

Dennis leaves lasting legacy in Louisburg, LHS athletics



Damon Dennis, and his wife Karla, pose for quick picture during a timeout at a Louisburg High School basketball game Dennis was announcing. Dennis, who is better known as Doc D, is handing over his business at Louisburg Chiropractic Office to Dr. Jacob Polzin and is stepping away as the LHS team doctor after 28 years of service. His last day at the office is tomorrow (Saturday).

Almost every day of the week, if you were looking for Damon Dennis, he could be found at his office on 11 S. Broadway St., helping treat those pesky aches and pains, taking X-rays, or mending those beaten up athletes after a game.

Doc D – as he his affectionately known – opened Louisburg Chiropractic Office 28 years ago and has served as the Louisburg High School athletic team doctor for almost that same amount of time.

Dennis has seen it all. The walls in his office are lined with mementos from his years of service to both the community and the high school.

He has taped thousands of ankles, seen even more patients and has touched many lives during his time in Louisburg. That is why this week is one of the more emotional times in his life.

On Saturday, he will officially leave Louisburg Chiropractic Office and hand the reins over to Dr. Jake Polzin. Add to

that, Dennis is also stepping away as LHS' team doctor and will leave an absence on the sidelines and behind the mic that many in Louisburg have come to know.

"My decision to step down and sell the practice has turned out to be the hardest thing I have ever done," Dennis said. "I have poured everything I have into my job and community. It has become my entire existence. I was taught from a young age to serve others and your community. I feel like the pressures I have put on myself have become unhealthy. I have put about 40 years work in to 28 and feel like there is never going to be a good time to make such a huge life change.

"That being said, I feel like I need to make changes while I am still able to do the things that will be best for my family. Dr. Polzin came along and I think he will carry on the work at the office wonderfully. We are a lot alike in many ways. I could not have found anyone better to replace me."

For many, Dennis has been a big part of people's lives, especially in the athletic arena. He has served as the LHS team doctor since 1992 and has treated many athletes in those 28 years.



Dennis (left) and Dr. Jake Polzin pose for a picture in their office. Polzin will officially take over the practice from Dennis after this week, but both have been seeing the patients the last three months.

During the school year, Dennis would leave his place of business every day after 3 to go to the high school to tape up athletes from all different sports and made sure they were all ready to go for practice. After that was over, he would rush back to his office to finish the day treating his patients.

It would be hectic life for some, but it is one that he has treasured for the last nearly three decades.

"My time in practice has been a blessing," Dennis said. "I truly care about all of the patients and people in the community that I have been involved with. I have tried to be a positive impact on the town through my involvement in different organizations. As with any business, there are bumps in the road. I genuinely appreciate everyone who has had a positive impact on me through these years.

"I have poured my heart and soul in to every aspect of my business and involvement in the community, sometimes at the sacrifice of my wife, Karla. I am eternally grateful for her patience and love. Part of the reason why I am handing over the reigns is that I have a lot of making up for time to do."



Damon Dennis (middle) walks out of the locker room with the Wildcat football coaches prior to a game.

Dennis and his family have made a lot of sacrifices during his

time and many of the Wildcat coaches – both former and present – appreciate what he has done for them and their players.

“As far as what he has meant to the community, it is immeasurable,” longtime former coach Gary Griffin said. “He came in the first year and made himself available to all the coaches and was there for whatever the kids needed from the medical stuff, to a new pair of shoes, or money to go to a team dinner. He was even there to lend an ear to a kid that was having issues from girlfriends, teacher issues or problems at home.

“For me personally, he was a cheerleader when times were not good, he was an advocate for kids when I didn’t always know what was going on behind the scenes. I trusted Doc like he was a member of the coaching staff. I told him a lot of things in confidence so I could get his advice knowing it would not go any further. As far as the community goes, he is a pillar and he is involved in everything and is held in high regards by most. It is really hard for Doc to tell anyone no, so most of his days are longer than just his office hours. Doc is going to be missed in so many ways. He is a very humble man and he is very deserving of slowing down and enjoying the fruits of his labor.”

A Small Beginning

Back in June of 1992 is when Dennis began to plant his roots in the town he would begin to call home.

Dennis purchased the small satellite office from Dr. Larry Fulk, who at the time also had a practice in Paola. Dennis was less than a year out of school and was eager to get involved in the Louisburg community.

Two months later, Dennis reached out to then Louisburg High School administrator Doug Chisam and asked if he could serve as the team’s doctor – free of charge. Since August of 1992,

Louisburg High School would not be the same.

Dennis made trips over to the high school for treatment and would also follow many of the team's to their games after work was over. It was a life that would go on to create many memories.

"Jim Knox, Don Meek and Doug Chisam were all very supportive and I am forever in their debt," Dennis said. "I started out just going to all games, home and away, and every sport that I could. At that time I was in the office from 6 am to 7 pm and then off to games 3-4 nights a week. The things I have always enjoyed about being the team doctor was the kids and the coaches. High school athletes have not changed since day one. They want someone who cares about and shows interest in what they are doing. I am still close with a lot of the students who have come through the high school and will continue to be.

"My role evolved over the years. I began doing all the taping before practice and games, Impact testing, announcing basketball and other roles as the coaches requested. I enjoy helping others and that is how my role evolved in to so many other areas. Over the years, the coaches have included me and I will always be grateful to them for allowing me to be a part of the experience."



Damon and his wife Karla pose for a picture in front of his office back in the early 90s.

His role got even bigger when the new high school was built and Dennis was asked if he would like to announce basketball games. He certainly didn't mind having a mic in his hand and loved playing off the crowd and making sure the athletes felt a little extra special.

"We had a girls' tournament and Dave Tappan asked me if I would announce the game," Dennis said. "He thought it would be a nice touch to have an announcer. I am not sure he ever asked me to continue, I just did it. I had to be at games anyway and I like to talk, so it worked out. Dave never said to quit, so I just kept doing it.

"I really did enjoy that. I would try to throw in a little funny once and awhile just to see if people were listening. Dottie Cook had a birthday every game night for several years. Knowing the kids so well, it was fun to add their middle name or nickname at the game."

Tappan, who is currently the USD 416 assistant superintendent, worked as the LHS activities director and principal during many of Dennis' years in Louisburg and the two became quick

friends.

With that, Tappan is well aware of Dennis' work ethic and commitment to Louisburg athletics. In fact, he has seen it firsthand.



Doc D lets out a cheer on the sidelines following a big play during the Wildcats' 2010 state championship game.

"Most people know that Doc doesn't take vacations very often," Tappan said. "In fact, it usually takes a team of us to get him out of the office for more than a day. But in 2010, he and Karla scheduled a trip over Thanksgiving break to Chicago. Well, that was also the year of our run to the state football championship and there was no way he was going to miss it. In typical Doc D fashion, he lined things up to perfection. He takes a 5 a.m. flight from Chicago to Kansas City, has Karla drive him to the Legends off of I-70 and at about 6:30 I'm

picking him up and we beat the team to Salina. When the bus finally rolls in, he looks at Coach (Gary) Griffin with a grin and says, 'What took you so long?' About four hours later we were celebrating a championship.

"The commitment that Doc D has demonstrated over the years to the students of Louisburg schools is second to none. From the football sidelines on a Friday night in the fall, to being behind the mic in the LHS gym during basketball season, Doc always supported the students, the coaches and the administration of USD 416. I am proud to call Damon Dennis my friend."

Beyond The Call of Duty

Running a business can be difficult enough, but when you have other responsibilities on top of all that, it can be stressful at times.

The coaches at Louisburg High School never got that when working with Doc D. Veteran and young coaches alike were amazed at the dedication he displayed.

"Doc D is one of the most honest and honorable men I have ever met," Louisburg soccer coach Kyle Conley said. "He has donated countless hours and years for helping Louisburg student athletes. He always went out of his way to help anyone and everyone. He wasn't always just helping players. He would always check in on the coaches as well – checking on their well-being, their teams, and their families.

"Doc always went out of his way to make someone feel important and special. He was NEVER too busy for anyone. He will be greatly missed and he is irreplaceable. Thank you Doc D for everything that you have done for my teams, my family and for myself. You are someone I am lucky enough to call a friend."

That dedication would not only be found after school in the evenings, but even before the sun came up as well.



Doc D checks out Louisburg's Hallie Hutsell following an injury during last soccer season.

"Doc D will be greatly missed," Louisburg volleyball coach Jessica Compliment said. "He unselfishly devoted many hours to our athletes and was always a phone call or a text away. I can't count how many times he would meet myself and an athlete or two at the school at 5:30 a.m. prior to departure for a volleyball tournament. Not only was he a great role model and mentor for the athletes, but he served as a great mentor to a young coach for the past 14 years. He will be greatly missed by many."

However, where Dennis is most recognized was on the football sidelines. He did anything from tending to injured athletes, mentoring future trainers and handing out free food or candy to the student section before certain games.

It wasn't gone unnoticed as many around the school and

community know what Doc D has meant to the district.

"If Louisburg had a Mt. Rushmore, Damon would definitely be up there," Louisburg graduate and longtime coach Jeff Lohse said. "Doc is one of the most selfless people that I know. He was always more than willing to help anyone out and never expected anything in return. I consider Doc to be a great friend of mine and this is definitely bittersweet. I wish him and Karla nothing but the best as they open up this new chapter in their lives. Damon will be missed but his legacy in Louisburg will live on forever."

Dennis always made sure to welcome the new coaches to the district and made them feel a part of the family and that was the case with boys basketball coach Ty Pfannenstiel when he came to the school three years ago.



Doc D was presented with a team signed helmet following the team's award banquet two years ago.

"Doc D is the most selfless man I know," Pfannenstiel said. "What Doc gave to this school and community is unprecedented. He cared so much for all of our athletes, there's no way we are going to be able to replace what he brought to this school. I feel bad for whoever is going to come in and try to fill his shoes – he set the bar way too high."

Dennis has been on the sideline for many of Louisburg's greatest athletic achievements, including three state football appearances and has watched many athletes along the way achieve great individual accomplishments.

He knows that he has been blessed to be able to be a part of Wildcat athletics in one form or another the last 28 years.

"As for favorite memories, it is not always about the wins and losses," Dennis said. "The things I have most enjoyed is the time spent with athletes and coaches. The things that go on in the locker room, before and after games were the fun part. I have had a behind the scenes view of some pretty amazing people.

"Obviously the 2010 state football championship is at the top of the list. We had gone to the championship twice and come home in second on two occasions. It was a great group to be around and a great experience. If I had to choose a group of kids that really stand out the most, it would be the seniors my first year here (class of 1993). They welcomed me with open arms and made me feel like I was appreciated. I still speak to members of that class often and consider them friends. It was a really special group. I also loved seeing kids accomplish their dreams of success. Louisburg has had its share of champions and athletes that have gone on to do some amazing things."



Doc D was also good with equipment as he works on Madden Rutherford's helmet prior to a game.

In his last week at the office, Doc D has seen a lot of visitors that have come to thank him for everything he has done. Although Dennis won't be around as much as he used to, he wants people to know that this isn't a farewell – but more of a see you later.

"I want everyone to know how much I appreciate their kind words," Dennis said. "There has been talk of various activities surrounding my career change that have been proposed. While I genuinely appreciate this, I don't think I can handle the attention. My emotions have gotten the better of me and I am not sure that I can handle any celebrations publicly, unless everyone wants to see me cry."

"I am not going away. I just won't be at 11 South Broadway or at the high school every day. Thank you to everyone that has

supported me as I have made every effort to support my community."

No, Doc – thank you...

LHS sports preparing to start back up in June with summer workouts



Kansas high school sports has been absent since the middle of March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but that all could change very soon.

During its board of directors meeting earlier this month, the Kansas State High School Activities Association made a change to its summer regulations. Starting on June 1, school employed coaches may begin summer programs as long as it is permitted by the community's health authorities and the school district.

Coaches at Louisburg High School are making plans to move forward beginning the first of June, but they must meet some guidelines to do so.

In the first two calendar weeks in June, athletes will need to attend a conditioning session each day. Those must be completed to be able to participate in a coach's camp or

organized competition.

If an athlete is playing football, they must complete an extra five days of conditioning before being able to participate in competition.

The first two weeks of conditioning sessions will not involve weights, indoor facilities or sporting equipment to ensure safety. Masks will be optional at workouts, but six feet of distance will be in place along with no more than the 90 gathering restriction under the phase 3 guidelines put out by the state.

Then on June 15, barring no setbacks, conditioning will include indoor weight sessions and indoor facilities will be allowed. Coaches will also be able to hold camps and competition throughout the summer.



Louisburg football coach Robert Ebenstein has plotted out summer workouts for his football team beginning with three weeks of conditioning starting June 1

"I think the guidelines were set to help ensure the safety of all student athletes accords the state, along with their physical health as well as the preparation for the season," Louisburg football coach Robert Ebenstein said. "Challenges may be there, but overall they are irrelevant as all the teams in the state have to follow the same guidelines. Our school administrators have been very supportive throughout this process."

Along with the new changes, KSHSAA also lifted the moratorium period at the end of the summer and will allow teams to practice all the way up to the beginning of the school year. Fall sports, however, will take precedence from Aug. 1 through Aug. 15.

For some programs, the changes won't be much different as what they have experienced in the past, other than practicing social distancing through the first two weeks of conditioning.

"We are still allowed to compete in leagues and camps after all athletes have completed 10 days of conditioning/training," Louisburg volleyball coach Jessica Compliment said. "Our summer weights program is changing some this summer, so it gives the players a chance to acclimate back into workouts before putting a ball in their hands.

"When you really look at the schedule, we lost the first two weeks in June (in terms of volleyball skill work), but we gained the moratorium week and have full contact until August 16. The fall season starts on August 17. Normally, we can't have contact, outside of weights and conditioning, after mid-July. This actually gives us about four weeks on the back end of summer to work with the athletes."



Louisburg volleyball coach Jessica Compliment has her normal summer scheduled planned out despite a different start.

Still, the new-look summer won't be without its challenges – especially in the first 10 days of the summer calendar. However, the coaches and athletes will gladly work around the new rules in order to get back together and competing again.

"I think the new guidelines will help kids get back to some normalcy as long as everything continues to get better, but the six feet of social distancing could be challenging when you are coaching a team sport," Louisburg soccer coach Kyle Conley said. "We will find a way to overcome these challenges and help the kids develop as much as possible."

Coaches have already altered their camp schedules for the summer, and that information, along with a list of camps, can be found [here](#).

As for Louisburg cross country, the runners will also be going through a conditioning period like everyone else. They will meet at the football practice field at 7 a.m. for an hour every morning beginning June 1 and that will continue through the summer.

Since school has been out since the middle of March, coaches have tried to find a way to stay in touch with their players – and like with online schooling – the zoom platform has been a big help for coaches.

“Football has been doing online zoom workout together for those currently in high school every Monday, Wednesday and Friday while we have been out of school, so I have still been seeing them and they have been doing some cardio,” Ebenstein said. “We have as normal of a summer planned as possible. We will have our weights sessions, our team camp, review/skills night, and we will have our contact camp that KSHSAA is allowing.”

With everything going on around the state and the country, everything is still in limbo and dates could have to be altered once again depending on what local officials decide. Even with all that, the coaches believe there will be a fall season.



Louisburg soccer coach Kyle Conley has tried to keep many of his same events for both the boys and girls teams.

"I am confident our fall season will be played," Conley said. "It may have some things that are different, but we will play. I know that the boys are very anxious in having conversations with some of them."

Many of the coaches and players are just ready to return to some kind of routine following the spread of COVID-19 and they hope sports can give that to them.

"As of right now, our season is scheduled, and we'll plan accordingly if told differently," Compliment said. "But for right now, (activities director Michael) Pickman has stressed that for most of the athletes, a return to summer weights/conditioning/activities will be their first taste of 'normalcy.' I'm excited to get back at it and see the athletes

and students again."

Pickman named as new LHS activities director



Michael Pickman (left) was hired as Louisburg High School's new activities director and assistant principal last week following the USD Board of Education meeting. Current Louisburg AD, Scott Hinkle (right), will move to the middle school to serve in the same capacity starting next school year.

Louisburg High School will have a little different look to its activities department for the 2020-21 school year.

Following the USD 416 Board of Education meeting on April 13, Michael Pickman was hired to serve as the school's new assistant principal and activities director. Pickman will replace Scott Hinkle, who has been in that position for the last two years.

Hinkle will remain in the district and will move over to the middle school to serve in the same capacity.

"I had known for a while that I wanted to continue my education by getting a second master's degree, but I didn't really know which area," Pickman said. "I talked with current

administration and was both inspired and encouraged to explore administrative leadership. This is the job I wanted because it meant staying in Louisburg and continuing to work with the staff and coaches who I know have, can and will achieve great things when it comes to our students and student athletes.

"We are a Louisburg family and I want my daughter in the Louisburg community and school system, so I wouldn't have done this anywhere else. The atmosphere from district leadership to the building leadership is top notch and I am ready to grow as an educator and work alongside (principal) Jeremy (Holloway) and the administrative staff at the high school and the amazing coaches and support them."

Pickman has taught English at the high school for the last seven years and has also worked in the Prairie View, West Franklin and Maur Hill Prep school districts.

He has also spent a lot of time in the athletic arena as he has served as the Wildcat boys and girls soccer assistant coach, alongside head coach Kyle Conley, for the last five-plus years.

"It will be tough to give up all aspects of it, but the magic of these soccer programs will be especially difficult," Pickman said. "Kyle has been an amazing person to coach with and his passion is contagious. Getting to start the girls program with him and the immediate success has been amazing. State finals and big wins and the atmosphere – some don't ever get to experience that – and lastly the players, both boys and girls who have graduated and those who remain to carry on the greatness are why I said yes to coaching. They make the whole experience amazing and fun.

"So it will be hard, but I would also not have gone anywhere else to do a different job and so I will still be able to support the soccer players and every other student and athlete through my new opportunity and to do so the Wildcat Way."

As for Hinkle, he spent the last two years as the LHS activities director after coming from Liberal High School. He is excited that his new position at the middle school will allow him to spend more time with family.

"I really enjoyed my time at the high school, even though it was only two years," Hinkle said. "I am leaving behind a great workplace with a great culture and an unbelievable staff. It was not an easy decision."

"I made the move to the middle school to get back some evenings and weekends. I have been an athletic director for 11 years at the high school level in my career, and I was ready to free up some time. I know I am joining another great staff at LMS, and look forward to the new challenge ahead of me."

Moore earns academic all-state cross country honor



Louisburg senior Trinity Moore put together an historic season for the Louisburg cross country team last fall. She also had a strong performance in the classroom as she was named to the academic all-state first team.

After an historic senior season in cross country, the honors are still rolling in for Trinity Moore.

Moore, who finished third at the Class 4A state cross country meet in November, was recently honored for her work in the classroom.

The Louisburg senior was named to the Kansas Cross Country and Track and Field Coaches Association Academic All-State First Team and her coach, John Reece, presented her with a plaque Tuesday at Louisburg High School.

To qualify for the all-state honor, the student athlete must be a junior or senior, must have an unweighted GPA of 3.75 or higher and must have placed in the top 30 at this year's state cross country meet.

During her four years with the Wildcat cross country team, Moore accumulated four state medals and she helped the Lady Cats to three consecutive state appearances as a team.

She broke her own school record at the Class 4A state meet last November as her time of 19 minutes and 39 seconds was good enough to take third overall. All those accomplishments made her the most decorated runner in Louisburg history.

Moore will continue her cross country career in college next season as she signed with Pittsburg State University and will run for the Gorillas beginning in the fall.

Top 10 Louisburg Sports Stories of 2019



It was a successful, and eventful, 2019 for Louisburg High School athletics and for those who are connected to the Wildcat program. This past year created a lot of school history for LHS and several programs brought back state hardware.

Below are the Top 10 stories from 2019, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the explanation is the link to the actual story from the event.

When putting the list together, I took a lot of things into account – whether it was team vs. individual, popularity of the sport, historical achievements and the interest it drew on the web site. There were stories that I had to leave off that normally would easily make it. 2019 was that successful of a year for Wildcat athletics.

This year was a blast to cover and I was blessed to have the opportunity to go along for the ride with many of these. As much fun as it was, I can't wait for 2020 to begin. Looking forward to it!



10. Tucker, Ratliff-Becher win powerlifting titles, Tucker breaks state record.

Two Louisburg High School weightlifters made their way to the top of the podium in March during the Class 4A State Powerlifting Meet at Basehor-Linwood High School.

Louisburg senior Kiefer Tucker and junior Reilly Ratliff-Becher both earned state championships in their respective weight class. Senior Jonathan DePriest finished third overall and several other Wildcats also earned individual medals.

Not only did Tucker win a state title in the 220-pound division, he also broke a 24-year state bench press record as he recorded a bench of 375 pounds to surpass the old mark of 365. He also won the squat competition at 505 pounds and had a total of 1,165 pounds to run away with the crown.

Tucker's total was the highest three-lift mark at the entire state meet in all weight classes.

"I had messed around with 375 and 385 before on bench, so I was confident that I could lift it if I had the chance," Tucker said. "I was more worried about my first lifts on bench at 345 and 365 because if I messed up on those attempts then I would not have had the change to even attempt 375. It was definitely a sigh of relief when I finally locked it out.

"It was a great feeling to beat the state record. To put Louisburg up on the record chart definitely brought a smile to my face."

Ratliff-Becher had a big day in the women's division as she won a state crown in the 180-pound weight class. She finished with a three-lift total of 575 pounds.



The Louisburg junior took first in bench press with 155 pounds, first in clean at 150 pounds and second in squat with a 270-pound lift.

“Winning the state title meant a lot to me,” Ratliff-Becher said. “I have put in a lot of time and

effort in weights class, so it's nice to see it has paid off. But, also because I feel as if I put out a message to girls that it's cool to be strong physically. I know that being sometimes the only girls in a class with a lot of strong guys is intimidating. Weightlifting is all about your own personal growth and seeing how far you can push yourself.

"I was honestly surprised I won because there are lots of very strong girls there and it's good competition. It's also fun to meet new people that have the same interests and motivation as you."



9. Golf qualifies for state, Dillon medals for third straight season

As the scores trickled

in to the clubhouse at Paola Country Club, the Louisburg golf team could hardly stand it.

The Wildcats were nervously waiting to hear if they had qualified for state, but they knew it was going to be close. Louisburg had to be in the top three of the team standings to earn a spot and the Wildcats had some tough competition amongst them.

As it turned out, the Wildcats had nothing to worry about.

Louisburg recorded a team score of 352 during the Class 4A regional tournament in May and finished third overall by nine strokes over fourth-place Ottawa. The Wildcat team of Calvin Dillon, Drake Varns, Garrett Rolofson, Ryan Haight, Noah Hill and Colin Cook all competed in the state tournament

Topeka-Hayden won the regional title going away with a 332 and Louisburg was just three strokes behind runner-up Tonganoxie, which had a 349.

“It feels great, especially with all the hard work we have put in the offseason and last few months,” Dillon said. “It was our goal coming in and we did it. I felt like we had a good chance. It was borderline with those four teams being as close as we are. I knew we had a chance, but it was nice to actually qualify. It was definitely a little nerve-racking waiting for the scores to come in.”

As impressive as that

feat was for the Wildcats, Dillon's performance blew away the rest of the competition.

The Louisburg junior won his first individual regional title as he carded a 1-over 73 to win the tournament by six strokes. Dillon's 73 was his best score on the season and he has now won all but one tournament on the year.

Dillon went on to record his third consecutive state medal and finished 11th overall in Dodge City after the tournament was postponed several times, and eventually moved due to weather.



8. Wildcat wrestling sends six to state, Moore earns first state medal

Back in early November of 2018, Austin Moore was in a sling with a broken collarbone and he wondered why all this was happening.

Moore suffered the injury during the regional football playoffs and he didn't get to finish his final high school season. Not only that, his hopes of getting his first state wrestling medal was in serious jeopardy.

A little more than four months later, Moore was on the medal stand with some of the state's best wrestlers in his weight class.

The Louisburg senior earned a fourth-place medal at 220 pounds during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in February at the Tony's Pizza Events Center in Salina. It was his first high school state medal and it marked the end of a long journey for Moore.

“It was pretty special for me to get a state medal, especially because it has been a goal of mine ever since I started wrestling,” Moore said. “Overall, I felt like I wrestled pretty well, but I just wish I could've ended it on a win.”

The Wildcats qualified six wrestlers for state, had three regional champions and took third place in the team standings during the regional tournament in Paola – all while not being able to field a full team.

Louisburg's talent was

certainly on full display during the two-day tournament. Brandon Doles, Blue Caplinger and Austin Moore won regional crowns, Cade Holtzen was a regional runner-up, while Gabe Bonham and Ryan Owens also qualified for state by placing third and fourth, respectively.

As a team, the Wildcats ended up with 138.5 points and was just 2.5 points out of second place. Ottawa won the regional with 149.5 points and Eudora was second at 141. It was the highest regional team finish for Louisburg since 1998.

“The way these guys wrestled this weekend shows that the program has been doing so many things right this season,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “We’ve had the obstacle of low numbers, which hurt us in our duals, but when it comes to tournament time, we have a bunch of guys who are placing high and that gives us a lot of team points. Taking six to state feels pretty encouraging, and finishing third at regionals is an awesome statement for this team.

“If a few things had gone the other way, we would have been in second as a team. On paper, we weren’t supposed to be in the race for a regional plaque. Almost all of our guys stepped up and scored huge team points for us.”



7. Louisburg softball captures regional title

OTTAWA – Madison

Svoboda could feel her heart starting to come out of her chest.

Karson Griggs was a
feeling a little nauseous.

Those are some of the
same feelings that were flooding the Louisburg softball's team
dugout during the
final inning of the Class 4A regional championship game
against Chanute on
Tuesday in Ottawa.

Louisburg held a one
run lead, but Chanute had the tying run on third, two outs,
and a trip to the
state tournament was on the line. On the mound was sophomore

Brooklyn Diederich, and with two strikes, the Chanute batter fouled five straight pitches.

The tension was mounting.

Finally, on the 10th pitch of the at-bat, Diederich got what she was looking for – a swing and miss.

The strikeout sealed the Lady Cats' trip to state with a 6-5 victory over No. 7 seed Chanute and sent shockwaves throughout Class 4A softball.

"I want to cry, but at the same time I am just really happy," Griggs said. "It is exciting because I never thought something like this could happen, especially this year. It feels really nice and now maybe people will actually start taking us seriously."

Not many gave people gave the Lady Cats a chance as they entered the Class 4A regional tournament with just five wins and were forced to begin tournament action in the play-in game.

After a 17-2 win over Parsons last Monday in the play-in game, No. 15 Louisburg advanced to the regional semifinals and upset No. 2 seed Ottawa, 9-7, which helped set up the Lady Cats' first state tournament appearance since 2014.

"I think a lot of

other teams underestimated us," Diederich said. "The fact that we came out and played our hardest ball showed what type of team we actually are. It is just crazy."

At the state tournament in Salina a week later, the Lady Cats faced off against Andale and lost to the eventual state champion in the first round, 10-0.



6. Cross Country qualifies for state, Moore breaks school record and takes third at state

BALDWIN CITY – One by one, members of the Louisburg girls cross country team crossed the finish line and coach John Reece was unsure whether or not his team did enough

to qualify for state.

The Lady Cats had made school history by qualifying the last two seasons, but the third time was a little bit in jeopardy – that was until the results were released.

As it turned out, Reece didn't need to be so worried.

Louisburg finished third overall with 96 points in October at the Class 4A regional meet at the Baldwin Golf Course, and beat out Bishop Miege by six points to earn a spot at the state meet this weekend in Wamego.

The team of Trinity Moore, Carlee Gassman, Reese Johnson, Claire Brown, Ruth Minster, Kennady Wilkerson and Bree Gassman competed for the Lady Cats at state.

“This group of girls runs well, they race well and they train well together,” coach Reece said. “They are a good group and this is just as exciting as the other two times. The competition was a lot tougher than the previous two times. We had to run our races and we did. From our third to fifth runners was about an eight point spread.”

Trinity Moore has left a lasting impression on the Louisburg cross country program over the last four years, but she saved the best moment for her final act.

Moore broke her own school record with a time of 19 minutes and 39 seconds to finish third overall at the Kansas Class 4A State Cross Country Championships at the Wamego Country Club a week later.

The Louisburg senior recorded the program's best ever state finish as she eclipsed her fourth-place state medal from a season ago.

"It meant so much to me to finish with such a great race for my high school career," Moore said.

"Going into the race, I didn't know how well I would finish. This race had the best competition that I have ran against all year and I think that is what really pushed me.

"When I saw my time crossing the finish line, I was ecstatic. I felt great the entire race and was able to control everything I did. Finishing third was icing on the cake. I was surprised but so incredibly happy to be able to place in such a great spot, but I also knew that this was what I had worked for all year."

This made the fourth state medal for Moore in her high school career and she improved on her state finish every year. Last season, she took fourth overall and bested her state time from a year ago by more than 30 seconds.



5. Boys Soccer wins league, regional titles to earn No. 1 seed in playoffs.

For more than 70 minutes, the goals for Louisburg were hard to come by and it started to leave an eerie feeling on Halloween night.

However, the Wildcats got their treat when it was all over.

Louisburg scored two goals in the final seven minutes of the match to earn a 2-0 victory over Kansas City Christian in the Class 4-1A regional championship game Thursday. The Wildcats (16-2-1) earned their third regional title in the last four years and advanced to the state quarterfinals.

“This group is special,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “It is going to be tough when it is

all over. This group has changed our culture. They came back to what this program believes and they have bought in to what we are teaching them. They have worked so hard since June. For these seniors, this is their third title in four years and I think it is a lot of fun for them.

A school record 16 wins, a Frontier League championship and a regional title are all something worth celebrating, but following the state quarterfinal match with Bishop Miege, all Louisburg could think about was the finality of it all.

Despite all those accomplishments, the Wildcats fell one win short of their main goal – a spot in the state final four.

Louisburg saw its season come to a close with a 3-0 loss to Bishop Miege at the Wildcat Sports Complex. The Wildcats lost to the eventual state champion, as Miege went on to defeat Wichita-Trinity on Saturday, 3-1, for the Class 4-1A state championship – the Stags' fourth in a row.

As difficult as the loss was for Louisburg, there was no forgetting how big of a jump the Wildcats made from the season before as they went from a 6-win team to one that earned the East's No. 1 seed in the state playoffs.

“Going 6-11 last year and seeing this Miege team almost mercy-ruling us in the regional championship last year in the rain, was a program changer,” Louisburg coach

Kyle Conley said. "After that was over, we talked about how things needed to change and it starts now. For our first practice in June, I told them that they are the ones that has to change them. Since day one, they have played for each other, played hard in practice and it was a total mindset change. When someone got hurt, it was the next guy up. We missed two starters for half of the year and it was always the next guy up taking advantage of his opportunity to fill in. The freshmen stepped up huge for us.

"This team is special. 16 wins is a school record and only two losses is probably a school record. This team is incredible, played so hard and did everything I asked them to do. They were always there to pick each other up and that is what this soccer family is all about. It will be tough to say goodbye to these kids."



4. Volleyball knocks off Miege to win regional title, takes fourth at state

ATCHISON – The sub-state semifinal game between Louisburg and Bishop Miege had all the feels of a state tournament match.

Partially because a year ago, it was.

Louisburg met Miege in the state championship match only to see the Stags send the Lady Cats to a runner-up finish in two sets. Then three weeks ago the two teams met again, and like before, Miege dispatched of Louisburg in two sets.

However, Bishop Miege saw a different Louisburg team during the sub-state tournament at Atchison High

School – one they didn't expect.

The Lady Cats came out on fire and never let up in a 25-18 and 25-22 win over Miege to end the Stags' season. It marks the first time in at least 12 years, if not longer, that Miege will not be at the state tournament.

Since the state tournament began in 1971, Bishop Miege has made 39 state appearances during that time in either Class 5A or 4A and is the most in Kansas history.

“Our energy was going to be the difference in that match, so we knew we had to bring it,” Louisburg senior Erin Lemke said. “We knew we had the same skill set as Miege, but our energy was what was going to pull us through there in the end. To get there, we just had to believe in ourselves and work hard this past week to give us the confidence that we needed.”

However, even after pulling off a big revenge win that expended a lot of energy, the Lady Cats still had a sub-state championship match to play against No. 2 seed Atchison. The No. 7 seed Lady Cats took care of business as they won in straight sets, 25-12 and 25-15, at Atchison High School.

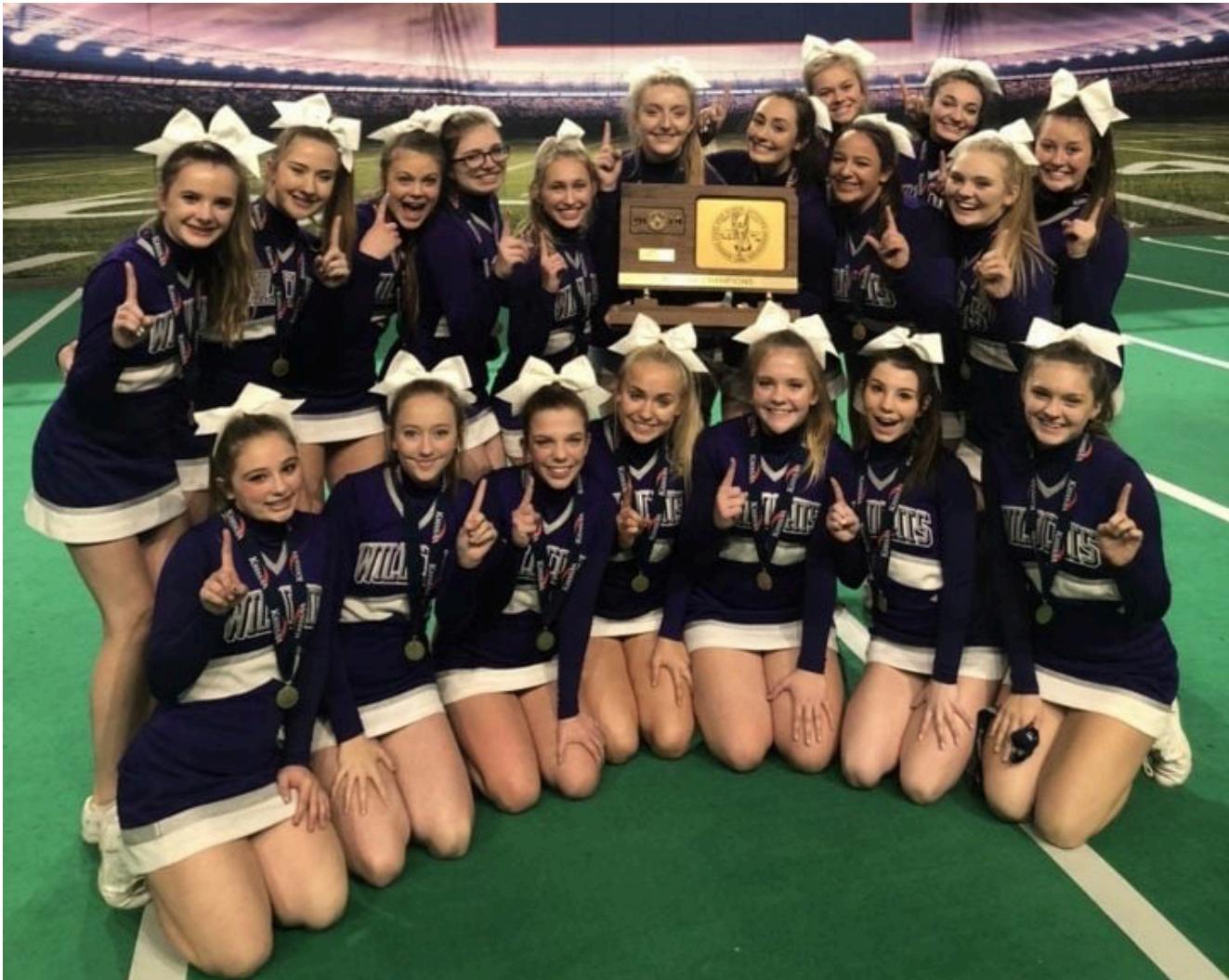
Louisburg lost its final two matches of the season, but those setbacks didn't take away from what the Lady Cats accomplished during the Kansas Class 4A State Championships.

For the third straight season, the Lady Cats were among the last four teams playing

and brought home a little hardware for their efforts. Louisburg took fourth overall after losing its third place match to Towanda-Circle, 2-1, in October at Hutchinson Sports Arena.

“Every season our goal is to put ourselves in the best position to qualify for state and then to hopefully advance to bracket play on Saturday,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “Leading up to state, we talked about how nothing is guaranteed and in order to make it to bracket play, we have to show up and play our best from the first whistle to the last whistle. If we play our game, then hopefully the winning will take care of itself and we’d advance.

“The eight teams at state this year were all very talented. I was happy that we qualified for the semifinals because that put us one step closer to the championship. Even though we didn’t reach the championship match and finished fourth, I was still very proud of how the team played throughout the tournament.”



3. Louisburg cheer wins first state championship

The Wildcat cheerleaders competed at the Class 4A KSHSAA Game Day Spirit Showcase Competition on Nov. 23 at the Stormont Vail Events Center in Topeka and came back home with a big trophy in tow.

Louisburg edged out runner-up Augusta with a point total of 82.25 to 81 in the finals to secure what is just the third athletic team state title in school history.

“I was so nervous at the awards,” Louisburg senior Lauren Vincent said. “We were all holding hands and had our heads down. We thought that we would get second

place at best, most likely third. We were content because we put everything out on the mat and did the best we could. But when they called out second place and it was Augusta, we screamed, cried, and hugged each other because we knew that we had just won.

“When our name was called for first, we jumped up and hugged each other. Then I ran out onto the mat and grabbed the trophy and we held it up and jumped around victoriously. It was the best feeling in the entire world. Knowing that all of our hard work had finally paid off was indescribable feeling of joy.”

The Louisburg cheerleaders that competed are Lexi Pena, Lauren Vincent, Ashlyn McManigal, Brooklyn Mitchell, Gabby Tappan, Andrea Gaza, Eleanor Willming, Jayden Trester, Lacie Kallevig, Sammy McDaniel, Mable Graham, Anna Morrison, Bella Feikert, Audrey Anderson, Sydney Dudzik, Kaitlyn Vest, Jolie Hendrickson, Abby Bradley and Zoe Cutshaw. Louisburg’s head coach is Jayna Guerra.

Not only were the Wildcats the third team to win a state title in school history, they were also the first female squad to win a team crown as well. All the history just added to what was a special day for the program.

“It means so much to me and all my teammates,” Tappan said. “As someone who’s been a part of a variety

of sports my entire life, I know how hard each of our teams work to do their very best in whatever sport they're a part of. We are so thankful that we got to make history for Louisburg and it is something that I can guarantee that each and every one of us will remember it for the rest of our lives."



2. Girls soccer takes second at state, Conley named coach of year and Scholtz, Buffington awarded players of year.

When it was all said and done, the Louisburg girls soccer team held its trophy high in front of the Wildcat faithful and the tears were easy to spot.

After nearly 200 minutes of soccer in a nine-hour time period, including one

match that ended in penalty kicks, the Wildcats were spent. They gave everything they had.

For the second consecutive season, Louisburg earned the Class 4-3-2-1A state runner-up trophy after a wild victory over Topeka-Hayden in the semifinals and then were shutout by Bishop Miege in the championship game, 4-0. It was the third consecutive state final four appearance for Louisburg.

Frustration and sadness was easy to see following the Wildcats' loss to the defending state champion, but the team realizes what they have accomplished in just four years of existence is to be celebrated.

"Being in this situation two years in a row is something that doesn't happen very often,"

Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "There are a bunch of teams that haven't been to a state final four and we have been to three in three years. It is pretty cool and it is special."

It was a wild 24 hours for the Wildcats. Louisburg was supposed to play Hayden on Friday in the semifinals, but severe weather forced the postponement to early Saturday morning.

The Wildcats battled Hayden through four overtimes and eventually led to penalty kicks. After an intense first five penalty kicks that left the match still tied, senior goalie

Carson Buffington recorded a big save and then senior Hallie Hutsell converted the sixth penalty kick to break the tie and give Louisburg a 2-1 win over Hayden.

“We usually play 80 minutes, but this time we had to play 110 minutes and we were gassed,” Conley said. “We were holding on and had some chances at the end to win it, but then we went to overtime and then to penalty kicks. It was all about to see if we could survive. Emotionally it was just a high for us and an unbelievable response and a great finish. Carson making a big save, Hallie putting it in for the win – it was just a great game.”

In the championship match, the Stags were just too much for the Wildcats and junior Sophia Stram provided a big spark. Stram scored all four goals for Miege in the title game, all of which came in the first half, and the Wildcats didn’t have an answer.

“They are just so freaking good,” Conley said. “I think the girls were mentally ready, but I don’t think their legs were quite ready, but we lost to one of best teams in the state of Kansas. They have great players, they are well-coached, but our girls played their butts off.

Coming off its second consecutive state runner-up appearance, Louisburg had some positive repercussions from its historic season.

However, none bigger came when the all-state teams were released by the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association. Not only did six Wildcats earn all-state selections, but they were honored with some of the highest awards out there.

Junior Mackenzie Scholtz was named as the Co-Offensive Player of the Year in Class 4-1A with Bishop Miege's Sophia Stram after she led the Wildcats in scoring.

Louisburg was also recognized on the other side of the ball as senior Carson Buffington was named the Class 4-1A Goalkeeper of the Year.

"Seeing Mackenzie and Carson recognized for their positional player of the years was fantastic," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. "They both had incredible years."

The Wildcats weren't done, as for the second consecutive season, Conley was named as the Class 4-1A Coach of the Year as he guided Louisburg to a 17-4 record. He also led the Wildcats to three consecutive final four appearances.



1.4x400 boys wins state championship, Wright wins four state medals and team breaks six school records at regional meet.

Three days after arriving in Wichita for the Kansas State Track and Field Championships, Justin Collins, Blue Caplinger, Ben Wiedenmann and Chris Williams finally got the chance to get on the Cessna Stadium track.

The four Wildcat runners had the top time in Class 4A going into the 4x400-meter relay, but weather threw a little wrench into their plans. The meet, which was supposed to end on a Saturday, was postponed to Sunday morning and all

races were judged by times with no preliminaries.

It wasn't the ideal situation, but they made it work – and it worked well.

Collins, Caplinger, Wiedenmann and Williams won the state championship in a time of 3 minutes and 25.39 seconds as they edged Chapman at the finish line, which ran a 3:25.61. It was the first state track championship for Louisburg since 2015 when Connor McMullen won the discus.

That was just one event in what was an historic week for Louisburg track.

Louisburg freshman Delaney Wright earned four state medals, while junior teammate Carlee Gassman finished with three as the Lady Cats went on to finish 10th in the team standings. The Lady Cats earned several other medals at the state meet coming off an impressive performance at regionals.

During the Class 4A regional meet at Paola High School, Wright qualified for state in four events, broke two school records and earned a regional title in her first postseason track meet.



Wright won a regional title in the long jump and finished second in the 200 and 400-meter dashes. She also helped Carlee Gassman, Rain Pugh and Sydni Keagle to a second place finish in the 4x400-meter relay.

"I am so grateful for everything," Wright said. "I had been having trouble with my hip this week and I just wanted to come out and make state in at least one event. I didn't realize I would make it in four. It is an unbelievable feeling."

Wright's day was just one of the many positives for the Lady Cats as they broke four school records, had four regional

champions and qualified for state in 10 events.

As a team, the Lady Cats nearly earned the regional runner-up trophy as they racked up 86.5 points and finished a half a point behind second place Baldwin and Bishop Miege, who tied for second. Paola won the regional title with 107 points.

The Wildcat boys also broke two school records and would end up qualifying for nine spots at the state meet.

Moore's love for running takes her to Pitt State



Trinity Moore, a four-time state medalist for Louisburg High School, will run for the Pittsburg State cross country and track and field teams next season.

Coming into high school, Trinity Moore decided to run cross country to help stay in shape for her favorite sport – soccer.

Little did she know at the time that her decision would alter the course of her young life for the better.

“It is something that has changed everything for me,” Moore said.

As it turned out, all Moore did

was become the most decorated runner in Louisburg cross country history. The Louisburg senior holds the school record and recorded four state medals, including a third-place finish this past season.

With all that success came opportunity, as Moore secured her chance to run in college as she signed her letter of intent to run cross country and track at Pittsburg State University last week during a signing ceremony at Louisburg High School.

“It means a lot to me,” Moore said. “It just showed how hard I worked to be able to get to the next level and I am very excited. I can’t wait for next year, and I know that doing different races with different teammates will be a fun experience for me.

“Knowing a lot of people that went to Pitt really helped me make my decision. I contacted the coach, and then when I saw their education program and all the success they had in running, I think I just fell in love with it. It really is my dream school and I’ve wanted to go there for years now. But when I fell in love with running, I think I knew that is when I wanted to go there.”

Moore will run under the guidance of Pitt State coach Russ Jewett, who has coached the Gorilla program for 34 years. Jewett helped the Gorillas to nine MIAA cross country titles and 11 trips to the NCAA Division II National Championships.

In 2016, Jewett guided the Pitt State women’s track program to the Division II Outdoor National Championship – the first in program history. He has also been named MIAA Coach of the

Year 38 times during his time at Pitt State.

"He is amazing and he is an institution there," Moore said of her new coach. "He went to school there and ran at Pitt, so I am really excited to see what he can do to transform me into an even better runner. He is an awesome coach."



Louisburg senior Trinity Moore signed her letter of intent last week to run cross country and track at Pittsburg State. Seated next to Trinity are her parents Diana and Randy Moore. Standing (from left) is her brother Hunter and Louisburg head cross country coach John Reece.

Although she hasn't been able to run track and field at the high school level due to the fact she plays soccer

in the spring, Moore is also excited in getting back into that aspect of the sport.

"I am still planning on running track there and coach just said that it will just be kind of a fresh start for me since I haven't run track since middle school," Moore said. "I will be able to try a lot of different things and see what fits for me and go from there."

It has been an amazing run – literally – for Moore during her four years with the Wildcat cross country team. Along with her four state medals, she helped the Lady Cats to three consecutive state appearances as a team.

Moore broke her own school record at the Class 4A state meet last month as her time of 19 minutes and 39 seconds was good enough to take third overall.

"All the accomplishments that I have mean a lot to me," Moore said. "It is something that I never thought would happen. Records are meant to be broken and I hope that we have a runner someday that can be even better than me. I'm glad that I was able to start something and leave the program with so many accomplishments."

Moore earns fourth state medal, breaks own school record



Louisburg senior Trinity Moore accepts her third place state medal Saturday following the Class 4A girls race at Wamego Country Club.

WAMEGO – Trinity Moore has left a lasting impression on the Louisburg cross country program over the last four years, but she saved the best moment for her final act.

Moore broke her own school record with a time of 19 minutes and 39 seconds to finish third overall at the Kansas Class 4A State Cross Country Championships on Saturday at the Wamego Country Club.

The Louisburg senior recorded the program's best ever state finish as she eclipsed her fourth-place state medal from a season ago.

“It meant so much to me to finish with such a great race for my high school career,” Moore said. “Going into the race, I didn't know how well I would finish. This race had the best competition that I have ran against all year and I think that is what really pushed me.

“When I saw my time crossing the finish line, I was ecstatic. I felt great the entire race and was able to control everything I did. Finishing third was icing on the cake. I was surprised but so incredibly happy to be able to place in such a great spot, but I also knew that this was what I had worked for all year.”

This made the fourth state medal for Moore in her high school career and she improved on her state finish every year. Last season, she took fourth overall and bested her state time from a year ago by more than 30 seconds.

“Trinity has been a pleasure to work with,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “She is a driven person who expects the best and will settle for nothing less. I feel that she saved her best race for last. She answered surges and when she made her move, she separated herself from the group and pressed to the finish line. Her third place finish was incredible. She did accomplish a lot during her four years and the best is still ahead of her in college.”



Trinity Moore prepares for one of the several turns on the Wamego Country Club course Saturday during the Class 4A state meet.

Moore

led the Lady Cats to a fifth-place team finish at the state meet with 165

points and were just four points behind Fort Scott for fourth-place. Buhler won

the state championship with 60 points and Baldwin was the runner-up with 74.

Chapman's

Taylor Briggs won the individual state crown with a time of 19 minutes and

Piper's Grace Hanson was second at 19:31.

"The

girls had a good race," coach Reece said. "Fifth place as a

team was beyond my expectations for the meet. They all seemed to handle the race well and a few even ran their best times ever."

Sophomore Reese Johnson finished second on the Louisburg team in 21:57 and was 40th overall in the 102-runner field. Freshman Claire Brown took 50th in 22:22 and senior Carlee Gassman battled an injured ankle and was 61st in 23:01.



Sophomore Reese Johnson races toward the finish line during the state meet Saturday in Wamego.

Another

sophomore, Ruth Minster, was 74th in 23:32, while freshman Bree Gassman (25:05) and junior Kennady Wilkerson (25:09) finished 98th

and 99th, respectively.

As

for Moore, she able to able to get out fast from the start and work with the front group most of the way, which allowed her to get comfortable and run her race.

“The

race at state was very fast and competitive,” Moore said. “I knew I had a great start since I was closer to the front than in year’s past, and I was able to keep it and work hard to pass those in front of me. With running this course so many times, I knew what to expect, so there were no new challenges except for powering through what I have done before, with the hills and turns this course presents.

“It

was the best race I have ever ran and it was the best I have ever felt in a race since my body is always comfortable running there and I was able to push through all it has to offer.”

As

celebratory as the finish was, it was also the final time Moore and Gassman will wear the Lady Cat uniform. However, both runners were a part of three state qualifying teams and Moore has plenty of medals to show for her time as a Wildcat.

“I definitely felt the realization that my high school cross country career was over when I crossed the finish line at state, but I don’t think I have really let it sink in,” Moore said. “It still seems like I have more time even though it has ended. I think at our banquet is when it will really hit me since I will be with my teammates, family and coaches. They are the people who have helped make this all possible for me and have been my support system over the years.”

“Looking back over the past four years, I would never have imagined that I could have accomplished more. When I started cross country, it was a way to stay in shape for soccer, but it turned into one of the things I love most. I pushed myself to the limits and I know there are things I could have done differently over the course of my career, but finishing where I did was the best I could have ever imagined for myself.”

As for the program itself, Reece saw improvements from several underclassmen as he envisions both of his teams taking another step forward.

“The season was super positive and the runners did an amazing job,” Reece said.

“The boys team started strong as a group and finished stronger. They have a couple great seasons ahead of them. The girls team shuffled a little, but in the end came together as a solid nine, which makes it hard to

set for regional and state, but it is a good problem to have.

“The seniors will always be missed as they are the leaders of the team, but we have some strong young runners that will step in and step up to the challenge.

Next year could be better, who knows. With the middle school starting cross country this year, it will also help the program to continue to gain strength in the future.”

Lady Cats will head to state for third consecutive year



Louisburg senior Trinity Moore finished sixth overall to lead the Lady Cats to a third place team finish and a spot at the state meet in Wamego.

BALDWIN CITY – One by one, members of the Louisburg girls cross country team crossed the finish line and coach John Reece was unsure whether or not his team did enough to qualify for state.

The Lady Cats had made school history by qualifying the last two seasons, but the third time was a little bit in jeopardy – that was until the results were released.

As it turned out, Reece didn't need to be so worried.

Louisburg finished third overall with 96 points Saturday at the Class 4A regional meet at Baldwin Golf Course, and beat out Bishop Miege by six points to earn a spot at the state meet this weekend in Wamego.

The team of Trinity Moore, Carlee Gassman, Reese Johnson, Claire Brown, Ruth Minster, Kennady Wilkerson and Bree Gassman will compete for the Lady Cats at state.

“This group of girls runs well, they race well and they train well together,” coach Reece said. “They are a good group and this is just as exciting as the other two times. The competition was a lot tougher than the previous two times. We had to run our races and we did. From our third to fifth runners was about an eight point spread. It was just incredible.”

Along with the team qualifying for state, Moore made some noise of her own as she finished sixth overall in to earn a regional medal in 20 minutes and 8 seconds. Piper freshman Grace Hanson won the individual crown at 19:15 and Eudora's Riley Hiebert was second with a time of 19:24.

In the team standings, Eudora won the regional title with 47 points and Baldwin was second with

55.

"It means a lot to go to state three years in a row with my team," Louisburg senior Trinity Moore said. "It shows that our hard work and goals for the season have paid off. It has showed me that we are capable of anything we set our minds to. Even with new runners on the team each year, it is so great to work together with these girls and lead such a great team.

"I feel like I ran very well. It was the best I had felt while racing this season in terms of weather and how I felt because of my training and competition throughout the season. This year's race was more competitive compared to year's past, but I think that is what made it great."



(From left) Reese Johnson, Kennady Wilkerson, Claire Brown, Trinity Moore, Bree Gassman, Nova Ptacek, Ruth Minster, Carlee Gassman and coach John Reece were all smiles after their third place team finish.

Johnson, a sophomore for the Lady Cats, finished 13th overall in 21 minutes to take second on the team. Gassman also battled through an injured ankle to take 21st in 21:29.

Brown, a freshman, also had a strong performance as she was the team's fourth runner and finished 25th in 22:06 and Minster, a sophomore, was fifth on the team in 23:39 and took 30th overall.

Wilkerson (24:10) and Bree Gassman (24:37) finished 43rd and 46th, respectively.

"I think they ran really well," coach Reece said. "I think if they go back and look at their times, they are close to PR's, if not better, and I think the boys were too. Trinity ran the race she needed to run and I think Reese stepped up for us to get second. Carlee gutted through having a bad ankle and Claire improved on her time and what an addition to the team she has been. Ruth also stepped up as our fifth runner, and she was our anchor and she got us there."



Sophomore Ruth Minster sprints to the finish line Saturday during the Class 4A regional at Baldwin Golf Course.

On the boys side, senior Anthony Davis missed out on a state bid by a few places as he finished 17th in 18:20 and the Wildcats were fifth as a team with 118 points.

Tonganoxie won the team title with 44 points and Bishop Miege was second with 73. Piper senior Owen Roellchen won the individual title in 16:57.

Sophomore Ryan Rogers was second on the Wildcat team with a time of 18:29 and was 20th overall and fellow sophomore Caden Bradshaw was 22nd in 18:32. Junior Carson Houchen was 25th in 18:44.



(From left) Ryan Rogers, Caden Bradshaw, Anthony Davis, Carson Houchen, Cade Holtzen, Sawyer Richardson and Evan Murphy line up for the start of the boys race Saturday in Baldwin City. Senior Evan Murphy (19:23), sophomore Sawyer Richardson (19:29) and junior Cade Holtzen (19:41) finished 35th,

36th and 40th, respectively.

The Louisburg girls will take to the course one final time at 12:30 p.m. this Saturday as the Lady Cats travel to Wamego for the state meet as they hope to better their fifth-place finish a season ago.

Moore, on the other hand, will try for her fourth state medal after finishing fourth in 2018. Johnson will vie for her second medal in as many years after taking sixth last season.

“To medal for the fourth time at state would be one of the best feelings in my heart,” Moore said. “It would be icing on the cake for my time as a cross country runner. It would show me that I can set a goal for myself and accomplish it, even through the toughest challenges.

I never would have thought at the beginning of my freshman year that this could be a possibility, and to have gained so much in a sport.

“Not only is it my fourth time at state, but it is my last high school cross country race. I am definitely going to feel the emotions of it being my last time running there, but I know it will be a great day.”

Three Wildcats earn all-league honors at Frontier meet



Sophomore Reese Johnson was one of three Louisburg runners to earn all-Frontier League honors last Thursday in Tonganoxie.

TONGANOXIE – In what is probably the most difficult league in Class 4A – the Frontier League – the Louisburg cross country teams found themselves in their toughest meet of the season.

The Wildcats competed in their first postseason meet Thursday in Tonganoxie at the Frontier League Invitational. In a race that featured state-ranked teams and returning state medalists, Louisburg found some success on both sides.

Louisburg senior Trinity Moore led the girls side with a top five finish and earned first-team all-league with her performance. Senior Anthony Davis and sophomore Reese Johnson were named honorable mention after they finished in the top 20.

Both teams went on to finish sixth in the team standings, but Louisburg coach John Reece was happy with the way

his teams competed against some of the state's best.

"The teams ran well at league," coach Reece said. "The Frontier League is one of the best and there will be teams from our league holding plaques at state on both sides, maybe two."

Moore put together one of the best races of her career, time-wise, as she ran a personal record of 19 minutes and 41 seconds and beat her old time by five seconds to finish fifth overall.

"I was very proud of my finish at league, even though my placing wasn't what I wanted," Moore said. "With the amount of talented runners I was going up against, I knew I was going to have to run my best if I wanted to earn first-team league honors. I had the competition to push myself and I was ecstatic when I learned that I had PR'd. If it wasn't for the girls who pushed me during the race, or the fast course, I don't think I could have run that fast and had such a good race."



Trinity Moore finished fifth overall to lead the Louisburg girls.

Johnson

was 20th overall in 21:32 to finish with honorable mention all-league honors. The top 21 runners in each race earn league honors, with the top seven named to the first team.

As

a team, the Lady Cats had to overcome some adversity as one of the team's top runners, senior Carlee Gassman, injured her ankle during the race and was unable to finish. With that, they dropped in the team standings and took sixth with 146 points.

Eudora won the league title with 37 points and Baldwin was second with 70. Piper freshman Grace Hanson was the league champion with a time of 18:50.

“It is always tough to lose a top runner during the race but that did not stop the girls from upping their game,” coach Reece said. “It was a fast race, not course, and many of the girls ran their best times for the season. I was hoping for a top three team for the girls but that was altered a little by Carlee going down, but she will be ready for regionals.

“Trinity and Reese earned well-deserved honors for their effort. Because it was a fast race, Trinity responded and did better with her time, but I think there is more to come.”

Freshman Claire Brown was third on the team with a 36th place finish in 22:21, while junior Kennady Wilkerson took 44th in 23:22. Sophomore Ruth Minster (24:01), and freshmen Bree Gassman (24:08) and Nova Ptacek (25:06), finished 55th, 59th and 69th, respectively.

Davis also picked up a good time to run his best race of the season. The Louisburg senior led the Louisburg boys in 15th place overall with a time of 17:53.



Senior Anthony Davis finished 15th overall at league to lead the Louisburg boys

As a team, the Wildcats were sixth with 130 points. Tonganoxie won the league title with 51 points and Spring Hill was second with 63. Piper senior Owen Roellchen was the league champion in 16:36.

“Anthony ran a great race and was rewarded with league honors,” coach Reece said. “He is gunning for a school top 7 time and I think he will get there. The boys continue to impress me with their team average time. It continues to drop and they are working hard to try and be the No. 3 at regionals.”

Sophomore

Ryan Rogers was second on the team in 25th with a time of 18:40 and

junior Carson Houchen was right behind him in 18:46 and took 27th.

Sophomore Caden Bradshaw (18:58) and junior Cade Holtzen (19:18) were 31st

and 33rd, respectively.

Senior

Evan Murphy (19:39) and sophomore Sawyer Richardson (19:43) took 37th

and 39th place.

Both

Wildcats teams will try to find a way to get into the top three team standings

Saturday when they compete in the Class 4A regional meet at Baldwin Golf

Course. The team three teams in each race will qualify for state, as will the

top five individuals that aren't members of those top three teams.

The

girls race will begin at 10 a.m. and the boys race will follow at approximately 10:45.

"Both teams are ready to run at Baldwin," coach Reese said. "We run fast there so look out, here we run. It will be one of the toughest regionals in 4A when it comes to the separation between the 3-4-5 place teams. Whoever is mentally ready will be going to state. I like our chances for both."

The Louisburg girls will try to qualify for the state meet for

the third consecutive season and Moore is ready for the challenge.

"I am super excited and very much looking forward to Saturday at regionals," she said. "Most of the teams in our league will be at regionals along with some others, so that helped us prepare for what we will see this weekend. I was able to run against the best competition, which I haven't seen all season, and it showed me how hard I will need to work if I want to make to state."

"I definitely think we are prepared knowing the competition we will face, as well as running on a familiar course. We run very well on Baldwin's golf course, but we will need to show up ready to race."

Lady Cats win team title on their home course



Louisburg senior Carlee Gassman leads a pack of runners up a hill toward the finish line last Thursday during the Louisburg Invitational at Lewis-Young Park. The Lady Cats took first place and Louisburg medaled six overall.

Running around the course at Lewis-Young Park for the final time, realization began to set in for the six

Louisburg seniors.

Time on the cross country season is quickly running out. Trinity Moore, Carlee Gassman, Emily Williams, Natalie George, Anthony Davis and Evan Murphy not only ran their final regular season race of their Wildcat career, but also the last on their home course.

As emotional as it was for some, they seemed to make the most of it – especially Moore and Gassman. The two Louisburg seniors led the Lady Cats to a first place team finish at the Louisburg Invitational on Thursday, and between the boys and girls, Louisburg earned six medals overall.

“It was so exciting to see the team take first,” Gassman said. “I’m really proud of all the girls who ran their hearts out. Each and every one of us contributes to the team’s success. It was a great way to end my last home meet.”

The Lady Cats pulled together to win the team title as they finished in a tie with Fort Scott with 68 points. The tie-breaker, which is the top sixth runner on each team, went the way of Louisburg as freshman Bree Gassman edged out the Fort Scott runner.

“It meant a lot to have our team take first place,” Moore said. “We were tied and our sixth runner helped to break the tie for us to win. It showed me, and the team, that

we can take on challenges that come our way, even in difficult race conditions. Our hard work paid off and it is starting to show more and more every week.”

Louisburg had to dodge the rain to make sure its home invitational was able to get in and the Wildcats wouldn’t go two weeks with competing in a meet, as their last meet in Pittsburg was rained out.

That meant having to run on a soft, muddy course at Lewis-Young, but Louisburg was still able to produce good results.

Moore led the Lady Cats in third place overall with a time of 20 minutes and 55 seconds. Piper freshman Grace Hanson won the girls side in 20 minutes and Spring Hill sophomore Alyssa Anderson was second.

“I felt like I ran okay during the race,” Moore said. “I had some tightness in my leg, but I powered through as much as I could. It wasn’t my best race, and I know I could have done better, but I’m happy with my performance with all the challenges and conditions. With never running in conditions like this before, it took some getting used to as every step was different with the terrain and wetness of the course. It wasn’t too difficult, but it had its challenges.”

As for Carlee Gassman, she finished seventh overall in 22:14 to earn a medal in her final home meet.

Sophomore Reese Johnson also garnered a medal for the Lady Cats as she took 11th

in 22:49.

"I felt like I gave it my all and left everything out on the course," Carlee said. "I wouldn't have ran so well if it wasn't for Reese. She gives me a lot of motivation."

Sophomore Ruth Minster had her best varsity race of the season as she was fourth on the team in 24:22 and was

22nd overall. Freshman Nova Ptacek also had a strong showing in 25th with a time of 24:50.

Bree Gassman (24:56) and junior Kennady Wilkerson (28th) were 27th and 28th, respectively.



Senior Anthony Davis (left) medaled in his final regular season meet as he finished 10th overall.

On the boys side, Louisburg garnered three medals, including one from Davis in his final home meet. Davis

took 10th overall in 19:01 and helped the Wildcat boys to a third-place team finish with 70 points.

Spring Hill won the boys team title with 32 points and Piper was second with 58. Piper senior Owen Roellchen won the boys race in 17:30.

Louisburg sophomore Caden Bradshaw finished right behind Davis in 11th to medal with a time of 19:06. Fellow sophomore Ryan Rogers also garnered a medal in 15th in 19:14.

Junior Carson Houchen finished just outside of medal contention in 17th with a time of 19:28 and junior Cade Holtzen was 20th in 20:04. Senior Evan Murphy (20:31) and sophomore Sawyer Richardson (21:12) took 26th and 29th, respectively.

The competition will begin to heat up for the Wildcats as they begin their postseason schedule this Thursday when they travel to Tonganoxie for the Frontier League Invitational at the Leavenworth County Fairgrounds.

The Frontier League features state-ranked teams in Baldwin and Eudora, along with several strong individual runners from other programs.

“I am very excited for league,” Moore said. “We have a very difficult league with very talented and amazing runners. We have not run this course before, so it will be very exciting and interesting as it will provide many of its own challenges. I know that I can do great myself, and that our team can perform very well if we give our best effort. It should be a great race and I can’t wait to run.”