

# Koontz wins state title as Wildcats medal in 12 events at 4A meet



*Louisburg junior Tom Koontz was all smiles after winning the 110-meter high hurdles Friday during the Class 4A state meet at Cessna Stadium in Wichita.*

WICHITA – There were many big performances for Louisburg in its quest for a Class 4A state championship as the Wildcats medaled in 12 of 18 events.

Several athletes stepped up on their way to giving Louisburg its second state championship – its first coming 10 years ago.

Maybe none stepped up more than Wildcat junior Tom Koontz.

Koontz was Louisburg's lone state champion Friday during the Class 4A Kansas State Track and Field Championships at Cessna Stadium in Wichita.

He cruised to a personal-best time of 14.87 seconds in the 110-meter hurdles to win going away. Wellington's Gavin York was second at 15.22.



***Louisburg junior Tom Koontz clears a hurdle during as sophomore Mason Dobbins (left) is right behind him during the 110-meter race. Koontz won the race and Dobbins was third overall.***

“Winning the 110s was easily one of the highlights of my track career,” Koontz said. “Before the race, I kept repeating to myself ‘no one here wants this more than you’ and I had convinced myself that I had it in the bag.

“(Coach Leanna) Willer had asked me to run under a 15 so she had bragging rights, but it was also my desire to be better than I was before that did it for me. When the race was over, I couldn’t believe that I’d done it, and I simply wouldn’t stop smiling.”

Koontz nearly got a second gold medal in the 300-meter hurdles, but came up just short as he hit a couple hurdles on his way to a second-place finish in 40.54 seconds. Topeka-Hayden’s Jake Muller won the event in 39.92.

In all, Koontz finished the state meet with four medals, including two as a member of the 4×100 and 4×400-meter relays.

“I knew the 300s would be my toughest race, and it was,”

Koontz said. "I was so determined to win that I lost sight of how I run my races. One small slip up can make the difference, but now I'm ready for next year. The 300s are a very difficult race, but I know I'm capable of doing great things in it."

The Wildcats had top three finishes in all of their relays and it started with the 4×800 group.

Carson Houchen, Cade Holtzen, Hayden Ross and Jaden Vohs ran to a third-place finish in 8 minutes and 33 seconds. Buhler won the title at 8:16 and Wamego was second with a time of 8:20.

"I was very happy with our 4×800," Holtzen said. "We wanted first, but the top two teams ran incredible races so to be top three in the state is a great feeling. And there is no other way I would've liked to cap my high school career than that."



***Louisburg junior Jaden Vohs leads a pack of runners during the 1,600-meter run Friday at the state meet. Vohs earned three state medals overall.***

Louisburg also got some key points in the distance races with Vohs and Houchen. Both runners medaled in the 1,600-meter run as Vohs was sixth at 4:36 and Houchen took eighth in 4:42.

Vohs also picked up a medal in the 800-meter run as he came in sixth in 2:03. Houchen just missed a medal as he took ninth in 2:05.

“Jaden and I both weren’t projected to get points based on our regional times, so to come into the 1,600 and have both of us score was a big bonus for our team points,” Houchen said. “In the 800, both of us were just about wiped going into the race, so to come away with ninth and with Jaden scoring points was a really great feeling.”

Vohs, a junior, is competing in his first year of track and was able leave Wichita with three state medals.

“I had no idea what to expect,” Vohs said. “Honestly, I only anticipated to medal in the 4×800 relay. Thanks to hard work and perseverance, I was able to medal in every event. It was fun competing at such a high level. I will continue to train so I can keep improving.”



***Louisburg senior Ben Wiedenmann takes the handoff from sophomore Ethan Ptacek during the 4×100-meter relay.***

Next up was the 4×100 relay and the team of Justin Collins, Koontz, Ethan Ptacek and Ben Wiedenmann finished runner-up with a personal best time of 43.52 seconds. Chanute won the event in 43.20.

The same group of runners went on to clinch the state championship in the 4×400-meter relay to end the meet in a personal best time of 3:29.13 and took third.

“We actually were hoping to break our school record for the 4×100 but fell just .2 short of doing it,” Wiedenmann said. “But the second and third place medals achieved in those events were both very welcome since we were seeded one place lower than we finished in both races.”

Getting two medals in the relays, Collins also ended his Wildcat track career with a pair of individual medals. Collins went on to finish fifth in the 100-meter dash (11.22) and the

400 dash (51.19).

Ptacek also earned an individual medal of his own as he took eighth in the 400 dash in 51.51.



***Senior Justin Collins gets off to a good start in the 100-meter dash Friday at state. Collins ended the day with four state medals.***

When all was said and done, Collins earned four state medals and couldn't have asked for a much better finish to his season.

"I was very happy with myself since I came in ranked 6th in the 100 and 8th in the 400, and I ended up getting 5th in both," Collins said. "I was very pleased because It was a great way to end senior year.

"Getting to walk away with four medals was an amazing feeling.

All the hard work we had to put in to practice paid out and ended my senior year with a bang.”

Sophomore Mason Dobbins came away with two state medals in his first ever state competition.

Dobbins finished third in the 110-meter hurdles in 15.24 seconds. Earlier in the meet, he finished in a tie for fifth in the high jump at 6-0.

“At first I was a little nervous in high jump since I had a lot of good competition, but after the first jump all the nerves went away,” Dobbins said. “It felt amazing for me and Tom (Koontz) to finish top three like we did. Tom and I had really been pushing each other every week in practice to better each other and for us to come into state and pull off what we did was incredible.”



***Louisburg senior Luke Faulkner celebrates after he cleared a personal best 14-6 to take second at the state meet in the pole vault.***

In the field events, the Wildcats were able to medal two in the pole vault and senior Luke Faulkner saved his best for last. Faulkner cleared a personal-best 14-6 to finish as the state runner-up.

Freshman Caden Caplinger cleared 12-6 and medaled eighth in his first state meet.

“The conditions for the morning were great and I was ready to compete and I went against very skilled vaulters,” Faulkner said. “I focused on my jumps and vaulted the best I ever have. Taking second felt incredible especially since 4A pole vault was one of the hardest events with the competition.”

Sophomore Nathan Vincent provided some big points for the Wildcats in the javelin and he started the event strong with a personal-best throw in the preliminaries.

Vincent’s first throw of the day was 176-10 and was good for fourth overall.





***Sophomore Nathan Vincent recorded a personal best throw of 176-10 in the javelin to take fourth Friday at the state meet.***

"I threw the javelin as best I could," Vincent said. "Coming out with a PR on the first throw was a huge relief and really relaxed my nerves and allowed me to just go out there and throw."

In other events, sophomore Nathan Apple took 15th in the 110 hurdles in 17.52 and junior Ryan Rogers was 15th in the 3,200-meter run in 11:03.

In the field events, senior Jay Scollin was 15th in the javelin with a throw of 141 feet and sophomore Isaiah Whitley was 16th in the long jump at 17-9.