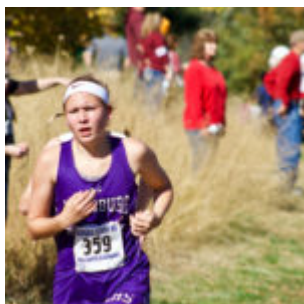


Moore, Johnson earn state medals, Lady Cats take fifth



Louisburg junior Trinity Moore makes her way toward the finish line Saturday during the Class 4A Kansas State Cross Country Championships at Wamego Country Club. Moore finished fourth in the state and teammate Reese Johnson was sixth.

WAMEGO – It was going to be hard for the Louisburg High School girls cross country team to duplicate its magical season of 2017.

Not only did the Lady Cats qualify their team for state for the first time in program history, but they also had a top five finisher in Trinity Moore.

Fast forward to 2018, Louisburg wasn't able to match that successful run – the Lady Cats took it a step further.

Moore, along with freshman Reese Johnson, each had a top 10 finish during the Class 4A Kansas State Cross Country Championships at Wamego Country Club, and it is the first time in school history that two female runners had medaled at a state meet. Louisburg added on to that as the girls finished fifth in the team standings with 154 points, which is also the highest finish in school history.

Baldwin won the state title with 51 points and Eudora was runner-up with 81. Buhler was third at 107 and Bishop Miege

was fourth with 128 points.

“It was fantastic to finish in fifth place,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “We ran well and ran our races. From No. 1 to No. 7 is a gap, but our gap was less than other teams and putting two runners in the top 10 was the big difference between last year and this year. We are only losing one of the top 5 runners so next year could be special again.”



The Louisburg girls cross country team took fifth at state on Saturday. Standing (from left) are head coach John Reece, Shaylor Whitham, Kaitlyn Lewer, Kennady Wilkerson, Trinity Moore, Delaney Wright, Carlee Gassman, Reese Johnson and assistant coach Arianne Seidl.

Moore, who finished fifth at state a year ago, bested her performance by one place as she took fourth with one of her better performances of the season. Johnson was right behind her as she crossed the finish line in sixth to earn a state medal as a freshman.

“Coach A (Arianne Seidl) and I were elated with the girls efforts and for Trinity and Reese to both be top 10 was amazing,” Reece said. “I felt they would both medal, but did not see them finishing as well as they did. We are starting to develop an expectation of high performance, not a hope.

“Trinity and Reese both ran smart races. They did not go out with the front girls and let the race come to them. When it did they were poised to move through the field and they did. You always want the best to be your last race and I think it was for them, but they both said there were places that they might have run different that might have placed them differently. I liked that as that tells me they are breaking down their races and are always looking to make themselves better.”

Moore ran strong in the 96-runner field as she ran a time of 20 minutes and 15 seconds and her fourth place finish is now the highest state cross country finish in school history.

Chapman sophomore Taylor Briggs won the individual state title in 18:57 and Bishop Miege senior Fallon Russell was second in 19:43. Eudora’s Riley Hiebert was third at 20:03.

“Overall, I think I ran pretty well,” Moore said. “The race felt like it went by really fast. I was able to push through the hills and then surge going out of them. Placing one spot higher makes me feel like I have worked harder, and overall had a better season than last year. I know I have gotten better and had my teammates there to push me all year, so it feels great.

“The race was really intense with the girls competing. I knew I had to work really hard to accomplish my goal of doing better than last year. The weather was really nice so it didn’t affect how I felt during the race. Wamego is a challenging course with hills, but I was able to push through them and could pass people while doing it. I am glad I was

able to push myself against the competition and have a great race.”



Freshman Reese Johnson runs down a straightaway Saturday at Wamego.

As for Johnson, she didn't perform like it was her first state meet. She finished just a few seconds behind Moore to take sixth overall in 20:20.

Johnson went stride for stride with Abilene's Sydney Burton toward the finish line, but Burton just edged Johnson for fifth in a photo finish.

“I was overly excited to finish sixth,” Johnson said. “I was expecting good results, but not that good. I was really proud of myself and my team. As a freshman, I am just so happy to have done so well.

“When I found out that our team got fifth, I was super excited. I did not think we were going to do that well, but I know that next year we can get in the top three. Having Trinity to run against always helps me go faster because it gives me a challenge and a reason. I really like racing against her and she is a big part of the runner I am. I am so proud of her for reaching her goal.”

To get that fifth place finish, the Lady Cats were going to have to other runners step up and they were able to do that. Junior Carlee Gassman was third on the team and took 34th overall in 22:01.

Senior Shaylor Whitham (24:13) and freshman Delaney Wright (24:19) were 78th and 79th, respectively. Senior Kaitlyn Lewer (25:03) was 85th and sophomore Kennady Wilkerson (27:57) was 96th.

“I knew we were going to go out and have the race of our lives,” Moore said. “When coach ran over to us and said we got fifth, we all jumped in the air and had a huge group hug. Reese finishing sixth made me super happy. She has had an amazing season and has worked so hard all year. She is an amazing runner and she has great determination.”

It was a great way for Whitham and Lewer to end their Wildcat running careers, according to coach Reese.

“Our seniors this year were awesome,” Reese said. “The three years that I coached Shaylor and Kaitlyn were wonderful. They brought great leadership to the team and showed it during practice and races. I was so happy for them to end their cross country careers at the pinnacle of the season by running at the state meet. They will be greatly missed.”

“It was a special year yet again. I want to thank the runners as they were a great group to work with. The parents again

supported the team with dinners and snacks and a great cheering section that literally moved from place to place at the meets.”



Louisburg’s Trinity Moore gives teammate Reese Johnson a hug as she crossed the finish line Saturday at the state meet. (Photo courtesy of Adam Trower)

The Lady Cats are already looking forward to next season as they will return five of the top seven runners from this year’s team as they try for an even bigger finish at state.

“After this year I am pumped to run again,” Johnson said. “I can’t even begin to explain how much I already miss practice and I miss the team so much. Next year I am hoping to do even better. Running has become a new passion of mine and I am going to keep running during the off-season. I can’t wait to keep getting better and these next few years are going to be

great.”

Moore couldn't agree more.

“This season has given me a lot of momentum for next year,” Moore said. “Even with our first two races getting cancelled this season, I think I was able to work hard to better my personal record and have a great season. My teammates have pushed me really hard and I know they will do the same next year.”