

State qualifiers look to pace Louisburg cross country



Louisburg High School sophomore Trinity Moore hopes to garner her second consecutive state medal after she finished 19th overall at the 2016 Kansas State Cross Country Championships in Wamego. Moore is one of three state qualifiers to return for the Wildcats.

The Louisburg High School cross country team set the bar high last season as the Wildcats qualified three runners for the state meet and one of them earned the program's first medal since 2006.

Despite all those accomplishments, the Wildcats are looking for even more this season as they return all three state qualifiers in seniors Wyatt Reece, Tim Smith and sophomore Trinity Moore.

Throw in a group of returning runners, especially on the girls' side, and the Wildcats are expecting big things out of their program.

"This season could be very special for both groups," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "We have added some great new runners from the freshman class, first timers from sophomores to seniors and some new students to the district. The end of the season could be interesting."



Senior Wyatt Reece has qualified for the state meet the last two seasons and hopes to do the same this season.

Moore leads a girls team that plans on being competitive, not only with the opposition, but with each other. Moore medaled at state as a freshman last season and became the first female runner in Louisburg history to earn a state cross country medal.

It was a special season for her and one that she hopes to recreate with a few more friends this time around.

“I am really excited to get the season started,” Moore said. “We have a great group of girls that are working hard. Medaling at state was huge, but I know I still have to give my best effort and work hard every race. Now that I have been to the state meet, I hope to get back and this time with the team.”

The Wildcat girls have a large number of runners who are trying fill those seven varsity spots. Along with Moore, the Wildcats return several with varsity experience, including seniors Isabelle Holtzen, Reilly Alexander, juniors Kaitlyn Lewer, Shaylor Whitham and Alex Miller and sophomore Emily Williams.

Throw in transfer Carlee Gassman and newcomers Payton Shaffer, Avery Graham and Kennady Wilkerson and the Wildcats have high expectations for the girls team, including what the runners have displayed in practice.

“I am anticipating difficulty in having a constant top 7 girls team this year,” coach Reece said. “We have more than 10 runners at the moment that could be considered for the varsity team. With this many girls, the season should be competitive among the teammates.

“Trinity will improve over last year through experience alone and you only get what you put into it. What she puts into the season will be returned through performance at meets. A strong group of teammates will make the whole group improve as they push each other.”

The boys side isn't quite as crowded, but it is top heavy as both Wyatt Reece and Smith try to make a return trip to Wamego and the state meet in late October.



Senior Tim Smith earned a spot in the state cross country meet last season in just his first year with the program.

Wyatt is a two-time state qualifier and has improved each season, including a 48th place finish a year ago and Smith took 68th in what was a tough boys field. Wyatt took another step toward getting his first state medal over the summer when he attended a cross country camp in Colorado Springs, in an effort to get in even better shape.

However, who will run alongside of Reece and Smith is a bit of a mystery as the Wildcats feature several young runners.

“Wyatt and Tim will be our top two runners as we start the season,” coach Reece said. “We have at least 3-4 others who will move up so that we can field a varsity team at most meets and toe the line at regionals with a varsity team this year.”

Louisburg will get it all started Thursday when it travels to Garnett for the Jerry Howarter Invitational. Freshman races will begin at 3:30 p.m., with junior varsity and varsity to follow.