

Caplinger, Holtzen wins home tourney titles; Wildcats medal 8



Louisburg sophomore Cade Holtzen takes an opponent down to the mat Saturday during the Wildcat Classic on Saturday at Louisburg High School.

The beginning of the season hasn't exactly been a smooth one for the Louisburg wrestling team as it has dealt with numerous injuries, which has forced several wrestlers to move around weight classes.

That is why the Wildcat Classic couldn't have come at a better time.

After a little time off for the holidays, the Wildcats took part in their home tournament Saturday at Louisburg High School and ended the day with eight medalists, including a pair of champions.

It was a nice change of pace for Louisburg to compete in front of its home fans.

"We had a very smooth tournament," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "All the people who chipped in to help made it a great event for

our program,
whether it was setting up the gym, donating for our
hospitality room, or
cleaning up. I love hosting a tournament in our gym – it's
almost as if the
architects had wrestling in mind when they designed it. What a
fan-friendly venue
for a wrestling tournament.

"The guys wrestled really well, too. I think having lots of
family,
friends, and fans cheering us on throughout the day really
kept them pushing
hard in their matches. Actually, when I look back on past
performances at this
tournament, I'm really happy with our conditioning and
competitive mindset.
We're coming off a long break, but the guys were focused and
working hard all
week at practice."

Louisburg senior Blue Caplinger (170 pounds) and sophomore
Cade Holtzen (113) both came away with top honors as they were
champions of their respective weight classes.

Caplinger finished the day with a 4-0 record, including a pair
of pins,
but his final two victories were the most impressive.
Caplinger, who is
currently ranked No. 5 in Class 4A, defeated No. 6 Brandon
Martin of Piper by a
6-2 decision.



Senior Blue Caplinger won the 170-pound title Saturday at the Wildcat Classic.

In the championship match, Caplinger then defeated Anderson County's

Logan Allen by a 4-2 decision to improve his record to 19-1 on the season.

"Those wins over Allen of Anderson County and Martin of Piper should be

pretty good confidence boosters for Blue," Bovaird said. "Both are extremely

talented wrestlers. Blue keeps himself in great position every match and the

more experience he gets, the more he's been able to start taking advantage of

his scoring opportunities. He's really matured a lot as a wrestler, and now

that he's a senior, he's been pretty dominant."

Holtzen breezed through his 113-pound bracket as he finished the day with a 4-0 mark as well to go along with four pins. He pinned Blue Valley West's Joey Nichols in the championship in the second period to improve his record to 19-1 on the year.

Holtzen is currently ranked No. 4 in Class 4A at 113 pounds and captured his second consecutive Wildcat Classic title.

"I especially liked how Cade utilized his mat time this weekend,"

Bovaird said "I saw him hitting some crisp techniques and trying out some new moves. He's got a mindset that's keeping him focused on his end goals for the season, and he's taking advantage of the process of improving every match. That takes discipline.

"A lot of wrestlers will see a match against a lesser opponent as an opportunity to try "funk" moves or to try to embarrass their opponents. I'm proud of how Cade took advantage of his matches to work on improving the techniques that will win him key matches at regionals and state."

Six other Wildcats captured medals, including sophomore Ryan Owens, who took second at 120 pounds. Senior Gabe Bonham (138) and freshman Brandon Doles (145) took third overall, while sophomore Anthony Welborn (138), freshman Aiden Barker (145) and sophomore Ben Wiedenmann (182) finished fourth.

Owens improved his record to 17-4 on the season after he began his day with four consecutive wins, including a pin of Tonganoxie's Hunter Harris in the semifinals. Owens was pinned by Anderson County's Ryland Wright in the championship match in the second period.

"All season long, Ryan has been sacrificing for the better of the team, and I couldn't be any prouder of him," Bovaird said. "He's not just bumping up to fill in at 120; he's competing there. He's got a lot of experience with wrestling throughout the years, and here he is at full strength battling with kids who are cutting weight. He's a warrior on the mat, and if he's bothered by the weight difference, you couldn't tell."



Louisburg senior Gabe Bonham works for a pin Saturday during a 138-pound match.

Bonham went 3-2 on the day, including a pin over Welborn in the third-place match. Doles also had a 3-2 performance at 145 pounds and won by major decision over Barker in the third place match.

Wiedenmann started his day with three straight wins, but lost a pair of decisions to Anderson County's Dominic Sutton and Baldwin's Cy Hockey to end his day. Both Sutton and Hockey are ranked No. 5 and No. 6 at 182 pounds.

Luke Kelly (113 pounds, fifth), Nathan Hamilton (132, eighth), Jacob Briley (160, eighth), A.J. Reed (182, ninth) and Sam Kratochvil (220, sixth) also wrestled for the Wildcats.

As a team, Louisburg finished seventh in the team standings with 134 points. Blue Valley West won the tournament title with 204.5 points and Anderson County was second with 179.

"Toward the end of the tournament, when I looked at the team scores, I was honestly surprised that we were so low," Bovaird said. "We were winning a lot of matches and doing well overall. It's just a matter of having some gaps in our lineup. Brandon Doles moved down a weight, leaving us open at 152, and Brian Houck got sick, so we were open at 195. Hunter Day's season was ended with a torn labrum in his shoulder. He had surgery right after New Years Day. We were open at five weights, and two kids who've been winning

matches for us –

Anthony Welborn at 138 and Aiden Barker at 145 – were wrestling unattached, so their wins didn't gain us any team points.

“This was one of those tournaments where the team score isn't the right way to evaluate our success. The individual wins and the style of wrestling we had are the methods we're using to evaluate our progress. I saw several gaps we need to focus on, but at the same time, I love the progression the guys have been making all season.”

Louisburg will get another chance to wrestle at home Thursday when it hosts Spring Hill for Alumni Night. Matches are set to begin at 6 p.m.