

# Wildcats race way to four medals in opener



Louisburg High School seniors Tim Smith (left) and Wyatt Reece get off to a good start Thursday during the Jerry Howarter Invitational in Garnett. Smith and Reece medaled fourth and sixth, respectively.

GARNETT – The Louisburg High School cross country team has been practicing hard leading up to the Jerry Howarter Invitational on Thursday in Garnett.

The Wildcats have spent the last several weeks trying to get in a shape for what is a grueling season and they found out just how in shape they were when they took to the difficult Garnett course.

Despite the large, steep hills, four Wildcats left with their first varsity medals and a nice momentum boost heading into the season.

Seniors Tim Smith and Wyatt Reece took fourth and sixth, respectively, in the boys race to grab medals. Sophomore Trinity Moore finished 17<sup>th</sup> overall and fellow sophomore Carlee Gassman took 30<sup>th</sup> to earn medals in the girls race.

“Wyatt and Tim finished almost exactly where I thought they would,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “I was thinking a bit faster, but after looking at last year’s times, I was very

happy as Wyatt improved by almost a minute.

“Trinity ran a good race and it was a very fast girls race. Carlee medaling in her first race was fantastic.”

On the boys side, Smith ran a time of 17 minutes and 54 seconds to lead the Wildcat runners and Wyatt was right behind him with an 18:08. Baldwin’s Jacob Bailey won the meet in 17:22, and his teammate Parker Wilson, was second at 17:24. Eudora won the team title with 42 points and Baldwin was second with 53.

Louisburg had two others run varsity alongside Smith and Reece. Sophomore Evan Murphy was 56<sup>th</sup> in 21:19 and freshman Cade Holtzen took 58<sup>th</sup> in 21:21.

Moore led Louisburg in what was a competitive varsity girls race. She finished with a time of 22:54 and Gassman, a transfer from Iowa, ran a 24:04.



**Carlee Gassman was one of two Louisburg girls to earn medals Thursday in Garnett.**

Santa Fe Trail's Hannah Honeyman won the varsity competition in 20:16 and Baldwin's Ambrynn Stewart was second in 20:30. Baldwin won the team crown with 35 points and Eudora was second with 70 out of nine teams.

The Wildcat girls, which finished fifth with 149 points, had a good first time out according to coach Reece.

Senior Isabelle Holtzen just missed a medal by one spot as she took 31<sup>st</sup> in 24:16. Payton Shaffer came in 41<sup>st</sup> in her varsity debut in 24:55.

Kaitlyn Lewer (25:34) and Reilly Alexander (25:36) took 50<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup>, respectively. Shaylor Whitham (27:45) rounded out the Louisburg roster in 60<sup>th</sup>.

"The rolling hills are a challenge for the first meet and all the runners did a great job," coach Reece said. "The cooler temperatures definitely helped.

"I was happy with their performance. We had first race nerves pretty bad but those soon went away once the gun went off. My veteran runners matched times from last year or improved which was awesome and my new runners competed well."

Louisburg also brought home several medals in the sub-varsity races.

Freshman Carson Houchen finished toward the top of the junior varsity boys race. Houchen, who is in his first year of cross country, took fourth overall in 21:19.

Sophomore Emily Williams ran a 25:49 to finish 11<sup>th</sup> and medal in the junior varsity girls competition. Abby Crooks medaled third in the beginner 2-mile girls race in 16:07 and Colin Cook (14:08) took ninth in the beginner boys race.

"We brought home several medals and the young runners ran great," coach Reece said. "The overall boys performance shows me that there is a young varsity team ready to start competing, and with experience, they will improve. The girls who did not run varsity have put pressure on the ones that did as there are now nine girls to look at when fielding my seven varsity runners.

"We had great parent support and the team thanks them for sticking around with the delay caused by the timing system. Nothing like getting medals awarded by the light of cell phones."

A majority of the Wildcats will face another tough course this Thursday at the Ottawa Invitational, while a few varsity will venture to Wamego on Saturday for the Wamego Invitational.