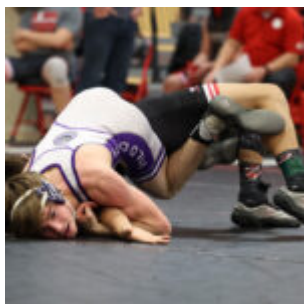


# Wildcats take second at Fort Scott to open season



*Louisburg senior Ryan Owens works for a pin against Fort Scott on Friday at Fort Scott High School. Owens finished the day 4-0 at 120 pounds.*

FORT SCOTT – Despite obstacles that was in its way in the preseason thanks to COVID-19, the Louisburg wrestling team found itself back on the mat Friday in its season opener.

The Wildcats certainly got off to the start it was looking for.

Louisburg went 3-1 at the Fort Scott Duals at Fort Scott High School and finished second overall in a gym that was void of fans. Not having spectators didn't make the success any less memorable.

“I felt a lot of relief,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “There was so much unknown heading into this season – would we get to compete? What will tournaments look like? How will the team respond to changes? It was just like the fall sports season. The anticipation leading up to the first competition was excruciating at times. Then, we got on the bus and drove down south. We got to Fort Scott and then got weighed in. When that first whistle blew, it felt like a huge relief.

“Now, of course we're struggling with conditioning, but some of that's due to kids having been quarantined and only having four days to get in some sort of shape. Most of our guys are

pretty experienced on the varsity level, so we're going to be able to focus on the technique concerns more specifically this week. We nearly filled the whole lineup, only have two opens. Everyone made weight, and they all went out and battled."

The Wildcats got out to a good start as it defeated Blue Valley Southwest, 48-24, and then met the host school Fort Scott in second round. It came down to the last match, but Fort Scott heavyweight Syllvin Roark pinned Elijah Eslinger to hand Louisburg a 47-36 defeat.

Louisburg would bounce back in its third dual as it downed Anderson County, 42-32. The Wildcats then ended on a good note with a 48-28 victory over Prairie View.

"The Fort Scott dual came down to the last match, and we nearly got the pin at 285 for the team victory," Bovaird said. "It was pretty exciting, and I'm proud of how our younger guys stepped up to the challenge and how our older guys set a solid example."

Louisburg seniors Ryan Owens and Alec Younggren both had solid starts to their seasons as each went 4-0. Owens, who competed at 120 pounds, recorded three first period pins and also won by forfeit.

As for Younggren, the Wildcat 220-pounder did the same as he breezed through his opposition with three pins and a forfeit.

"Ryan looked like he hadn't been off the mat at all," Bovaird said. "Just a smooth and natural flow to his movement. This was my first time really seeing Alec wrestle, other than a few live rounds at practice. He looked unstoppable – solid positioning and explosive attacks"



***Louisburg junior Johnathan Keegan-Childs works for some back points Friday against Blue Valley Southwest.***

Senior Cade Holtzen (126 pounds) also went 4-0, but only got one actual match in and that was second period pin over Anderson County's Masten Wright. Freshman Noah Cotter, 106 pounds, also won all four matches by forfeit.

Junior Johnathan Keegan-Childs had a successful day at 195 pounds as he finished the day with a 3-1 record. One of those victories was a come-from-behind win over Fort Scott's Jed Nash, as he pinned him late in the second period.

Sophomore Kaven Bartlett (132), freshman Traden Noll (138), senior Jacob Briley (2-2) and Eslinger each went 2-2 on the day. Senior Jarrett Hoyle (145) and junior Aiden Barker (182) each also won a match.

"Cade worked his tail off to make weight, and it was

frustrating for him to only get one match,” Bovaird said. “He made the most of it though, and looked pretty tough. Johnathan Keegan-Childs had an exciting come-from-behind win against Fort Scott. Jarrett came out his first match looking very focused and strong. Kaven and Aiden both had tough weights at that meet, and while their records don’t look outstanding, they both competed really well.

“Noah Cotter went 4-0 just by showing up and taking forfeits. It stinks for him that he didn’t get to wrestle, but at the same time, we went so long without a 106-pounder and were just giving those team points away. It’s nice to be on the other side of that situation. Traden Noll went out and got his first varsity win of his high school career. I’ve been working with him with the Wildcat Wrestling Club for a few years now, and it’s great to see him transition so well to high school.”



***Senior Jarrett Hoyle takes his Blue Valley Southwest opponent to the mat Friday in Fort Scott.***

Louisburg will be back on the mat this Friday when it travels to Basehor-Linwood for a dual competition with Burlington,

Lawrence Free State and Basehor-Linwood. Matches are set to begin at 5 p.m.

“Thanks to Covid-19, our season is getting drastically reworked,” Bovaird said. “The December Duals traditionally hosted by Baldwin got split into two locations. Burlington always has a pretty solid lineup top-to-bottom. Basehor is growing in strength every year – they’ve got a great youth program and their coach is outstanding. Lawrence Free State is also on the rise in 6A. I’ve known their new head coach for a long time and I really respect what he’s been doing. Friday’s duals can be interesting, but I feel like we’ll be prepared to step up and take on the challenge.”