

LHS wrestling downs Ottawa in front of former Wildcats



Louisburg senior Tucker Batten works for a pin Thursday during the Wildcats' home dual against Ottawa. The night also marked the return of several former wrestlers as they took part in the 3rd Annual Wildcat Wrestling Reunion.

Past, present and even future Louisburg High School wrestlers gathered together Thursday for the program's 3rd Annual Wildcat Wrestling Reunion.

As former wrestlers came together to relive their favorite memories on the mat, the current Wildcat team provided the entertainment. Louisburg hosted Ottawa in a Frontier League dual and the Wildcats brought down the Cyclones, 51-27, as nine different Wildcats picked up victories.

"It's always a great feeling to get a win in front of the home crowd," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "With so many alumni in attendance, it felt even better. I love that our guys have the ability and the chance to show the previous generations where our program is heading. All those guys had a big part in building the foundation that we have."

Several former Wildcats had a chance to be recognized halfway through the dual, including former head coach Don Meek, who was the program's first head coach in 1969.



Former LHS wrestling head coach Don Meek waves to the crowd as he was recognized with other LHS wrestling alumni Thursday.

Others that attended the reunion included: coach Brent Lane; Tom York, 1973; Fletch Kelly, 1975; Jack Smith, 1976; Jeff Shaffer, 1978; Chris Kelly, 1979; Marilyn Meek Mueller, 1981; Craig Crossley, 1987; Karl Stuteville, 1989; Bruce Caldwell, 1990; Bryan Stahl, 1990; Matt Golladay, 1993; Logan York, 1997; Shawn Crossley, 1998; Chad Hardesty, 1998; Clint Carter, 1998; Trevor Finch, 1998; James Auth, 1999; Andrew Shaffer, 2000; Jill Schaumburg Tibbetts, 2003; Reed Kreiser, 2004; Tim Gregar, 2005; Bradley Trageser, 2016; Jimmy Dolan, 2016; Zach Jones, 2016; Paige Shaffer, 2016; Alyssa Ellifrits, 2016; Dylan Meyer, 2017.

“Keeping the alumni a part of the program is a huge advantage,” Bovaird said. “Our younger guys see that this is a sport that builds life-long friendships. These guys who

wrestled for the program weren't just high schoolers who decided to wrestle in the winter to stay busy or to stay in shape; they were a part of a family. I want the squad to see how the alumni come together to share stories and laugh about old memories.

"We had all five decades of our program represented, from the very first LHS wrestling squads up through guys from last year's graduating class. An event like this helps the alumni remember that they're a part of the program, that people remember the things they did to help us get to where we're at right now. It's a tradition I plan to keep going as long as I'm here. Louisburg wrestling has always been something special, and thanks to the investments of all those who came before us, it always will be something special for our community."

The current Wildcats put on a show as they jumped out to a big lead over the Cyclones through the first half of the dual.

After senior Thad Hendrix lost a close decision at 106 pounds, freshman Cade Holtzen won by pin at 113 pounds and junior Hunter Bindi was open at 120. Senior Kyle Allen won by technical fall at 126 pounds to stake Louisburg to a 17-3 lead.

Louisburg continued its run as freshman Anthony Welborn won by forfeit at 132 pounds and senior Tucker Batten won by pin at 138 pounds. Senior Ryan Adams won by forfeit at 145 and the Wildcats took a 35-3 advantage.



Senior Kyle Allen works to turn his opponent Thursday during the Wildcats' home dual with Ottawa.

Freshman Jacob Briley lost by pin at 152, but junior Blue Caplinger won by major decision at 160 to get Louisburg back on track. Seniors Dylan Thompson (170) and Garrett Caldwell (182) lost by pin before Austin Moore (195) won by pin in his match.

James Nelson, who moved up a weight class from junior varsity, filled in at 220 and lost by pin. Junior heavyweight Hunter Day won the final match by forfeit.

"We were pretty competitive in most of the night's matches," Bovaird said. "I'm also really glad that some of our non-varsity guys had a chance to perform on the mats of our home gym. Dylan Thompson is a senior who just started wrestling last year, and he was excited to fill our 170 spot for the night. Several freshmen are also showing a lot of guts by

filling in at varsity whenever asked.”