

Holtzen wins regional title; Wildcats send three to state



Louisburg wrestlers (from left) Ryan Owens, Cade Holtzen and Brandon Doles qualified for the Class 4A state wrestling tournament after all three made it to the regional finals Saturday in Louisburg.

Three Louisburg wrestlers advanced to the biggest tournament of the season and did so in front of their home fans.

Ryan Owens (120 pounds), Cade Holtzen (126) and Brandon Doles (160) qualified for the Class 4A state tournament Saturday during the 4A regional tournament held at Louisburg High School. All three had solid performances against some tough competition.

Holtzen captured the 126-pound regional title, while Owens and Doles both finished as the regional runner-up. All three will compete at the state tournament beginning this Friday in Salina.

“With all the craziness of hosting the regional tournament, I’m very proud of how the team performed overall,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “It was great

having three guys make the finals.”

Holtzen

(35-3), who is heading to state for the third consecutive year, won his first regional crown with a dominant performance in his bracket. He opened the tournament with pin of Tonganoxie’s Logan Wake and then pinned Baldwin’s Lucas Hopper in just 54 seconds in the semifinals.

All

that set up a championship match against Piper’s Nick Lawson, and Holtzen was control of the match from the opening whistle as he recorded a 13-1 major decision.



Junior Cade Holtzen won the 126-pound regional title Saturday during the 4A regional tournament in Louisburg.

“Being a regional champ is a really good feeling,” Holtzen said. “I haven’t been able to accomplish that my first two years so to be able to get that was almost a weight off my chest and going to state again is a huge deal. You almost start to take it for granted and last year at state I was definitely humbled, so I am ecstatic about going to state this year, but I’m not done yet.

“I feel I wrestled pretty well overall. There are a couple of areas I can touch up on, so I’ll be doing that in practice this week. But you can always get better so you can never be complacent. And the competition at state is always the best that there is so you have to be at your best.”

As for Owens (35-6), the Louisburg junior opened with a 15-0 technical fall over Ottawa’s Trevor Kaub and then defeated Baldwin’s Jesse Hopper by a 9-4 decision in the semifinals to earn a spot in the championship match and secured a state berth.

Owens faced off with Tonganoxie’s Grayson Sonntag in the finals. Sonntag, who is ranked No. 1 in Class 4A, defeated Owens by a 12-4 major decision. Despite the runner-up finish, Owens is excited for his second trip to the state tournament.

“Being able to go to state again is a great opportunity for me to compete against the best in the state,” Owens said. “I had worked harder this year than any other year in order to go back to state. The past couple years of my high school career had not gone as planned, but

this year I have a
great shot at winning some matches.



Louisburg junior Ryan Owens finished second in the 120-pound class during Saturday's Class 4A regional tournament at LHS.

"Overall, I was able to make it into the finals and face off against the No. 1 ranked wrestler in the state, which I was really excited about. I had lost my semis matches in the past couple meets and was finally able to pull off a semifinals win when it really mattered for regionals."

Doles (31-9) faced a similar road to Owens as he opened with a pin of Paola's Corey Holub and then recorded a 15-0 technical fall over Baldwin's William Damet. That set up

a championship
match against another top-ranked wrestler.

Doles was matched up against Piper's
Anthony Ferguson, who is the No. 1 wrestler in 4A at 160
pounds. Ferguson
pinned Doles in the second period, but the Wildcat sophomore
earned his second
consecutive trip to state.

"Both Ryan and Brandon had tough
match-ups in the regional finals, but I'm proud of how they
battled against
their opponents," Bovaird said.



**Sophomore Brandon Doles took second at 160 pounds during the
4A regional tournament Saturday.**

The Wildcats nearly had two more

earn a trip to state as freshman Kaven Bartlett and sophomore Aiden Barker each found themselves one win from a state berth.

At 113 pounds, Bartlett (28-12) made his way to the blood round despite a tough 6-4 loss in the first round to Atchison's Archer Willis. Bartlett battled back to the consolation semifinals, where he eventually fell in a 3-1 decision to Paola's Charlie Zeller.

As close as that match was, Barker's consolation semifinal match was even more dramatic. Barker found himself in a back and forth match against Paola's Ben Timpe and nearly had a 2-point takedown at the buzzer.

Barker put Timpe on his back as the buzzer sounded, but was ruled just out of bounds as time expired and lost a 9-8 decision.



Sophomore Aiden Barker takes down an opponent for two points. Barker and teammate Kaven Bartlett each finished one win away from qualifying for the state tournament.

"I'm super proud of those two and how much of a fight they put up," Bovaird said. "They both truly took on a predator mindset, which we've been talking about all year. Some of the best wrestling I've ever seen from those two happened this weekend. It is heartbreaking, but some good came of those tough losses. Both of them have been at practice this week helping their teammates, and I think they're both willing to commit to even more off-season wrestling to help them get to their goals."

The

Kansas Class 4A State Wrestling Championships begin at 10 a.m. on Friday at the Tony's Pizza Event Center in Salina and the top six in each weight class will earn a medal.