

Wildcats hope to bring home multiple medals from state



Senior Blue Caplinger is one of three state-ranked wrestlers from Louisburg High School that will compete in this weekend's state tournament in Salina. The Wildcats qualified six wrestlers in all.

It has been a few years since Louisburg has left the Class 4A state tournament with multiple state medals.

The Wildcats hope to reverse that trend this weekend when their six qualifiers travel to the Kansas State Wrestling Championships at Tony's Pizza Events Center in Salina.

Louisburg features three state-ranked wrestlers going into this tournament with Austin Moore (No. 3, 220 pounds), Blue Caplinger (No. 4, 170) and Cade Holtzen (No. 6, 113). Added to that list is Brandon Doles, the 145-pound regional champion, and senior Gabe Bonham (138) and sophomore Ryan Owens (120) who qualified for state for the first time.

The road to a state medal won't be easy for any of the six wrestlers, and Holtzen is the lone Wildcat to have earned a state medal in the past when he finished sixth last season.

"The way the brackets were drawn and the regionals were matched up, it'll

be a tough road to the finals for our guys,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Every year, you see crazy match-ups that happen before the state finals. Austin has the No. 1 ranked guy on his side of the bracket, so hopefully that will be our semifinals match. If Cade wins his first match, he has the No. 1 wrestler in the quarterfinals.

“Brandon is getting a rematch with a Buhler kid who pinned him at Baldwin last month. Blue has a tough quarterfinals match, but if he gets through that, he’s looking good for a spot in the finals. Gabe and Ryan are both in great positions to win some matches, too. You never know. It happens all the time that top-ranked kids get upset early in the tournament. Kids who are ranked all year get beaten by wrestlers who aren’t supposed to win. It’s all about the mindset and the preparation.

“With all we’ve done this season, I’m anxious to see the team’s hard work pay off,” Bovaird continued. “They’ve bought in to the mentality we’ve been preaching this season. Believe, compete, and do one more. These guys aren’t finished yet. They’re already working hard at practice this week, getting ready to bring home some hardware from state.”

Moore, who is currently 12-0 on the

season and won regionals last week, is among the favorites to earn a medal at 220 pounds but his path to the finals is a difficult one as he has the defending state champion, Braden Morgan from El Dorado, in his half of the bracket.

He will open with Chanute's Tucker Davis (17-25) in the first round, and if Moore were to advance, he will face the winner between Scott City's Kyle Sherwood (30-8) and Santa Fe Trail's Caleb Harmes (26-12).

Caplinger (30-3) also hopes to bring home his first state medal as he earned a favorable first round matchup after winning regionals last week. He will meet Winfield's Cole Finey (5-14) in the first round.

The Louisburg senior could have a tough second round match-up at 170 pounds as he will meet the winner of Rose Hill's Grant Scheer (26-5) and Smoky Valley's Dax Hopp (36-8). Scheer is currently the No. 2-ranked wrestler in 4A.

At 113 pounds, Holtzen (31-4) is ready to bring home another state medal as he will meet Augusta's Collin Jackson (20-12) in the first round. If he should advance, he will meet the winner of Abilene's William Stroda (39-3) and Towanda Circle's Wyatt Wright (32-12) in the quarterfinals. Stroda is currently the No. 1-ranked wrestler at 113 pounds.

Doles (28-9) will take part in his

first high school state tournament as the Louisburg freshman will square off with Buhler's Nick Elliott (34-8), while Doles lost to earlier in the season at Baldwin. He will then meet the winner/loser of the other match between Chanute's Brady McDonald (33-11) and Abilene's Austin Wuthnow (21-23).

After finishing third last week at regionals at 138 pounds, Bonham (18-9) will meet Chanute's Parker Winder (42-6) in the first round and will face the winner/lose between Scott City's Kaden Wren (34-3) and Abilene's Jackson Randles (24-14).

Owens (28-12), a sophomore, will have a tough first round match as he will face Santa Fe Trail's Christian Rowe (39-3) in the first round. He would then meet the winner/loser between Winfield's Chris Ray (23-13) and Pratt's Koda Dipman (32-9) in the next round.

Wrestling begins at 10 a.m., on Friday at the Tony's Pizza Events Center and will wrestle through the semifinal round and one round of consolation. The rest of the consolation rounds and the finals will be held Saturday. All that action begins at 9 a.m.

To view all the state brackets and to follow along with all the action from the weekend, make sure to [click here](#).