

# Numbers, expectations are high for Louisburg wrestling programs



***Louisburg senior Ashton Moore is one of five returning state qualifiers for the Wildcat wrestling team this season. Moore finished fourth at state a year ago.***

It was a successful finish for the Louisburg wrestling team last season as it ended with six state qualifiers and a state medalist.

The good news for the Wildcats is most of those qualifiers are back to make another run at it for the 2024-25 season. Plus, there are a lot more that want to join them.

There are currently 55 out for the boys team, which is a big jump from a year ago. Louisburg's girls program also saw a big leap as it currently now has 10 members, which is up from two last season.

"We've got a unique problem this year, and that's a lack of space," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "I knew we'd be returning a lot of wrestlers from last season, but I didn't know until the week before the season started that we'd have so many. Right now, we're at 65 with our numbers, so we're having to be creative with how we use our space. The team is working hard, and they're ready to get after it this season."

On the boys side, the Wildcats do return their lone state medalist from a season ago. Senior Ashton Moore will make a run at back-to-back trips to the state podium.

After finishing fourth at regionals, Moore put together a strong state tournament as he reached the semifinals, before falling in the third place match at 190 pounds. This season, Moore will be bumping up to 215 and is currently ranked No. 3 in the state.

"I think Ashton is going to be an absolute dynamo this season," Bovaird said. "He's got a hunger to put a state championship to his name. He's got great energy on the mat, incredible strength, and a tireless nature."



***Louisburg senior Canaan Clayton is one of five returning state qualifiers for the Wildcat wrestling team.***

Moore is one of 12 Wildcat seniors who will lead the way for Louisburg. The other four returning state qualifiers are also seniors in Canaan Clayton (120), Will Showalter (126), Logan Henry (138) and Jay McCaskill (165).

Other seniors Mika McKitrick (132), Greysen Dixon (144), Brayden Yoder (190), Miles Meek (285) and Xander Lucas (285) will all play big roles for the Wildcats this season.

“The trick is staying healthy, of course,” Bovaird said. “The majority of this senior class has been wrestling since a very young age, and now they’re reaching a great deal of success as upperclassmen. I think we can give some of the ranked teams a run for their money this year – Tonganoxie, Paola, and Santa Fe Trail, to name a few. We’ll turn some heads this year, thanks to the guts, experience, and work ethic of these seniors.”

Sophomores Levi Cotter (106), Bryce Thompson (157) and junior Vance Hahn (175) also bring back varsity experience from a year ago. Freshmen Parker Showalter (113) and Bo Ballard (150) will also see varsity time this year.

“On the boys side, we have a very experienced group,” Bovaird said. “In fact, our returning varsity wrestlers earned 261 wins last season. Not only do we have those five returning state qualifiers, but we have a bunch of returning guys who were right there last season, making a run at state. Guys like Levi, Mika, Bryce, Vance, Brayden and Xander are bringing a lot of experience with them, and they’re poised to have great seasons.”



***Sophomore Leola Eslinger is one of two returning varsity wrestlers on the girls side.***

As for the girls, the Wildcats return their lone two wrestlers from a year ago in Allison Martin (135) and Leola Eslinger (155) and will be joined by eight others.

Ashlyn Spradling (105), Bella Pickman (110), Brooklyn DeWeese (120), Emma Duckworth (125), Brianna Caraway/Evelyn Rue (130), Maliya Collins (145) and Nora Smith (170) will all see varsity time this season.

“I knew we had Leola and Allison coming back from last year, and I knew that we’d have girls like Brianna, Brooklyn, Emma, Bella, and Ashlyn move up from the middle school and Wildcat Wrestling Club programs,” Bovaird said. “The other three decided to give it a try, and I couldn’t be happier with how hard they’re working. All of them have great attitudes and a growth mindset. Leola and Allison got some great experience, and we have a bunch of freshmen who have been wrestling with our club for a while. It’s going to be a phenomenal year for our girls program.”