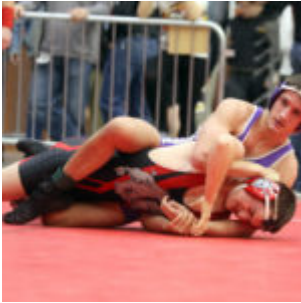


Louisburg wrestling hopes for another big season



Louisburg senior Ryan Adams captured a state medal for the Wildcats last season after he finished sixth at 138 pounds. Adams is one of five returning state qualifiers for Louisburg and is currently ranked No. 2 in the state.

There haven't been many seasons like the one the Louisburg High School wrestling team had last year – only two to be exact.

The Wildcats qualified eight for the Class 4A state tournament, which tied a school record that was set back in 1984. Louisburg didn't have quite the success it was hoping for when it reached Salina as it picked up just one state medal.

However, the Wildcats are ready to make another run at it. Louisburg returns five state qualifiers for the 2017-18 campaign and it is excited about what the possibilities hold for this season.

"Practices have been going well, for the most part," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "There are the start-of-the-season snags, but the guys are doing well getting back into the swing of things. We've got 31 wrestlers out this year, and I'm especially excited with all the experience they're bringing back to the mats."

"We graduated eight seniors from last year, and most of them were varsity. We do have a good number of younger wrestlers coming in with some pretty good kids wrestling experience. The last few years, we've been extra strong in the upper weights, but this year it's looking like our lower weights will be pretty strong, too."

The coaches around the state seem to think the Wildcats will have their fair share of success as well. Louisburg is currently No. 8 in the Kansas Wrestling Coaches Association Class 4A team rankings and the Wildcats have four state-ranked wrestlers.

Senior Ryan Adams captured his first state medal last year at 138 pounds and is looking to do more of the season this season. Adams plans to stay at 138 pounds and lead a group of talented lower-weight wrestlers. He is currently ranked No. 2 in the state in his weight class.

"Ryan has been wrestling from a very young age, and I've known him as long as I've been in Louisburg," Bovaird said. "I'm pretty excited to see what he can do to wrap up his wrestling career. He's been a regular fixture in off-season wrestling. The last two years that we had our 'Ironman' program, he was one of the winners. He's sitting in a good position here at the start of the season, but we'll have to see how things work out as the season progresses."



Louisburg junior Austin Moore is currently ranked No. 5 in Class 4A at 195 pounds and is a returning state qualifier.

Louisburg also returns another state medalist, even though he didn't win one for the Wildcats. Junior Hunter Bindi returns to the Wildcat program after wrestling for a year at St. Thomas Aquinas.

At the Class 5A tournament last season, Bindi finished fifth at 106 pounds for Aquinas. He wrestled for Louisburg his freshman year, missing out on a state medal by one match.

Bindi, who is currently ranked No. 4 at 120 pounds in Class 4A, is expected to give the Wildcats another threat at a state medal this season. It hasn't been decided yet on if he will wrestler at 113 or 120.

"Hunter's more focused than I've ever seen him, and I love his

attitude,” Bovaird said. “He wants to get mat-time, and he wants to face the challenges in front of him. He’ll be able to be a contender for the state championship this season, that’s for sure.”

The Wildcats return three other state qualifiers in seniors Thad Hendrix (106 pounds) and Kyle Allen (126), along with junior Austin Moore (195). Moore is currently ranked No. 5 in the state at 195 pounds as he makes the leap from 170 pounds.

Seniors Tucker Batten (145) and Garrett Caldwell (182) join junior Blue Caplinger (160) as three others who are returning varsity wrestlers and Bovaird is expecting each of them to show improvement from a year ago.

“Austin has put in the work in the weight room, and he’s coming off an awesome football season,” Bovaird said. “He’ll be able to do some damage this season. We have a bunch of wrestlers who are ready to take the next step.”



Senior Thad Hendrix, who qualified for state last season at 106 pounds, will try for his first state medal.

Louisburg also has a few new varsity wrestlers that hope to make impacts as well. Freshman Cade Holtzen will wrestle at either 113 or 120 pounds for the Wildcats and has had a lot of success at the kids wrestling level.

Gabriel Bonham, a transfer from Gardner-Edgerton, will give the Wildcats more depth at the lower weights as he will wrestle at 132 pounds. Freshman Ben Wiedenmann will fill the 152 pound spot and sophomore Jacob Cowell will slot in at 170 pounds.

Sophomore Sam Kratochvil and junior Hunter Day will take the 220 and 285-pound slots, respectively.

"Top to bottom, our line-up is looking pretty solid," Bovaird said. "We're a little thin in the upper weights with only one

kid at 220 and one at 285. Try as we may, we haven't been able to convince the big football players in the school that wrestling will benefit them greatly on the football field."

Louisburg will get its season started Saturday when it competes in the Fort Scott Dual Tournament. Matches are set to begin at 9 a.m.