

Wildcats finish third at Fort Scott to open season



Louisburg senior Blue Caplinger puts an opponent from Anderson County on his back Saturday during the Fort Scott Dual Tournament. Caplinger finished with a 5-0 record on the day and the Wildcats took third overall as a team.

FORT SCOTT – Before the start of each dual during the Fort Scott Tournament on Saturday, the Louisburg wrestling team found itself having to play catch up.

The Wildcats were open in four different weight classes and were giving up 24 points to each of their five opponents. It was not exactly a formula for success, but the Wildcats were able to make the best out of a tough situation.

Louisburg finished third overall with a 3-2 record, behind Paola and Anderson County, to open its season on a strong note and got some good experience for a lot of its wrestlers.

“We structured our season to begin with several dual tournaments,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “The idea is to foster the team aspect of the sport in the wrestlers’ mindsets. Scoring bonus points, fighting out of pinning situations, being willing to step in where the line-up needs them. Aside from that deficit we were in at the start of each dual, the guys wrestled very well.”

"Of course, with it being the first competition of the season, we saw quite a few things that need to be addressed, but ultimately, I'm pretty happy with the technique, the physicality, and the attitudes of the guys. In our Wrestling Mindset training sessions, we're focusing on the three things we can control: effort, attitude, and aggressiveness, and I'm pretty happy with our first matches of the season based on those three things."

The Wildcats opened the tournament with three straight victories, including wins over Blue Valley Southwest (46-34), Fort Scott (42-28) and Shawnee Mission West (42-18). Louisburg lost its final two duals to Anderson County (36-29) and Paola (45-33).

A pair of state-ranked wrestlers led the way for Louisburg as sophomore Cade Holtzen (No. 3, 113 pounds) and senior Blue Caplinger (No. 5, 170 pounds) both went 5-0 on the day and each had a close victory.

Caplinger notched a 6-2 victory over Anderson County's Logan Allen, in what was a low-scoring match late in the third period.

As for Holtzen, he also finished the day with three pins and he bumped up a weight class to 120 pounds to wrestle Anderson County's Ryland Wright, who was a state qualifier last year. Holtzen recorded two points late in the third period to win the close 7-5 decision.

"I love getting these guys some tough matches to kick-start the season," Bovaird said. "There's no better way to get in wrestling shape than to be on the mat wrestling, and to do so against some quality opponents is great for these guys. Against Anderson County, Cade and Blue both wrestled against returning state qualifiers and pulled out some tight victories. Cade was bumping up a weight class, and Blue's match was pretty close until the end. Both were very smart

with their wrestling.”



Louisburg freshman Aiden Barker grapples with an opponent from Shawnee Mission West on Saturday at Fort Scott.

Freshmen Aiden Barker (145 pounds) and Brandon Doles (152) both had a strong debuts for the Wildcats as they finished the day with 4-1 records. Doles won all four of his matches by pin and Barker recorded three pins.

“Both Aiden and Brandon held their own against their opponents, and that’s a great sign for the rest of the high school careers,” Bovaird said. “It’s a huge difference between kids club wrestling and high school wrestling. Now, these guys are often stepping on the mat with men who are about to graduate high school. The conditioning is at a higher level, and the techniques that worked before will often be ineffective up here. They both showed how resilient they can be by adapting to the new level and scrapping with their opponents.”

Sophomore Ben Wiedenmann, who wrestled at 182 pounds on Saturday, pulled off the biggest upset of the day for the Wildcats as he knocked off Anderson County's Dominic Sutton in a 6-4 decision. Sutton was state-ranked coming into the match and Wiedenmann's victory moved him into the state rankings at No. 4 this week.

Wiedenmann, who finished the day with a 4-1 record and two pins, suffered his lone loss to Paola's Mikey Stribling in the final dual of the day. Stribling is ranked No. 3 at 182 pounds.

Fellow sophomore Ryan Owens had a big day at 113 pounds with a 4-1 record with a pin and a technical fall. Sophomore Anthony Welborn also filled in for an injured Gabe Bonham at 138 pounds and was 2-2 on the day.



Louisburg sophomore Ryan Owens was 4-1 on the day as he split time at 113 and 120 pounds.

Senior heavyweight Hunter Day also had a strong performance with a 3-1 mark with two pins, while junior Sam Kratochvil had a 3-2 record on the day with two pins at 220 pounds.

“Ryan, Ben and Anthony are some sophomores who are undersized for their weights,” Bovaird said. “Ryan has been trying to get down to 106 and he spent the night trying to get the weight off, but it wasn’t going to happen. He came in Saturday morning, weighed in at 113, and never complained once going between 113 and 120. The one match he lost was against a 120 kid from Fort Scott who was pretty strong. Ryan had been leading most of the match before the weight difference wore him down too much.

“Anthony was trying to get to 132 this weekend but couldn’t quite get there, even after coming in early Saturday morning to run it off. He bumped up to 138 and filled in for Gabe after he hurt his knee the first match. Ben is about the same size as Blue, but he’s filling in at 182 for our lineup in duals and got a big win against a state-ranked opponent from Anderson County.

“Sam is showing a lot of growth after having his season end early last year. Hunter’s only loss last weekend was against a state ranked opponent from 220 who bumped up a weight for the competition. Jacob Briley (160) is another sophomore who is stepping in at a higher weight class. He’s shown that he’s much more comfortable this season and is looking very natural on his feet during matches.”

Louisburg hopes to continue to see improvement Friday when it travels to Baldwin High School for the December Duals. The first match against Prairie View is set for 4 p.m.