

Regional runner-up finish sends Lady Cats to state



Members of the Louisburg girls cross country team hoists their regional runner-up trophy following last Saturday Class 4A regional in Ottawa. The Lady Cats qualified for state for the second consecutive season.

OTTAWA – As runner after runner crossed the finish line during the Class 4A regional meet in Ottawa, doubt began to creep in the minds of the Louisburg High School girls cross country team.

The Lady Cats were hoping to finish in the top three of the team standings and earn a state berth for the second straight season. Louisburg wasn't sure if the results were going to be good enough to equal last year's third place regional finish.

It turned out the Lady Cats had nothing to worry about.

Not only did Louisburg finish in the top three, but the Lady Cats recorded the best finish in school history as they took second with 75 points at the Eisenhower Road Course, 10 points ahead of third-place Paola. Baldwin won the girls regional with 40 points.

Moore, Reese Johnson, Carlee Gassman, Shaylor Whitham, Delaney Wright, Kaitlyn Lewer and Emily Williams will all be making the trip to Wamego this Saturday for the Class 4A state meet.



Louisburg runners and coaches celebrate the announcement of their regional runner-up finish.

"I am just so thrilled that we were able to qualify again as a team," junior Trinity Moore said. "We have worked so hard this year. We were kind of worried because we didn't know where we were going to finish. We just had to go out and run our race. When we found out we made it, we were all just overly ecstatic. We have worked so hard and to finish second is great."

Along with the Lady Cats' regional runner-up finish, they also had two runners finish in the top three individually. Johnson passed Moore late in the race to finish second overall in 22 minutes and 8 seconds, and was five seconds in front of Moore, who ran a 22:13 to come in third.

It was the first time this season that Johnson, a freshman, eclipsed her teammate in a race as both runners have been

pushing each other in practice.



Louisburg freshman Reese Johnson leads a pack of runners up a hill Saturday in Ottawa.

“I was not expecting it at all,” Johnson said of her second place finish. “Everyone was telling me I could beat Trinity and I was able to do it. To me, this was my favorite course so far, even though everyone else hated it. I loved it. I just controlled myself in the middle and took it up the hill.

“Trinity and I are good friends now. We are always running together at practice and we are hanging out all the time. I was always too scared to pass her cause I knew with her competitive side that she would pass me. It is kind of cool that we can race against each other like that.”

Although the finish might have surprised Johnson, it didn't

surprise her coach as he has seen her progress all season.

“Reese is a go-getter,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “There is a lot of gas in that tank and there isn’t anything that is going to stop her. She is going to push through anything and it was just an outstanding race for her. The sky is the limit for her and I think she is going to perform well at state.”



Junior Trinity Moore gets ready to take on one of the many hills at the Ottawa course.

As good as Johnson and Moore ran for the Lady Cats, it was the middle three runners that helped secure the Lady Cats’ state bid.

Gassman was third on the Louisburg team with a 15th place

finish in 23:47, while Whitham finished 25th in 24:49. Wright took 31st overall in 25:36. Lower (26:34) and Williams (27:52) took 36th and 40th, respectively.

"It was amazing," coach Reece said. "I really had no clue that we would get second. For a long time I thought we were fighting for third. Our three, four and five runners were really huge for us.

"Delaney, Shaylor and Carlee stepped up and had the race of their lives. They ran smart races. They started out like we wanted them to, nice and comfortable, they worked through the middle and ended up passing a lot of kids. The game plan worked."

The Louisburg boys saw its season come to an end Saturday in Ottawa as the Wildcats took seventh with 163 points. Iola won the regional with 49 points, El Dorado was second with 51 and Fort Scott was fourth with 84.



Junior Anthony Davis led the Louisburg boys with his 27th place finish.

Junior Anthony Davis was the highest finisher for Louisburg as he took 27th in 20:31. Sophomore Cade Holtzen was 29th in 20:39 and junior Evan Murphy took 32nd in 20:49.

Sophomore Carson Houchen (21:26) and freshman Ben McKain (21:39) took 37th and 38th, respectively. Seniors Gareth Baus (22:03) and Jackson Staab (24:28) took 42nd and 54th.

As for the Lady Cats, they hope to put together their best performance of the season Saturday during the Class 4A state meet at the Wamego Country Club. The 4A girls race is scheduled to run at 12:55 p.m.

After running as a team at state last season, and Moore

finishing fifth overall to earn her second state medal, Louisburg is hoping for even bigger things this time around and a few less nerves.

“I think it will be huge for the girls that went to state last year to show the ones that didn’t run there last year and help them out,” coach Reece said. “I think when you have girls like Trinity, Carlee and Kaitlyn who ran it last year, I don’t think there will be those nerves this year, and that will help the ones who didn’t run like Reese, Delaney and Shaylor. They will have a good group to lean on.”

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

