

# Reece excited for next step at Southwest Minnesota State



After earning his first state medal last month, Louisburg senior Wyatt Reece looked to the future last Wednesday when he signed his letter of intent to run cross country at Southwest Minnesota State.

When he first got into high school, Wyatt Reece had no intention of running in college. The idea hadn't even crossed his mind.

Wyatt joined the Louisburg cross country team in hopes of staying in shape for basketball and baseball. Before long, however, cross country turned into something a lot more.

"When I was younger running in general was not what I dreamed about," he said. "Of course I did the middle school track thing and had a lot of fun, found some success, but I was focused on baseball and basketball.

"I truly fell in love with running the summer going into my sophomore year. Running before that summer was a way to be better in other sports, but running after that summer – was my life."

Wyatt's life got a lot more interesting last Wednesday when the Louisburg High School senior signed his letter of intent to run cross country at Southwest Minnesota State, a Division

II program in Marshall, Minn.

It was a moment that saw years of hard work come to fruition for Wyatt as he is ready to take the next step in his running career.

“I am extremely excited to go to SMSU,” he said. “Running in college was a reality to me after my sophomore year of cross country. Going to state was that one thing that made me think I had an opportunity to continue my running career and I kept grinding.”

Wyatt was a big part of the Wildcat cross country program the last four years as he ended his career as a three-time state qualifier and captured his first state medal in October after he finished 11<sup>th</sup> overall in Class 4A.



Louisburg senior Wyatt Reece signed his letter of intent with Southwest Minnesota State last Wednesday. Sitting

**next to Wyatt (from left) is his sister Lexie, his mother Lisa and sister Katie (on iPad). Standing is LHS assistant cross country coach Arianne Seidl and Wyatt's father, and head coach, John Reece.**

It was a moment Wyatt – and his coach and father – John Reece won't forget any time soon. Watching his son become one of the state's top runners and earn a spot on the collegiate level has been rewarding for the Louisburg head coach.

"It has been an honor and a privilege to coach Wyatt," coach Reece said. "Watching him as a coach, he is a great leader, both verbally and through work ethic. He is passionate about the sport of running and he wants to instill his passion in others. As a dad, it has been a positive learning experience. We have grown to appreciate each other's time and commitment to the sport and have learned to put aside the dad or son card and built the coach and athlete relationship that is needed to be successful.

"The fact that he wanted to pursue running at the next level was thrilling to me. I knew that there was a place for him, we just had to find the right fit. Southwest Minnesota State is the right fit both academically and athletically for Wyatt."

Athletically, Wyatt liked what he saw out of the Mustang program, including getting a chance to get to know his new coach – Dan Allen. Allen is currently in his third season as the cross country and track coach at the school and Wyatt believes he fits well with the group of runners at SMSU.

"Coach Allen was one of the big reasons I chose SMSU," Wyatt said. "His goal is to excel his runners, while also making sure they will love running after college. The team was another big factor. I spent a whole night with the team on my visit and all the men and women were very nice and genuine.

"My goal as a freshman is to run varsity for them. I don't

have any time goals yet because I've never raced an 8k."

Wyatt leaves the Louisburg program as one of the top boy runners in Wildcat history. He became the school's second state medalist on the boys' side and his 5-kilometer time is toward the top of the leader board.

"Running in (cross country) got me through high school," he said. "My teammates were always there, and my coaches were too. Louisburg High School cross country will always be my family and I love them as such. I will miss them all and hope they will continue to succeed."