

Adams leads Wildcats at state with first medal



Louisburg junior Ryan Adams points to the section of Wildcat fans following his win over Andover Central's Bryant Page in the "blood round" Saturday at the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in Salina. Adams earned a state medal with the win and would finish sixth overall.

SALINA – When the final whistle sounded in Ryan Adams' "blood round" match, the Louisburg High School junior turned and pointed to the section of Wildcat fans at the Salina Bicentennial Center.

He clapped his hands and walked to the center of the mat. A weight had been lifted off his shoulders – he was a state medalist.

Adams captured his first career state medal as he finished sixth at 138 pounds Saturday during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships. He was one of eight Wildcats to make the trip to Salina for the two-day tournament, but he was the lone Wildcat to get on the medal stand.

"It feels amazing," Adams said. "It feels great and very satisfying. I thought I wrestled pretty good overall, but I think the nerves were getting to me a little bit. I think the

whole team wrestled well. I really want to thank my family, coaches and teammates for sticking with me and rooting me on.”

The road back to Salina has been a long one for Adams.

As a freshman, Adams finished one win away from a state medal but lost in the medal round. He was forced to sit out his sophomore season with an elbow injury, but came back this season in hopes of getting that state medal.

“It was definitely motivation for me,” Adams said of the last two years. “I wanted to be a four-time state placer, but I came up short my freshman year and I wasn’t able to wrestle last season. It really put a spark in me and it really was a motivator to go out and place.”

Adams opened the state tournament with a pin of Pratt’s Kadence Riner in the first period and then faced off with Tonganoxie’s Gad Huseman in the quarterfinals, where he lost a tough 6-4 decision.

That loss put him in the consolation bracket, but Adams responded with a pin of Anderson County’s Cole Denny. Then in the “blood round,” Adams secured his state medal with a 6-1 decision of Andover Central’s Bryant Page, who was ranked No. 5 coming into the state tournament.



Ryan Adams works for a pin of Anderson County's Cole Denny on Saturday in Salina.

Adams went on to face Baldwin's Levi Green in the consolation semifinals, where he lost a 10-1 major decision and was pinned by Burlington's Brett Bober in the fifth-place match.

"Ryan has had a tough run these last couple seasons," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "Losing his entire sophomore season was tough for him, but once he had his surgery and finished his rehab, he was back at it in the summer months. None of our other wrestlers put in as much off-season time as he did. During the high school season, I think he had it in the back of his mind, what if I hurt my elbow again? I think it kept him conservative in some matches. But at state, we got the old Ryan Adams back, and it happened at just the right time.

"He was able to hang with the No. 3 ranked wrestler (Huseman) and lost 6-4, and then he beat the No. 5 ranked wrestler 6-1 to get into the medal rounds. He showed a lot of toughness in all his matches, and he showed a good deal of resilience after he lost in the quarterfinals. One of the best moments of the

season was when the final whistle blew in the blood round, and Ryan was so excited. He'd achieved one of his goals, to place at high school state."

Six of the eight Louisburg state qualifiers each won a match, but none of those were able to advance to the medal round.

Thad Hendrix (106), Dylan Meyer (145), Austin Moore (170), Austin Raetzel (195) and Mason Koechner (285) each finished the state tournament with a 1-2 record. Senior Nathan Keegan (120) and junior Kyle Allen (126) lost their first two matches Friday.

"It was tough seeing seven of our eight guys lose there in the first round, but then again, we weren't set up too well based on our regional results," Bovaird said. "Other than Adams, Raetzel was the only one who didn't have a ranked opponent in round one. Hendrix and Keegan both had the No. 1 ranked kids in their weights, Moore had the No. 2 guy, and Allen and Meyer each had the No. 4 guy in their weights.

"On the back side of the bracket, we had five guys win matches, which was nice to see. They wrestled tough in all their matches, but to come home winning a match is pretty good. When it comes down to it, the state tournament is tough, and I think this year was filled with some of the toughest brackets I've seen in a long time. Nathan Keegan was one of eight returning state medalists in his weight class. The same goes for Mason Koechner. Some guys in those brackets had to return home empty-handed. It just hurts that it had to be two of our guys. I thought we'd been better prepared than that."



Louisburg senior Mason Koechner battles with Holton's Kyler Tannahill during a consolation match Saturday in Salina.

Koechner (39-4), who entered the tournament as the No. 2 ranked heavyweight in Class 4A, had a difficult opening round match. He met Colby's Ethan Jay, the defending state runner-up and eventual third-place finisher, and lost a 5-2 decision.

After a scoreless first period, Jay earned an escape in the second period and then took down Koechner for two more points. Koechner earned the escape in the third period, but Jay got another takedown to widen his lead even more.

The Louisburg senior responded to pin Clearwater's Brady Helton in the second period in his first consolation match. However, Koechner lost a 3-1 decision to Holton's Kyler Tannahill in the next round.

Despite missing out on a state medal, Koechner's career at Louisburg was a strong one as he was two-time Frontier League champion, a 3-time state qualifier, a third-place finisher at state as a junior and finished with a career record of 130-32 – which is the second most wins in program history.

“Koechner's tournament was very tough for all of us, but I know Mason can't define his identity as a wrestler based on one tournament,” Bovaird said. “He was 4-0 against the state finalists this year. He pinned (Sam) Christy of Spring Hill twice, and he beat (Jake) Hastings of Santa Fe Trail twice (5-0 and 6-1). That's painful to see both of those guys make the finals. It just goes to show how much of a psychological factor there is in the sport of wrestling. Mason went all season ranked toward the top, only to hit a couple road-blocks along the way at the state tournament.

“Mason was the first wrestler I got to know from the Louisburg wrestling program when I first took the job, and he has had more of a role in rebuilding the program than I think he realizes.”

Raetzel (31-13) fell in his first match in a 13-7 decision to Goodland's Cameron Gray, but stayed alive in the consolation round with a wild 15-12 victory over Ulysses' Ayston Perez. Raetzel was down 12-10, but earned a takedown and a 3-point nearfall with 25 seconds left to secure the win.



Louisburg senior Austin Raetzel tries to hold down Goodland's Cameron Gray during his first round match Friday at the Class 4A state tournament.

The Louisburg senior lost his next consolation match as he was pinned in the second period by Basehor-Linwood's Alex Bejarano.

As for Moore (33-11), he responded after his first round loss

with pin of Concordia's Tracer Workman in the first round of consolation. He then met Bonner Springs' Trai Warburton but was eventually pinned in the third period in what was a back and forth match.

Meyer (23-20), another Louisburg senior, got a state win in the first round of consolation with a pin of Andover Central's David Mumford. His season came to an end in the next round as he was pinned by Chanute's Gage Leedy.

Hendrix (31-12) won a 4-2 decision over Holton's Cameron Smith in the first consolation round to get his first career state win, but lost a 7-0 decision to Clearwater's Hunter Reddick to end his season.

Keegan, who was a 3-time state qualifier, finished with a 20-9 record. Allen made his first state tournament and ended his season with a 25-13 mark.