

Frontier League breakup could happen soon



In a few months – or even weeks – the Frontier League as it currently stands could have a different look.

Since March, meetings have gone on within member schools of the Frontier League and Kaw Valley League to discuss possible realignment of both leagues.

The Frontier League currently has seven members – Louisburg, Paola, Spring Hill, De Soto, Ottawa, Baldwin and Eudora – and a meeting between the schools took place on March 28 to discuss where each school stood as far as their happiness in the league.

Brian Biermann, superintendent of USD 416, and Louisburg High School athletic director Darin Gagnebin attended the meeting on Louisburg's behalf and both relayed the fact that every school stated they were happy with the way the league is currently set up, but a couple schools came to the realization the Frontier League might not be able to offer what they are looking for.

De Soto and Spring Hill currently have growing enrollment numbers are interested in playing Class 5A competition. De Soto moved up to 5A this school year and Spring Hill will look to make the jump in the coming years with its larger enrollment. The rest of the schools all compete in Class 4A.

Both schools stated they would like more competition at the

sub-varsity level that schools like Louisburg, Baldwin and Eudora cannot provide. Competing in a mainly 5A league would relieve some of those problems.

“De Soto said they will probably open next year with 950 kids and they would grow by 100 the year after that,” Biermann said. “They are happy in the Frontier, but they feel like they need 5A competition and they feel like it could hurt them in football with seedings and tie-breakers. They could potentially get penalized by competing in a mainly 4A league.

“Spring Hill wants to be proactive. Their growth is coming. Their classes in the middle school are pretty good size. They won’t grow a lot next year, but they will in the next few years.”

What started the meetings is due to the fact that the Kaw Valley League is looking to rework their situation or create a brand new look altogether. The Kaw Valley currently has seven schools in Lansing, Turner, Bonner Springs, Tonganoxie, Piper, Bishop Ward and Basehor-Linwood, but one member – Bishop Ward – is leaving for a new league beginning next school year.

According to report in March from the *Tonganoxie Mirror*, Lansing wants to create a larger league that would contain all or some combinations of Lansing, Blue Valley Southwest, De Soto, Leavenworth, Bonner Springs, Basehor-Linwood, Tonganoxie, Ottawa, Piper, Spring Hill, Turner and Topeka schools Seaman, Shawnee Heights and Topeka West.

Many of those schools are either in Class 5A already or are close based on enrollment numbers. The idea of competing against bigger competition is intriguing to De Soto, Spring Hill – and possibly Ottawa – the three largest schools in the Frontier League.

An idea was thrown around of creating a league of two divisions between the Kaw Valley and Frontier. One division would be 5A schools and the other would be 4A.

"We visited with our board of education and we are not in favor of a mega-league," Biermann said. "That has been talked about – having a league of 5A and 4A schools. We don't want to invite new 5A schools. We are ok with Spring Hill and De Soto staying in the league, even though they are growing, but we don't want to invite other 5A schools or have a mega league so they can have better competition.

"Our stance is if De Soto and Spring Hill feel like they need 5A competition and leave, then they can work towards that and we can work on filling those spots with 4A schools."

Both Biermann and Gagnebin feel like the Frontier League needs to be proactive as changes could be made sooner rather than later.

"We aren't panicking as a league as much as the Kaw Valley schools are because they know they are headed for a break up," Gagnebin said. "We could easily stay with the seven schools we have. Pretty soon, De Soto will have close to 1,000 kids. It is more on them if they want to be in our league, and if they are happy, by all means stay. We are not saying they have to leave, but they have to do best what is for their school, and if this league isn't the best option for you, then you have to look elsewhere."

Due to the fact De Soto and Spring Hill could be moving on, the Frontier is being proactive and inviting some members of the Kaw Valley League to come make presentations at a meeting Wednesday to see if they would be a fit in the Frontier.

According to Biermann, Tonganoxie, Piper, Bonner Springs and Basehor-Linwood High Schools will all make presentations at the meeting and then schools from both the Kaw Valley and the Frontier will meet to discuss options at a later date.

"I led the (March 28) meeting and I wanted to make sure everyone was as honest and open as possible," Biermann said. "There were no hurt feelings. Collectively we don't want a

mega-league, no additional 5A schools and that is firm from us, Paola, Baldwin and Eudora. Spring Hill and De Soto left the meeting, I think, that they need to start looking for potential 5A competition.

"The easy fix would be for De Soto and Spring Hill to join the bigger league and we take someone like Tonganoxie and Piper to replace them. Every school said they loved the Frontier League and competition, but it is time there has to be some conversations. The biggest thing is we don't have three baseball, softball or soccer teams to schedule, but De Soto and Spring Hill want that. We can't field C teams in some cases."

The leagues are on a sort of a time crunch. With football reclassifications and scheduling beginning this October for the next two years, it would be the best case scenario to get the reshuffling done before then so they can schedule for the 2018-19 season and beyond according to Gagnebin.

The Louisburg activities director also believes keeping the right number of teams is also imperative for a healthy league.

"We want to maintain the integrity of our league, whether that is with seven or even eight schools," Gagnebin said. "We want to maintain that number. Nine is a scheduling nightmare, and if you only have six teams, you are opening up a can of worms where if you leave an open spot, then the state could come in and assign certain schools to us that aren't a good fit."

"I don't necessarily want them to leave the league, but we need to be told if they are. I am more afraid of them leaving our league than them staying in our league. I am not afraid of the competition we face with them. We can compete with them in all the sports, but I am more afraid of us dropping from a seven to a five-team league."

However, one hiccup remains. The Frontier League bylaws state that a member school must give two years notice before leaving

the league.

"If the dominoes start falling fast, the league could pass a bylaw amendment to allow for movement for De Soto or whoever, which is something I think they will have to do," Gagnebin said. "Not much is happening now, but when it does it is going to happen quick. You better be ready to move with it and have a plan in place or you could be stuck on the outside."

Top 10 stories of 2016



Here are the Louisburg Sports Zone Top 10 Stories of the Year. In each brief explanation of the story, there will be a link to the full story of when the event actually happened. Thanks again for a successful 2016 and I am already looking forward to 2017.

10. LHS golf qualifies three for the state tournament



Hogan Welch (left), Ty Martin (middle) and T.J. Svoboda all earned a spot in the Class 4A state golf tournament in May.

Three Louisburg High School golfers put together a strong performance in less-than-ideal weather conditions during the Class 4A regional tournament in May.

Hogan Welch, T.J. Svoboda and Ty Martin all three earned qualifying scores to earn a spot in the Class 4A state tournament in the rain at Dub's Dread Golf Course. At the state tournament, Welch led the way as he shot an 84 to finish 34th overall in his second consecutive state tournament.

9. Tappan, Conklin win state debate crown



Carson Tappan (left) and Curran Conklin (right) pose for a picture with their state championship debate trophy with coach Brian Weilert.

After 11 rounds and 17 hours of debate over two days, Carson Tappan and Curran Conklin didn't have a lot more left to give.

But all that hard work paid off for the Louisburg High School duo.

During the Class 4A 2-speaker state debate tournament at Independence High School, Tappan and Conklin were awarded their first state championship after finishing with an 11-0 record.

They weren't the only Louisburg team to come home with some hardware.

Sophomores Isabelle Holtzen and Grayson Anderson found

themselves among the final four teams as well. Despite a close split-decision loss in the semifinals, Holtzen and Anderson finished third to win their first state trophy.

8. Three Wildcats win regional track titles, qualify 11 events for state



Chloe Renner (left), T.J. Dover (middle) and Isabelle Holtzen won regional titles in their respective events in May at the regional meet in Chanute.

Louisburg High School students Isabelle Holtzen, Chloe Renner and T.J. Dover were among several members of the Wildcat track teams to have big performances at the Class 4A regional meet in May at Chanute High School.

Holtzen won a regional crown in the pole vault, while Renner won the triple jump to lead the Lady Cats as they qualified for six events total. Louisburg sent all three relay teams that consisted of Kaitlyn Gaza, Mikayla Quinn, Megan Lemke, Reilly Alexander, Jordon Leach, Hanna Becker, Lauren Becker, Shaylor Whitham, Liz Hildreth and Holtzen. Sophie McMullen also earned a spot in the discus.

Dover captured a regional crown in the discus as he recorded a personal best throw of more than 150 feet. He was one of five

events to go to the state meet. Teammate Jarod Woodward also qualified in the shot put, while Chris Williams did the same in the 400 dash.

Brandon Cooper, Quinn Rigney, Ben Minster, along with Williams, helped the 4x100 relay team earn a spot, while Wyatt Reece, Ben Hupp, Tanner Belcher and Michael Minster also qualified in the 4x800 relay.

7. FFA wins three state titles, shines at national competition



Members of the LHS FFA chapter won three state titles in May and later traveled to nationals in October and brought home several honors.

After three Louisburg High School FFA teams won state titles in their respective career development events in May at the state competition, those same students performed well at the nationals.

Louisburg sent three teams to the 89th Annual National FFA

Convention in Indianapolis and all three were among the top in their respective Career Development Events (CDE). Each team received a gold emblem, while 11 of the 12 members who attended received individual gold emblems as well.

Paige Buffington, Wyatt Reece, Georgia Wilde, Justin Sievert, Hattie Harris, Hallie Hutsell, Faith Seuferling, Mariah Wrigley, Madelynn Yalowitz, Bryn O'Meara, Morgan Strumillo and Lexie Reece all came away with honors from nationals.

6. Cross country sends three to state, Moore captures medal



Freshman Trinity Moore became the first female runner in Louisburg history to capture a state cross country medal.

Louisburg High School freshman Trinity Moore didn't look like a first-year varsity runner at the Class 4A state cross country meet as she finished 19th overall with a time of 20 minutes and 54 seconds – just 10 seconds off her personal best time. That finish was good enough to earn a state medal and became the first female runner in Louisburg history to do so.

Moore joined juniors Wyatt Reece and Tim Smith as all three runners competed in the state meet in Wamego in October. Reece and Smith finished 48th and 68th, respectively, just a week after finishing in the top five at the regional meet.

5. Koechner, Keegan earn medals as Wildcat wrestling puts five to state



Louisburg's Mason Koechner was one of two medalists for the Wildcats at the Class 4A state wrestling tournament in February. Koechner finished third at 220 pounds and teammate Nathan Keegan was sixth at 120 pounds.

For the first time since 2011, a member of the Louisburg High School wrestling team left the Class 4A state tournament with a medal – in fact – two of them did.

Mason Koechner and Nathan Keegan finished in the top six of their respective weight classes at state meet in Salina. Koechner took third overall at 220 pounds, while Keegan came in sixth at 120 pounds.

Along with the two state medalists, the Wildcats also sent three other wrestlers to state. Anders Vance (285 pounds), Thad Hendrix (113) and Hunter Bindu (106) competed for

Louisburg as it qualified five for state for the second consecutive season.

4. Griffin signs with New Orleans Saints



Michael C. Hebert New Orleans Saints

Photo courtesy of the New Orleans Saints
Louisburg native, and Air Force Academy graduate, Garrett Griffin, was signed to the New Orleans Saints practice squad

in August.

In early June, Garrett Griffin received his diploma from the Air Force Academy and shook hands with the President of the United States.

That event alone is enough to top most people's list of accomplishments. Four days later, Griffin fulfilled a life-long dream.

Following his graduation from the Air Force, Griffin was signed by the New Orleans Saints and his dream of playing professional football became a reality. The Louisburg native competed in the Saints training camp and later earned a spot on the team's practice squad, where he currently resides.

3. Wildcat football rallies around coach, ends playoff drought



The Louisburg High School football team celebrates its

regional championship and its first playoff win in four years.

The season didn't get off to the start members of the Louisburg High School football team were hoping for. The Wildcats dealt with the departure of head coach Kyle Littrell before the season, but instead of letting it define their season, it made them stronger.

Louisburg rallied behind its former coach and the Wildcats won their first playoff game in four years after they defeated Independence in November to win a regional title. The Wildcats lost to eventual state champion Bishop Miege in the sectional round of the playoffs and ended their season with an 8-3 record.

2. Girls soccer team wins regional crown during inaugural season



The Louisburg girls soccer team celebrates its regional championship in the Wildcats' inaugural season.

As the final buzzer sounded, members of the Louisburg girls soccer team rushed to each other in the middle of the field at the Wildcat Sports Complex. It was a sense of euphoria.

The Wildcats had every reason to be excited.

Louisburg – a program that has been in existence for all of two months – won its first regional title in program history in May after it ousted Basehor-Linwood in a 3-1 victory during the regional championship game. The win put the Wildcats in the state quarterfinals, where their season came to an end with 3-1 loss to De Soto and finished up with a 14-4-1 record on season.

1. Boys soccer advances to state final four



The Louisburg High School boys soccer team made history this past season as the Wildcats earned their first state quarterfinal victory and a spot in the Class 4A final four.

The state quarterfinal round had been nothing but heartbreak for the Louisburg High School boys soccer team.

In their previous six appearances, the Wildcats have seen their season come to an end and those players were left only to dream what playing in the state final four would be like.

There was no imagining this time around.

Louisburg got a goal in the 75th minute from senior Herman Knipp to give the Wildcats a 1-0 victory over Trinity Academy

in the state quarterfinals in Louisburg. The Wildcats moved on to the Class 4A state final four in Topeka in November, where they took fourth – the best finish in program history.

The Wildcats (14-6-2) finished their season with losses to eventual state champion Bishop Miege and Andover Central, but doubled their number of wins from the prior year.

Moore makes Louisburg history with state medal



Louisburg freshman Trinity Moore rounds a turn during the Kansas Class 4A State Cross Country Championships on Saturday at the Wamego Country Club. Moore earned a state medal with a 19th place finish.

WAMEGO – A day before the biggest race in her life, Trinity Moore limped her way from practice with a foot injury.

It wasn't anything serious, but it was the last thing Moore needed to deal with on the brink of the Kansas Class 4A State Cross Country Championships. The pain was still there before the race started Saturday at the Wamego Country Club, but she wasn't going to let it stop her.

In fact, it made her push even harder.

The Louisburg High School freshman didn't look like a first-year varsity runner as she finished 19th overall with a time of 20 minutes and 54 seconds – just 10 seconds off her personal best time. That finish was good enough to earn a state medal.

"I just wanted to come down here and try my hardest and see what the competition was like," Moore said. "I really didn't know what to expect since this is my first year. Being able to medal my first year is really exciting and I hope next year I get a chance to do even better."

This season was a special one for Moore, who set the school record and led the Lady Cat runners all season as a freshman. She was also the first female runner to medal in Louisburg history and the first runner to medal since Jason Rose took fifth in 2006.



Trinity Moore leads a pack of runners toward the finish line Saturday at the Class 4A state cross country meet.

"Trinity did an awesome job," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "For a freshman, getting a school record earlier in the year, coming to state and medaling was just icing on the cake. She just had a fantastic season."

"She definitely exceeded my expectations. She almost ran her

best of the season here and that is outstanding. She is a competitor. She runs hard, works hard and ran the best race she could. She started off steady, moved through the pack and then when she had to she made moves on all the downhills and put herself in a better and better position."

Wamego's course featured several different obstacles for Moore, but maybe the biggest were the numerous hills she had to make her way through.

"It was probably the hardest course in terms of competition and try to pass people up the hills," Moore said. "Ottawa's course was pretty hard earlier in the year, but this might have been a little tougher. The toughest part was running up the hill and trying to beat people as I was running up them."



Louisburg junior Wyatt Reece runs with a large group of runners downhill Saturday in Wamego.

Louisburg juniors Wyatt Reece and Tim Smith also had goals of picking up a medal at state, but both fell victims to what was a very fast start to the Class 4A boys race. Wyatt finished 48th in 18:32 and Smith was 68th in 19:07.

For Wyatt, it was a big improvement from his state meet appearance a year ago. Last season, he finished 71st overall at the Wamego course.

“The boys race was different,” coach Reece said. “It went out very fast and a lot of boys paid for it. Wyatt was in a great position to start with, but as the race played out, his legs just went away from him and it just wasn’t there. He wanted it really bad. He went for it and it just didn’t work out. That is the nature of the beast.

“Tim did a great job with this being his first time here. He moved through the pack a little bit there at the end. I was pleased with those two and how they ran this year. They used each other well and hopefully we can find a few other kids to help them out next year.”



Junior Tim Smith (right) picks up the pace for final leg of the race at the Wamego Country Club.

As for Moore, she is excited for what the future holds as she looks to improve on what was an historic freshman season.

"This is going to give me a lot of motivation going into next year," Moore said. "I am going to do so much better knowing the competition and the courses so well. I am really looking forward to it."

Three Wildcats run their way

to state meet



Louisburg junior Wyatt Reece finishes the last part of the course with some encouragement from his coach John Reece on Saturday at the Class 4A regional meet in Burlington. Reece, along with teammates Tim Smith and Trinity Moore, qualified for the Class 4A state meet with top 10 finishes.

BURLINGTON – Wyatt Reece, Tim Smith and Trinity Moore weaved through the winding course Saturday at the Class 4A regional meet.

With every turn on the John Redmond reservoir path, the three Louisburg runners came that much closer to their goal. All they wanted was an opportunity to run one more race.

They got that chance.

Reece, Smith and Moore all qualified for the Class 4A state cross country meet after they finished in the top 10 individually in Saturday's race at Burlington. It is also the second straight season the Wildcats will have a runner represent them at state as Reece went a season ago.

"I am just thrilled right now," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "I was told that we got 200 percent better since we have three going to state this year, so that is definitely a plus. Wyatt and Tim 'raced' today. That is what we talked about is that they have to 'race' to get in and they both went out there and ran a great one. They both ran close to personal

records and it paid off for them.

"Trinity ran well and this is huge for her. She was hurt for two weeks, then came back and ran 11th at league and finished in the top 10 here, which is just outstanding."

Wyatt ensured his second trip to state as he was able to stay near the front for much of the race and eventually crossed the finish line in fifth-place in 17 minutes and 7 seconds, which was close to a personal record.

"It is always a really big deal to go to state and that is always the goal," Wyatt said. "It is a big accomplishment and I am lucky to be able to do it two years in a row. It is really nice to have Tim there to run with me because we train together during the season, so it was nice to have someone there to keep training with."



Junior Tim Smith distances himself from an Iola runner Saturday in Burlington. Smith finished seventh at the regional meet.

Smith also ran close to the front as he was able to finish in seventh with a time of 17:16. He started out the first mile in 13th place, before eventually working his way up into the top 10.

"It feels really good because we have been working all summer for it," Smith said. "Just the fact that we planned for this, and we actually did it, means a lot. I am so excited to go state. It is all that I have wanted and hope that we can do well out there."

As for Moore, she competed in a tough girls field that featured one of the top runners in the nation in Girard's

Callie Logue. That didn't stop Moore from recording one of her best times of the season as she came in eighth in 20:44.

"It is really fun because I was able to work hard enough to be able to do this and I was just happy to run with everyone else," Moore said. "It was fun to be able to run as a team and I am glad that I get to go to state."

"I think I ran a pretty good race today. I think I ran a little too fast at the beginning, but I found myself and I was able to pass a lot of girls so I think I did really well."

Louisburg was hoping to get one of the top three spots in the team standings and qualify the whole team for state, but came up short as it finished fifth with 122 points. Girard won the meet with 61 points, while Fort Scott (62) and Frontenac (74) took second and third, respectively.



Freshman Trinity Moore leads a pack of runners around a curve Saturday in Burlington. Moore finished eighth overall in the girls race.

Logue won the individual crown with a time of 17:51, nearly two minutes ahead of the second-place finisher.

"The girls field was incredible," coach Reece said. "I knew it would be close to try and get in as a team, but there were so many girls that broke up all the ones in the back. The 12th place finish was the final qualifier and it just showed you how tough of a race it was."

Junior Isabelle Holtzen ran a personal best time of 22:03 to come in 27th overall, while sophomore Kaitlyn Lewer (22:09) and senior Madelynn Yalowitz (22:16) finished 33rd and 34th,

respectively.

Freshman Emily Williams was 48th in 23:22 and sophomore Alex Miller was right behind her in 49th in 23:29. Junior Reilly Alexander rounded out the Louisburg girls team in 55th in 23:51.

Girard won the boys team title with 57 points, while Fort Scott (71) and Iola (76) took second and third to also qualify for state. Fort Scott's Devin Brooks took first individually in 16:31.

As for what the three Wildcats can expect for Saturday's Class 4A state meet in Wamego, Wyatt will be able to guide both Smith and Moore on what to prepare for.

"Wamego's course has been labeled as one of the toughest in the state," Wyatt said. "I love going out there and running because you are at state, and that is a big deal, but it takes a lot of work to get there and you have to work hard when you get there."

Four Wildcat runners earn honors at league meet



Louisburg junior Wyatt Reece ran a personal-best time of 17

minutes and 8 seconds to take third at the Frontier League Championships on Thursday at the Baldwin City Golf Course. It was the second-fastest time in school history.

BALDWIN CITY – One by one, Wyatt Reece passed every runner in the field Thursday at the Baldwin City Golf Course.

Well, all but two that is.

Reece ran a season best time of 17 minutes and 8 seconds and picked the right moment to do it. The Louisburg junior finished third at the Frontier League Championships, and in the process, recorded the second-fastest time in school history.

His third place finish also earned him first team all-league honors

“I ran at Baldwin as a freshmen for league and I really like the course,” Reece said. “I like uphill running a lot more and it has that, but it is nothing that is super steep and you can relax a little bit. It is a fast course as it is, the weather was perfect and everything just seemed to click.”

The Baldwin course was also kind to a few other Louisburg runners as the Wildcats earned four all-league spots overall. Along with Reece, junior Tim Smith was named second team all-league after he finished eighth in 17:45.

Those honors continued onto the girls team as the Wildcats earned two all-league spots.

After missing two weeks with an injury, freshman Trinity Moore returned to lead the Louisburg girls in 11th overall in 21:23 and was good enough to get second team all-league. Sophomore Kaitlyn Lewer continued to show improvement as well as she was 21st in 22:03 and was named an all-league honorable mention.



Louisburg runners (from left) Tim Smith, Trinity Moore and Kaitlyn Lewer all earned Frontier League honors last Thursday in Baldwin. Smith finished eighth in the boys race, while Moore and Lewer finished 11th and 21st, respectively.

"It was great to have Trinity back in the mix," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "She makes our team even stronger. The girls all ran great and most ran their best times for the season. Our tough league only makes us better."

Senior Madelynn Yalowitz just missed all-league honors as she took 26th in 22:25. Junior Isabelle Holtzen was next on the team in 29th in 22:40 and sophomore Alex Miller ran a time of 23:15 to finish 35th.

Freshman Emily Williams (23:28) and junior Reilly Alexander (24:01) came in 38th and 44th, respectively. Sophomore Shaylor Whitham was 50th in 24:20.

Freshman Natalie George (58th), senior Lily Cook (60th), senior Mara Justesen (61st), senior Bryn O'Meara (62nd), senior Liz Hildreth (63rd), junior Lilly Mick (64th), freshman Piper Mills (67th), freshman Elizabeth Kratochvil (71st), senior Hailey

Crowder (72nd), junior Haley Earl (73rd), junior Janae Kuhlman (74th) and senior Grace Rolofson (75th) also competed for Louisburg.

As a team, the Louisburg girls took fifth with 123 points. Baldwin won the league title with 33 points and Eudora was second with 51. Eudora's Riley Hiebert won the individual league crown with a time of 19:20.

The Wildcat boys finished sixth in the team standings with 142 points and was the first time they had put together a varsity team all season. De Soto won the league title with 37 points and Spring Hill was second with 51. Spring Hill's Dylan Brenneman won the individual title in 16:09.

Senior Austin Raetzel was third on the Louisburg team as he took 51st overall in 20:15. Freshman Evan Murphy (66th), sophomore Bryce Kuhlman (67th), sophomore Jackson Staab (70th), freshman Keith Estle (74th), junior Garrett Mills (76th), sophomore Gareth Baus (83rd) and junior Parker Perentis (84th) rounded out the Wildcat team.

Louisburg will now compete in the race it has been waiting for all season. The Wildcats will travel to Burlington on Saturday for the Class 4A regional race.

The top three teams earn a spot in the state meet next week in Wamego, along with the top five individuals that aren't on a qualifying team. The girls race will begin at 10 a.m. and the boys will follow at approximately 10:30.

"We are super excited for regionals and we hope to be state bound with two boys and the girls team," coach Reece said. "I want them to leave it all on the course and end the season with their heads held high no matter the outcome. "This has to be the best group I have had the privilege to coach."

Reece medals third, Lewer leads girls at home meet



Louisburg sophomore Kaitlyn Lewer makes her way up a hill alongside a Fort Scott runner Thursday at Lewis-Young Park during the Louisburg Invitational. Lewer led the Louisburg girls with a 10th place finish.

Lewis-Young Park felt right at home to the Louisburg High School cross country team as it competed in the Louisburg Invitational on Thursday.

The Wildcats took to the course in the six-team meet, and after running all those familiar hills, turns and straightaways, they came away with several pieces of hardware to show for it.

In all, five varsity runners earned medals, including junior Wyatt Reece who led the boys squad in third place overall and sophomore Kaitlyn Lewer, who paced the girls team in 10th. The Louisburg girls also took third in the team standings.

"The kids always get pumped for our home meet," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "They either love our course or hate it. Most love it because they continue to show improvement even though their time does not show it after running at

Pittsburg's flat, fast and short course."

The meet was also an opportunity to honor Louisburg's nine senior runners. Seniors Lily Cook, Hailey Crowder, Kaitlyn Gaza, Liz Hildreth, Mara Justesen, Bryn O'Meara, Austin Raetzel, Grace Rolofson and Madelynn Yalowitz all ran on their home course for the final time.

"The senior group this year has been great," coach Reece said. "The ones that have given the program four years have made it better and the late comers only added to this. They have been positive influences and welcoming to incoming freshman as well as those who found our sport later in their school career. I wish I could have had all of them for four years, but I will take what I can get."

Wyatt Reece and teammate Tim Smith continue to run well for the Wildcats as both earned medals in the boys race. Wyatt's third place finish of 18 minutes and 3 seconds was his second-fastest time of the season.



Junior Wyatt Reece turns the corner and heads to the finish line Thursday during the Louisburg Invitational.

Smith ran a time of 19:04 to finish 11th overall, while Raetzel finished 29th overall in 21:14. Fort Scott won the boys team title with 40 points and Spring Hill was second with 42.

"Wyatt ran a great race," coach Reece said. "He was pumped to run our course and really attacked it. He knew he was not going to be challenging for first, but was ready to fight it out for second until Fort Scott jumped in, which was great to have them, and he turned to claiming third in the race which he did. Looking at past performances and what he is doing this year, he has made big gains in his racing and his times will soon show that."

Lewer picked a good time to run her best race of the season for the girls team. The Lady Cats had to run without their top runner, Trinity Moore, for a second straight week due to an injury, but Lewer stepped up to lead Louisburg in 10th with a season-best time of 22:47.

Teammates Isabelle Holtzen and Yalowitz also earned medals for the Louisburg girls team. Holtzen, a junior, took 12th in 23:09 and Yalowitz was 13th in 23:12.

Junior Reilly Alexander was next on the girls team in 22nd in 24:34. Sophomore Alex Miller (25:07), sophomore Shaylor Whitham (25:18) and freshman Emily Williams (25:18) came in 26th, 27th and 28th, respectively.



Senior Madelynn Yalowitz stays with a pack of runners Thursday. Yalowitz medaled 13th overall.

Louisburg was third in the team standing with 72 points and Fort Scott won the meet with 19 points. Spring Hill took second with 58.

"We are still improving as a group and we have a lot of work ahead of us," coach Reece said. "Kaitlyn ran a great race to lead the team. She improved on her best time this year, from the Pittsburg meet the week before, and did it on a tougher course. The future this year, and years to come, looks bright with the hard working girls we have."

In the junior varsity race, four Louisburg girls earned medals as Natalie George (fourth), Justesen (seventh), Hildreth (eighth) and Lilly Mick (10th) all finished in the top 10.

Now the Wildcats will venture into the postseason as they will travel to the Frontier League meet Thursday in Baldwin City. The following week, Louisburg will take part in the regional meet in Burlington.

As the season is coming to a close, the Louisburg coaches and runners are excited to see what transpires.

"Postseason is always nerve racking for the runners, Coach A (Arianne Seidl) and myself," coach Reece said. "We want them all to finish on a positive note and walk away from the season proud of their accomplishments. We hope that we have prepared them to peak for their last race. They are excited to compete and to reach their individual and team goals at the end of the season."

"As I said at the beginning of the year, it is going to be a fun ride and it has been. No matter the outcomes at league, regional and hopefully state, it has been a great year full of great performances and a step forward for the program."

Smith, Reece pace Wildcat runners at Pittsburg



Louisburg senior Austin Raetzel leads a pack of runners during a meet earlier this season. The Wildcat cross country team traveled to Pittsburg last Thursday and left with two top 10 finishes on the boys side.

PITTSBURG – The Louisburg High School cross country team ventured a little further south than normal to see some new competition.

The Wildcats took part in the Pittsburg Invitational on Thursday, and despite missing a key runner, fared well – especially on the boys side.

Juniors Tim Smith and Wyatt Reece each had top 10 finishes to earn medals for the fifth straight week and both runners ran a season-best time. Smith crossed the finish line in fifth in 17 minutes and 11 seconds and Reece came in eighth in 17:18.

Senior Austin Raetzel rounded out the Wildcat team in 60th in 20:43.

“The boys ran well as individuals since we have not put a varsity team together yet,” Louisburg coach John Reece said.

"Wyatt and Tim are still showing improvement and are poised to make a great run at qualifying for state."

As for the girls squad, the Lady Cats were without top runner Trinity Moore, who was out with an injury. Louisburg finished sixth in the team standings with 136 points. Fort Scott took first with 36 and Frontenac was second with 55 points.

"The girls ran well and not having a top runner causes us to add about 30-plus points to our team total," coach Reece said. "We are still training well and the future meets will be exciting."

Senior Madelynn Yalowitz led the Louisburg girls in 24th overall with a time of 21:50. Junior Isabelle Holtzen was right behind her in 28th in 22:06 and sophomore Kaitlyn Lewer took 33rd in 22:20.

Junior Reilly Alexander finished in 24:03 to take 48th and sophomore Shaylor Whitham was right behind her in 49th in 24:04. Freshmen Emily Williams (24:28) and Natalie George (25:05) came in 52nd and 60th, respectively.

In the junior varsity races, sophomore Alex Miller finished fifth overall in 23:51 to earn a medal, while senior Mara Justesen was 12th in 25:00. Bryn O'Meara (21st), Lilly Mick (23rd), Elizabeth Kratochvil (27th), Kaitlyn Gaza (32nd), Lily Cook (44th), Tomi Frederes (46th), Piper Mills (49th), Hailey Crowder (51st), Mariah Wrigley (57th), Weeraya Khongpatimakorn (59th) and Grace Rolofson (61st) also competed for the Lady Cats.

Gareth Baus had a strong race for the junior varsity boys as he took 14th in 20:26. Evan Murphy (38th), Jackson Staab (44th),

Keith Estle (47th), Garrett Rolofson (48th), Garrett Mills (49th) and Parker Perentis (67th) also ran for Louisburg.

Louisburg returns to action this Thursday when it competes in the Louisburg Invitational at Lewis-Young Park. The first race is set to begin at 3 p.m., which was moved up an hour due to weather concerns.

"We hope to tear it up at our home meet this week," coach Reece said.

Louisburg girls capture Prairie View meet crown



The Louisburg High School girls cross country team won the Ramsey Invitational on Thursday at Prairie View High School for the second straight season. Members of the team (from left) are Kaitlyn Lewer, Emily Williams, Madelynn Yalowitz, Alex Miller, Isabelle Holtzen, Trinity Moore and Reilly Alexander.

LA CYGNE – Just a year ago, the Louisburg High School girls cross country team made program history when it won its first ever team competition.

History repeated itself Thursday when Louisburg won the Ramsey Invitational for the second consecutive year at Prairie View High School. The Lady Cats scored 16 points and finished 33 points ahead of runner-up Blue Valley.

Louisburg had four runners finish in the top 10, but the entire team stepped up as a freshman ran her first varsity race and another runner moved up from junior varsity due to an injury. Freshman Emily Williams moved up to varsity after running well on the junior varsity level all season, while sophomore Alex Miller also moved up to varsity due to an injury to fellow sophomore Shaylor Whitham.

"It was awesome to finish first as a girls team again," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "We are definitely going for the three-peat next year.

"The young runners continue to step up when called upon as Emily and Alex did a great job. Emily has found a spot on the varsity squad even with Shaylor returning to the group for next week. It is great to see them working hard and putting the team first."

Individually, the Louisburg boys and girls teams shined. Freshman Trinity Moore won the girls race as she ran a season-best time of 21 minutes and 51 seconds to win by 46 seconds.

Moore has finished in the top 10 in all four races this season and has made a big impact in her first year as her time on Thursday is the second-fastest time in program history.

She is getting pushed by a pair of upperclassmen as junior Isabelle Holtzen (23:24) and senior Madelynn Yalowitz (23:25) finished fifth and sixth, respectively. Sophomore Kaitlyn Lewer also had a top 10 finish as she took ninth (24:40).

"Trinity is having a great first year so far," Reece said. "As she continues to gain experience she will only get better with the sport. The varsity girls push each other both in meets and

at practice. They are almost always running together and work together on pace days to really push each other."

Williams ran a time of 26 minutes to take 13th overall and junior Reilly Alexander was 17th in 26:47. Miller rounded out the varsity lineup in 21st in 27:52.

Juniors Wyatt Reece and Tim Smith continue to run well for the Louisburg boys. Reece finished runner-up, just nine seconds behind the leader with a season-best time of 18:24, while Smith came in third in 18:45.

Senior Austin Raetzel finished in 21st with a time of 21:22 to round out the Wildcat varsity runners.

"Wyatt and Tim ran well," coach Reece said. "Wyatt did most of the work during the race up front. He made a move with about 500 meters left and did what he needed to do to win the race but fell short. Wyatt has been 'racing' this year which has been great to see. For this being Tim's first year, he is doing fantastic as well."

In the junior varsity girls race, freshman Natalie George took second overall in 26:58, while seniors Mara Justesen and Bryn O'Meara also had top 10 finishes in sixth and eighth, respectively.

Lilly Mick (12th), Kaitlyn Gaza (17th), Elizabeth Kratochvil (19th), Hailey Crowder (22nd), Lily Cook (24th), Haley Earl (28th), Janae Kuhlman (38th) and Mariah Wrigley (39th) also competed for Louisburg.

Gareth Baus led the junior varsity boys in 11th overall, while Bryce Kuhlman came in 17th, Jackson Staab (21st), Evan Murphy (30th), Garrett Rolofson (40th), Parker Parentis (41st) and

Garrett Mills (42nd) also competed for Louisburg.

Louisburg returns to action Thursday when it travels to Pittsburg and the runners hope to see their times continue to go down.

"We get to go south this week and run against a few 4A schools that could be in our regional meet," coach Reece said. "It should be great weather and fast times and there may be some shuffling of Top 7 all-time performances."

LHS girls cross country finishes third at Wellsville



Junior Isabelle Holtzen (left) sprints past a Spring Hill runner near the finish line as she gets some encouragement from Louisburg head coach John Reece on Thursday in Wellsville. Holtzen and the Lady Cats finished third in the team standings.

WELLSVILLE – It was another meet and another slew of medals for the Louisburg cross country team Thursday.

The Wildcat runners competed at the Wellsville Invitational and members of both the boys and girls teams finished toward

the top of the pack. The Louisburg girls finished third in the team standings and three earned individual medals.

Louisburg also captured two individual medals on the boys side as it left Wellsville with plenty of hardware.

The Lady Cats finished with 70 points for their third place finish as Fort Scott won the meet with 45 points and Eudora was second with 53.

Louisburg got another good performance from freshman Trinity Moore as she had her third consecutive top 10 finish of the season as she came in fourth in 22 minute and 5 seconds to earn a medal.

Junior Isabelle Holtzen was just outside the top 10 as she took 11th in 23:20 and senior teammate Madelynn Yalowitz came in 18th in 23:37 as both garnered a medal.

Sophomores Shaylor Whitham (27th), Kaitlyn Lewer (31st), junior Reilly Alexander (41st) and senior Kaitlyn Gaza (47th) also competed for the Lady Cats.

"The competition was fierce for the girls," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "I knew Eudora was going to be strong, but I was surprised by Fort Scott. They have a great team this year. I felt like we had to earn the third place team medals, but it was not easy and a few places either direction could have totally changed the team outcomes. It is nice to see the girls continue to get individual medals at the meets. They are running strong."



Louisburg junior Wyatt Reece runs away from a pair of runners toward the finish line Thursday in Wellsville.

Wyatt Reece came through with one of his better races on the season as he finished fourth to lead the boys team in 18:31. The Wildcat junior passed two runners in the final 200 meters to leap into the top five.

"Wyatt raced well," coach Reece said. "He said he felt like he ran the turns well in the beginning which gave him a good position as the race played out. It would not be my plan for him to wait to run people down at the end but to put them away earlier in the race. He does have a great finish which looks like he saved something for the end, but it is just how he can finish even when tired. I am always telling the runners you can still run fast even when you are tired, and he can."

Fellow junior Tim Smith also came through with medal-winning performance as he came in ninth in 18:53. Senior Austin Raetzel also competed for the Wildcats and took 54th overall.

The Wellsville course provided a different change of pace from the week prior when the Wildcats ventured to hill-filled Eisenhower Road Course in Ottawa. The Wellsville course didn't have the hills, but featured a lot of twists and turns to keep the runners on their toes.

"Every course has its challenges," Reece said. "Wellsville is different than Ottawa but it has multiple tight turns which can be tricky and the minimal change in terrain means there is no time to relax on a down hill. But of course the temperature had to get back to its normal hotness, so that was different as well."

The Wildcats also experienced some success on the junior varsity level, especially on the girls side. Freshman Emily Williams won the JV girls race in 26:26, while sophomore Alex Miller and freshman Natalie George came in third and seventh, respectively.

Louisburg returns to action Thursday when it travels to the Prairie View Invitational. The meet is set to begin at 4 p.m.

For a photo gallery from the meet, make sure to [click here](#).

Smith, Moore lead LHS cross country at Ottawa



Louisburg junior Tim Smith passes Spring Hill's Trey Mathis to win the Ottawa triangular Thursday at the Eisenhower Road Course in Ottawa. Freshman Trinity Moore led the girls team as she finished second overall.

OTTAWA – The steep hills at the Eisenhower Road Course in Ottawa provided the toughest test of the season thus far for the Louisburg High School cross country team.

For some of the Wildcat runners, they took those hills head on Thursday and came away with some impressive performances from a few first-year runners. In a triangular with Ottawa and Spring Hill, Louisburg found itself in the front of the pack in both races.

Louisburg's Tim Smith surpassed Spring Hill's Trey Mathis in the final stretch as he won the boys' side in 19 minutes and 13 seconds. Smith's teammate, junior Wyatt Reece, also ran toward the front for most of the race and took fourth in 19:54.

Smith competed in his first-ever cross country race and it was a certainly a memorable one for the Wildcat junior.

"Tim ran a great race on Thursday," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "He, Wyatt and a Spring Hill runner set the tone for the race and Tim had it on the last hill to pull into the lead and stay there."

The Louisburg girls also had a big day as they finished with nine medals and got a good performance from a first-year runner of their own. Freshman Trinity Moore had her second-straight top 10 performance as she took second place in 23:26.

Moore's teammate, junior Isabelle Holtzen, was next to cross the finish line in 24:50 as she came in sixth. Senior Madelynn Yalowitz (25:12) and sophomore Kaitlyn Lewer (26:20) took eighth and 10th, respectively.

The top 20 runners in each race earned medals.

"The girls team continues to impress Coach A (Arianne Seidl)

and I," coach Reece said. "Team scores were not kept but the girls won the meet by three points. The girls continue to work hard together both in practice and meets. Our number six through 10 runners on the squad continue to improve and are making the inner-squad competition fierce. This is going to be a fun season."

Louisburg's girls squad wasn't done earning hardware as six more runners garnered medals.

Sophomore Shaylor Whitham finished 12th overall in 26:40 and junior Reilly Alexander came in 15th in 27:31. Freshman Natalie George (28:51), freshman Emily Williams (29:06), senior Mara Justesen (29:08) and junior Lilly Mick (29:16) came in 16th, 17th, 18th and 20th, respectively.

Seniors Lily Cook (21st), Kaitlyn Gaza (23rd), Bryn O'Meara (24th), junior Tomi Frederes (26th), freshman Elizabeth Kratochvil (27th), sophomore Alex Miller (28th), senior Hailey Crowder (29th) and sophomore Weeraya Khongpatimakorn (30th) also competed for the Wildcats.



Louisburg freshman

Trinity Moore leads a pack of runners up a hill Thursday in Ottawa.

Freshman Evan Murphy (25:47) and sophomore Gareth Baus (26:29) finished just out of medal contention as they took 23rd and 24th, respectively. Sophomore Bryce Kuhlman (26th), freshman Garrett Rolofson, junior Garrett Mills (28th), sophomore Jackson Staab (29th), freshman Keith Estle (30th) and junior Parker Perentis (31st) also ran for Louisburg.

The Wildcats return to action Thursday when they compete at the Wellsville Invitational. The meet is set to begin at 4 p.m.

To view a photo gallery from the meet, make sure to click [here](#).