

# Wildcats finish as regional runner-up, qualify for state in 14 events



*The Louisburg boys track and field team finished as the Class 4A regional runner-up Friday at Eudora High School. The Wildcats also qualified for state in 14 events.*

EUDORA – Defending a state championship isn't easy and the Louisburg boys track and field team has found that out first hand at different times this season.

One of those times came Friday at the Class 4A regional meet in Eudora. The Wildcats were on the verge of their second straight regional title, only to have another team take it away in the final event.

Topeka-Hayden won the regional title with 131 points and the Wildcats finished as the regional runner-up with 128. Hayden won the 4x400-meter relay in the final race of the day to to take championship.

As tough as that was, there were still plenty of positives for Louisburg to take away, from what was a successful outing for the Wildcats.

Louisburg qualified for state in 14 events and had several athletes qualify in multiple events as they gear up for another state run this weekend in Wichita.

"The guys were definitely disappointed, but they were still happy with a runner up as tough as our regionals was, and the number of athletes there that will be on the podium at state," Louisburg boys coach Andy Wright said. "For the most part they did what was expected, and in some circumstances, even more."



***Louisburg's Mason Dobbins (left), Tom Koontz (center) and Nathan Apple all qualified for state in the 110 hurdles Friday in Eudora. Koontz and Dobbins will represent Louisburg at state in four events.***

It was all led by Louisburg senior Tom Koontz as he qualified for four events, including two hurdle races and two relays.

Koontz was a regional champion in the 110-meter high hurdles in 14.8 seconds and was the regional runner-up in the 300 hurdles in 39.93 seconds. Koontz, who is the defending state champion in the 110s, lost to Hayden's Jake Muller in the 300s, the same opponent he finished behind last year at state.

"Well, winning the 110s felt great, but my ultimate goal is state," Koontz said. "It's what I've been working for since December, since last year even. I knew it would be incredibly difficult to live up to those expectations, so winning regionals feels like a great step closer, but the 300s are a

different story.

“Jake Muller is going to be my first real challenge this year. I only wish I could’ve gone against him more. I’ve spent all of the week leading up to state preparing mentally for the race against him. We are very equally matched, so it’s gonna come down to who runs their best race.”

Koontz was also a part of a regional championship relay as the 4×100 team of Koontz, Mason Dobbins, Caden Caplinger and Ethan Ptacek took gold in 43.64 seconds.

The Wildcat 4×400 relay will also make an appearance at state as Koontz, Ptacek, Colyer Wingfield and Hunter Heinrich finished third in 3 minutes and 28 seconds.



***Junior Ethan Ptacek sprints down the straightaway to help the Louisburg 4×100 relay to a gold medal Friday in Eudora.***

Dobbins also qualified for four events at the state meet. Along with his role in the 4×100, Dobbins won the regional championship in the high jump after clearing 6 feet.

The Louisburg junior will join Koontz in the 110 hurdles after he finished second in 15.15 seconds. He also qualified third

in the 200 dash in a personal best time of 22.84 seconds.

"It meant a lot to win a regional title in high jump and qualify for state in four events," Dobbins said. "It reassured me that all my hard work pays off. I expect to go to state and perform to the best of my abilities. I want to place in every event this weekend."

Louisburg also earned a regional title in the field events as junior Nathan Vincent continues to improve in the javelin. Vincent recorded a personal-best throw of 178 feet, 4 inches, to win by almost four feet.

"It was a super cool experience going out there and competing against some great throwers," Vincent said. "The conditions were pretty good which made for a good javelin day, and it just flew well for me and I came out on top, which was awesome."

"I'm comfortable with my form right now, but the distances can always go up. I'm looking to pop out a big throw. It's going to be tough with the Andale throwers but, as everyone says, it only takes one."

The Wildcats also earned several more sprint spots at the state meet.

Ptacek ran a personal-best time of 51.51 seconds in the 400 dash and finished as the regional runner-up and will compete in this race at state, along with the two relays.

Senior Cooper Hipp ran a personal best time of 22.99 seconds in the 200 dash and qualified fourth, while junior Nathan Apple was third Wildcat hurdler to qualify as he finished fourth in the 110s in 15.44.

"Ethan is coming along in the 400," Wright said. "He is really working hard on his running form and race strategy. Mason and Cooper had good starts in the finals and I am so happy for



Cooper Hipp. Very deserving and rewarding to see a guy that has worked for four years to accomplish a goal. To run in his very first regionals and PR by a second and half, and qualify for his first state track meet, is great to see.”



***Louisburg senior Jaden Vohs takes the handoff from freshman Jerynce Brings Plenty during the 4×800 relay Friday in Eudora. The Wildcats finished third overall to qualify for state.***

Louisburg also qualified in three distance races and it started with a difficult 1,600-meter run.

Senior Jaden Vohs finished third in 4:33 to qualify for state, while Jerynce Brings Plenty did the same in the 3,200-meter run as he finished fourth in 10:27.

Vohs and Brings Plenty also joined Heinrich and senior Hayden Ross to finish third in the 4×800 relay in 8:30 to qualify all three relays.

“The relays finished strong, while not our personal best, they ran smart and did what they needed to do to qualify,” Wright said. “Our 4×1 is still running low 43’s, 4×8 all ran a solid

race and 4×4 just came short of winning regionals. The most exciting part is that all of the relays have a shot at a medal next week at state.”

In the field events, Wingfield qualified in a pair of jumps to go along with the 4×400 relay.

The Louisburg junior finished second in the long jump with a personal best mark of 21-5.25 and later took third in the triple jump at 39-2.75.



***Louisburg junior Colyer Wingfield flies through the air for an attempt in the long jump Friday in Eudora.***

“Coming off an injury, Colyer was just trying to qualify so that we would have another week to get better,” Wright said. “He performed very well with a PR in the long jump, had 3-4 good jumps. Triple jump we wanted to jump as little as possible to qualify, and he took care of business.”

Caplinger qualified in his second event after he finished as the regional runner-up in the pole vault after he cleared 14 feet.

The Wildcats will try for back-to-back state titles this weekend when they compete at the Class 4A state meet at Wichita State University. The meet is set to begin at 7:45 a.m. on Friday and run through Saturday evening.

“Most of the state qualifiers are returning from last year’s team, so the experience will help,” Wright said. “State is its own beast. You never know what is going to happen out there.”

The top eight in each event will earn a state medal.

Other results are:

100 dash: Ashton Moore, 7th, 11.64

200 dash: Ethan Ptacek, 6th, 23.06

400 dash: Hunter Heinrich, 6th, 53.25

800 run: Jaden Vohs, 6th, 2:04; Andrew Brown, 11th, 2:14; Hayden Ross, 13th, 2:15

1,600 run: Jerynce Brings Plenty, 8th, 4:48; Leo Martin, 16th, 5:10

3,200 run: Noah Cotter, 7th, 10:58

300 hurdles: Nathan Apple, 5th, 41.69

High jump: Isaiah Whitley, 7th, 5-8

Long jump: Hayden Feikert, 11th, 19-10.5; Jase Hovey, 18-2, 16th

Triple jump: Trey Myers, 10th, 35-10.25

Shot put: J.R. Rooney, 5th, 46-8; Connor Lee, 11th, 41-5; Jaymes Melton, 16th, 39-6.5

Discus: Chase Pritchard, 8th, 114-4; Nathan Vincent, 10th, 109-4; Layne Ryals, 16th, 98-8

Javelin: Brecon Klugman, 8th, 135-11; Carson Wade, 10th, 132-6