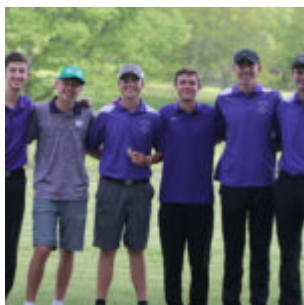


Wildcat golf qualifies for state; Dillon wins regional title



The Louisburg golf team finished third Monday during the Class 4A regional tournament in Paola and qualified for the state tournament. Members of the team are (from left) Colin Cook, Drake Varns, Calvin Dillon, Ryan Haight, Garrett Rolofson and Noah Hill.

PAOLA – As the scores trickled in to the clubhouse at Paola Country Club, the Louisburg golf team could hardly stand it.

The Wildcats were nervously waiting to hear if they had qualified for state, but they knew it was going to be close. Louisburg had to be in the top three of the team standings to earn a spot and the Wildcats had some tough competition amongst them.

As it turned out, the Wildcats had nothing to worry about.

Louisburg recorded a team score of 352 during the Class 4A regional tournament Monday and finished third overall by nine strokes over fourth-place Ottawa. The Wildcat team of Calvin Dillon,

Drake Varns, Garrett Rolofson, Ryan Haight, Noah Hill and Colin Cook will all compete the state tournament in Winfield.

Topeka-Hayden won the regional title going away with a 332 and Louisburg was just three strokes behind runner-up Tonganoxie, which had a 349.

“It feels great, especially with all the hard work we have put in the offseason and last few months,” Dillon said. “It was our goal coming in and we did it. I felt like we had a good chance. It was borderline with those four teams being as close as we are. I knew we had a chance, but it was nice to actually qualify. It was definitely a little nerve-racking waiting for the scores to come in.”

As impressive as that feat was for the Wildcats, Dillon’s performance blew away the rest of the competition.

The Louisburg junior won his first individual regional title as he carded a 1-over 73 to win the tournament by six strokes. Dillon’s 73 was his best score on the season and he has now won all but one tournament on the year.

Dillon got off to a good start at Paola Country Club as he birdied his first hole and had three on the day. He also birdied his final hole on No. 18 with a nice chip and putt to seal the top spot.

“It was nice to get that under my belt, especially since I haven’t really finished all the well at regionals the last

couple of years,” Dillon said. “It is definitely good to get in the winner’s circle here.

“I thought I played well. I got off to a good start early and birdied No. 1 and I think that really helped me momentum-wise. I just gave myself looks all day and it worked well. It was also nice to end it with a birdie and I was able to make a nice putt there at the end.”



Louisburg junior Calvin Dillon won his first regional championship with a 1-over 73 on Monday in Paola.

Varns also played well for the Wildcats as he carded an 87 and finished 10th overall to earn a medal. The Louisburg junior had to play a playoff hole to decide 9th and 10th place.

Although he lost the playoff, Varns played well in his final nine holes after a rough patch early on where he had back-to-back triple bogeys. He went on to card a 40 on the back nine to get himself back into contention for a medal.

“It is nice and I am really happy to get a medal,” Varns said. “It is basically a home course for me as I play here quite a bit. I didn’t play very well the first nine holes, but I came back, followed through and shot a good back nine.

“After the back-to-back triples, it took me awhile to get back into it. I was just in my own head. I came out and shot par the next hole and that just got me back in the right mindset.”



Louisburg junior Drake Varns carded an 87 during the regional tournament Monday in Paola and medaled 10th overall.

Haight was third on the Wildcat team with a 95 and finished 22nd overall, while Rolofson carded a 97 and took 23. Hill finished with a 111 and Cook had a 116 to round out the Louisburg scores.

The Wildcats are now preparing to compete in their first state tournament, but it isn't known when the last time Louisburg qualified a team for state. The last known team to qualify for state was in 1977 when the Wildcats won the sand greens title.

On Monday, the Wildcats will tee off around 10 a.m. in Winfield for the Class 4A state tournament at Quail Ridge Golf Course. Cook will tee off first at 10 a.m. on hole No. 10 and the rest of the Wildcats will follow ending with Dillon's scheduled tee time being 10:50 a.m.

"It feels great," Varns said of qualifying. "We have been working since last summer to get here and it is nice to come through and do well at regionals. It has been awhile since that has happened.

"State is going to be so fun. I don't think we are going to feel a lot of pressure, but we just want to go have fun and see what happens."

Expectations are high for Dillon as he is one of the top golfers heading into state action. His 73 was the top

score from all the regionals last Monday, but Dillon knows state will be a big challenge as he has medaled the last two seasons.

“The Winfield course is set up really tough,” Dillon said. “The rough is really thick and the greens are fast. If I play like I did (Monday), I think I can have a genuine shot at winning.”

Louisburg coach Brian Burns agrees that Dillon will be among the favorites come tee time.

“Calvin is playing great golf right now,” Burns said. “He is still working on his accuracy on his drives, but is hitting the ball a long way. I know the course at Winfield has long rough and hard and fast greens, but we are trying our best to play the ball down at our course this week to work on a more upright swing, chopping down at the ball to advance our rough shots.

“Overall, I like where everyone is with their game, but it is an individual sport and they must get over their own nerves and be confident. Calvin has a chance to place in the top five at state, if not better.”