

Johnson ready for big finish in her final year with LHS cross country



Louisburg senior Reese Johnson is a two-time state medalist for the Lady Cat cross country team and she is hoping to add a third medal to her resume, along with a team state title.

Reese Johnson has faced ups and downs throughout her cross country career, but it was after her sophomore year where the doubts started to creep in.

As a freshman, Johnson surprised some as she finished sixth at the Class 4A state meet and hung with the program's most accomplished runner – Trinity Moore – in just her first season out.

Johnson seemed like she was poised for a great four year run, and for some people, she has. However, Johnson had higher goals for herself, which was why she considered her sophomore season a disappointment after she took 40th at the state meet.

For her, it was a step backward. Then last season, Johnson missed the final three regular season meets and she wondered if she would even be able to make it back to state.

Despite having to come back from an injury, Johnson went on to get her second state medal at last season's state meet and also helped the team achieve history as the Lady Cats took third in Class 4A.

It has been nothing but a wild ride so far for Johnson.

“I can’t believe it’s already been four years,” Johnson said. “It really does feel like I was just running alongside Trinity. My freshmen year was a crazy experience. I was not expecting to do that well as a freshmen and getting sixth was a great feeling.

“I would say in a way I used to be disappointed in the runner I became, especially after my sophomore year, but that just gave me a reason to push myself. So after that I started working so much harder and training more and all the work paid off after my junior year season. I never thought I’d be able to place again after getting 40th, but getting 15th meant so much to me. I’m looking forward to this season cause I’ve been working harder than ever.”



Junior Reese Johnson makes her way up a hill during last season's Class 4A state meet at Wamego Country Club.

Whatever doubts there were for Johnson are now gone as she enters her final season for the Louisburg cross country team. She is the lone senior on a squad filled with young, talented runners and is looking forward to taking that leadership role.

She is hoping for big things for herself and the rest of her teammates.

"This season I just have this feeling that we're gonna do great things," Johnson said. "I sense a state title for our team and I know we're all working for that ring. We're gonna

be better than we ever have been this season and everyone is working so hard.

“It really does feel different knowing this is my last season. Even though it’s running and it sucks, I’m gonna miss it. I didn’t think I would, but the emotions are already starting to come to me even though the season just started. I love this team and I love the hard work we put in. I’m gonna miss being part of such a successful program.”

It is easy for Johnson to get emotional after the season the Lady Cats had a year ago. It may have not been her best state finish individually, but it was her most memorable one.

“For me, my junior year individual medal and team medal mean the most to me,” Johnson said. “Although it wasn’t my best individual finish, it sure felt like my best finish. I worked so hard after my sophomore slump and after missing three meets before regionals due to an injury, so it really was great to be able to finish that well. I’ve been very fortunate in high school sports and making trips to state, but being able to be third in the state was the best feeling ever. I can’t even explain it. We all felt so proud and we all deserved it.”

Johnson’s team-first attitude was evident last season, but even more so in her final year with the program.

“Reese is a lead by example teammate,” coach John Reece said. “She works hard and puts in the time needed to accomplish what she wants. This is an individual/team sport and she is really focused on the team aspect this year and wants to succeed. She is going to put herself out there and run for her teammates every race.”

In what is a talented Class 4A field, especially in the Frontier League, Johnson has set high goals for herself and her teammates and she is ready to meet them head on.

“This season I would like to place top 20 at state again,” she

said. "It's gonna take a lot of work, but I know with my team's support I can do it. Along with an individual medal, I wanna bring that state champion plaque to Louisburg and get the girls cross country team's name on the state champions sign.

"Our goal as a team this season is win state and get ourselves a ring, a plaque and a sign. Coach is rooting for us and helping us every step of the way. With his support and our hard work, this season is gonna be one to remember."