

State goals abound for both Louisburg track teams



The 2021 season was one for the history books for both the Louisburg boys and girls track teams.

The Louisburg boys are coming off their second state championship in school history and hurdler Tom Koontz also won state in the 110-meters.

State was also kind to the Louisburg girls as they finished fifth at state, taking just a handful of athletes. Much of that was thanks to Delaney Wright as she won state titles in the 200 and 400-meter dashes and the long jump.

Even with all that success, both Wildcat teams are looking to match that, or even succeed it, in 2022 as several athletes return to try and create another special campaign.

“Practices have been going well,” Louisburg boys coach Andy Wright said. “We are coming off an amazing season in 2021. I would like to see us continue that high as we return nine state qualifiers, with seven state medalists. There will be some big shoes to fill in the sprints and distance events from last year’s seniors. I am confident that we have underclassmen that are up to the challenge.

“I am really looking forward to another great season, with some great athletes to work with. As a team we have to continue to work hard, keep focused, stay healthy, and improve with each practice.”

Koontz returns after a strong junior year that saw him win state in the 110 hurdles and was also a state runner-up in the 300 hurdles. He was also a member of the 4×100 relay that took second at state and the 4×400 relay that finished third.



Louisburg senior Tom Koontz, center, won the state title in the 110 hurdles and junior teammate Mason Dobbins (left) was third overall a year ago.

The Wildcats are hoping for big things out of their senior hurdler.

“Tom is a good leader,” coach Wright said. “He has been setting the tone at every practice. Tom wants to defend his 110 High hurdle state championship and also be a state champion in 300 Intermediate hurdles. He will also be a part of the 4×1 and 4×4 relays. With setting the tone at every practice, Tom is making sure that as a team we will be back on the podium with a team plaque.”

Louisburg figures to score a lot points in the hurdles this season as junior Mason Dobbins returns after taking third in the 110s and was also fifth at state in the high jump. Another junior, Nathan Apple, also returns as a state qualifier.

“Mason has been working hard in the off season,” coach Wright said. “Mason will be running the 110 hurdles ranked second and the 300s. I’m expecting big things from Mason this season. He is ranked as one of the top hurdlers in 4A and is also ranked in high jump. A new event for Mason this year will be the 4x1 relay. Nathan Apple is also ranked in the top 6th in the 110s this season. These three should be in the top six at most of the meets.”

The Wildcats also figure to score a lot of points in the field events as junior Nathan Vincent returns after taking fourth at state in the javelin and sophomore Caden Caplinger medaled eighth at state in the pole vault.

“They both have been working to improve this season,” coach Wright said. “Caden has been working all winter at an indoor practice facility for pole vault. He has improved his speed and I’m excited to see what he does this year.



Sophomore Nathan Vincent recorded a personal best throw of

176-10 in the javelin to take fourth at the state meet last season.

"Nathan is ranked second in javelin going into the season and top 16 in discus. Both of these two are bigger and stronger than last year looking forward to what they accomplish this season."

Vincent, along with Layne Ryals, will both throw the javelin and discus this year, while Carson Wade will also look to score points in the javelin. J.R. Rooney and Chase Pritchard will look to score points in the shot put, while Pritchard will also throw the discus.

In the jumps, junior Isaiah Whitley returns after qualifying for state in the long jump and will be joined by senior Hayden Feikert in the event. Newcomer Colyer Wingfield will participate in both the long and triple jumps.

Jaden Vohs will also look to improve off a strong junior season that saw him earn a state medal in the 800 and 1,600-meter runs a year ago.

"Excited to see what Jaden does this season," coach Wright said. "Last year was his first year out for track and ended up placing in three events at state. Jaden has been running all offseason to prepare himself for his senior year."



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

Vohs and teammate Hayden Ross were also a part of the 4×800 that also medaled at state, but Wright said they will be working throughout the year to put another 4×800 team together.

All three relays medaled at state a year ago, but each of them lost key pieces to their groups. This season, junior Ethan Ptacek, Koontz, Hunter Heinrich and Wingfield will run the 4×400.

In the 4×100, Caplinger, Dobbins, Koontz, Jase Hovey, Ptacek, Toby Espina-Roca, Hayden Feikert, Gavin York and Whitley are all competing for spots on the relay.

Ptacek will be the team's top returning sprinter after he took

eighth at state in the 400-meter dash and will also run the 100 and 200 dashes as well.

GIRLS TRACK

Delaney Wright had the best individual season in Louisburg girls track history as she won three state championships as is considered one of the top athletes in Class 4A.

Those accolades earned her attention from college coaches around the area and Wright signed to join the Kansas State University track and field program next season.

Unfortunately, a basketball injury will sideline Wright for the early part of the track season, but she still has plans to participate in all three events this year.



Delaney Wright lands in the sand pit during the long jump

competition at state last season in Wichita. Wright won with a mark of 18-2.25

"Delaney will have a slow start to the season and it might be a few meets before she competes," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "As of now we look for her to continue to do the 200, 400, and long jump. We could add another event for her with our new found talent and maybe put together a relay or three."

The Lady Cats have 21 athletes out for track this season and return three state qualifiers in the process.

In the field events, Corinna McMullen (discus) and Davis Guetterman (javelin) both return for their senior seasons. McMullen earned her first state medal as she was fourth a year ago.

"Davis and Rinny are leading the way in the throws," Reece said. "I expect them to do great things and return to state and improve upon their placings last year or even go in another event."



Louisburg's Corinna McMullen earned her first state medal in the discus last year as she took fourth with a throw of 113 feet.

Junior Emma Prettyman will also look to qualify for her first state meet this season as she competes in the shot put and discus.

On the track, sophomore Emma Vohs returns after earning a state medal in the 400-meter dash a season ago as she took sixth.

"Emma will be doing some different events throughout the season," Reece said. "I look for her to continue with the 400 but move up to the 800 and possibly be a part of a strong 4x4 or 4x8. With a somewhat young team, we will have to see how we progress with training and times."

Louisburg will also have some new faces in the distance races

as Aubryn Berck, Maddy Rhamy, Ashley Branine and Nova Ptacek will join returner Erin Apple in those events.

Emma Lohse and Delaney Wieland will compete in the sprints, while freshman Mackenzie Rooney will took part in the hurdles.

“As a whole this is a good group,” Reece said. “We have several new upperclassmen out this year for the first time so after a few meets, we will really see the strength of our team.”