

Cotter, Ellison qualify for state cross country



Louisburg sophomores (from left) Levi Cotter, Truman Ellison and Spencer Mattison pose for picture Saturday at the Class 4A regional meet at Blue Valley Southwest. Both Cotter and Ellison qualified for state.

OVERLAND PARK – The season isn't quite over for the Louisburg cross country team – Levi Cotter and Truman Ellison made sure of it.

Both Cotter and Ellison qualified for the state meet after each earned top 15 finishes at the Class 4A regional meet Saturday that was held at Blue Valley Southwest.

"Levi and Truman ran great races," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "They had a controlled start and were able to move through the field as the race played out. They had to work

hard the last 800 as they were in the mix of several runners and had to be top 15 to qualify.”

Prior to the season, the Kansas State High School Activities Association changed how a runner can qualify for state. Previously, it was the top three teams, then the top five individuals that weren’t part of the state qualifying teams.

This season, it is still the top three teams, but runners that are not on state qualifying teams must finish in the top 15. Cotter and Ellison beat out a pack of runners to earn that state bid.

Cotter led the Wildcats as he broke the 18 minute mark and took 12th overall in 17 minutes and 57 seconds.

“I felt like all of the work that I put in throughout the years for running has paid off,” Cotter said. “I felt like I was ready. During the warm-up I was feeling great, too. The course was amazing and I couldn’t have asked for an easier course than that.”

As for Ellison, he was right behind his teammate as he finished 14th overall in 18:02. Both runners earned their first state bid.

“Everyone on the team has been putting in the hard work,” Ellison said. “I’m grateful for my coaches that have pushed me since fifth grade, and it feels like the encouragement and work that I have put in is paying off.

“I feel like I ran an amazing race and was prepared, both physically and mentally. There were many great runners at the meet and the competition was very hard. At first the course was a little bit confusing, but after walking it before the race, I felt like I knew it well. The course had many ups and downs, but it was very fun to race.”

Another sophomore, Spencer Mattison, also ran for the Wildcats

and he took 27th overall in 19:08.

On the girls side, the Wildcats had four runners compete and freshman Hailey Shelton led the way in 22:20 and took 31st. Freshmen Annie Hornberger (22:48) and Anna Cotter (23:13) finished 24th and 39th, respectively.

Sophomore Talen McMurray rounded out the Wildcat lineup in 41st in 23:16.

"The girls did awesome," Reece said. "All four of them ran PR's to end their season and gained some great racing experience. We hope to take another step forward next year with such a young group of runners."

Now Cotter and Ellison will prepare for the Class 4A state meet that will be held this Saturday at the Wamego Country Club. The 4A boys race is scheduled for 12:55 p.m.

"Having run Wamego earlier in the season, I look for them to compete well and leave state with a course PR and maybe an all time PR," Reece said. "It is going to be a great day."