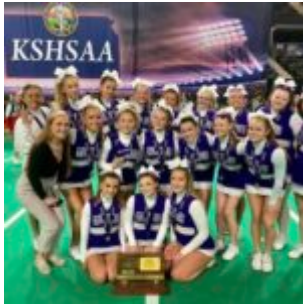


Wildcat cheer earns state runner-up for second straight season



Members of the state runner-up Louisburg cheer squad are (front row, from left) Sydney Dudzik, Bella Feikert, Zoe Cutshaw; (middle) coach Marissa Morrow, Caroline Dugger, Elizabeth George, Addison Drake, Brooklyn Harmon, Adison Vargo, Maddy Carpenter-Ross; (back row) Sienna Finch, Alayna Stohs, Alaina Dudzik, Maddie O'Keefe, Liz Willming, Kayleigh Ramsey, Taryn Osborn, Anna Brizendine and Jocelyn Burk.

TOPEKA – It has almost become commonplace to see the Louisburg High School cheer squad in the finals of the Class 4A Gameday Spirit Showcase.

However, that doesn't mean the cheerleaders are any less excited about it.

For the second straight season, the Wildcats finished as the state runner-up in the Class 4A competition Saturday at the Stormont-Vail Events Center. They finished with a score of 79.45 and were one point behind champion Paola.

It is the fourth straight season that the Wildcats have finished in the top three, which included a state championship in 2019.

"I am so unbelievably and incredibly proud of this team," Louisburg coach Marissa Morrow said. "This positivity and

attitude that these girls have shown this year have been the key to our success. I had no doubt that the material and performances we brought on Saturday had the potential to do well, but it was the girls who made it possible to pull it together. They were all such competitors and left it all out on the mat, and I couldn't ask for more. We also could not have done it without the support of our amazing cheer families."

It wasn't always a smooth ride for Louisburg as it stumbled a little to begin the competition. Although the Wildcats were in fourth place heading into the finals, there was a little uncertainty before the big announcement of earning a spot in the top six.

Louisburg had a 3-point deduction during their fight song performance due to the song length being two seconds over the limit.

"This was devastating to hear considering it was the same song/file that has been used the past four years with no deductions," Morrow said. "Three points in cheerleading is huge. Those points could be a make or break to go to finals or to win. After rallying together and everyone giving pep talks, we knew we had to make our third performance (the last before hearing finalists announced) the best we could just to be given the chance to prove ourselves in finals."

The Wildcats earned a stronger crowd leading score of 75.633, which gave them an overall score 182.600.

It was good enough to put them into the finals and Louisburg took full advantage.

Louisburg had the best crowd leading score in the finals, which helped the Wildcats earn their second consecutive state runner-up plaque.

"The girls blew me away with our cheer section and I was so

hopeful to have a chance," Morrow said. "The cheerleaders and myself we ecstatic when we heard our name called to move on to finals. Once in finals, you have a clean slate and all previous scores do not matter. In crowd leading, all I can say is our Louisburg cheerleaders are loud and proud."

The Wildcats were led by three seniors this year in Bella Feikert, Sydney Dudzik and Zoe Cutshaw and all three have been a part of state success the last four years.

"They were essential in laying out the foundation for the program and our goals for this season," Morrow said of her seniors. "Their hard work and dedication to the team made this possible. The leadership skills that these girls radiate carries the team through all the positives and negatives that we could encounter, and I am really grateful and appreciative of them. It will definitely be sad to watch them leave."

With all of the state success the last four years, Louisburg is considered one of the top cheer squads in the state and for good reason. The Wildcats have come home with a plaque every year since 2019.

"It is a remarkable achievement, especially for our seniors, to have won a title the last four years at our state competition," Morrow said. "I have only been here for the last two of them and it was the wonderful Jayna Heriford the two years before me. I love knowing that Louisburg cheer is always 'the one to beat' or 'the one to look out for' for these other teams.

"I believe it is also such a confidence booster for our girls when we walk into the venue and it seems all eyes are on us or when teams stop what they are doing to watch us in our warm ups. I hope the legacy of LHS Cheer continues on for the years to come."

The Louisburg cheerleaders that competed at the state competition are Bella Feikert, Addison Drake, Zoe Cutshaw,

Sienna Finch, Anna Brizendine, Caroline Dugger, Maddy Carpenter-Ross, Madison O'Keefe, Alayna Stohs, Liz Willming, Sydney Dudzik, Brooklyn Harmon, Taryn Osborn, Jocelyn Burk, Adison Vargo, Kayleigh Ramsey, Alaina Dudzik and Elizabeth George.