

Louisburg 4×400 relay sprints way to state championship



The Louisburg 4×400-meter relay (from left) of Justin Collins, Blue Caplinger, Ben Wiedenmann and Chris Williams pose with their state championship medals Sunday at Wichita State's Cessna Stadium. The Wildcat quartet won the state title in 3:25.39.

WICHITA – Three days after arriving in Wichita for the Kansas State Track and Field Championships, Justin Collins, Blue Caplinger, Ben Wiedenmann and Chris Williams finally got the chance to get on the Cessna Stadium track.

The four Wildcat runners had the top time in Class 4A going into the 4×400-meter relay, but weather threw a little wrench into their plans. The meet, which was supposed to end on Saturday, was postponed to Sunday morning and all races were judged by times with no preliminaries.

It wasn't the ideal situation, but they made it work – and it worked well.

Collins, Caplinger, Wiedenmann and Williams won the state championship in a time of 3 minutes and 25.39 seconds as

they edged Chapman at the finish line, which ran a 3:25.61. It was the first state track championship for Louisburg since 2015 when Connor McMullen won the discus.

"I felt we ran well," Wiedenmann said. "Our coach (Andy Wright) had told us that individually there would be kids faster than us, but that as a team they couldn't beat us as long as we ran our best race."

Collins opened the relay, and the Louisburg sophomore was a little nervous, knowing there was more than just a state championship on the line.

"It was a relief because right before I went out there to run, coach Wright told us he had never had anyone win a state championship and we wanted to make sure to do that," he said.

Collins then handed the baton to Caplinger, who also helped keep the Wildcats toward the front of the pack and the Louisburg senior was happy to do his part.

"I think it was cool to win state," Caplinger said. "It is something everyone hopes for and actually accomplishing it is pretty awesome. I think I ran a decent leg, but it wasn't my best. The competition was tough and much different than anything we saw during the regular season."

Caplinger then gave the baton to Wiedenmann and the Louisburg

sophomore remembered something he told Williams two days prior to the race.

“I told Chris that I would do my best to give him a 20-meter lead, and even after all the delays, I made sure to stick to my promise,” Wiedenmann said. “When I handed it off to him, I thought I was pretty close to accomplishing my goal.”

Williams then took the final leg of his high school career and made it count as he left the other seven teams behind him.

“Once I crossed the line, I knew that I used all the effort that Justin, Blue and Ben gave to get me the baton in first and to finish the race like they started,” Williams said. “It was a great feeling that we were able to provide coach Wright with his first state championship in his coaching career.”

The rest of the team felt the same as they came together to celebrate on the infield as Williams crossed the finish line.

“I had mixed feelings watching Chris cross the finish line,” Wiedenmann said. “One part of me was stoked that we had finished first, but the other half of me was glad that it was finally over and that our hard work had finally paid off.”

Louisburg’s 4×400-meter relay was one of two relays to earn state medals for the Wildcat boys. Louisburg medaled in four events overall as the top eight in each event make their way

to the medal stand.

Charlie Koontz, Caplinger, Wiedenmann and Collins worked their way to the medal stand for the 4×100 relay as the Wildcats finished fifth in 43.68, just behind rival Paola who ran a 43.66.

“Getting a medal was really cool in the 4×100,” Caplinger said. “We were ranked seventh coming in and we were just .02 seconds off of third place. I think we ran well against this competition, even though it wasn’t our best time.”



Sophomore Luke Faulkner cleared a personal best of 13-6 in the pole vault to earn his first state medal after he finished fourth overall.

Sophomore Luke Faulkner picked the perfect time to have his best performance in the pole vault as he cleared a personal best 13 feet, 6 inches to finish fourth overall and earned his first

state medal. Teammate Trent Martin was 12th in the event after clearing 12-6.

Williams also earned an individual state medal for the second straight season in the 400-meter dash. The Louisburg senior finished seventh in 52.52 seconds.

"To be honest, the one race I cared about was the 4×400, but once the race started I decided to just go for it," Williams said. "I was just wanted to make my last individual race in high school a good one and it is nice to get another medal."

Senior Kiefer Tucker was just one spot away from earning his first state medal, but the Louisburg senior took ninth with a throw of 141-3, just three feet behind the eighth-place finisher.

Junior Michael Waldron recorded his best throw of the season Saturday in the javelin as he recorded a toss of 165-3 and took 10th. Waldron was a little more than a foot behind eighth-place.

In other events, freshman Tom Koontz had a good time in his first state meet as he took 12th in the 300 hurdles in 42.21 seconds and senior Brandon Cooper was 13th in 11.45 in the 100 dash.

Junior Anthony Davis and freshman Ryan Rogers finished 15th and 16th, respectively, in the 1,600-

meter
run.