

Wildcat wrestling picks up big wins despite dual loss



Louisburg senior Kyle Allen works for a pin during this 126-pound match Wednesday during the Wildcats' dual with Gardner-Edgerton in Gardner. Allen won by pin, but the Wildcats fell in the dual 41-30.

GARDNER – It wasn't exactly the result the Louisburg High School wrestling team was looking for Wednesday when the Wildcats traveled to Gardner-Edgerton High School.

Although the Wildcats lost the dual, 41-30, they picked up several big individual wins – including a pair of come-from-behind victories. In all, Louisburg won six of the 14 matches.

"We knew going into the dual that it would be a physical match-up," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "It has been like that the last couple of years since we started dualing Gardner. They have a solid group of wrestlers who hit moves hard and fight to the end. While I'm happy that we didn't shell-up and let their physicality break us mentally, I wish we had been able to capitalize on a couple matches. I'll give it to our guys, though. They didn't give up, and they didn't back down."

Louisburg got off to a good start as freshman Ryan Owens made the move up from junior varsity at 106 pounds due to an injury to Hunter Bindi. Owens gave the Wildcats an early lead with a

pin for his third varsity win on the season.

Senior Thad Hendrix and freshman Cade Holtzen both moved up a weight class to give Louisburg a stronger lineup and the Wildcats nearly came away with two wins. Hendrix lost a close decision, but Holtzen responded with a pin that gave him his 20th victory on the season.

The Wildcats recorded its second straight win when senior Kyle Allen responded with a pin at 126 pounds. It gave Louisburg 18-3 lead at the time, but Gardner got pins over Justin Collins (132) and Gabe Bonham (138) to cut into the Wildcat advantage.



Louisburg freshman Ryan Owens gets a pin at 106 pounds.

Senior Ryan Adams extended Louisburg's lead with an exciting match at 145 pounds. Adams, who is currently ranked No. 3 in

the state, had his hands full with Gardner's Taven Ewbank.

Adams was down 4-0 in the third period, but got a reversal for two points late in the match and then got three back points to come away with a 5-4 decision.

"Ryan's match was an exciting one," Bovaird said. "I was getting pretty fired up because I felt like the official wasn't taking control of the match and Ryan was getting his arm wrenched behind his back quite a bit. I love the grit and determination he showed by getting the late reversal and then back points to win the match."

Gardner responded by recording a technical fall on Tucker Batten at 152 pounds and pinned Ben Wiedenmann at 160 to grab a 27-21 lead.

The Wildcats pulled off an upset at 170 pounds when Blue Caplinger, who is ranked No. 6 in 4A, faced off with Gardner's Jensen McDermott, who is ranked No. 3 in 6A.

Caplinger was down 1-0 in the third before he recorded a late reversal with just seconds left in the match and came away with a 2-1 decision to cut into the Blazer lead.

"Blue's match was great," Bovaird said. "He's been wrestling very well this season. He keeps in good position, he keeps his feet moving, and he's really picked up his scrambling skills. That match was a smart win for him – he kept the first period scoreless and then gave up an escape in the second period. Third period he took bottom position and he was scrambling and moving most of the period.

"By the time the match was drawing to a close, he'd been moving like crazy, the top man had been warned for stalling, and Blue had worn down his stamina. With a late scramble to a reversal, he was able to hold on for a nice win over a state-ranked opponent."



Freshman Ben Wiedenmann blocks a shot from a Gardner opponent Wednesday.

Louisburg nearly took the lead back when senior Garrett Caldwell got the first takedown at 182 pounds and put his opponent on his back, but he couldn't get the pin and ended up getting pinned later in the match.

Senior Austin Moore answered for Louisburg with a quick pin at 195 pounds, but it would be the Wildcats' last victory. Louisburg was open at 220 as Sam Kratochvil was out after he suffered a fractured leg at last week's home tournament. Heavyweight Hunter Day was pinned by Gardner's Jackson Flowers, who is ranked No. 1 in 6A.

Despite the loss, Bovaird saw a lot of positives as the Wildcats head back into tournament competition Saturday at the Topeka High Invitational.

“Austin Moore had another dominant win, and he’s leading our team with the most pins,” Bovaird said. “Our freshmen are stepping up big time. Ryan Owens, Justin Collins and Ben Wiedenmann are all getting in some good mat time. Owens got a pin, Collins scored the first takedown on an experienced wrestler, and Wiedenmann was hanging pretty well with a heavier opponent.

“Cade Holtzen is 20-1 this season at 113 and continues to make an impact at the varsity level. Thad Hendrix and Gabe Bonham both bumped up a weight to help our lineup, but they lost close decisions. Tucker Batten, Garrett Caldwell, and Hunter Day all fought hard against their opponents, who were pretty tough wrestlers.”