

Wildcat track wins first regional title since 2012; qualifies in 15 events



The Louisburg boys track and field team were all smiles Friday following the Class 4A regional meet in Paola. The Wildcats won their first regional title since 2012 as they qualified for state in 15 events.

PAOLA – It has been almost a decade since the Louisburg boys track and field team has come away with a regional title.

That drought came to an abrupt end Friday during the Class 4A regional meet in Paola. The Wildcats racked up 168 points and defeated runner-up Paola by 30 points to win their first regional crown since 2012.

In all, Louisburg qualified for state in 15 of the 18 events on Friday. The Wildcats had six individual regional champions and are sending 16 athletes to state.

“This team has worked so hard and put in the time at practice and it was super nice to see that pay off for the athletes,” Louisburg boys coach Andy Wright said. “They were excited to win regionals, but what I love about them is that they aren’t satisfied with it, and want to go after state.”

Two of those individual titles came from one person. Junior Tom Koontz won both the 110 and 300-meter hurdles, and he also qualified in two relay events. He was the top-point getter for

the Wildcats.

Koontz ran a personal best in the 110 hurdles to win in 15.07 seconds and later won the 300 hurdles in another personal best time of 39.80 seconds. He is currently ranked No. 1 in Class 4A in both events.



Louisburg junior Tom Koontz stretches out ahead of teammate Mason Dobbins to win the 110-meter hurdles.

“My main goal in my hurdle events was to beat my rival from Spring Hill every meet, and PR of course,” Koontz said. “But winning at regionals seemed very possible for me, so I did have it up there as one of my goals.

“But to PR on both my events by so much meant the world to me. Everyday I work hard so I can get better and hopefully get noticed, and PRing by so much was like a dream come true. That doesn’t mean I’m done though.”

Koontz also joined Justin Collins, Ben Wiedenmann and Ethan Ptacek to take second in the 4×100 and 4×400-meter relay. The 4×100 ran a time of 43.79 and the 4×400 ran a season best 3:29.

It was a special moment in the 110 hurdles race as the Wildcats qualified all three hurdlers for state. Along with Koontz, sophomore Mason Dobbins was runner-up in 15.36 seconds and sophomore Nathan Apple was fourth in 15.79.

In the preliminaries, Apple had originally not qualified for the finals due to a competitor next to him knocking over his hurdle unintentionally. Meet workers allowed Apple to run again, which allowed him to qualify for the finals and he ran a personal record in the process.

“Tom has worked super hard all season and he is a perfectionist at practice,” Wright said. “He stays after to get it just right, and that commitment is paying off for him. I can’t wait to see him get a chance to put all that hard work into action and give it his best at state.

“All the hurdlers have all been working and improving, and qualifying three is a credit to that work they put in practice.”



Louisburg senior Carson Houchen runs the anchor leg of the 4×800-meter relay Friday in Paola. The team of Houchen, Cade Holtzen, Hayden Ross and Jaden Vohs won the regional crown in 8:32.

The Wildcats also scored a lot of points in the distance races and it started with the 4×800-meter relay as the team of Carson Houchen, Cade Holtzen, Hayden Ross and Jaden Vohs won a regional title in a personal best time of 8:32.

“The 4×8 at regionals was much more competitive than we thought it would be,” Houchen said. “Basically every team went out and PR’d by a lot. Our team also PR’d, but only by about two seconds. Everyone on our team except me had their best split times of the year, and I was about 5-6 seconds behind where I usually am. If all of us run our best times, we have a very good chance to get first or second at state.”

Vohs went on to win a regional championship of his own in the

1,600-meter run in 4:45, less than a second in front of Labette County's Alex Meister. Houchen also qualified in the 1,600 as he took third in 4:52.

The two traded spots in the 800 run as Houchen qualified in second in a time of 2:06.05 and Vohs was fourth in 2:06.65.

"Because Jaden and I did three events last Friday, it was an extremely tough meet for us," Houchen said. "The meet was run ahead of schedule so we didn't get a lot of recovery time in between our races.

"Having my teammate running the same tough races with me was a big boost to my confidence and is a big reason why both of us were able to qualify in all three events. I'm looking forward to competing with Jaden and helping each other reach new heights at state."

Louisburg also qualified a runner in the 3,200-meter run as junior Ryan Rogers finished fourth in 11:06.

In the sprints, Collins qualified in two individual events as he took second in the 400-meter dash in 51.51 seconds and earlier took third in the 100 dash in 11.26. Ptacek also qualified in the 400 dash and took fourth in 51.77.

Wiedenmann recorded a runner-up finish in the 200-meter dash in 23.06 seconds.



Sophomore Ethan Ptacek gets the handoff in the 4×400-meter relay during the Class 4A regional meet in Paola. The team of Ptacek, Justin Collins, Ben Wiedenmann and Tom Koontz took second in the 4×400 and 4×100 relay.

“Justin and Ben have been the backbones of the team all year on the track,” Wright said. “They are excellent leaders and help give the younger guys the confidence they need to perform well as a team.

“I love what they will bring to the track in their intensity at state. They have both been there and know what to expect and how to handle the pressure. I look for good things from them on Friday.”

In the field events, the Wildcats had a pair of regional champions in the pole vault and high jump.

Senior Luke Faulkner earned a regional title in the pole vault

after he cleared 14-0 for the second straight week and edged out Paola's James Earlywine, who also cleared 14-0. Freshman Caden Caplinger also earned a state bid after he cleared 12-6 to take third.

Dobbins provided the Wildcats with a nice surprise in the high jump as he cleared a personal best height of 6-1 to win the event.

The Wildcats also got a nice boost from sophomore Isaiah Whitley, who recorded a personal best of 20-8.5 in the long jump to take fourth and earn a bid to state.

"I was super happy for Mason, but not surprised as he is a super hard worker, and is putting it all together," Wright said. "Coach (Leanna) Willer has him believing in what he can do, and I know he will just keep getting better.

"I knew Isaiah had a big jump coming. He was getting frustrated in previous weeks, and I told him it was coming, that he was going to put it together and pop a big one and he did."

Louisburg also qualified two athletes in the javelin as both Nathan Vincent and Jay Scollin endured sloppy conditions to find a way to state. The runway was wet and muddy due to rain from earlier in the week, but the Wildcat throwers came through.



Louisburg senior Jay Scollin recorded a personal best throw in the javelin to take third overall.

Vincent was second with a throw of 159-03 and Scollin had a personal best toss of 158-6 to take third overall.

Now the Wildcats have their sights set on the Class 4A state meet this Friday in Wichita. The top eight will earn medals, but Louisburg is also trying to get on that medal stand as a team.

Events will begin at 8 a.m. at Cessna Stadium, and the meet, which is in conjunction with Class 3A, will run throughout the day.

"If we go in there with the mentality of just doing what we know we can do, and competing, these guys are going to give it their best shot and surprise some people that have maybe overlooked them," Wright said.



Luke Faulkner raises up the regional championship plaque following the conclusion of the meet last Friday.

Other results are:

3,200 run: Leo Martin, sixth, 11:28; Sawyer Richardson, 9th, 11:42

100 dash: Hunter Heinrich, 11th, 12.38

1,600 run: Ryan Rogers, seventh, 5:06

400 dash: Dylan Armstrong, seventh, 55.30

300 hurdles: Mason Dobbins, fifth, 42.57; Nathan Apple, eighth, 43.43

800 run: Cade Holtzen, ninth, 2:15

200 dash: Armstrong, seventh, 24.38; Heinrich, ninth, 24.60

Shot put: J.R. Rooney sixth, 40-8; Chase Pritchard, 11th, 36-0.5; Reid Justesen, 14th, 34-2

Discus: Nathan Vincent, fifth, 124-11; Pritchard, 11th, 89-10

High jump: Isaiah Whitley, eighth, 5-8

Long jump: Ethan Ptacek, ninth, 19-1.75; Hayden Feikert, 10th, 18-8.75

Javelin: Carson Wade, seventh, 136-06

Pole vault: Caleb Shaughnessy, fifth, 10-6