

Wildcat wrestlers feature young, experienced roster heading into season



Louisburg junior Leola Eslinger returns to help lead the Wildcat girls squad as she is one of three returning state qualifiers for the girls and boys program.

A new era of Louisburg wrestling officially begins this winter, and first-year head coach Shawn Crossley believes both the boys and girls programs have the work ethic and leadership to make it a smooth transition.

Crossley, a longtime Wildcat assistant who takes over for Bobby Bovaird after his 14-year run, inherits a roster that is young but hungry. The boys team enters the year having lost

four state qualifiers – including 215-pound state runner-up Ashton Moore – and three 100-match winners from last season. Only one state qualifier returns, but Crossley said the program's foundation remains solid.

"Practice has been going really well," Crossley said. "We have a great group of leaders in our room. We set expectations early, and so far we've lived up to them. This is a hard-working group of kids."

Junior Levi Cotter, who qualified for state at 106 pounds a year ago, moves to 113 this season and is expected to anchor a developing boys lineup.

"In regard to Levi, I expect him to have a great year," Crossley said. "He's planning to wrestle 113, and I think he'll be very strong there."



Louisburg sophomore Levi Cotter puts an opponent on his back during a match last season. Cotter is the lone returning state

qualifier for the Wildcat boys.

Louisburg opens with only five seniors – Myke McKitrick, Keegan Rogers, Vance Hahn, Anis Ghannam and Broden Vargo – as competition for varsity spots continues through the early part of the schedule. The Wildcats return 47 athletes overall, including 16 freshmen, 15 sophomores and 16 juniors.

Rogers (126), McKitrick (132), Hahn (190) and junior Spencer Mattison (144) are also team captains on the boys side as all four look to lead the Wildcats this season.

“Clearly, we lost a lot of talent from last year’s team,” Crossley said. “Not only that, we lost all of our team captains and a great group of leaders. But this team is very young and experienced.”

While the boys focus on rebuilding, the girls enter with higher expectations – and more depth than ever before. Louisburg returns two state qualifiers in team captains Brooklyn DeWeese (135) and Leola Eslinger (155). Eslinger begins the year ranked No. 6 in Kansas.



Louisburg's Brooklyn DeWeese works for a pin during regional action last season.

Brianna Caraway (140), Allison Martin (145) and Maliya Collins (125) also return for the Wildcats after nearly earning a state qualification themselves.

"I believe this is our largest girls team ever," Crossley said. "Leola and Brooklyn are poised to have great years once again. Brianna, Maliya, and Allison were all knocking on the door of a state qualification last year and could break through."

The Wildcats also have wrestlers sidelined with injuries who will return next season, but Crossley said they have remained involved as team managers.

Crossley added former Louisburg wrestler Shea Cox, a 2015 LHS graduate and the program's 2024–25 Contributor of the Year, to his coaching staff.

“He has that passion for LHS wrestling like I do, and bleeds purple and white,” Crossley said. “He’s been a great addition and shares my vision.”