer (Columbus) 4-16 (Fall 0:39)

Semifinal – Mason Koechner (Louisburg) 38-2 won by fall over Dylan Frederick (La Cygne-Prairie View) 22-16 (Fall 0:40)

1st Place Match – Seth Stroble (Independence) 36-1 won by decision over Mason Koechner (Louisburg) 38-2 (Dec 6-1)