

Three Wildcat wrestlers go undefeated at Tonganoxie



Louisburg sophomore Cade Holtzen gets ready to pin his opponent from Eudora on Saturday during the Randy Starcher Invitational in Tonganoxie.

TONGANOXIE – Even with the injuries that kept the Louisburg wrestling team from finding much success in the team standings Saturday at the Randy Starcher Invitational, the Wildcats were still able to find plenty of positives.

Louisburg had three wrestlers in Ryan Owens (120 pounds), Blue Caplinger (170) and Ben Wiedenmann (182), who each finished the day with a 5-0 record and provided the Wildcats with some big victories during the dual tournament at Tonganoxie High School.

Although several open weight classes led to the Wildcats' sixth-place team finish, Louisburg also went up against a couple state-ranked opponents, including Lansing (No. 9 in Class 5A) and Tonganoxie (No. 9 in Class 4A).

Louisburg lost its first dual to Lansing (46-24), but rebounded to beat Atchison (54-21) before falling to Frontier League rival Eudora (45-35). The Wildcats defeated Independence (42-33) in the consolation semifinals and then fell to Tonganoxie (42-23) in the fifth-place match.

“It was a tournament filled with some quality wrestlers from all the teams, and the dual format made it even more

challenging," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "There were ranked kids from Shawnee Heights, Frontenac, Lansing, Tonganoxie and Eudora and we saw several of those kids throughout the day.

"In any other season, we're right in the mix with a lot of those duals we lost. This year, since our numbers are so low, it's tough to compete in a dual tournament. We've got quality kids, and they're winning some good matches."

Caplinger, who is currently ranked fifth in the state at 170 pounds, continued his strong season with a 5-0 record to go along with three pins and a technical fall.

Owens finished the day with five wins, with three of those coming by pin. Wiedenmann also racked up points for the Wildcats as he was 5-0 with four pins.

"Those three guys going undefeated on the day was pretty nice to see, that's for sure," Bovaird said. "Ryan has shown that he's very capable of adapting to the new weight class. He's at full strength and not cutting any weight, so combine that with the confidence he's gained over the past year and you've got a kid who's going to be dangerous this season.

"Ben is also getting more and more confidence as the season progresses. I'm seeing him less tentative and more aggressive on the mat. He's getting used to the fact that he's got a presence on the varsity mat and he can beat good kids at his weight. Blue is coming closer and closer to turning the corner with his wrestling abilities. He's nearly at 100 career wins, but even more important, he's getting the experience he needs to be in the mix for a state medal."



Sophomore Anthony Welborn works for a pin against Atchison on Saturday in Tonganoxie.

Sophomore Cade Holtzen, who is ranked No. 4 in the state at 113 pounds, suffered his first loss of the season when he lost a 3-2 decision to fellow state-ranked wrestler Greyson Sontag from Tonganoxie. He still finished the day with a 4-1 mark with two pins and a technical fall.

Freshman Aiden Barker (145) and Hunter Day (220) each ended their day with three wins and Day earned a big pin in his match against Independence that allowed the Wildcats to get the team win. Freshman Brandon Doles (152) and sophomore Anthony Welborn (138) also recorded a pair of victories.

The Wildcats will get a much-needed break as they are off until the holidays as they get some time to heal up from their injuries.

Louisburg will return to action on Jan. 5 when it hosts the Louisburg Invitational and the bracket tournament is set to begin at 9 a.m. Louisburg also plans to celebrate 50 years of Wildcat wrestling during a ceremony at the event.

"The break couldn't come at a better time," Bovaird said. "Lots of our guys have been getting banged up, but that's the nature of the sport. Some time off will help us get healed up. We already have five guys with at least 10 wins, and nine of our varsity wrestlers have a record above .500.

"When we host our home tournament, we're going to have a special presentation before the finals. This season marks the 50th season of Louisburg High School wrestling, and I want to use this home event as an opportunity to help celebrate this."