

Bartlett, Eslinger win regional titles, Wildcats qualify six for state



Louisburg senior Kaven Bartlett celebrates after winning the 138-pound regional crown Saturday during the Class 4A regional tournament at Baldwin.

BALDWIN CITY – In what was their most important tournament of the season, several Louisburg wrestlers put together their best performance.

The Wildcats qualified six for state following Saturday's Class 4A regional wrestling tournament at Baldwin. The top four in each weight class earn a state bid.

Seniors Kaven Bartlett (138 pounds) and Elijah Eslinger (285) earned regional titles, while sophomore Jay McCaskill (157) finished as a regional runner-up. Junior J'Lee Collins (126) and sophomore Ashton Moore (175) took third, while senior Trace Eslinger (215) came in fourth.

Almost all them had revenge on their minds as four of them avenged a loss from earlier in the season. As a team, the Wildcats finished fifth in the regional standings with 117 points.

"I think the team was ready to go Saturday, and they wrestled beyond their potential in so many cases," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "We've taken six to state seven times in

our program's history, and it's the third most we've taken.

"Quite a few of our qualifiers ended up getting revenge wins on Saturday – J'Lee against his Baldwin opponent in the first round, Kaven against his Holton opponent in the finals, Ashton against his Perry-Lecompton opponent in the blood round, and Trace against his Ottawa opponent in the blood round. The regional tournament is such a sweet time to get a revenge win."



Louisburg assistant coach Shawn Crossley and head coach Bobby Bovaird celebrate following J'Lee Collins' blood round match Saturday in Baldwin.

Bartlett's revenge win was a big one as he squared off with Holton's Cale Hein in the finals. The Louisburg senior lost to Hein less than a month ago at the Baldwin Invitational.

In the same gym as that loss, Bartlett got the regional title with a 2-1 decision that came down to the final seconds as Bartlett was able to hold Hein down on a late scramble.

"Last year I fell short of becoming a regional champ in the finals so finally getting it this year felt amazing," Bartlett said. "Last time I wrestled the Holton kid I was still

recovering from my messed up hip and I wasn't 100 percent. This time around was different. I was fully healed and ready for anything he threw at me."

Elijah Eslinger dominated the heavyweight division as he earned the No. 1 seed and he showed why. Elijah pinned Santa Fe Trail's Alex Strother in 1:14 in the first round and followed it up with a 3-0 decision of Topeka-Hayden's Hunter Diederich in the semifinals.

In the finals, Elijah took care of business with a 37 second pin of Tonganoxie's Gavin Rhoads.



Louisburg senior Elijah Eslinger gets pin in his 285-pound regional championship match Saturday at Baldwin.

After finishing seventh at the Husky Invitational a month ago, Eslinger hasn't lost a match and is ready for the challenge of state.

"To me, qualifying for the state tournament is exciting and I am ready to go to Salina," Elijah said. "After I did so poorly for the BVNW tournament, I think that set a fire under me that helped me win these last tournaments. Ultimately though, I want to do better than I did last year at state."

McCaskill earned a spot in the regional championship for the first time in his career despite dealing with an injury that forced him to miss three weeks of competition prior to regionals.

The Louisburg sophomore opened with a 30 second pin of Baldwin's Brayden Hirschmann, and then earned a state bid with another 30-second pin in the semifinals against Eudora's Mason Cox.

McCaskill found himself against Tonganoxie's Gannon Sonntag in the finals, but lost a 6-0 decision. Despite the loss, McCaskill is looking forward to state.



Sophomore Jay McCaskill gets a pin in his 157-pound semifinal match Saturday to earn a state bid.

"It meant a lot to qualify especially after losing by one point in the blood round last season," McCaskill said. "I feel like I have been wrestling pretty well, especially compared to last year, but I still have a lot of room to grow and improve being only a sophomore."

Collins battled his way through the 126-pound bracket as he went 3-1 on the day to earn a state bid. He opened with a 14-5

major decision over Baldwin's Gunnar Reichard after losing to him earlier in the season, before falling 18-4 to Holton's Asher Larsen in the semifinals.

The Louisburg junior bounced back nicely with a 44 second pin of Ottawa's Colton Ray in the consolation semifinals to earn a state bid. He ended his day with an 11-8 decision over Santa Fe Trail's Blake Slavin in the third place match.



Junior J'Lee Collins gets some back points during his first round regional match Saturday at Baldwin.

"I would have to say the moment I found I won the match that had qualified me for state I was ecstatic," Collins said. "Qualifying has been my goal all season and after taking sixth at league I wasn't sure if I was gonna be able to do it."

Moore also found his way to the semifinals of 175 pounds after a late pin of Eudora's Braedon Speer in the quarterfinals. He then squared off with Wellsville's David Signs in the semifinals, where he fell by a 2-0 decision.

The Louisburg sophomore punched his ticket to state as he got a 6-3 decision over Perry-Leocompton's Christian Conklin in the blood round. Moore lost to Conklin less than a month ago at

the Baldwin Invitational after he was just coming back from an injury.

Moore went on to finish third by injury default as Speer was unable to compete in the third place match.

“Qualifying for state meant a lot to me,” Moore said. “Qualifying for state is a goal I have for myself every year and it felt great to be able to do it.”



Sophomore Ashton Moore put together a 3-1 record to take third at 175 pounds Saturday at the regional tournament in Baldwin.

As for Trace Eslinger, his state bid was years in the making and one that saw him battle through injuries the last two years.

Now healthy, Eslinger got that chance. After a loss to Baldwin's Conner Murry in the quarterfinals, Trace battled back to record two straight pins to reach the blood round.

It was there that Trace avenged a loss and got a state bid at the same time as he recorded a 6-2 decision of Ottawa's Cooper Stone. Trace later fell to Murry again in the third place match, but that didn't let that dampen his excitement.

“Qualifying for state means a lot to me,” Trace said. “It has been a goal of mine since freshman year and after losing two seasons to injuries and giving up 25 pounds I feel like I’ve really earned this.”



Senior Trace Eslinger leaps behind his opponent to get two points Saturday during his blood round match.

Even with all the excitement, the Wildcats still left with some disappointment, especially when it came to sophomore Brayden Yoder.

The Louisburg 190-pounder battled throughout the day. After losing a 3-1 decision to open the day to the regional runner-up in Jeff West’s Keaton Shelman, he held on to win a 2-1 overtime decision of Tage Skocny from Santa Fe Trail.

Yoder then pinned Royal Valley’s Cyrus Harding, which set up a blood round match against Wellsville’s Carter Wilmarth. Yoder found himself ahead in the third period, only to have a questionable call change all that.

The Louisburg sophomore forced overtime, before falling in a 6-5 decision.



Louisburg sophomore Brayden Yoder tries to turn his opponent Saturday during his blood round match.

“Brayden’s blood round loss was absolutely heart-breaking,” Bovaird said. “I hate to see a kid lose the way he did. There was a controversial situation where his opponent scored a reversal and in the scramble, Brayden’s hand got caught in the kid’s singlet. The referee stopped the match, and at the time, we thought Brayden would be winning 5-4 and that he would just be giving up a penalty point for grabbing the singlet. After the head official conferred with his assistant, they awarded a two-point nearfall because he had a ‘silent count’ in his head and they felt that the singlet grabbing prevented the Wellsville kid from getting back points.

“I’ve never seen that sort of call happen like this, and the frustrating thing is that the referee never once signaled nearfall – not even a 1-count. It was a scramble in which Brayden’s hand got caught. The referee waited nearly 10 seconds before stopping the match to confer with his assistant. Going back and watching the film, the hand getting caught in the singlet had nothing to do with Brayden fighting off his back. It’s just frustrating that things went down that way, but at the same time, Brayden gave it everything he had.

He went through the overtime periods like a warrior and battled it out.”

For the six Wildcats whose seasons are still alive, they will compete at the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships starting at 10 a.m. on Friday and the tournament continues through Saturday in Salina.

106

Will Showalter (14-26) place is unknown and scored 0.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Maverick Hug (Holton) 21-15 won by decision over Will Showalter (Louisburg) 14-26 (Dec 5-2)
- Cons. Round 1 – Luke Owings (Wellsville) 16-21 won by major decision over Will Showalter (Louisburg) 14-26 (MD 10-2)

113

Broden Vargo (2-17) place is unknown and scored 0.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Jayden Westgate (Baldwin) 29-9 won by fall over Broden Vargo (Louisburg) 2-17 (Fall 0:28)
- Cons. Round 1 – Cesar Sandoval (Holton) 15-18 won by fall over Broden Vargo (Louisburg) 2-17 (Fall 2:06)

120

Keegan Rogers (7-22) place is unknown and scored 0.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Matthew Tracy (Hoyt-Royal Valley) 21-14

won by fall over Keegan Rogers (Louisburg) 7-22 (Fall 1:37)

- Cons. Round 1 – Keegan Rogers (Louisburg) 7-22 received a bye () (Bye)
- Cons. Round 2 – Clayton Crookham (Tonganoxie) 18-18 won by fall over Keegan Rogers (Louisburg) 7-22 (Fall 1:47)

126

J`Lee Collins (22-17) placed 3rd and scored 15.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – J`Lee Collins (Louisburg) 22-17 received a bye () (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – J`Lee Collins (Louisburg) 22-17 won by major decision over Gunnar Reichard (Baldwin) 22-19 (MD 14-5)
- Semifinal – Asher Larsen (Holton) 27-10 won by major decision over J`Lee Collins (Louisburg) 22-17 (MD 18-4)
- Cons. Semi – J`Lee Collins (Louisburg) 22-17 won by fall over Colton Ray (Ottawa) 16-21 (Fall 0:44)
- 3rd Place Match – J`Lee Collins (Louisburg) 22-17 won by decision over Blake Slavin (Carbondale-Santa Fe Trail) 25-14 (Dec 11-8)

132

Mika McKitrick (13-24) place is unknown and scored 7.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Mika McKitrick (Louisburg) 13-24 won by fall over Carson Bell (Wellsville) 12-13 (Fall 1:37)
- Quarterfinal – Braeden Moore (Tonganoxie) 32-1 won by fall over Mika McKitrick (Louisburg) 13-24 (Fall 0:31)
- Cons. Round 2 – Mika McKitrick (Louisburg) 13-24 won by fall over Gavin Akin (Hoyt-Royal Valley) 16-14 (Fall

1:26)

- Cons. Round 3 – Trevor Kaub (Ottawa) 20-14 won by fall over Mika McKitrick (Louisburg) 13-24 (Fall 1:46)

138

Kaven Bartlett (36-4) placed 1st and scored 21.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Kaven Bartlett (Louisburg) 36-4 received a bye () (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Kaven Bartlett (Louisburg) 36-4 won by major decision over Ethan Williams (Baldwin) 25-18 (MD 16-5)
- Semifinal – Kaven Bartlett (Louisburg) 36-4 won by decision over Koy Randel (Wellsville) 19-19 (Dec 8-3)
- 1st Place Match – Kaven Bartlett (Louisburg) 36-4 won by decision over Cale Hein (Holton) 30-11 (Dec 4-1)

144

Colin Robinson (4-18) place is unknown and scored 0.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Alex Clobes (Eudora) 12-18 won by fall over Colin Robinson (Louisburg) 4-18 (Fall 3:59)
- Cons. Round 1 – Colin Robinson (Louisburg) 4-18 received a bye () (Bye)
- Cons. Round 2 – Bennett Minnick (Perry-Lecompton) 18-25 won by tech fall over Colin Robinson (Louisburg) 4-18 (TF-1.5 3:57 (16-1))

157

Jay McCaskill (24-7) placed 2nd and scored 20.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Jay McCaskill (Louisburg) 24-7 received a bye () (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Jay McCaskill (Louisburg) 24-7 won by fall over Brayden Hirschmann (Baldwin) 11-12 (Fall 0:30)
- Semifinal – Jay McCaskill (Louisburg) 24-7 won by fall over Mason Cox (Eudora) 22-15 (Fall 0:30)
- 1st Place Match – Gannon Sonntag (Tonganoxie) 19-10 won by decision over Jay McCaskill (Louisburg) 24-7 (Dec 6-0)

165

Vance Hahn (2-29) place is unknown and scored 0.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Vance Hahn (Louisburg) 2-29 received a bye () (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Colton Brusven (Tonganoxie) 26-9 won by fall over Vance Hahn (Louisburg) 2-29 (Fall 0:34)
- Cons. Round 2 – Vance Hahn (Louisburg) 2-29 received a bye () (Bye)
- Cons. Round 3 – John Sink (Ottawa) 18-14 won by fall over Vance Hahn (Louisburg) 2-29 (Fall 3:33)

175

Ashton Moore (18-6) placed 3rd and scored 16.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Ashton Moore (Louisburg) 18-6 received a bye () (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Ashton Moore (Louisburg) 18-6 won by fall

over Braedon Speer (Eudora) 21-9 (Fall 5:46)

- Semifinal – David Signs (Wellsville) 32-3 won by decision over Ashton Moore (Louisburg) 18-6 (Dec 2-0)
- Cons. Semi – Ashton Moore (Louisburg) 18-6 won by decision over Christian Conklin (Perry-Lecompton) 28-9 (Dec 6-3)
- 3rd Place Match – Ashton Moore (Louisburg) 18-6 won by injury default over Braedon Speer (Eudora) 21-9 (Inj. 0:00)

190

Brayden Yoder (32-14) place is unknown and scored 4.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Brayden Yoder (Louisburg) 32-14 received a bye () (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Keaton Shelman (Meriden-Jefferson West) 21-6 won by decision over Brayden Yoder (Louisburg) 32-14 (Dec 3-1)
- Cons. Round 2 – Brayden Yoder (Louisburg) 32-14 won in tie breaker – 1 over Tage Skocny (Carbondale-Santa Fe Trail) 13-21 (TB-1 2-1)
- Cons. Round 3 – Brayden Yoder (Louisburg) 32-14 won by fall over Cyrus Harding (Hoyt-Royal Valley) 24-16 (Fall 2:14)
- Cons. Semi – Carter Wilmarth (Wellsville) 37-8 won in tie breaker – 1 over Brayden Yoder (Louisburg) 32-14 (TB-1 6-5)

215

Trace Eslinger (24-19) placed 4th and scored 11.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Trace Eslinger (Louisburg) 24-19

received a bye () (Bye)

- Quarterfinal – Conner Murry (Baldwin) 28-13 won by fall over Trace Eslinger (Louisburg) 24-19 (Fall 0:54)
- Cons. Round 2 – Trace Eslinger (Louisburg) 24-19 won by fall over Branden Gregory (Eudora) 2-24 (Fall 0:40)
- Cons. Round 3 – Trace Eslinger (Louisburg) 24-19 won by fall over Mason Charvat (Topeka-Hayden) 7-14 (Fall 1:28)
- Cons. Semi – Trace Eslinger (Louisburg) 24-19 won by decision over Cooper Stone (Ottawa) 12-8 (Dec 6-2)
- 3rd Place Match – Conner Murry (Baldwin) 28-13 won by fall over Trace Eslinger (Louisburg) 24-19 (Fall 1:49)

285

Elijah Eslinger (38-5) placed 1st and scored 24.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Elijah Eslinger (Louisburg) 38-5 received a bye () (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Elijah Eslinger (Louisburg) 38-5 won by fall over Alex Strother (Carbondale-Santa Fe Trail) 9-5 (Fall 1:14)
- Semifinal – Elijah Eslinger (Louisburg) 38-5 won by decision over Hunter Diederich (Topeka-Hayden) 10-5 (Dec 3-0)
- 1st Place Match – Elijah Eslinger (Louisburg) 38-5 won by fall over Gavin Rhoads (Tonganoxie) 20-15 (Fall 0:37)