

Gassman, Williams win regional titles, 'Cats qualify for state in 9 events



Louisburg sophomore Carlee Gassman clears the final hurdle on her way to a regional title in the 300-meter hurdles Friday during the Class 4A regional meet in Eudora. Gassman qualified for state in two events.

EUDORA – When the Kansas State Track and Field Championships kick off this Friday in Wichita, Louisburg will have its fair share of representation at Cessna Stadium and they hope to return with more than what they came with.

The Wildcats qualified for state in nine different events last Friday during the Class 4A regional meet at Eudora High School and also left with a pair of regional champions under their belt.

Junior Chris Williams won the 400-meter dash and sophomore Carlee Gassman captured gold in the 300-meter hurdles to lead the Wildcats as both qualified in two events.

It was a successful day for the Louisburg program, as Isabelle Holtzen (pole vault), Trent Martin (pole vault), Wyatt Reece (1,600 and 3,200-meter run) and the boys 4×400 relay each finished second in their events to qualify. Kaitlyn Urban (triple jump) and Luke Faulkner (pole vault) came in third,

while Gassman qualified fourth in the long jump.

“We always want more kids to go to state but it is tough to get there,” Louisburg girls coach John Reece said. “Our regional meet was tough. All of the Frontier League was present except for DeSoto, and the teams that rounded out the 16 schools made it even more competitive.”

Gassman blew the competition away in the 300-meter hurdles as she recorded a time of 46.03 seconds to win by nearly a full second. Earlier in the day she even surprised herself when she recorded a personal-best in the long jump with a mark of 17 feet, 3.25 inches.

“It is special to me because this is my first year long jumping and it is has been a lot of fun,” Gassman said. “I blew my own mind when I found out I jumped 17-3 and I definitely didn’t think that was going to happen.

“It was also pretty amazing to qualify in the hurdles. I wasn’t sure what to expect coming out here because there are some talented girls. It was a lot of fun though and it is my favorite race.”

The Louisburg sophomore is currently ranked No. 2 in Class 4A in the 300 hurdles behind Andale senior Abby Smarsh, who will be competing for Wichita State next season.

“Carlee ran well and is setting herself up to be a top finisher at state,” coach Reece said. “She could medal in both of her events as her long jump distance gives her a chance to be in finals as well as the 300m hurdles.”



Junior Chris Williams sprints to the finish to win the 400-meter dash.

As for Williams, he was able to hold off Burlington's Jayden Payne at the finish line of the 400 dash as he won his regional title in 50.80 seconds – just .01 seconds in front of Payne.

“It was really cool and winning the regional is pretty exciting,” Williams said. “I felt I ran pretty good for the most part. I died basically on the last 100 meters and that guy from Burlington scared me a little bit, but it was pretty fun.”

Williams picked up the pace again in the 4×400-meter relay as he helped Blue Caplinger, Justin Collins and Ben Wiedenmann to a personal record time of 3 minutes and 26.76 seconds.

The Wildcats were sitting in fifth place through half of the relay before Wiedenmann made up ground and then Williams followed suit as he put the team into second place after he passed Spring Hill and Eudora.

“Going into regionals we knew we would have to PR or run close to our very best to be in the top four,” Louisburg boys coach Andy Wright said. “I couldn't be happier with all four runners

as they came and competed, with each of them running a PR split.”



Senior Wyatt Reece celebrates his state berth in the 1,600-meter run.

Louisburg continued its success on the track as Reece, a senior, was able to qualify in both distance events and exercise some demons in the process.

The last two seasons, Reece had finished one spot out of qualifying for state in the 1,600 run, but he left no doubt this time around. Reece held off a pair of four runners to take second in 4:42 and raised his arms with excitement following the finish.

He later went on to take second in the 3,200 in 10:49 and will have a busy state experience this coming weekend.

"It is awesome," Reece said. "I went to state with the 4x800 relay before, but the last two years have either been in fifth place or sixth place in both events at regionals, so it is just nice to be able to go and it really means a lot to me. It means a lot because I was able to get second in both events and I can see that I am improving.

"The mile has always been my race. It hasn't always been my fastest, but it is definitely a fun race for me. When I crossed the finish line, it was just a big relief to realize that I had finally done it. It took four years to get here, but I did it."

Louisburg will also be represented well in the pole vault as the Wildcats will take three vaulters to Wichita.

On the girls side, Holtzen will look to get her second straight state medal after she cleared 10-6 to take second overall. Last season, she finished seventh at state to earn a spot on the medal stand.

"I sprained my ankle a little bit in practice, so I was a little bit nervous coming in and I didn't have the best warm up," Holtzen said. "It wasn't the best meet for me, but all that matters at regionals is just getting to state. This week I am just going to work hard and perform to the best of my ability."

Martin, a sophomore, cleared 12-6 to take second overall and will make his first state appearance. Faulkner, who is in his first season of varsity action as a freshman, will also make his state debut after he took third and cleared 12 feet.

"Trent and Luke were ready when the opportunity to make state presented itself," Wright said. "They competed hard, mentally and physically were focused, and used their determination to earn their spots competing against some of the best vaulters in 4A. State competition is going to be hard against a very tough field of vaulters. Trent and Luke both have continued to

work very hard in practice, and hope to improve their heights at state.”



Kaitlyn Urban took third in the triple jump with a personal best mark of 34 feet.

The success continued in the jump as Urban, a senior, will be making her second trip out to state in the triple jump and pulled out a personal record in the process. Urban jumped 34 feet to take third overall.

“I am so excited because last year at state I feel that I didn’t do as well as I wanted, so this year I am already starting off better than I was going into it,” Urban said. “I am excited to go and try my best and hopefully PR again.”

State action will begin Friday morning at 7:45 a.m., and will continue through the afternoon. Action will then pick up again

Saturday morning with more field events and finals on the track.

To view a photo gallery from the regional meet, make sure to [click here](#).

Other regional results are:

GIRLS

400 dash: Mikayla Quinn, seventh, 1:05

800 run: Shaylor Whitham, 11th, 2:45

100 hurdles: Sydni Keagle, 8th, 24.22

4×400 relay: Isabelle Holtzen, Quinn, Kaitlyn Urban, Carlee Gassman, fifth, 4:16

High jump: Eileen Benne, 10th, 4-10

Pole vault: Avery Graham, sixth, 9-6

Shot put: Shea O'Hara, 15th, 27-8

Discus: Lexie Reece, seventh, 101-4; Melia Rice, 18th, 75-8

Javelin: Lakin Cunningham, 13th, 79-4

BOYS

100 dash: Brandon Cooper, 7th, 11.42

200 dash: Blue Caplinger, fifth, 23.11; Cooper, 10th, 23.31; Ben Wiedenmann, 12th, 23.40

4×100 relay: Cooper, Caplinger, Wiedenmann, Justin Collins,
fifth, 44.70

Shot put: Kiefer Tucker, fifth, 45-1.5; Brayden White, 14th,
40-6.25

Discus: Tucker, ninth, 128-8

Javelin: Michael Waldron, seventh, 159-5; Austin Moore,
eighth, 151-4