

POLE VAULT ROYALTY: Wildcat vaulters soar to top of state podium



Louisburg's (from left) Cooper Wingfield, Caden Caplinger and Maddy Carpenter-Ross earned top honors during the Class 4A state meet Friday at Wichita State. Caplinger won his second state title, while Carpenter-Ross won the girls side. Wingfield finished right behind Caplinger in second.

WICHITA — Maddy Carpenter-Ross, Caden Caplinger and Cooper Wingfield had been considered as some of the top pole vaulters in Class 4A for most of the season.

All three had finished at, or toward the top of each of their meets this year, and all of them had high hopes going into state meet Friday at Wichita State.

Carpenter-Ross and Caplinger reached the highest summit Class 4A had to offer as both were crowned state champions following their respective events.

Caplinger became a two-time state champion first as he cleared 15 feet to win the 4A boys pole vault.

"It means a lot and I am just blessed to have the opportunity to be here and win the title, especially with Cooper right on my tail," Caplinger said.



Louisburg junior Caden Caplinger clears 15 feet on his last attempt to win his second straight state title.

Wingfield certainly made it interesting. The Louisburg sophomore was ahead in the competition after clearing 14-6 on his first attempt and Caplinger missed his first two.

It all came down to Caplinger's third attempt. If he were to miss, he would be eliminated and Wingfield would take the lead in the competition with Andale's Rylan White. However, it was hard for him to root against his teammate.

"I don't think pole vaulters want each other to fail," Wingfield said. "I mean there was a little bit in me that hoped he missed it, but we honestly do root for each other. We know how hard it is and we don't want each other to fail."



Louisburg sophomore Cooper Wingfield finished second at the state track meet Friday in Wichita.

Caplinger went on to clear the attempt. Then after Wingfield and White missed all of their attempts at 15 feet, Wingfield still had the upper-hand on Caplinger, who had one more try at 15 feet, after missing his first two. If the two tied at 14-6, Wingfield would have won the tiebreaker based on number of misses at 14-6.

Just like on the previous height, the third time was the charm and Caplinger secured the state title. He did it on a day where he was feeling under the weather and he was able to battle through.

“It didn’t feel like a day where I could do very well and I didn’t feel well at all,” Caplinger said. “I just had to go out there and do the best I could. When I cleared 15 feet, I felt that it all just went away.

“We are one big supportive group. You want everyone to do the best that they can do throughout the entire competition. If you win, and other people are having off days, then I’m not

sure it means as much because you are just kind of competing against yourself. It has been great going up against Cooper because he has been super consistent all year.”



Cooper Wingfield (left) and Caden Caplinger were all smiles as they waited to receive their state medals Friday at Wichita State.

Wingfield went on to finish as the state runner-up at 14-6, which was a long way from where he finished his season a year ago.

“It means a lot,” Wingfield said. “Honestly, I was just glad to make it to state after the year I had last year. My top height was 10-6 last year, but I just worked on my form and it paid off. Not sure I thought I would get second at state at the start of the year, but it feels good.”

Carpenter-Ross thrived under the pressure in the girls competition as she, not only looked for her second consecutive state medal, but her first state championship.



Louisburg junior Maddy Carpenter-Ross cleared 11 feet on her first attempt to win the 4A girls pole vault title.

The Louisburg junior captured her first state title after she cleared 11 feet, which tied a personal best. This coming off a season where she medaled fifth at state a year ago.

“I think it is fantastic,” Carpenter-Ross said. “Going to 11 feet, I was tied with the one girl and I was hoping that I would get it on my first try. Then when I did, it was just an amazing feeling.

“It was just awesome for me, plus to see my family’s faces up in the stands was really cool too. Being a state champion is awesome and I plan to do it again.”

Carpenter-Ross vaulted strong from when she came in on her opening height at 9-6. She went on to clear four straight heights without a miss, which included getting 11 feet on her first attempt.



Maddy Carpenter-Ross celebrates with coach Andy Wright after clearing 11 feet.

That put her in the driver's seat after Andale's JoJo Cutler missed on her first attempt at 11-0.

"I had a lot of confidence in myself," Carpenter-Ross said. "In practice, I was able to clear 11 feet on my first attempt. I knew I could do it here (state). I could do it anywhere. The competition was really tough. There were a lot of girls who were close to me, and I knew it could come down to a jumping game on who clears a height first. Luckily, I was able to do it."