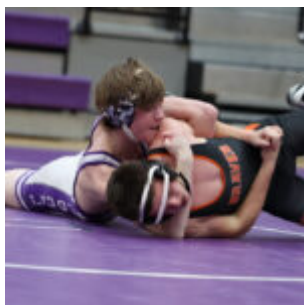


Younggren wins title at Tonganoxie; Owens, Holtzen runner-up



Senior Ryan Owens works for some back points during a match Thursday at Spring Hill High School.

TONGANOXIE – It was a busy week for the Louisburg wrestling team as the Wildcats took part in three different competitions last week.

Louisburg started with duals against Olathe West, Bonner Springs and Spring Hill and went 1-2. However, the competition heated up even more Saturday when Louisburg competed in the Randy Starcher Memorial at Tonganoxie High School.

Three Wildcats found themselves in the finals and Louisburg had five wrestlers overall that took a top four finish. In the team standings, Louisburg was sixth with 93 points and Shawnee Heights took first with 202.

Senior Alec Younggren won the 220-pound title with a pin of Eudora's Devon Moncrief and then captured a 12-1 major decision over Shawnee Heights' Garrett Perry in the title match. Perry was a state qualifier a year ago and Younggren, who is currently No. 2 in 4A, is still perfect with a 12-0 record.

Seniors Ryan Owens (120 pounds) and Cade Holtzen (126) also advanced to the championship round, but lost to a pair of

state-ranked opponents.

Owens, who entered the match with a 12-0 record, won his first three with two technical falls and a pin. He matched up with Shawnee Heights' Brock Ferguson in the championship round, but was pinned in the third period.

As for Holtzen, he posted a 13-0 record after three straight pins put him in the finals against the defending state champion, Grayson Sonntag, of Tonganoxie. Holtzen lost the match by a 6-1 decision.

In the heavyweight division, sophomore Elijah Eslinger ended his day on a good note as he finished third after he pinned Tonganoxie's Cooper Jones. He finished the day 2-1

Junior Aiden Barker (182) also found himself wrestling for third, but was pinned by Platte County's Jake Fernandez and ended the tournament 2-2 record.

Senior Jarrett Hoyle (145) finished fifth, while freshman Noah Cotter (106), sophomore Brett Rangel (152) and junior Johnathan Keegan-Childs (195) was sixth. Sophomore Kaven Bartlett (132) was seventh and senior Jacob Briley (170) took eighth.



Cade Holtzen (right) gives teammate Kaven Bartlett some words of encouragement during his match Thursday against Bonner Springs.

"We had some great things happen at Tonganoxie," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "Looking past the team score, I'm very happy with our performance. Elijah Eslinger is really figuring things out at 285. He went 2-1 with two pins to finish third. Ryan Owens lost by pin at 120, but the match was closer than the result suggests. His opponent, who took 3rd in 5A last year, caught him in a wicked headlock, but up until that point, Ryan was scraping with him pretty well.

"Cade dropped a decision against the returning 4A state champ. It was a tough match, but he's going to see that guy many more times. Because of how KSHSAA has restructured the post season, we're likely going to see Tonganoxie quite a bit before state. Aiden Barker went 2-2 and one of his wins was against a 4A

state qualifier. In the 3rd place match, he was dominating his Platte County opponent, but got caught after a little mistake.”

On Wednesday, Louisburg hosted Olathe West in its home opener for a dual, and despite giving up some points, the Wildcats made it close, but fell 48-36 against their Class 6A opponent.

The Wildcats also had some exhibition matches against Osawatomie and Holtzen got himself a big win. Holtzen bumped up a weight class to face off with No. 3 Chance Mitzner of Osawatomie and got the 6-3 decision.

Holtzen, along with Bartlett, freshman Traden Noll (138) and Younggren, picked up two wins on the night. Owens and Barker also won a match.

The next day, Louisburg traveled to Spring Hill for a double dual with Bonner Springs and the Wildcats left with a 1-1 record. Louisburg defeated Bonner Springs, 48-33, and came up short against Spring Hill, 45-36.



Junior Bailey Hallas works for a pin Thursday against her Spring Hill opponent.

It was against Spring Hill where Louisburg junior Bailey Hallas picked up her first win of the season for the Wildcat girls team as she won by pin. Amber Pritchett also wrestled for the Louisburg girls.

Louisburg is now on winter moratorium and won't be able to get back to the practice room until Jan. 5 and will have four days to get ready for its home tournament on Jan. 9.

Bovaird has liked what he has seen from his team so far and is looking forward to the rest of the season.

"We're at the point where I'm constantly reiterating to the guys that we need to quit looking at records and wins / losses," Bovaird said. "This part of the season is when we focus on growth. Every year, the wrestlers who keep the growth

mindset and build from each match are the ones who get revenge wins and get far at state. That's our goal – relentlessly pursuing improvement.”