Paola AD proposes bill to help classification issue

Last October, Paola activities director Jeff Hines went to a Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) regional meeting to get updates on classification issues.

Six months later, Hines found himself in Topeka, in front of the Kansas Senate Education Committee to talk about a bill that could change the way schools are classified.

On Thursday, Hines sat in front of the committee to discuss Senate Bill 464 – a bill that he proposed with guidance of Sen. Caryn Tyson.

Statute 72-130 establishes specific guidelines pertaining to the organizational structure and functions of KSHSAA. Senate Bill 464 would change one part of the statute and strike the line which allows schools to be classified only by student enrollment.

“The total number of students in schools is a great starting point for classifying them,” Hines said. “It makes sense that the largest schools should play the largest schools and the smallest schools should play the smallest schools, but there are other things that need to be considered.”

For several months, KSHSAA has had a classification committee discuss different ways to have a competitive balance with its member schools. They came up with ideas of reducing the number of classifications or changing the number of schools in a

division.

“There were no other factors being considered and that bothered me,” Hines said, “All that would do was reshuffle the schools just a little bit but we would have the same problem.”

The problem for the committee was its hands were tied thanks to the wording in Statute 72-130 that specifically states schools can only be classified by enrollment numbers and nothing else.

So Hines went to work and helped create Senate Bill 464, which does not give a specific solution to the problem, but rather would take wording out of the statute to allow KSHSAA to figure out how to classify schools on its own.

Hines gave a 15 minute testimony in front of the committee and then answered questions from the committee members for more than 30 minutes afterward. Before the hearing, Hines received support from every member in the Frontier League, Pioneer League and all but two schools in the Kaw Valley League, as those two didn’t respond before the hearing.

Following Hines’ testimony, Sen. Vicki Schmidt, R-Topeka, had concerns as to why KSHSAA did not come in front of the committee itself to ask for changes.

Hines informed the committee that it would be redundant for KSHSAA to endorse the plan, because if approved, member schools would still have to vote on it. He believes Bill 464 would let KSHSAA come up with a system and let schools improve it, instead of the legislature.

“KSHSAA wants to be neutral because this proposal would affect different schools in different ways,” Hines said. “It could be very beneficial to some schools and others may not like it because they might have to move up a class. So, why should KSHSAA have to pick sides in it and pit member against member? It doesn’t have to be that way in my opinion.

“Yes, a school that has to move up a classification might not like it, but is it the best thing overall for the association? They can’t look themselves in the mirror and say ‘No, this isn’t the right thing to do?’

A major problem for some member schools in KSHSAA is they do not believe it is competitively equal the way it is currently structured.

“I am not a believer in participation medals,” Hines said. “If they are kindergartners, sure, but when you start playing, part of being successful later in life is learning how to compete. We all competed for a job when you have gone in for an interview and that is good. You need to have that skillset and I am not saying that we need to give more trophies out and give everyone a shot, but I just want a system in place that is equitable for all so that some don’t have an unfair advantage at the expense of the rest and I think that is what is happening.”

One of the problems is the lack of balance between championships won between public and private high schools. Hines did research and presented numbers at the hearing at the number of state championships won between private and public schools from 2004 to 2014.

Here is what he found.

- Private schools make up slightly less than 8 percent of the KSHSAA membership.
- Private schools have won slightly less than 32 percent of the state championships.
- Based on membership percentage, private schools should only win approximately 8 percent of the titles, not nearly 32 percent.
- Private schools are winning four times more state titles than should be expected based on their memberships.
- Private schools are nine times more likely to win five

or more state titles than their public school peers.

“In that period of time, I looked for who has won five or more state titles,” Hines said. “That is a difficult feat. You look at Paola’s history and we have won like seven and Louisburg has won three in 100-plus years. During those 10 years, 37 percent of those private schools won five or more during that time and public schools had 4 percent win five or more. Private schools are nine times more likely to become a dynasty or a successful program with strong tradition. You tell me how we are all the same?”

Another problem they are facing is schools with a high percentage of low socioeconomic status (SCS) students, cannot compete against fellow schools in their own classification in many activities, including football.

“There is a whole bunch of schools in the Kansas City, Kansas school district that are 6A or 5A that have no business competing against those really hard schools,” Hines said. “They don’t have resources, they don’t have the students, there is no interest and they have all those things working against them and I feel bad for those kids. Who wants to trot out against some of those bigger schools and know you are going to get your ears boxed in? That is not fun. Moreover, it is not challenging for the kids those schools are playing against.”

Hines believes competition is important when it comes to the growth of the student athlete and it is beneficial for the school and its community.

“Not only what it does for grades, but for what it does for the human spirit,” Hines said.
“When I was the FFA advisor in Paola, we won 10 state championships in nine years and you could tell the interest by the students and the community went through the roof. You can say the same thing about Louisburg and what Jim Morgan does

with his FFA kids. People flock to success.

“Naturally, when they are there they feel better about themselves, they want to work harder in the classroom to stay eligible and kids that want to stay involved are going to be more successful in life. It is all about having the chance to be successful.”

During Hines’ testimony in front of the Senate Education Committee, not all of the legislatures seemed open to the idea. Molly Baumgardner, R-Louisburg, asked Hines if he would be willing to relinquish state funding if the legislature agrees to release oversight of how KSHSAA classifies schools.

“If we relinquished the funding behind it, (high school activities) would disappear,” Hines said at the hearing.

No action was taken following the hearing, but the committee chairman spent 15 minutes with him and Tyson to help them strategize on what to do next.

One option is to amend the bill to include more specifics that could include a multiplier or a separate division for private schools and a low SCS school de-multiplier.

Another option, Hines said, would be to have the classification committee draft a letter to the Senate Education Committee that states they would like to study these other factors as part of a proposal for revamping the classification system, but not until they feel the legislature is open to changing the law.

Whatever decision comes next, however, Hines wants it to be decided by multiple people within KSHSAA on how to proceed.

“I don’t feel comfortable making that change because I feel a committee needs to do the work,” Hines said. “I shouldn’t be doing it, nor should 11 legislators, you need more. We should let the classification committee work on it and hopefully we

can get some things accomplished.

“The only way to allow this to happen is to remove the barrier in place that exists due to the state statute.”

Top 10 stories of 2015

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 2015 and I am already looking forward to 2016.



Hogan Welch (left) and Wyatt Reece each qualified for state in their respective sports.

10. Welch and Reece qualify for state

LHS students Hogan Welch and Wyatt Reece each put together strong seasons in their respective sports.

In May, Welch qualified for the Class 4A state golf tournament after he shot an 85 at the Osawatomie Golf Course to become one of five individual qualifiers for state. It was the first time Welch had qualified for the state tournament and would shoot a 79 a week later in McPherson to finish 40th overall.

As for Reece, he qualified for the state cross country meet for the first time in his career in October. The Louisburg sophomore came in 13th overall and was also one of five individual qualifiers. A week later Reece traveled to Wamego to compete at the state meet and ran a 18:43 to come in 71st.



Louisburg's Jimmy Dolan (left) and Mya Diacono each suffered major head injuries from an accident just days apart. The Louisburg community rallied together to help the two families.

9. Accidents bring Louisburg community together

Jimmy Dolan and Mya Diacono live in the same community but were worlds apart from each other.

Jimmy, a junior at Louisburg High School, loves to wrestle, hang out with friends and live the life of a teenager.

It was a far cry from 9-year-old Mya who loves soccer, horses and spending time with her fourth-grade friends at Broadmoor Elementary. In a town of less than 5,000 people, the two had never met.

Two tragic accidents changed all of that.

On Jan. 12, Jimmy lost control of his vehicle while driving to school and suffered a major brain injury. Just 42 days later, Mya was involved in an automobile accident just outside the Louisburg city limits that left her with the same severe brain trauma.

That was when the Louisburg community came together to help the two families cope with a burden no family should have to bear. Since then, both Jimmy and Mya are on the road to recovery thanks to the help of a lot of people.



Louisburg Soccer Club president Karin Olson (second from left), Louisburg HIgh School junior Maddie McDaniel (middle) and fundraising organizer DIana Moore (right) receive the WIN for KC Sprint Teamwork Award on Feb. 13 in Kansas City, Mo.

8. Girls soccer raises funds to start program, wins award

A fundraising committee made a big push to make sure there was a girls soccer program at Louisburg High School.

The committee raised $39,000 in almost a year’s time to fund the program for three years. Thanks to all the hard work, the group was also recognized by the WIN for KC organization. The Lady Cats’ soccer season will kickoff in late March.



Louisburg graduates Kody Cook (left) and Garrett Griffin are each winding down their careers with their respective Division I football programs.

7. Griffin, Cook wrap up college careers

Louisburg High School graduates Kody Cook and Garrett Griffin have lived the lives a lot of football fans could only hope for.

Both are wrapping up their Division I collegiate football careers and are doing it with a lot of success. Cook is living his dream with the Kansas State football team as he has made contributions at both the wide receiver and quarterback positions to help the Wildcats to the Liberty Bowl.

Griffin, on the other hand, battled through an injury-plagued senior season to help Air Force reach the Armed Forces Bowl and made several big plays at the tight end spot.



Louisburg quarterback Austin Terry was one of several players responsible for the Wildcats' turnaround this season.

6. Wildcat football has big turnaround

After finishing with just three wins a year ago, the Louisburg High School football team put together a strong season in 2015 as they finished with seven wins.

Those seven victories put the Wildcats within a game of Paola for the Frontier League title and Louisburg also earned a spot in the regional playoffs before falling to Basehor-Linwood in a tight contest.



The Louisburg High School soccer team captured its first regional crown since 2010 after a 2-0 win over Coffeyville.

5. Louisburg soccer wins regional crown

Through much of the regular season, the Louisburg High School soccer team didn’t have much to cheer about.

The Wildcats had just four wins during the regular season, but they seemed to find the right chemistry in the postseason. Louisburg rattled off three consecutive wins in the postseason, including a 2-0 victory over Coffeyville-Field Kindley in the regional championship.

It was the Wildcats’ first regional title since 2010 and their sixth in the last 10 years.



Anders Vance won a regional title in the 285-pound weight class last February as he was one of five Wildcats to earn state bids.

4. Louisburg wrestling qualifies five for state

The Louisburg wrestling team hadn’t been a part of the state tournament since 2012 – that is before last season.

The Wildcats put together a breakout season as they qualified five for the state tournament, while Anders Vance won the regional crown at 285 pounds. Brenton Wrigley (195 pounds), Mason Koechner (220), Nathan Keegan (113) and Ryan Adams (138) all made the trip to Salina for the Class 4A state tourney.



Jeff Lohse (left) and Ben York each stepped away from their head coaching posts in 2015.

3. Long-time coaches resign from post

Jeff Lohse and Ben York had been fixtures in their respective sports for Louisburg High School, but both decided to call it quits this year.

Lohse, who spent the last 17 years as the head coach for the LHS baseball team, stepped down from his spot in May, citing personal reasons. Lohse led the Wildcats to two state tournament appearances.

York, who was the head coach when the boys soccer program started, also cited personal reasons for leaving the Wildcat soccer program after 13 years. York helped the Wildcats to six regional titles in the last 10 years.



Connor McMullen won the state title in the discus back in May and became Louisburg's first track state champion since 2011.

2. McMullen wins state title in discus, Dennis medals in hurdles

Louisburg High School senior Connor McMullen finally got the state title in the discus he had been searching for.

McMullen recorded a throw of 173 feet, 1 inch on his final attempt to win the Class 4A state discus title in Wichita back in May. He would also medal eighth in the javelin with a toss of 164-02.

Fellow senior Sean Dennis also garnered a state medal as he took fourth in the 110-meter hurdles. The boys and girls team combined sent a total of 11 athletes to the state meet.



The Louisburg High School volleyball team finished third overall in 2015 after making it to state for the fifth time in the last six seasons.

1. Lady Cat volleyball takes third at state

The Louisburg High School volleyball team has made a habit of making the trip to Salina in recent years and this season was no exception.

This time, however, the Lady Cats finished with a victory.

After ending their season with a runner-up performance and two fourth-place finishes at state the last three years, Louisburg won its final match of the season in 2015 as it defeated Tonganoxie in the third-place match.

The Lady Cats qualified for the state tournament for the fifth time in the last six years.

Cross country team looks back on year



Members of the LHS boys cross country team (from left) Jarod Rose, Austin Raetzel, Spencer Rogers, Zach Minor, Eddie Murphy, Devyn Small, Wyatt Reece and assistant coach Arianne Seidl listen to head coach John Reece talk about the season during the team's banquet on Nov. 11.

The Louisburg High School cross country team came together one last time in 2015 to reminisce about a season that left a lot of lasting memories during the team's end of the season banquet on Nov. 11.

Whether it was the first girls team title in the program's history, or sophomore Wyatt Reece punching his ticket to the state cross country meet, the 2015 season had a lot of positives for this group of Wildcat runners.

"I think this was probably the tightest knit group of runners I have ever had here," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "They all worked extremely hard to improve their times and they truly cared about each other.

“We have had years where kids would just come out to get in shape for other sports, and that is great too, but all of these runners cared about the cross country team by the end of the season. That is so great to see and we have a good future ahead.”

During the banquet, coach Reece also announced some changes on the Wildcats’ list of top seven runners. Wyatt Reece cracked the list this season as he recorded the seventh-fastest time in program history with a time of 17 minutes and 59 seconds.

“I thought Wyatt had a great season,” coach Reece said. “As his coach and his father, I am so proud to see him crack this list. I know he is going to be even better these next two seasons so I am excited to see how far he can go.”

Also a big change this season was the girls team switching over from 4- to 5-kilometer races. Although the change wasn’t required until postseason competition, the Lady Cats competed on the 5K level in every race this season.

With that, Reece created a new record board for the girls 5K.

Sophomore Isabelle Holtzen is now the school’s record-holder in the 5K with a time of 21:43. Junior Madelynn Yalowitz is second in 22:37 and sophomore Savannah Reinhart was a second behind her in third in 22:38.

Junior Liz Hildreth (23:30), junior Kaitlyn Gaza (23:40), freshman Alex Miller (24:56) and senior Abby Bergman (25:27) rounded out the top seven spots on the list.

“I thought all these girls did a great job with the change and ran hard all year long,” coach Reece said. “We had some good times in there and hopefully with age we can get even better. These are a talented group of girls and they all improved throughout the year. I am excited to see what we can do as a team next year.”

To round everything out, coach Reece recognized his senior group that included Devyn Small, Zach Minor, Eddie Murphy, Michael Shaner and Spencer Rogers on the boys side, along with Abby Bergman, Cierra Rose, Maddie McDaniel and manager Katie Reece on the girls side.

“These seniors have all been great for our program and each of these runners have come a long way and have improved every year,” coach Reece said. “They were a great senior class to have and they will definitely be missed. They brought a lot to our team.”

Reece gets state cross country experience



Louisburg High School sophomore Wyatt Reece (right) competed in his first state cross country meet last Saturday in Wamego. Reece was 71st in 18:43 and learned a lot from his first meet.

WAMEGO – Before Wyatt Reece stepped up to the starting line, he was calm and collected for his first state cross country race.

Once he got to the line, everything seemed to change.

Nerves started to creep in as he wondered how it was all going to turn out. Once the gun went off, however, Reece put those aside and took off on the Wamego Country Club course.

When it was all said and done, Reece finished 71st overall out of 107 runners on Saturday with a time of 18 minutes and 43 seconds at the Class 4A state meet. It was a good first experience at state for the Louisburg High School sophomore.

“After the gun went off it was just another meet,” Wyatt said. “There were no nerves, just me, the course and my competitors. My race was ok, the first mile was very fast, probably the fastest of the year.

“The course is very difficult, there is no flats just ups and downs. The hardest part is all the sharp turns and the gradual up hills, one of the easiest hills for me were the steepest ones.”

He got good reviews from Louisburg coach John Reece, who also happens to be Wyatt’s father.

“It was awesome to watch him line up and compete at state,” coach Reece said. “It brought back memories of old when I ran at state. He ran a good race for the first time on a hard course. He was breaking down his race on the way home on where he felt he could have improved position or pushed harder. He is very critical of his races and processes through them.”

Now that his race is complete, Wyatt is looking forward to what is ahead – whether it is in cross country or the upcoming track season.

“Of course I give all the glory to God and hope that he will keep me moving forward through next year,” Wyatt said. “I want to go back to state next year and continue my high school running career at the high level it was this year.”

Coach Reece is a little anxious as well to see what his son can in his final two years of high school along with the rest of his team.

“He will take his experience from state and use it next year,” coach Reece said. “He is looking forward to track season and wants to qualify individually in an event as well as getting the 4×800 team back to state track.

“The cross country boys and girls teams had a great season and made great gains. The future could be very bright for our team.”

The Frontier League was also represented well as Spring Hill junior finished second in the individual race with a time of 16:18. Baldwin won the state championship with 47 points and De Soto was runner-up with 79 points.

On the girls’ side, Baldwin’s Addie Dick was fifth in 19:40 and the Bulldogs also won the state championship with 45 points.

Reece earns state cross country bid



Louisburg High School sophomore Wyatt Reece qualified for the state cross country meet Saturday when he finished 13th

overall at the Class 4A regional meet in Garnett. Reece will run at the state meet this Saturday in Wamego.

GARNETT – When Wyatt Reece opened the cross country season in early September, he did so at the Garnett Golf Course.

His result left him frustrated and a little disappointed.

So when Reece and the rest of the Louisburg High School team made their way back to Garnett on Saturday for the Class 4A regional race, the Wildcat sophomore wasn't sure what to expect.

Needless to say, his mood was a lot better once it was all over.

Reece qualified for the state meet as he finished 13th overall in the regional race with a time in 18 minutes and 16 seconds. The finish was good enough to become the fourth individual qualifier for state.

The top three teams qualify for the state meet in Wamego along with the top five other individuals not from those teams.

Happy was one way to describe Reece after the finish, but nothing matched the mood of his coach – and dad – John Reece.

"Honestly I was excited, but my dad was more excited," Wyatt said. "I came into this year not knowing how it would end up, but about half way through the year that idea started to change. After my run at Wellsville everything started to line up. My time kept dropping or was consistent and all my races felt good."

Wyatt put in a lot of work in practice with his coach, but also put in some extra time with his dad in order to be as

prepared as possible.

“Wyatt qualifying for state is unbelievable,” coach Reece said. “As a coach, I saw the potential early in the season and it was a matter of developing it. As a dad, I was there for moral support and our long runs on Sundays were spent talking about races, strategies and how proud I was of what he was accomplishing.”

The Louisburg sophomore put together a strong race from the start, stayed with the pack of the top 15 runners and saved his best for last.

“The race started off fast, almost too fast,” Wyatt said. “I came in at the mile around 14th and just stayed with the group I was with till about the two-and-a-half-mile mark. The end of a race is like my bread and butter. I can just let things go and run hard which I did. The finish is uphill for about 150 meters. There was some runners up ahead of me and I went for them.”

Wyatt was joined by two other runners on the Wildcat team as seniors Devyn Small and Eddie Murphy ran their final race for the Wildcats. Small came in 50th in 20:10 and Murphy was 74th in 22:02.

“They competed very well and ended their season with a positive experience,” coach Reece said. “I could not have asked for anything more and they did a great job for four years.”

Lousiburg’s girls squad suffered a little heartbreak during their race as the Lady Cats’ top runner, Isabelle Holtzen, stumbled and fell about a mile into the race. Holtzen was in contention to take one of those individual spots for state, but wasn’t able to recover in time.

The Louisburg sophomore did run hard at the end and finished

the race in 35th place in 23:38.

Junior Madelynn Yalowitz led the Lady Cats in 29th overall with a time of 23:01. Fellow juniors Kaitlyn Gaza (24:15) and Liz Hildreth (24:26) came in 44th and 49th, respectively.

Freshman Alex Miller (55th), sophomore Lilly Mick (60th) and junior Mara Justesen (64th) rounded out the Lady Cat lineup. As a team, the Lady Cats came in seventh overall with 183 points.

“The girls team continued their strong season,” coach Reece said. “They all ran well to end the season and have definitely set the bar higher for next year. Isabelle did go down at about 1.3 miles and walked a bit then got going again to finish strong for the team even though she was not where she wanted to be. The girls race was very strong with individual runners.”

The season does continue for Wyatt as he prepares to run at the Class 4A state meet at 1:45 p.m. on Saturday at the Wamego Golf Course and he is looking forward to the challenge.

“Saturday at Wamego will be hard,” Wyatt said. “The course is tough, although I’ve never ran it before, but I’ve seen it. It’s my first time at state and I’m not looking to run my best time. During state track my dad told me ‘The first time at state you’re there for the experience, the second time for the medal, the third time for the podium.’ Am I looking for a good run? Of course, but am I looking to get a personal record? No.”

Holtzen, Reece run way to league honors



Isabelle Holtzen sprints toward the finish line during the Frontier League meet Thursday at Lewis-Young Park. Holtzen finished 15th overall to earn a league medal and honorable mention all-league honors.

Louisburg High School sophomores Isabelle Holtzen and Wyatt Reece picked a great time to run one of the best races of their short varsity careers.

During the Frontier League cross country meet Thursday, Holtzen and Reece ran with the league's best and picked up some honors in the process. The Wildcat duo each earned a top-20 finish, and with that, both were recognized with honorable mention all-league honors.

For the second week in a row, the Wildcats had the opportunity to run on their home course at Lewis-Young Park and Holtzen and Reece took advantage.

Holtzen came up big as she recorded a personal best time of 21 minutes and 43 seconds to finish 15th overall and secure the last medal spot. She sprinted with Spring Hill's Allison Kosberg to the finish line for 14th place, but Kosberg won by .01 seconds.

“Isabelle ran great,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “I have always said if you go out and PR (personal record) good things happen and they did for her. She made moves when needed and her and the Spring Hill girl dueled it out to the end which got both of them medals.”

Wyatt Reece ran just short of his personal best time in the boys’ race, but he still ran an 18:03 to come in 19th overall and get all-league honors.



Wyatt Reece earned honorable mention all-Frontier League honors following the league race Thursday at Lewis-Young Park.

“Wyatt turned in a great race as well,” coach Reece said. “He is continuing to improve his racing not only in time but in competitiveness. He again made some big moves in the last 1,200 meters to put himself in 19th place. He has put in the time, like the rest of his teammates both boys and girls, to give himself the opportunity to do something special at the end of the season.”

In the team standings, the Louisburg girls came in sixth in what it is a very competitive Frontier League with 161 points. Baldwin won the league crown with 19 points and De Soto was second with 72.

On the boys' side, the Wildcats finished seventh with 191 points. Baldwin completed the sweep to win the league title with 30 points and De Soto was second with 51.

"Our kids always work hard and embrace the quality of our league," coach Reece said. "I think this is true in all sports. They ran well and improved their times from the week before which is what a coach likes to see."

In the girls' race, sophomore Savannah Reinhart was second on the Louisburg team in 30th overall with a time of 23:00 and teammate Madelynn Yalowitz was 33rd in 23:10. Juniors Liz Hildreth (24:24) and Kaitlyn Gaza (24:29) came in 47th and 48th, respectively.

Seniors Abby Bergman (25:27) and Maddie McDaniel (25:32) took 57th and 58th and freshman Alex Miller (25:38) was 60th.

Lilly Mick (61st), Mara Justesen (62nd), Lexie Reece (63rd), Bryn O'Meara (70th), Lily Cook (72nd), Cierra Rose (74th), Tomi Frederes (75th), Alexa Goodspeed (76th), Hailey Crowder (77th), Grace Rolofson (79th) and Ryan Caldwell (80th) also ran for the Lady Cats.

Senior Devyn Small was second on the Wildcat boys' squad as he came in 49th overall in 19:43. Junior Austin Raetzel was 66th in 20:27, senior Zach Minor was 68th in 20:31 and senior Eddie Murphy was 73rd 20:46.

Jarod Rose (74th), Bryce Kuhlman (81st), Spencer Rogers (91st),

Kennedy Unthank (94th) and Michael Shaner (96th) rounded out the Louisburg lineup.

The Wildcats will now prepare for their final meet of the season Saturday. Louisburg will run in the regional meet in Garnett at the Garnett Golf Course – the same course where it opened its season. The first race is set to begin at 10:30 a.m.

Wildcats run strong at home meet



Louisburg cross country runners (from left) Alex Miller, Kaitlyn Gaza and Liz Hildreth get off to a good start during the Louisburg Invitational on Thursday at Lewis-Young Park. The Lady Cats finished second in the team standings with 37 points.

The Louisburg High School cross country team finally got the opportunity to run on its home course Thursday and it was a welcome sight for some.

However, just because it was at home, didn’t mean it was easy.

The Wildcats faced a lot of challenges on their trek through Lewis-Young Park and they came away with a lot to be excited about.

Louisburg's girls squad continued its strong season as the Lady Cats finished second in the team standings with 37 points and medaled five runners in the process. Spring Hill won the meet with 21 points.

The boys also ran against some strong competition. Sophomore Wyatt Reece and senior Devyn Small both picked up medals as they earned a finish in the top 15.

Sophomore Isabelle Holtzen and junior Madelynn Yalowitz stayed near the front of the pack to lead the Louisburg girls to a third and fourth place finish, respectively. Holtzen ran a time of 23 minutes and 1 second and Yalowitz finished in 23:07.

"Isabelle and Madelynn ran a fantastic race," coach John Reece said. "It was probably the most competitive race they have ran all year, trying to catch up to those two Spring Hill girls and that was really impressive to see. It shows me there is some definite possibilities for them for league and regionals if they are going to work that hard.

"The girls behind them did a great job. I didn't think we could get Spring Hill team wise, but I wanted to give them a run and I was proud of their effort. For some of those girls, it was their first time on this course and it isn't an easy one."

Savannah Reinhart came in ninth (24:14), while Liz Hildreth (25:03) crossed the finish line in 12th and teammate Kaitlyn Gaza (25:59) was 14th to round out the Lady Cat medalists.

It was a difficult course for all the runners involved as they encountered a few different hills, including one near the finish line that tested a lot of the competitors.

“You have to sprint up it,” Holtzen said of the final climb. “I just wanted to get up it and give everything that I had. It is nice knowing the course because you know where the mile markers are, or if there is a hill coming up and I know that I have to power through it.

“Personally I think this is the best race that I have run all season. I think my mentality was better and it was the most I have ever pushed I was pretty proud of that. For the girls as whole, I think we did really well together.”

Senior Abby Bergman and freshman Alex Miller came up just short in their quest for a medal. Bergman was 16th in 26:36 and Miller was 17th in 26:37.

Wyatt Reece continues to hit his stride as the season is drawing to a close. The Louisburg sophomore came in fifth overall in 18:37. He moved up from seventh to fifth place in the final three-quarters of a mile and didn’t let up as he reached the finish.



Senior Zach Minor runs up the final hill on the course at Lewis-Young Park on Thursday during the Louisburg Invitational.

“I think I could have had a better time, but it was a good race,” Wyatt said. “We had a bunch of good people running, and the ones that were in front of me were way in front of me. If I would have started out with them I might have had a chance, but I started a little further back.

“I just pushed there at the last hill. I didn’t really save energy for the hill, but it is just about guts when you are heading to the finish. It is tough.”

Small also had one of his better finishes of the season as he picked up a medal after he ran a 20:15 to come in 14th overall.

“We keep improving and working hard,” coach Reece said. “Devyn has run second all year long, he is a senior, and did a great job. He ran hard at the finish and held off that final kid at the end and that is great to see him get a medal.”

Zach Minor (20:40), Austin Raetzel (20:56) and Eddie Murphy (21:17) came in 18th, 19th and 20th, respectively on their home course. Spencer Rogers rounded out the Wildcat team in 22nd in 24:15.

In the team, standings the Wildcats were third with 69 points. Ottawa won the meet with 28 points and Spring Hill was second with 33. Spring Hill’s Dylan Brenneman took the top individual spot in 16:47.

The junior varsity girls also had a big day for Louisburg as the Lady Cats medaled eight of the top 10 runners in the race.

Lilly Mick won the race in 27:23 to lead the way for Louisburg. Lily Cook ran a time of 27:51 to come in second and Mara Justesen was third in 28:25.

Bryn O’Meara (fourth), Tomi Frederes (fifth), Lexie Reece (sixth), Hailey Crowder (ninth) and Cierra Rose (10th) all earned medals for the Lady Cats as well.

In the junior varsity boys race, Bryce Kuhlman led Louisburg in 13th place in 23:39 and Gareth Baus was 16th. Michael Shaner and Kennedy Unthank rounded out the Wildcat lineup in 18th and 19th, respectively.

Louisburg will get a chance to run on its home course one last time Thursday when it hosts the Frontier League meet. Races are set to begin at 4 p.m.

Reece runs way into Wildcat history book



Louisburg sophomore Wyatt Reece sprints to the finish line during a meet earlier this season. Reece ran a personal best time of 17 minutes and 24 seconds, which was good enough for a 12th place finish, a medal and the seventh-fastest time in LHS cross country history.

PITTSBURG — As just a sophomore, Wyatt Reece has quietly become one of the top runners on the Louisburg High School cross country team.

There wasn’t anything quiet about his performance Thursday during the Pittsburg Invitational. Reece recorded one of the top times in program history as he ran a personal best 17 minutes and 24 seconds to finish 12th overall and earn a medal.

The Pittsburg course was just short of a full 5-kilometers, but Reece’s time was a loud statement that he is vying to become one of the top runners in the history of the program.

“Wyatt continues to compete well and improve his times,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “With an adjusted time due to the short course, he ran a personal best 17:59, which puts him at No. 7 all-time for our program.

“Pittsburg’s course is very flat, so it is challenging to keep pressing the pace because there are no down hills that could be used to relax a little on.”

As a team, Wyatt helped the Wildcats to a fifth-place team finish with 154 points. Pittsburg won the meet with 44 points and Paola was second with 65.

Senior Devyn Small was the next to finish for Louisburg as he took 32nd in 18:51. Teammate Austin Raetzel came in 44th in 19:21 and Eddie Murphy was 52nd in 19:31.

Zach Minor (19:56) and Jarod Rose (20:00) rounded out the Wildcat team in 60th and 61st place, respectively.

The Louisburg girls cross country team faced one of their toughest fields of the season as the Lady Cats competed against some of the top runners in the state.

Sophomore Isabelle Holtzen led Louisburg in 30th overall in 21:52. Junior Madelynn Yalowitz and sophomore Savannah Reinhart followed right behind her. Yalowitz was 31st in 21:53 and Reinhart came in 32nd with a time of 21:54.

Liz Hildreth was next for the Lady Cats in 44th in 22:45 and Kaitlyn Gaza was 46th in 22:55. Alex Miller rounded out the Louisburg lineup in 56th with a time of 24:29.

The Lady Cats were fifth in the team standings with 114 points. Frontenac won the title with 51 points and Fort Scott was second with 53.

“The girls ran well again,” coach Reece said. “It was a strong field of runners and a strong field of teams. I think we might have gone out a little fast at the start but that was OK. We learn every race so that we are better the next time.”

Lilly Mick recorded a top-10 finish to lead the Louisburg junior varsity girls in 10th with a time of 24:03. Teammate Mara Justesen came in 16th in 24:50, while Lily Cook (25:02) and Bryn O’Meara (25:11) finished 18th and 19th, respectively.

Lexie Reece (23rd), Hailey Crowder (38th), Cierra Rose (39th) and Grace Rolofson (47th) also competed for Louisburg.

Bryce Kuhlman led the Louisburg junior varsity boys in 16th in 20:29 and Gareth Baus was next on the team in 18th with a time of 20:37. Kennedy Unthank (22:27) and Michael Shaner (22:35) rounded out the Wildcat runners in 41st and 46th, respectively.

Louisburg returns to action this Thursday when it hosts the Louisburg Invitational at Lewis-Young Park. The races are set to begin at 4 p.m.

Lady Cat runners make history with team title



The Louisburg High School girls cross country team won its first team title in the program's history Thursday during the Ramsey Invitational at Prairie View High School. Members of the team are (from left) Alex Miller, Liz Hildreth, Kaitlyn Gaza, Isabelle Holtzen, Madelynn Yalowitz, Abby Bergman and Savannah Reinhart.

LA CYGNE – As the Louisburg girls cross country team made its way across the finish line Thursday at the Ramsey Invitational, the Lady Cats had no idea they were making history.

For the first time in the existence of the program, the Lady Cats won a meet team title as they ran away from the competition at Prairie View High School. Louisburg won the Ramsey Invitational with 27 points, which was 40 points ahead of runner-up Blue Valley.

The Lady Cats had four runners finish in the top 10 and win individual medals. Varsity runners Madelynn Yalowitz, Isabelle Holtzen, Liz Hildreth, Kaitlyn Gaza, Savannah Reinhart, Alex Miller and Abby Bergman also left with team gold medals.

"We have had good finishes in the past, but we have never had

a group that has done that, which is just fantastic," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "It is very fun. You can't help but smile when those things happen. They are coming together like I hoped they could and would."

Louisburg also got some good news on the boys' side as sophomore Wyatt Reece finished in the top five. Wyatt ran a personal best 18 minutes and 53 seconds to finish fourth and help the boys to a fourth-place team finish.

"I thought I did pretty well," Reece said. "I was able to get a personal record by 30 seconds so that was really good. It got off to a fast start and I was able to just settle in and everything else seemed to go well.

"I ran a personal record here last year and this is a course where you can see people the whole time. You can see people in front of you, if you have a sharp turn you can see people behind you, so it gives you a good idea of where you are with the rest of the field."



Kaitlyn Gaza races toward the finish line for Louisburg during the Ramsey Invitational on

Yalowitz led a group of Lady Cat runners that crossed the finish early. The Louisburg junior came in fifth in 24:10 and the next three to follow were her teammates.

Holtzen, who ran side-by-side with Yalowitz for most of the race, came in shortly behind her and took sixth in 24:20.

“It was nice to have the whole team run together and this was probably the first time it has happened to us in a meet,” Holtzen said. “We are just pushing each other, and having to stay with each other really I think helped the team out as a whole.”

Hildreth and Gaza made their way through the field in the last mile as they came in seventh and eighth, respectively. Hildreth ran a 24:24 and Gaza followed just 10 seconds behind.

“I was out in the field yelling at them for most of the race, so I didn’t get to see them finish, but it felt good to see them to continue to move up for the whole race,” coach Reece said. “Our third and fourth runners (Hildreth and Gaza) made up a lot of ground at the end of the second mile to get into that position and finished the way we did.”

Reinhart was next on the team in 18th overall with a time of 25:48 and Miller was 21st in 26:10. Bergman rounded out the Lady Cats in 26:25.

It was a finish the Lady Cat runners will never forget, but they did have a little extra motivation for this race.

“I thought we all did really well and we all pushed ourselves really hard to run our best, especially since coach told us we wouldn’t have practice if we ran well this time, so I think that helped a lot,” Yalowitz said.

As for Wyatt, he was able to get off to a strong start and

stay with the fast-moving pack early on in the boys race. He was able to gradually move his way up to fourth-place with a big finish.



Louisburg runners (from left) Austin Raetzel, Eddie Murphy, Jarod Rose, Wyatt Reece, Devyn Small and Zach Minor take off from their starting blocks Thursday at Prairie View.

“Wyatt did fantastic,” coach Reece said. “He started off with his first mile just under six minutes and did great. He ran his race at the beginning. The front group went out awful fast, and as he continued into the second mile, he just kept picking them off. I could tell in the third mile that his stride was quickening and his pace was increasing. Then in the last quarter-mile he just let it all go and good things happened.”

Senior Devyn Small was second on the Wildcat team as he ran a 20:40 to come in 20th overall. Fellow seniors Zach Minor (21:05) and Eddie Murphy (21:19) were 26th and 28th, respectively.

Sophomore Jarod Rose was 33rd in 21:38 and junior Austin Raetzel ran a 21:57 to take 36th.

In the junior varsity races, Bryce Kuhlman led Louisburg in 12th in 22:11. Gareth Baus (21st) and Michael Shaner (47th) also competed for the Wildcats.

Lilly Mick paced the Lady Cats in 12th overall with a time of 27:47. Tomi Frederes followed in 14th in 27:53 and Mara Justesen came in 15th in 28:12.

Lily Cook (17th), Bryn O'Meara (20th), Cierra Rose (33rd), Hailey Crowder (35th), Alexa Goodspeed (36th), Ryan Caldwell (38th) and Grace Rolofson (43rd) also ran for Louisburg.

The Wildcats return to action Thursday when they travel to the Pittsburg Invitational. Races are set to begin at 4 p.m.

Reece earns top 10 finish to lead Wildcats



Wyatt Reece leads a pack of runners around a turn and is followed closely by teammate Devyn Small during the Wellsville Invitational on Thursday. Reece finished 10th overall and earned a medal.

WELLSVILLE – The Louisburg High School cross country team has been showing improvements after every meet and the Wellsville Invitational was no exception.

Louisburg medaled three runners in the varsity races and earned two more junior varsity medals Thursday. All three varsity medalists continue to make strides for the Wildcats.

Sophomore Wyatt Reece had the best finish on the day as he finished 10th overall in 19 minutes and 31 seconds. Reece had a strong final leg to crack a spot in the top 10.

“Wyatt ran a solid race,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “He is starting to get a feel for his race and pace during the meets. He made strong moves through the field during the second and third miles to get to 10th place. I expect to see even more gains as the next two meets play out.”

The Louisburg girls produced two medalists on their side. Sophomore Isabelle Holtzen finished 12th in 23:55 and sophomore Savannah Reinhart was 19th with a time of 24:37.

Louisburg had three more runners that finished in the top 30. Junior Madelynn Yalowitz made her way back from injury to move up from junior varsity and join her varsity teammates. Yalowitz finished 26th in 25:21.

Junior Liz Hildreth ran a time of 25:28 to cross the finish line shortly behind Yalowitz in 27th. Junior Kaitlyn Gaza was 30th in 25:45.

Senior Abby Bergman (26:03) and sophomore Lexie Reece (29:50) rounded out the varsity lineup in 34th and 49th, respectively.

As a team, the Lady Cats finished fifth with 104 points. Eudora won the team title with 34 points and Spring Hill finished second with 50.

“The girls continue to impress me with their effort,” coach Reece said. “I will again have a slight shuffle of runners for my top seven because of their inner-squad competition. Isabelle ran a great race at Wellsville. Like Wyatt, they are both young runners who are starting to figure it out.

“Savannah was doing well but stepped funny and dropped off a little. Once she came back around to me she started to find her stride again and finished strong. Madelynn is making great strides in coming back for her injury. She is running better and better each day both in meets and practice.”



Senior Abby Bergman stays in front of a pack of runners Thursday in Wellsville.

Senior Devyn Small came in second on the team to help lead the Wildcat squad. Small ran a 21:22 to finish 33rd overall and junior Austin Raetzel finished 37th in 21:39.

Senior Eddie Murphy (21:42), sophomore Jarod Rose (21:54) and senior Spencer Rogers (25:35) crossed the finish in 39th, 44th and 58th, respectively.

The Wildcats took seventh in the team standings with 155 points. Eudora won the team title with 39 points and West Franklin was second with 71 points.

“The boys continue to work hard and I’m starting to see their team come together,” coach Reece said. “The next two meets will allow us to see different competition and to continue to work as a team to improve our standings in a race.”

Two junior varsity girls also earned medals for their top 10 finishes.

Freshman Alex Miller led the Lady Cats in ninth with a time of 28:22. Sophomore Lilly Mick came in 10th in 28:30 to also grab a medal.

Bryn O’Meara (20th), Mara Justesen (21st), Lily Cook (22nd), Alexa Goodspeed (23rd), Hailey Crowder (24th), Cierra Rose (26th), Ryan Caldwell (29th) and Grace Rolofson (37th) also competed for Louisburg.

Freshman Bryce Kuhlman led Louisburg’s junior varsity boys in 17th with a time of 23:37 and senior Michael Shaner was next in 27th and ran a 24:48.

Kennedy Unthank (35th) and Gareth Baus (40th) rounded out the Wildcat lineup.

Louisburg returns to action Thursday when it travels to the Prairie View Invitational. Races are set to begin at 4 p.m.