

Wildcat girls make history with first regional cross country title



The Louisburg girls cross country team of (from left) Talen McMurray, Annie Hornberger, Karissa Williamson, Maddox McGhee, Hailey Shelton, Reese Smith and Felicity Allen won the program's first regional title last Saturday at Neodesha.

NEODESHA – For the first time in program history, the Louisburg girls cross country team left a regional meet as champions.

On a rainy, muddy Saturday at Riverside Park in Neodesha, the Wildcats powered through the slick conditions to win the Class 4A regional championship with 39 points – seven ahead of runner-up Paola. The victory also secured a state berth for

the entire Louisburg squad.

“It was awesome and emotional to see the girls leave Neodesha as regional champs,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “It has been a long time in the making as we have had multiple teams qualify for state but have never won a regional title. The rankings had us winning the meet, but those are just rankings. The girls showed up to compete and that is exactly what they did.”

It was a youthful lineup that led the Wildcats to history, featuring two freshmen, four sophomores and one junior – and the youngest runners set the tone. Freshman Karissa Williamson finished fourth overall in 22:40.26, just ahead of fellow freshman Maddox McGhee, who took fifth in 22:40.46. Sophomore Hailey Shelton placed sixth in 22:57, giving Louisburg three runners in the top 10.

Sophomore Reese Smith finished ninth in 23:50, junior Talen McMurray placed 16th in 24:16, and sophomores Felicity Allen and Annie Hornberger rounded out the lineup in 23rd and 27th, respectively.

“We don’t have a senior on the team and having two freshmen lead with four sophomores and a junior right behind them is amazing,” Reece said. “Our time gap between No. 1 and No. 5 is about 1:30, which is amazing – and that’s how you win championships.”



Louisburg's (from left) Titus Ellison, Spencer Mattison and Truman Ellison each qualified for state cross country last Saturday in Neodesha.

On the boys' side, Louisburg qualified three individual runners for state. Juniors Titus and Truman Ellison – brothers – finished seventh and eighth in 19:29 and 19:36, while junior Spencer Mattison took 13th in 20:20. The Wildcats finished fourth as a team with 92 points, just six points shy of qualifying the full squad. Chanute won the boys team title with 25 points.

August Meyer took 26th overall in a time of 22:31 and Matthew Lien was 43rd in 24:25 to round out the Wildcat lineup.

“Titus, Truman and Spencer were more than determined to qualify for state,” Reece said. “It was fantastic to see them all finish in the top 15 to punch their ticket. It was bittersweet to finish fourth as a team and only miss by six points, which showed how well August and Matthew ran their races.”

Despite the tough course conditions – with standing water and muddy turns – Louisburg stayed focused.

“We controlled the controllables and did not let things we can’t control affect us,” Reece said. “The conditions were less than desirable, but we didn’t let that impact how we were going to race.”

Both teams will compete Saturday at the Class 4A state meet at Wamego Country Club.

“We’ve already run Wamego this year,” Reece said. “I look for them to improve upon their times and leave with a want to return next year and do even better. The next few years are going to be a lot of fun – we have no seniors to replace and great talent coming up from LMS.”