

# Wildcats medal five at Wamego Invitational



***Louisburg senior Carson Houchen leads a pack of runners Saturday during the Wamego Invitational at the Wamego Country Club. Houchen was one of five medalists for the Wildcats.***

WAMEGO – For Louisburg cross country coach John Reece, the purpose of driving the 2-plus hours to compete in the Wamego Invitational is a simple one.

The course at Wamego Country Club is where the Class 4A state meet will be held at the end of October and Reece wanted to give his runners a taste of what it is like to run on one of the toughest courses in the state and what it will be like should they make it to state.

The Wamego Invitational brings in some of the top teams and runners from all over the state, and if Saturday's results have anything to say, the Wildcats have a chance to do well in the postseason.

Freshman Lola Edwards led the way as she finished sixth overall in 21 minutes and 5 seconds and was one of five Wildcats to medal. The top 40 medalists in each race earn medals.

“Wamego always lines up the top 4A teams in the state each year,” Reece said. “This makes it the most competitive meet next to league for the regular season. Our veteran runners get a chance to run the course again and the newbies get their

first taste of one of the toughest courses in the state.”

Edwards led the Lady Cats to a fifth place team finish as they recorded 129 points and were just one spot away from earning team medals – that distinction goes to the top four squads. Baldwin (29 points), Eudora (69), Buhler (80) and Tonganoxie (107) each finished in the top four.

Along with Edwards, junior Reese Johnson also ran well. Johnson, who was a state medalist as a freshman, was familiar with the course after appearing at state the last two years and took 12<sup>th</sup> in 21:49.

“The race was run in two waves 90 seconds apart, which kind of helped us as we were in the second wave so we got to use the tail end of the first wave to motivate us to pass runners,” Reece said. “Lola and Reese competed very well. As a team we just missed being one of the top four for team medals, but this meet is more about the opportunity to run the course in preparation for a return in October.”

The Wildcat boys came away with three medals of their own. Junior Ryan Rogers led Louisburg in 32<sup>nd</sup> with a time of 19:08. Senior Carson Houchen also left with a medal as he took 34<sup>th</sup> in 19:19 and junior Caden Bradshaw was 36<sup>th</sup> in 19:20.

“The boys team ran great,” Reece said. “The one aspect of their race that was impressive was that the top five runners for us were only 40 seconds apart from each other. This is a huge deal as we move forward. We can not only improve individually, but being so close together we will pull each other along and be strong as a team. Earning three medals on the boys side was outstanding. I hope to be bringing both teams to state this year.”

Senior Cade Holtzen just missed a medal as he finished 45<sup>th</sup> in 19:38 and freshman Noah Cotter was 48<sup>th</sup> in 19:48. Freshman

Braden Branine was 63<sup>rd</sup> in 20:38.

On the girls' side, sophomore Claire Brown also just missed a medal as she took 42<sup>nd</sup> in 24:14 and sophomore Bree Gassman was 47<sup>th</sup> in 24:28. Freshman Erin Apple was 50<sup>th</sup> in 24:41, sophomore Nova Ptacek was 53<sup>rd</sup> in 25:37 and senior Kennady Wilkerson was 60<sup>th</sup> in 26:58.

Louisburg is back in action Thursday when it travels to the Wellsville Invitational. The meet is set to begin at 4 p.m.