

Four Wildcats take first in Topeka tournament



TOPEKA – It had been a frustrating start to the new year for the Louisburg wrestling team.

The Wildcats saw their first two events of 2020 cancelled, including their home tournament. It left them itching to get back on the mat and it showed Saturday.

Louisburg traveled to the Topeka Invitational for its first competition in nearly a month and the Wildcats were able to shake off the rust and come home with some hardware. They left Topeka with four champions and one runner-up as the Wildcats finished fourth out of 10 teams.

Freshman Kaven Bartlett (113 pounds), junior Cade Holtzen (126), sophomore Brandon Doles (160) and sophomore Aiden Barker (170) each finished first in their respective brackets to lead the Wildcats. Junior Ryan Owens (120) also advanced to the championship match, but finished second.

“They were definitely eager to get back on the mat,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “We’ve been working hard in the practice room, and after two weeks of some really awesome

practices, it's great to see them get a chance to get on the mats to show what progress they've been making.

"The cancellations were frustrating, no doubt about it, but it is what it is. Every year we don't have any meets canceled due to weather, we're pretty lucky. I just hate losing our home tournament because it's a long-standing tradition and a great chance to get some quality matches on our home mats. "

Bartlett (16-3) got his day started with a technical fall of Topeka West's Jay Dillon and then outlasted Burlingame's Conner Collins for a 2-0 decision in the semifinals. Bartlett then captured the title with a 4-1 decision over Council Grove's Jesse Rodgers in the championship match.

At 126 pounds, Holtzen (18-1) pinned his way to a title. He made his way to the championship with easy pins over Bishop Miege's Daniel Henre and Gardner-Edgerton's Therron Meade. Then in the first-place match, Holtzen handed Council Grove's Wyatt Johnson his first loss of the year with another pin.

Doles (15-4) opened his day up with a pair of easy pins over Topeka-Hayden's TC Thompson and Gardner's Trenton Bryan to advance to the championship. He then battled Topeka High's Caemen Blake and won with a 7-5 decision.

Barker (10-5) filled in at 170 pounds for the Wildcats and recorded a pair of pins over Gardner's Aydin Lowery to record his first championship of the season.

Owens (18-1) started the tournament strong as he pinned

Gardner's Zack Thomas and Highland Park's Javier Osorio to reach the finals. It was there where he suffered his first loss of the season in a 5-0 decision to Council Grove's Tom VanValkenburg, who is currently ranked No. 4 in Class 321A.

"Our guys really did come out well on Saturday," Bovaird said. "For Kaven and Aiden, it was their first ever varsity championship. Cade and Brandn have been there before, but they still had to earn it. Kaven held on to win two decisive matches with smart wrestling, especially on top. Cade had a tough opponent in the finals, but one great thing I saw from him was the ability to turn on the heat late in the match. He never let up, and finally got the pin in the third period.

"Brandon faced off against a very unorthodox opponent, a 6A state qualifier, and I think the match wasn't near as close as the score suggested. He was in control and dominant the whole match. Aiden stepped up to the opportunity to make some noise for himself, and he could have easily let himself get defeated mentally, but he showed some great mental toughness in his matches.

"Ryan Owens ran into the #4 ranked wrestler in 321A, and although he lost 5-0, he was competitive the entire time. That match, while it was a loss, helped him pinpoint some important things to work on, and with his attitude this season, he'll be bouncing back with no problem. "

Sophomores A.J. Reed (182) and Johnathan Keegan-Childs (195) each finished fifth for Louisburg, while junior Jarrett Hoyle (132) and senior Sam Kratochivil (220) each placed sixth.

As a team, the Wildcats finished with 143.5 points to take fourth despite being open in four weight classes. Council Grove won the team title with 171 points, Topeka High was second with 169.5 and Gardner-Edgerton was third with 150.

Louisburg is back in action at
5:30 p.m. tonight when it hosts Lawrence for Alumni Night. The
Wildcats will
also travel to the Parsons Invitational on Friday.