

Wildcat track qualifies for state in 10 events



Louisburg junior Quinn Rigney (left) edges Osawatomie's Will Thompson and Paola's Andrew Phillips at the finish line of the 100-meter dash Friday during the Class 4A regional meet at Paola High School. Rigney won the regional title in the event and qualified for three events at state.

PAOLA – With runners right on their heels, Quinn Rigney and Chris Williams didn't buckle on the pressure.

A regional title was on the line for both runners, and despite a late charge from their competition, both athletes left the Class 4A regional meet in Paola on Friday with a first-place medal and a spot at the state meet.

Rigney won the regional title in the 100-meter dash in 11.07 seconds in a near photo finish as he edged Paola's Andrew Phillips by .02 seconds.

"I was honestly kind of surprised because I think I was seeded fourth or something like that," Rigney said. "The weather wasn't that good, but I still can't believe that I won. It feels good though."

Williams captured the 400-meter dash crown in 50.90 seconds and held off Frontenac's Brendan Ishimura who ran a 51.10.

"The first 200 was pretty good, but the second 200 I started

to die a little bit,” Williams said. “Then the one kid came up from behind me. At the last 10 meters I wasn’t going to let him beat me, and I wanted it more and snagged it from him.

“This makes me feel like I can do a lot better now that I have gotten my time down to 50. Hopefully I can get back to 50 or lower next week.”



Louisburg sophomore Chris Williams won the regional title in the 400-meter dash and qualified for state in three events.

It was the start of a big day for the Wildcat track and field team. Louisburg qualified for state in 10 events total and is also sending four relays between the girls and boys teams. The top four finishers in each event at regionals earned a spot at state.

Rigney and Williams will each be competing in three events for the Wildcats as they are each a part of two relays.

Williams, along with Tanner Belcher, Jacob Benne and Ben Hupp, ran to a personal record in the 4×800-meter relay with a time of 8 minutes and 30.61 seconds to finish in third. Williams, Rigney, Hupp and Blue Caplinger took third in the 4×400 in 3:32.40.

Rigney, Jackson Ewalt, Caplinger and Charlie Koontz qualified in the 4×100 as came fourth in 44.9 seconds. The Wildcat team was sitting in sixth place in the final handoff, but Rigney sprinted them back to fourth place.

“Quinn had a great day,” Louisburg boys coach Gary Griffin said. “After having a couple of rough meets in a row, I thought he really stepped up. I was pleased with the relays, especially the 4×100 who ran a PR. Those kids have worked hard this year and it was nice to see them get a chance to go to state.

“Chris is in really good shape right now and I would hope that he could go out there and make the finals at state. No one in the state has broken 50 seconds this year, and I think he has the capabilities to do that. He has been there before so it is not a new experience, so we will see what happens.”



Louisburg senior Ben Hupp hands the baton off to teammate Quinn Rigney during the 4×400-meter relay.

The Louisburg girls will also take a relay to state as the 4×100 team of Kaitlyn Gaza, Kaitlyn Urban, Haley Cain and Jordan Leach ran their best of the season and took third overall in 53.10 seconds.

Gaza, a senior, will make her fourth trip to the state track meet and is excited about one last chance to compete on the big stage.

“It means a lot,” Gaza said. “I have qualified for state in something the last three years and I thought it would be awful if I missed it my last year. Once I saw the 4×100 pull through, I just thought ‘Oh my goodness.’ It is another opportunity for me to do something again.”



Kaitlyn Gaza gets hug from 4×100 teammate Jordon Leach following their third place finish in the event. This will be Gaza's fourth trip to state.

The Wildcats also qualified in several field events, including three runner-up finishes.

Senior T.J. Dover picked a good time to have his best meet of the season as he took second in the discus with a season-best throw of 147 feet, 4 inches and was less than a foot behind

Prairie View's Justin Peine for a regional title.

Dover qualified for state last season in the event and is hoping to leave there with a medal in his final meet.

"T.J. threw a personal record for this year and hopefully he can get a PR again this week," Griffin said. "If he does that, it may get him a medal."

After setting a personal record in the triple jump the prior three meets, junior Kaitlyn Urban almost did it again at regionals. Urban had a leap of 33-6.5 to take second and she is looking forward to taking part in her first state meet

"It means a lot to me because I put in a lot of work to improve over the summer and during the year," Urban said. "I have been working on a lot of running mechanics and speed to try and get my jumps farther and have been working a lot on technique. I am just super excited for it. This is my first year running the 4×100 too, and I am really proud of the team for working on their times and getting a personal record to go to state."



Junior Kaitlyn Urban stretches out for a mark in the triple jump Friday during the Class 4A regional meet. Urban took second overall.

Junior Isabelle Holtzen will make her third consecutive trip to the state meet in the pole vault. After setting the school record in the pole vault a month ago, Holtzen had hit a couple bumps along the way.

Holtzen rebounded to finish second at regionals after she

cleared 10-6 and is ready to try and bring home her first state medal.

“It was really exciting to qualify because I have been having a really rough time lately,” Holtzen said. “I did really well and then I was really bad for two weeks in a row. That was hard mentally for me. This meet, I was just trying to focus on not even jumping well, but just having a good mindset to tell myself that I have done this before. It really meant a lot to me for it to come together at a perfect time for me at regionals.”

Fellow junior Frankie Hurst will join Holtzen in the pole vault ranks. Hurst finished fourth in the boys competition after he cleared 11-6, despite being gone most of the week due to a family matter.

“I am proud of Frankie and that he was able to qualify,” Griffin said. “He had some family things to deal with and he dealt really well with them.”

Although the Lady Cats were only able to qualify in three events, girls coach Greg Darrington liked what he saw out of each of them.

“I was very pleased with the 4×100 team,” he said. “I thought they did a great job with adding Gaza to the team. I was a little concerned but these girls really stepped up and did really well at league and regional meets. I will not count them out, as they just keep on competing as they have done all year.

“I think Urban has done a good job getting herself in position to qualify for the state meet and really think if she can keep her technique and control her nerves, she could use the energy of the crowd at the state meet to place and earn herself a medal. She has done a great job all year.

“It was also nice to see Isabelle come out of her struggles

and begin to compete again. I am anxious to see how she does Saturday. I think if she can clear 11-6, she has a good chance at a medal as well.”



Louisburg junior Isabelle Holtzen clears a height in the pole vault. She finished second at 10-6 and will be making her third trip to state.

The Kansas State Track and Field Championships will be held at Cessna Stadium on the Wichita State University campus. The Class 4A portion of the meet will begin at 2 p.m. this Friday and continue into Saturday.

Other regional results are:

GIRLS

100 dash: Jordon Leach, ninth, 13.73

200 dash: Leach, 11th, 28.60

800 run: Payton Shaffer, 11th, 2:41

4×400 relay: sixth, 4:30

4×800 relay: fifth, 10:57

High jump: Eileen Benne, eighth, 4-8

Pole vault: Avery Graham, fifth, 9-0

Long jump: Chloe Renner, ninth, 14-9.5

Triple jump: Renner, fifth, 32-10.5

Shot put: Ellie Katzer, ninth, 32-1.25

Discus: Lexie Reece, seventh, 97-9; Katzer, eighth, 92-10

BOYS

100 dash: Jackson Ewalt, 13th, 11.91

800 run: Tanner Belcher, 10th, 2:15

1,600 run: Wyatt Reece, fifth, 4:51; Jacob Benne, 11th, 5:13

300 hurdles: Ben Hupp, seventh, 42.50

Pole vault: Trent Martin, seventh, 11-0

Long jump: Charlie Koontz, ninth, 19-0.50

Shot put: T.J. Dover, fifth, 45-9.75

Discus: Kiefer Tucker, 13th, 104-2

Javelin: Austin Moore, eighth, 128-7; Matt Holloway, 10th,
122-8