

Wildcats qualify seven for regional tournament



Junior Aiden Barker works for a pin during Saturday's district tournament at Santa Fe Trail High School. Barker won the 182-pound weight class.

CARBONDALE — It was the beginning of a different postseason for the Louisburg wrestling team Saturday at Santa Fe Trail High School.

In fact, it was a first for all the teams at the Class 4A District Tournament. This postseason was going to be much different than anything they have seen.

The district tournament was just the first of three stops before a wrestler has the opportunity to reach the state level. The top four in each weight class had the opportunity to advance and the Wildcats saw seven move on to the regional round.

Louisburg put six wrestlers in the district finals, and one in the consolation finals, as the Wildcats went on to finish fourth with 165 points. Ottawa won the district crown with 249.

"I'm very proud of how those seven did this weekend, and I'm very happy with our performance," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "Of course, there were five who didn't move on, and I'm just as proud of them as the others. This was our first traditional double-elimination bracket of the season,

and even though they've all wrestled in this type of competition before, our season has largely been focused on the mentality of having as strong a dual team as possible.

"I think that's definitely helped our competitive mindset – in duals, we try to score more bonus points by winning with pins, techs, and majors, and we also try to avoid giving up those things. In a tournament format, the team scoring is different, but the guys all battled in every match."

Ryan Owens (120 pounds), Cade Holtzen (132 pounds), Aiden Barker (182) and Alec Younggren (220) each captured the district title. Kaven Bartlett (126) and Elijah Eslinger (285) also made the finals, but finished second.

Sophomore Trace Eslinger (195) also advanced to regionals after he finished fourth.



Senior Ryan Owens gets some back points during his 120-pound semifinal match Saturday.

For Owens, Holtzen and Younggren – it was business as usual for the three Wildcats seniors. The three, who won state medals a year ago, moved on without a problem.

Owens, opened the tournament with a pair of technical falls, and then outlasted Baldwin's Nakos Benton in a 12-8 decision in the championship.

As for Holtzen, the No. 2 wrestler in the state, he recorded a pair of pins – including one of Ottawa's Liam Sutton in the championship – to win the 132 pound crown.

Younggren was just as dominant as the No. 2-ranked wrestler at 220 pounds had two first period pins to move his record to 29-0 on the season.



Cade Holtzen works for a pin Saturday during a match in the district tournament at Santa Fe Trail.

"Cade and Ryan have had some tight matches this season, which is great for preparing them for the postseason," Bovaird said. "It's out of our control, but Alec really hasn't seen a true test. Only one match has gone all three periods and we haven't been able to get him matches against other ranked kids. The three of them are looking pretty solid. We've tried to adapt our season periodization so that they're peaking at the right time, and I think we're doing some things right in that aspect."

Barker's journey to a district title was more difficult as he had to go through a returning state qualifier and a state-ranked wrestler.

In the semifinals, Barker caught Ottawa's Wyatt Sink on his back in the third period in a hard fought match to advance to championship, where he faced off with No. 6 ranked Angel Franco from Bishop Miego.

Barker and Franco's match went the distance as he outlasted Franco for a 9-8 decision, in what was a back and forth match.

"Two great things happened with Aiden on Saturday," Bovaird said. "One, he was able to get a second win over a returning state qualifier from Ottawa and two, he was able to get a win in the finals over a state-ranked wrestler from Bishop Miego.

"After both of those matches, I told him that he's causing my blood pressure to soar with some of the mistakes he's making, but at the same time he's aggressive, relentless, and confident. We can work to refine the technique errors, but those mindset strengths are things we can't really teach. A kid has to develop them them and apply them himself."

Bartlett and Elijah Eslinger both had competitive matches in the finals, but Bartlett came up short in a 5-1 decision to

Ottawa's Parker Guge and Eslinger went on to get pinned by Ottawa's Aaron Clevinger. Earlier in the day, Bartlett won his first two matches by pin in the first period and Eslinger won his semifinal match by pin.

Trace Eslinger, who filled in at 195 pounds due to injury, also had a good day as he won a 5-3 decision in his first match, before falling 3-2 in the third place match to Baldwin's Zayne Nowak.



Alec Younggren gets a pin Saturday in the district championship to improve his record to 29-0 on the season.

"Kaven is hitting his stride very well right now," Bovaird said. "Since moving down to 126, he's been able to win a lot of great matches. The kid he lost to in the finals had pinned him earlier in the season, but at districts it was a lot closer – even closer than the 5-1 score suggests. He's in a great position for moving into the next round after regionals.

"Elijah got a revenge win against in the semifinals by pinning his Baldwin opponent, and then he looked very competitive against his Ottawa opponent in the finals. Trace Eslinger stepped up and filled in at 195 this weekend after Johnathan Keegan-Childs was unable to be cleared to wrestle. He'd hurt his shoulder against Eudora a week ago. Trace got a key win in the first round and then found himself battling in a close match for 3rd place. The remarkable thing is that he normally weighs about 175 pounds."

Five Wildcats saw their season come to an end as Noah Cotter (106), Traden Noll (138), Jarrett Hoyle (145), Jesse Murphy (152) and Jacob Briley (170) each finished outside the top four.

"Our guys who didn't make it to the next tournament definitely went out fighting, especially Noah and Jarrett," Bovaird said. "Noah nearly won his last match for 5th place, but dropped an 8-6 overtime decision to his Eudora opponent. Jarrett won his final match for 5th place by getting a pin. Although his season is over, it's a great way to end things. A lot of tears were shed, especially by our seniors Hoyle and Jacob Briley."



Sophomore Trace Eslinger finished fourth at 195 pounds and advanced to regionals.

Louisburg will look to continue its success this Friday when it travels to the Class 4A regional at Jefferson West High School. Matches are set to begin at 3 p.m., and the top four advance to next week's sub-state tournament in Chanute.

"It's going to be a dogfight, that's for sure," Bovaird said. "All seven of our guys have shots at moving on, but nothing is ever guaranteed."

Noah Cotter (12-18) placed 6th and scored 3.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Graham Hawks (Shawnee Mission-Bishop Miege) 17-20 won by fall over Noah Cotter (Louisburg) 12-18 (Fall 1:46)
- Cons. Round 1 – Noah Cotter (Louisburg) 12-18 received a bye () (Bye)
- Cons. Semi – Ayedin Johnson (Baldwin) 21-11 won by fall over Noah Cotter (Louisburg) 12-18 (Fall 4:13)
- 5th Place Match – Russell Smith (Eudora) 1-18 won in sudden victory – 1 over Noah Cotter (Louisburg) 12-18 (SV-1 8-6)

120

Ryan Owens (22-4) placed 1st and scored 23.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Ryan Owens (Louisburg) 22-4 won by tech fall over Frank Cressey (Shawnee Mission-Bishop Miege) 4-21 (TF-1.5 1:49 (16-0))
- Semifinal – Ryan Owens (Louisburg) 22-4 won by tech fall over Ian Meisbach (Santa Fe Trail) 9-18 (TF-1.5 2:28 (15-0))
- 1st Place Match – Ryan Owens (Louisburg) 22-4 won by decision over Nakos Benton (Baldwin) 24-10 (Dec 12-8)

126

Kaven Bartlett (18-12) placed 2nd and scored 20.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Kaven Bartlett (Louisburg) 18-12 won by fall over Jack Baron (Baldwin) 6-23 (Fall 0:48)
- Semifinal – Kaven Bartlett (Louisburg) 18-12 won by fall over Trent Sleichter (Santa Fe Trail) 15-7 (Fall 0:25)
- 1st Place Match – Parker Guge (Ottawa) 14-2 won by decision over Kaven Bartlett (Louisburg) 18-12 (Dec 5-1)

132

Cade Holtzen (30-1) placed 1st and scored 24.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Cade Holtzen (Louisburg) 30-1 received a bye () (Bye)
- Semifinal – Cade Holtzen (Louisburg) 30-1 won by fall over Cody Slavin (Santa Fe Trail) 8-8 (Fall 1:00)
- 1st Place Match – Cade Holtzen (Louisburg) 30-1 won by fall over Liam Sutton (Ottawa) 19-9 (Fall 3:11)

138

Traden Noll (9-15) placed 5th and scored 5.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Chayse Jeanneret (Santa Fe Trail) 12-12 won by decision over Traden Noll (Louisburg) 9-15 (Dec 4-2)
- Cons. Round 1 – Traden Noll (Louisburg) 9-15 received a bye () (Bye)
- Cons. Semi – Miguel Andazola (Baldwin) 23-15 won by fall over Traden Noll (Louisburg) 9-15 (Fall 0:37)
- 5th Place Match – Traden Noll (Louisburg) 9-15 received a bye () (Bye)

145

Jarrett Hoyle (11-20) placed 5th and scored 7.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Luke Greenfield (Santa Fe Trail) 16-10 won by major decision over Jarrett Hoyle (Louisburg) 11-20 (MD 14-2)
- Cons. Round 1 – Jarrett Hoyle (Louisburg) 11-20 received a bye () (Bye)
- Cons. Semi – Richard Blevins (Ottawa) 20-10 won by fall over Jarrett Hoyle (Louisburg) 11-20 (Fall 1:18)
- 5th Place Match – Jarrett Hoyle (Louisburg) 11-20 won by fall over Josue Rosas (Kansas City-Bishop Ward) 2-6 (Fall 0:53)

152

Jesse Murphy (2-22) placed 5th and scored 5.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Joel Brown (Ottawa) 23-13 won by fall over Jesse Murphy (Louisburg) 2-22 (Fall 1:46)
- Cons. Round 1 – Jesse Murphy (Louisburg) 2-22 received a bye () (Bye)
- Cons. Semi – Jaiden Michael (Baldwin) 20-16 won by tech fall over Jesse Murphy (Louisburg) 2-22 (TF-1.5 2:34 (18-1))
- 5th Place Match – Jesse Murphy (Louisburg) 2-22 received a bye () (Bye)

170

Jacob Briley (8-21) placed 5th and scored 5.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Tyler Pankey (Shawnee Mission-Bishop Miego) 20-2 won by fall over Jacob Briley (Louisburg) 8-21 (Fall 0:55)
- Cons. Round 1 – Jacob Briley (Louisburg) 8-21 received a bye () (Bye)
- Cons. Semi – Dakota Whitaker (Eudora) 21-9 won by fall over Jacob Briley (Louisburg) 8-21 (Fall 1:32)
- 5th Place Match – Jacob Briley (Louisburg) 8-21 received a bye () (Bye)

182

Aiden Barker (22-8) placed 1st and scored 22.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Aiden Barker (Louisburg) 22-8 received a bye () (Bye)
- Semifinal – Aiden Barker (Louisburg) 22-8 won by fall over Wyatt Sink (Ottawa) 22-7 (Fall 5:49)
- 1st Place Match – Aiden Barker (Louisburg) 22-8 won by decision over Angel Franco (Shawnee Mission-Bishop Miego) 25-8 (Dec 9-8)

195

Trace Eslinger (3-5) placed 4th and scored 9.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Trace Eslinger (Louisburg) 3-5 won by decision over Isaiah Barrnett (Kansas City-Bishop Ward) 9-13 (Dec 5-3)
- Semifinal – Jared Ferguson (Ottawa) 20-8 won by fall over Trace Eslinger (Louisburg) 3-5 (Fall 1:24)
- Cons. Semi – Trace Eslinger (Louisburg) 3-5 received a bye () (Bye)
- 3rd Place Match – Zayne Nowak (Baldwin) 21-15 won by decision over Trace Eslinger (Louisburg) 3-5 (Dec 3-2)

220

Alec Younggren (29-0) placed 1st and scored 24.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Alec Younggren (Louisburg) 29-0 received a bye () (Bye)
- Semifinal – Alec Younggren (Louisburg) 29-0 won by fall over Cooper Stone (Ottawa) 1-1 (Fall 1:13)
- 1st Place Match – Alec Younggren (Louisburg) 29-0 won by fall over Devon Moncrief (Eudora) 7-11 (Fall 1:23)

285

Elijah Eslinger (16-12) placed 2nd and scored 18.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Elijah Eslinger (Louisburg) 16-12 received a bye () (Bye)
- Semifinal – Elijah Eslinger (Louisburg) 16-12 won by fall over Kaden Coons (Baldwin) 15-11 (Fall 1:55)
- 1st Place Match – Aaron Clevenger (Ottawa) 19-9 won by fall over Elijah Eslinger (Louisburg) 16-12 (Fall 1:40)

Hallas advances to regional tournament

Louisburg had a representative in last Friday's girls district II tournament in Osawatomie and Bailey Hallas saw her season extend at least one more week.

Hallas took fourth in the 109-pound division last Friday in

Osawatomie and moves on to the regional tournament Saturday in Burlington.

“I’m so excited about this,” Bovaird said. “She has been a trooper all season, learning the sport and working to improve every week. She nearly had her last match won – leading 6-2 late in the third period, she got a little out of position with a cradle on top and got reversed to her back. She’s got a great mindset and I’m excited to see how she competes this Saturday.

“There are a handful of young girl wrestlers coming up in the next few years, and Bailey and Amber Pritchett (along with the numerous girl wrestlers who came before them) have started a great foundation for our girls program.”