

Camp, Sunflower games end successful summer for LHS wrestling



Ottawa University coach Kevin Andres instructs Louisburg seniors Ryan Adams (left) and Tucker Batten during the Wildcat advanced camp on July 13 at Louisburg High School.

When the Louisburg High School wrestling team gathered together for its week-long camp, it was a little different than in year's past.

The camp had a family atmosphere that brought past, present and future Wildcat wrestlers together for a week that began in Louisburg and ended on a mat in Topeka.

Louisburg head coach Bobby Bovaird held a beginners and advanced camp that had approximately 60 wrestlers out between the two sessions that went from July 10-14.

"I think that it was the biggest one we've done since I've been at Louisburg," Bovaird said. "Without a doubt, we had great regular attendance and the support from the youth wrestling club was incredible. At each session, we had plenty of support from the Wildcat Wrestling Club coaches, and it would not have been as successful a camp without them."

In the advanced session, Bovaird brought in Ottawa University

head wrestling coach Kevin Andres to run the five-day camp and work with each of the athletes. Bovaird was happy his wrestlers had the opportunity to learn some new things from the college coach.

“While it was a huge burden taken off my shoulders to have Kevin come and work as our featured clinician, it was even more beneficial to the wrestlers to have the chance to learn from one of the best coaches in the state,” Bovaird said. “He brought in techniques that reinforced what I’ve been showing these last few years, and he also showed the team lots of new trends in the sport. I think the biggest benefit was the introduction of techniques that aligned well with our program’s philosophies as well as collegiate styles.

“I asked Coach Andres to come in and work with leg-riding techniques. Recently, we’ve had several wrestlers wanting to take their leg-riding skills to the next level and to make them more efficient on the mat, and this was a great chance to help them out. Coach Andres also showed some key points with takedowns and top work.”

Many of the Wildcat wrestlers had a chance to take what they learned from the camp and use that to compete in the Sunflower State Games in Topeka on July 15 at the Kansas Expocentre.

Wrestlers – young and old – fared well as several of them finished in the top four of two different competitions. Coaches from the high school and youth programs also entered the competition to show off some of their skills

In the folkstyle tournament portion, Kaden Allen (10-and-under), Sam Kratochvil (14-U), Ryan Adams (high school), Garrett Caldwell (high school) and Bovaird (19-29-year-old division) each came in first. Bronc Noll (10U), Brayden Yoder (10U), Aiden Barker (14U), Brandon Doles (14U), Brandon Ott (19-29), Scott Ballard (30-39) and Adam Noll (40-49) each finished runner-up.



LHS senior Garrett Caldwell was one of five Louisburg wrestlers to finish first in folkstyle at the Sunflower State Games on July 15 in Topeka.

Owen Ebenstein (8U), Traden Noll (12U), Cade Holtzen (high school), Chris Turner (19-29) and Shea Cox (19-29) took third. Braddock Tharp (8U), Xander Auth (8U), Bo Ballard (8U), Camren Ebenstein (8U), Jay McCaskill (12U), Kyle Allen (high school), Shawn Crossley (19-29) and James Auth (30-39) finished fourth.

Louisburg had four wrestlers take home top honors in the takedown tournament. Owen Ebenstein, Kaden Allen, McCaskill and Kyle Allen each took first place, while Doles and Holtzen finished runner-up.

Yoder, Barker and Adams came in third overall, while Bo Ballard and Camren Ebenstein brought home a fourth-place medal.

"One of the best things about how we set up camp as a lead-in to the Sunflower State Games was that the boys had a chance to put what they learned to the test," Bovaird said. "It's one

thing to learn a bunch of things at a camp in the middle of summer, working them on familiar faces. It's completely different to be able to take these new techniques and experiment with them in live wrestling against unfamiliar opponents, to see what works and what doesn't. I saw lots of our guys trying these new techniques in their matches at the Sunflower State Games.

"I had a blast getting back on the mat. Every few years, I put my shoes back on to compete, and the older I get, the more I question my sanity when I choose to do this. This year, however, was a pretty good experience. I love the fact that we had so many alumni talking about getting back on the mat, and so many of them followed through. At a tournament like this one, you'll see a good number of 'old timers' getting back on the mat and competing. We had high school coaches, club coaches, recent alumni and wrestlers' dads give it a go."



Eighth-grader Brandon Doles earned a pair of second-place honors at the Sunflower State games.

It has been a busy summer for the Wildcat wrestlers as they have had the opportunity to participate in several open mat sessions, along with different clinics and camps outside of Louisburg.

Bovaird has tracked his wrestler's participation by offering

an Ironman Award, which is given to every wrestler who accumulates 100 points over the summer. The program, which is in its second year, has seen the winners double in size from the year before as the Wildcats had 10 wrestlers earn the honor.

LHS senior Kyle Allen racked up the most points over the summer with 195 and Kaden Allen was second with 184. Cade Holtzen (166), Garrett Caldwell (116), Bo Ballard (105), Brandon Doles (105), Ryan Adams (104), Aiden Barker (100), Collin Hamilton (100) and Nathan Hamilton (100) also earned the award.

“The summers are getting busier than ever before. Kids have baseball, football, other sports camps, family vacations, work and all sorts of obligations. I try to offer several opportunities for them to get back on the mat, even if it is just once a week. The Ironman Award is in its second year, and the guys who won it last summer all made huge strides that were evident this past season – state medalists, state qualifiers, and major improvements. The thing is, they’re making efforts to get on the mat. The Ironman Award is an element of positive reinforcement. Instead of punishing the kids who don’t come in, I’m trying to reward those who do. There’s only so much that I can do to motivate them, however. The true motivation has to come from them. If they want to get their name on a shirt, then so be it. If they want to improve from last season, even better. The more they wrestle, the better it is for the program and the community.

“Kids have been coming to open mats each week, our team camp, and special clinics I’ve offered. I had several go to other local camps, and we had 16 kids wrestle at the Sunflower State Games. I know that five guys are attending the Penn State camp hosted at Baker, and that will be a great way to wrap up the summer. At the start of August, all the guys who earned at least 100 points will get their names printed on the Ironman Award shirt. It looks like we’re going to have a solid number

of names to add, but in the bigger picture, it's a major investment in our performances next season, whether it's high school, middle school or club wrestling."