

Wildcat track hoping for another big season that ends with state medals



Louisburg junior Carlee Gassman hopes to improve on her state runner-up finish in the 300-meter hurdles this season.

It was a successful 2018 for the Louisburg High School track and field team, and one that saw the Wildcats medal in six events at the state meet.

The Wildcats hope that success will translate into even bigger things in 2019 as they return athletes in five of those state events. Gone is Isabelle Holtzen's medal-winning event in the pole vault, but the Wildcats appear to be even stronger all the way around.

On the girls' side, junior Carlee Gassman returns to lead the Lady Cats after her state-runner up finish in the 300-meter hurdles last season. Gassman was a two-time state medal winner last season after taking fourth in the long jump.

Gassman is one of the favorites to stand atop the podium in the 300 hurdles once the season is complete and will be a big part of the Lady Cat squad.

“Carlee did awesome last year and I see her taking the state title (in the 300),” Louisburg girls coach John Reece said. “She has been alternating between sprint and distance workouts in hopes of maybe running the steeple sometime this year. As far as events go, we will do some different things with her from the 100 to the 400, two relays, long jump and maybe some others.”

Louisburg will also add a new face to the girls team as freshman Delaney Wright will look to achieve success at the high school level after two years of breaking numerous records in her two years of middle school track.

Wright, like Gassman, hopes to medal in several events this season. She is slated to run the 400-meter dash, long jump, relays and will try a couple other events throughout the season as well.

“Delaney will do multiple events like Carlee,” Reece said. “We will give her an opportunity to compete in both individual events and the relays. I do not want to burn her out as she is just a freshman and I hope she has a great four years.

“We will work different girls in both relays until we find the right mix and they should be very competitive come league and regional meets.”

The Lady Cats also return senior Eileen Benne in the jumps, who made progress in the high jump last season, along with junior Sydni Keagle who returns as the team’s top performer in the 100-meter hurdles

from a year ago.

Senior Melia Rice will help lead the Louisburg girls in the throws and senior

Shaylor Whitham will lead the Lady Cats in distance.

In all, Louisburg has 34 girls out for track this season and Reece believes his team will improve as the season goes along.

“It has been a challenge getting started this year with the weather and surprisingly the construction has not been that much of an issue,” Reece said. “We will have quite a few young athletes asked to step up into a varsity role this year so we will go through some growing pains, but be really competitive at the end of the season.”



Senior Chris Williams will lead the Wildcats in the 400 dash and 4x400 relay after he medaled at state in both last season.

On the boys side, senior Chris Williams will lead the Wildcats on the track after earning his first state medal in the 400-meter dash last

season and then later helped the 4×400 relay to a seventh-place finish at state to get his second state medal.

“I would like to see Chris start where he finished last year and grow from there,” Louisburg boys coach Andy Wright said. “After we get a few meets under our belt, I would like to see Chris extend to the open 800.”

Along with the Williams, the team of Blue Caplinger, Justin Collins and Ben Wiedenmann also return to run the 4×400 relay as the Wildcat quartet hopes to improve on their state finish from a season ago.

The Wildcats also return an experienced 4×100 relay in Caplinger, Collins, Wiedenmann, Charlie Koontz and Brandon Cooper as all five will be competing for a spot this year.

“If we stay healthy, our relays should be competing for the top spot at most meets,” coach Wright said. “Both relays have all four returning runners and it should be a good year.”



Louisburg junior Trent Martin returns to lead the Wildcat vaulters after he medaled at state last season.

Louisburg also had a lot of returning experience in the pole vault as junior Trent Martin returns after his state medal performance last season. Sophomore Luke Faulkner, who also qualified for state last season, will also provide the Wildcats with a lot of depth in that event.

“They both have been working to improve in the off-season, going to camps and indoor practice facilities,” coach Wright said. “I think both should have the opportunity to qualify for state and place in the top 8 if they continue to work hard.”

The Wildcats will also hope a lot of depth in the sprints as Cooper, Caplinger, Wiedenmann, Collins and Koontz all hope to medal throughout the season in the 100 and 200 dashes.

Although they didn’t go to state last season, Louisburg also has several returning letter winners from a year ago. Senior Kiefer Tucker, who made good strides in the shot put, comes

back to lead the Wildcats in the throws and junior Michael Waldron will look to do the same in the javelin.

Junior Anthony Davis will lead the Wildcat distance runners as he will compete in the 800 and 1,600-meter run.

In all, the Wildcats have 52 boys out this season with 25 being freshmen, and despite the rough start to the season with cold practices, Wright has liked what he has seen so far.

'We have been making the best of the weather and lack of track," he said. "Other schools have been generous and allowed us to workout at their facilities when they are done. The athletes have handled the adversity well and they are staying positive headed into the first meet with limited reps in the field events."

Louisburg will open its season today when it travels to the Leavenworth Invitational. The Wildcats will also compete on Thursday in Paola.