

Moore leads Wildcats at challenging Husky Invitational



Louisburg junior Ashton Moore finished second at 190 pounds Saturday at the Husky Invitational at Blue Valley Northwest High School.

The Husky Invitational is one of the tougher tournaments the Louisburg wrestling team will compete at all season.

It featured 23 teams from five states, to go along with several state-ranked wrestlers over a span of two days. The Wildcats were tested, but they were able to bring home some hardware in the process.

Junior Ashton Moore earned a spot in the finals and led the Wildcats with a second-place finish at 190 pounds. Senior J'Lee Collins and junior Jay McCaskill also found their way to the medal stand.

In all, the Wildcats finished eighth in the team standings with 295.5 points. Andover won the tournament with 473 points and J.K. Mullen (Iowa) was second with 402.5.

"It's a tough tournament with a bunch of out-of-state teams," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "That's part of what makes it such a great tournament for us at this point in the season. We saw opponents from JK Mullen in Colorado, Marion in Iowa, Rockhurst in Missouri, and Springdale in Arkansas, as well as in-state powerhouses like Andover and Lawrence Free State. Even though it was pretty tough, we had guys in every weight battling. They showed a lot of guts with their matches, and that's what we need."

Moore led the Wildcats as he dominated his way to the championship match at 190 pounds. He opened with an 11-4 decision of Lawrence Free State's Kael Robinson, and then followed that up with three straight pins to end Friday's competition.

On Saturday, Moore pinned Topeka Seaman's Deyton Mentzer in the second period of the quarterfinals, and then recorded an 11-2 major decision over Mullen's Oliver Scelza. That put Moore in the championship against the No. 1 ranked wrestler in Class 5A, Tate Hutchinson of Andover.

Moore battled but came up short in a 3-0 decision, but improved his record to 27-4 on the season after a 6-1 mark at the tournament.

"Ashton is stepping up, and I'm excited for him," Bovaird said. "He's asking the coaches for specific feedback, he's listening really well, and he's not afraid to step on the mat against anyone else."



Louisburg junior Jay McCaskill tries to get an opponent on his back Saturday at the Husky Invitational.

At 157 pounds, McCaskill earned a fifth place finish after wrestling nine matches in those two days. The Louisburg junior recorded three straight pins to open the tournament and finished pool with a 5-1 record.

McCaskill lost his quarterfinal match to Jayhawk-Linn's Andres Flores, but bounced back to take an 8-3 decision over Seaman's Gabe Brannick. After a loss to Olathe East's Ender Rider in the consolation semis, he won his fifth place match by medical forfeit.

As for Collins, he cruised through his pool matches Friday as he went 4-0 with four pins – including three of those coming in under 20 seconds. Collins then defeated Bonner Springs' Frankie Garcia by a 7-3 decision in the quarterfinals.

Collins nearly earned a spot in the finals, but lost to Shawnee Mission West's Nicholas Williams after he was pinned in the third period of a back-and-forth match. Collins eventually finished sixth overall as he suffered two more losses.



Louisburg senior J'Lee Collins finished sixth at 126 pounds Saturday at the Husky Invitational.

"Both of those guys were in some tough brackets," Bovaird said. "J'Lee nearly punched his ticket to the finals, too. He was winning 6-5 in the semifinals when he got caught by a tough kid from Shawnee Mission West. During the pool rounds on Friday, he also got a pin against a returning state placer from Free State.

"Jay's bracket was a pretty ruthless one. He had two losses against an Olathe East kid who is just dominant on top. He

also took another loss against the same Jayhawk Linn wrestler who's beaten him two times already this season. They're doing well though, as is the rest of the team. Each match, we're learning and improving."

Freshman Levi Cotter (106 pounds) and junior Canaan Clayton (113) also earned a spot in the quarterfinals, but finished just outside the medals in seventh and eighth, respectively.

The Wildcats return to action Thursday when they travel to Ottawa for a Frontier League dual. Louisburg will then compete in the Baldwin Invitational Tournament on Saturday.

Wildcats fall to Lawrence in Senior Night dual

The Louisburg wrestling team took part in its final home competition of the season on Jan. 17 when the Wildcats hosted Lawrence on Senior Night.

It also gave them the opportunity to honor their five seniors – J'Lee Collins, Elias Pugh, Colin Robinson, Traden Noll and manager Isabel Bond – along with their families prior to the contest.

Unfortunately for the Wildcats, the dual didn't end on a positive note as Louisburg fell 39-33 to the Lions.



Louisburg seniors (from left) J'Lee Collins, Elias Pugh, Traden Noll, Colin Robinson and manager Isabel Bond were all honored on Jan. 17 during Senior Night.

"We've got four outstanding seniors this year, along with a great senior manager with Isabel Bond," Bovaird said. "I really wish I had more time with these seniors though. J'Lee couldn't wrestle as a freshman due to an injury, Traden attended a school last year that didn't have wrestling, and Colin and Elias only started wrestling as sophomores. They've all made huge strides as wrestlers – they're incredibly hard workers who do whatever we ask them to do."

"Senior night was a tough loss for us, and I wish we'd had a couple things go differently. Lawrence has some hammers, especially at the lower weights. We're still in good shape, and I feel like the guys are getting ready to hit their peak at the right time when we go to regionals and state."

Collins and Noll both earned victories in their matches, as

did Levi Cotter, Blake Oliphant, Jay McCaskill, Ashton Moore
and Xander Lucas.