

Arriola, Olson spark Wildcat golf to third straight state tourney



Louisburg senior A.J. Arriola chips out of the sand and onto the green last Monday at the Class 4A regional in Fort Scott. Arriola finished as the regional runner-up with a 78.

FORT SCOTT – As the scores were rolling in, the Louisburg golf team was a little worried.

The Wildcats were in jeopardy of not qualifying for state after a few of the golfers didn't have the scores they were hoping for in the Class 4A regional tournament Monday in Fort Scott.

Chanute and Independence had already assured themselves of a spot, but the third place team was up in the air as the top three teams automatically qualify for state.

As it turned out, the Wildcats had nothing to worry about as they edged Paola by four strokes to finish in third with a 357 to secure their third consecutive spot in the 4A state tournament.

Seniors A.J. Arriola, Sam Wheeler, Ian Kirkpatrick, Johnny Thompson, along with juniors Jackson Olson and Nick Lancaster, will get to continue their season for another week and do it against the state's best golfers.



Members of the Louisburg state qualifying team are (from left) Ian Kirkpatrick, Jackson Olson, A.J. Arriola, Johnny Thompson, Nick Lancaster and Sam Wheeler.

"This meant everything to me," Arriola said. "Everyone on the team works so hard almost every day and I'm so happy that we all get to experience going to state together."

The Wildcats can thank both Arriola and Olson that they were able to keep their state streak alive. Both golfers set personal bests and did so in impressive fashion.

Arriola carded a 78 and finished as a regional runner-up, as he was just two strokes behind regional champion Drayton Cleaver of Chanute.

As for Olson, the Louisburg junior set a personal record by six strokes to shoot an 81 and took fourth overall. Those personal bests were enough to get the Wildcats into that third place spot at the Woodland Hills Golf Course.

"A.J. and Jackson went and played Woodland Hills before the tournament," Louisburg coach Brian Burns said. "A.J. took awesome notes and the team and I went over them in practice. I believe this was the key to their final score even though some

said they still got bad bounces.”



Louisburg's Jackson Olson watches his tee shot last Monday in Fort Scott.

Arriola, who has now medaled in seven tournaments this season for the Wildcats, recorded two birdies on the day in the middle of his round.

“I felt I was playing some of my best golf,” Arriola said. “I made a few mistakes towards the end of my round, but overall am very happy with how I played. The course was difficult in certain places, but the preparation me and my team did before our round helped us tremendously.”

Birdies also helped guide Olson to a good score and give him some confidence as his round went on. He had two birdies on the front nine and limited his bad holes.

“For the first 9 I was all over the place, and I started to feel nervous but I was able to get two birdies to help my score,” Olson said. “After the turn the coaches told me I would need to do good in order to make state, so I was able to

lock in and finish the round strong.

“To have the whole team qualify meant a lot especially since most of them are seniors. They have guided me to the person and golfer that I am today.”



Louisburg junior Nick Lancaster chips onto the green Monday in Fort Scott.

Lancaster also shot a solid round as he recorded the team's third best score as he carded a 96, including four straight pars to begin his day.

Kirkpatrick and Wheeler each finished with a 102, while Thompson rounded out the Wildcat scores with a 114.

Now the Wildcats will focus on the Class 4A state tournament that will be held at Sand Creek Station Golf Course in Newton.

The two-day tournament begins at 8:30 a.m. this Monday. The Wildcats hope to have a good showing and possibly earn a medal or two, especially for Arriola after a tough ending to his season a year ago.

"My only expectation for myself is make it to the second day," Arriola said. "Last year I missed the cut by one stroke and it definitely will motivate me to playing in the best of my ability come Monday."

Wheeler will be the first Wildcat to tee off at 9:20, followed by Lancaster at 9:30, Kirkpatrick at 9:40, Thompson at 9:50, Olson at 10 and Arriola at 10:10.