Wildcats run strong at Ottawa triangular



Louisburg's Savannah Reinhart finished in third place during Thursday's triangular at the Eisenhower Road Course in Ottawa. Reinhart ran a time of 25 minutes and 55 seconds and was one of nine girls to earn medals.

OTTAWA – The Louisburg High School cross country team took a little different approach from its usual routine.

Normally, the Wildcats will compete in large invitationals against several teams. Louisburg scaled it down a notch Thursday when they traveled to Ottawa.

Louisburg took to the Eisenhower Road Course, and for the only time this season, will run together as one team. The Wildcats competed against Ottawa and Spring Hill in a triangular and left with nine medals on the girls side and five on the boys.

"This meet is great for our kids," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "It is a small setting and having them run together really lets them see how they rank within the team. It really benefits the new runners having their teammates around them.

"I really like the triangular format early in the year. It takes some pressure off of the kids and lets them run."

Sophomore Savannah Reinhart led the Lady Cats with a third place finish in the 5-kilometer race. Reinhart ran a time of 25 minutes and 55 seconds and was just 30 seconds off of the first-place pace.

Junior Madelynn Yalowitz also had a big day for the Lady Cats as she was fourth in 26:11 and fellow junior Kaitlyn Gaza was sixth in 26:28. Senior Abby Bergman (27:07) came in eighth and junior Liz Hildreth (27:57) was 12th.

Mara Justesen (30:40), Lexie Reece (30:42), Maddie McDaniel (30:44), Tomi Frederes (31:20) finished 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th, respectively.

Lilly Mick (20th), Lily Cook (21st), Bryn O'Meara (22nd), Alex Miller (23rd), Alexa Goodspeed (24th), Hailey Crowder (26th), Cierra Rose (27th), Ryan Caldwell (29th) and Grace Rolofson (30th) also ran for the Louisburg girls.

Sophomore Wyatt Reece ran a time of 20:49 to finish eighth overall to lead the Louisburg boys. Senior Devyn Small came in 10th in 21:57 and fellow senior Zach Minor was 12th with a time of 22:06.

Junior Austin Raetzel (23:09) and sophomore Jarod Rose (23:38) also had top 20 finishes in 16th and 17th, respectively.

Eddie Murphy (24th), Spencer Rogers (25th), Michael Shaner (27th), Gareth Baus (28th) and Kennedy Unthank (32nd) also ran for Louisburg.

"For those who ran with the team last year, we saw improvement when compared to last year's performances," coach Reece said. "My new runners ran better races even if time did not show it."

Although they were competing against two teams, it was the course that provided the biggest test for Louisburg. Like in their previous race, the Wildcats had to deal with a lot of steep hills.

“All courses have their challenges and Ottawa has their hills,” coach Reece said. “They are so proud of the hills that they have named one of them Big Buddha. The hills always seem to pop up at inopportune times like right after the first mile and in the last half mile of the race.”

Louisburg will get back to its normal invitational schedule this Thursday when it travels to Wellsville. The first race is set to begin at 4 p.m.

Four Wildcat runners medal at opening meet



Louisburg sophomore Isabelle Holtzen stays with a group of runners during the Jerry Howarter Invitational on Thursday at the Garnett Golf Course. Holtzen led Louisburg in 14th place and was one of four varsity runners to medal.

GARNETT – For the last several years, the Louisburg cross country teams have started their season at the Jerry Howarter Invitational in Garnett and it is considered one of their toughest races of the year.

It didn't seem to bother many of the Wildcat runners – even the new ones.

Louisburg medaled four varsity runners between the two teams, including two newcomers to the team. Isabelle Holtzen, Savannah Reinhart and Liz Hildreth picked up medals on the girls side, while Wyatt Reece got some hardware in the boys division.

The Garnett Golf Course features several hills in the 5-kilometer race, including a steep climb to the finish line that doesn't give the runners much time to relax.

"Anderson County is always tough because it is the first meet of the season and the course has long gradual up-hills which really work the legs, and the up-hill finish does not help much either," Louisburg coach John Reece said.

Holtzen, a sophomore, led the Wildcat girls team as they ran their first-ever 5K race. Holtzen finished 14th in 24 minutes and 1 second, as the top 30 in each varsity race picked up medals.

Reinhart and Hildreth, both newcomers to the team, also garnered medals. Reinhart, a sophomore, came in 19th overall in 24:20 and Hildreth, a junior, was 30th with a time of 25:29.

"I was very happy to see them run well," coach Reece said. "With Savannah and Liz competing for the first time made it even better. Isabelle ran a great race to lead the team."

Junior Kaitlyn Gaza was fourth on the team as she ran a 26:20 to come in 36th. Senior Abby Bergman finished 39th in 26:33.



Louisburg senior Devyn Small leads a pack of runners up a hill during Thursday's season opening meet in Garnett.

Senior Maddie McDaniel (30:17) and sophomore Lilly Mick (30:49) came in 45th and 47th, respectively, to round out the Lady Cat team. As a team, the Lady Cats were fifth with 98 points, just seven points out of third.

Baldwin won the meet with 19 points and Eudora was second with 77.

On the boys side, sophomore Wyatt Reece had a strong opening race to get his first medal. Reece came in 27th overall in 20:10 to pace an inexperienced Wildcat team.

"Wyatt earned his first medal of the year with a solid race," coach Reece said. "He is also joined by a few new runners to the sport that gained much needed experience. I am excited to see how they continue to improve as the season continues."

Senior Devyn Small finished just outside of medal contention as he came in 39th overall in 21:26. Fellow senior Zach Minor

came in 47th in 22:10 and junior Austin Raetzel took 51st in 22:37.

Senior Ben Brummel (22:52), sophomore Jarod Rose (23:14) and senior Spencer Rogers (23:45) rounded out the Wildcat team in 54th, 56th and 60th place, respectively.

As a team, the Wildcats were seventh with 198 points. Baldwin came in first with 27 points and Eudora was second with 47.

Junior Madelynn Yalowitz normally runs with the varsity girls, but she is working her way back from an injury and is currently running on the junior varsity level. She had a strong finish as she ran 25:58 to finish fourth and also earned a medal.

Lexie Reece (28th), Alex Miller (30th), Tomi Frederes (31st), Mara Justesen (32nd) and Alexa Goodspeed (36th) also ran for Louisburg.

Eddie Murphy (16th) led the junior varsity boys in 22:58 and Michael Shaner (50th) ran a 27:23.

Anderson County also held a beginner's race as several Louisburg runners got their feet wet in the shorter 2 mile run.

Bryn O'Meara came in third overall in the girls division in 18:05 and teammate Lily Cook was fifth in 18:38. Hailey Crowder (ninth), Cierra Rose (11th), Ryan Caldwell (17th) and Grace Rolofson (19th) also ran for the Lady Cats.

Freshman Bryce Kuhlman led the boys side in second overall with a time of (14:17). Gareth Baus (10th) and Kennedy Unthank (13th) also competed for Louisburg.

Louisburg returns to action Thursday when it ventures to Ottawa. Races are set to begin at 4:30 p.m.

Wildcats running with team concept



Louisburg High School cross country runners (from left) Abby Bergman, Eddie Murphy, Spencer Rogers and Wyatt Reece complete a run during a practice last month. The Wildcat team opens their season Thursday in Garnett.

It is easy to consider cross country an individual sport.

After every race, the runners are given individual medals depending on where they finish and it is all about how fast you can get to that finish line. Although that is all true, the Louisburg cross country team is taking in this season on how it finishes – as a group.

The Wildcats have 31 runners out this season, and while they have several returning from a season ago, it has been all about getting better as a team.

“This is a great group of kids this year,” Louisburg coach

John Reece said. “They work hard to encourage and push each other during workouts which makes the team even stronger in an individual/team sport.”

Louisburg has a big contingent of girl runners this year with 19 and it has featured tough competition in practice according to Reece as 10 runners are vying for seven varsity spots. The Wildcats are looking for their first state participant since 2013.

Sophomore Isabelle Holtzen, who ran well a year ago, has emerged as the team’s No. 1 runner. Junior Madelynn Yalowitz is also one of the team’s top returning runners, but is working her way back from an injury.

Seniors Abby Bergman, Maddie McDaniel and Cierra Rose are also competing for a spot in the top seven.

A big difference for the girls will be their jump from 4-kilometer races to a 5K. It is roughly a half-mile longer than they were used to last season, but Reece knows they will handle the change with no problems.

“The girls are fine with the 5K,” Reece said. “We have just upped our workouts to prepare for the difference from last year.”

On the boys’ side, half of their roster is filled with seniors, but it will be another sophomore to lead the way. Wyatt Reece has separated himself as the team’s No. 1 runner as he tries to build on what was a solid freshman campaign.

Coach Reece says he has eight runners competing for the seven varsity spots and some of those six seniors are likely to be on it. Ben Brummel, Zach Minor, Eddie Murphy, Spencer Rogers, Michael Shaner and Devyn Small are all in their final season for the Wildcats.

“Practice has been going great,” coach Reece said. “The team

is training very well and my summer runners continue to increase their miles as we progress.”

The Wildcats also have a unique schedule this season as they will have two home meets. They will have their annual Louisburg Invitational on Oct. 8 at Lewis-Young Park.

The next week, Louisburg will also host the Frontier League meet Oct. 15 on the same course.

“It is nice to have home course advantage for league, but the caliber of our league is such that there is no home course advantage,” coach Reece said. “We always set our goals high and we want to compete strong in league and take that momentum into the regional meet. State as a team is never out of the question as it often depends on what teams we run with at regionals.”

Louisburg opens its season Thursday when it travels to Garnett for the Anderson County Invitational. The meet is set to begin at 4 p.m.

2015 LOUISBURG HIGH SCHOOL CROSS COUNTRY SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	@ Anderson County 4 p.m.
Sept. 10	@ Ottawa 4:30 p.m.
Sept. 17	@ Wellsville 4 p.m.
Sept. 24	@ Prairie View 4 p.m.

Oct. 1		@ Pittsburg 4 p.m.
Oct. 8		Louisburg 4 p.m.
Invitational		
Oct. 15		Frontier League
@ Louisburg	4 p.m	

Opinion: Rough patch leads to new beginning

I am just going to come right out and say it, “I’m scared.”

Yeah, it is an unusual way to start out an opinion piece, but there is no two ways around it – I am petrified. But believe it or not, it is what keeps me going.

We have all had at least one point in our existence where our lives changed for better or worse. I have had more than a few of those in my life, but the latest one came on Jan. 9.

It started out like all the other Fridays over the last seven years. I reported to work, spent a few hours in the office getting ready for what was a busy weekend of prep coverage ahead. It was the first action after Christmas break and I was

ready to get back into the swing of things.

That never took place.

My bosses came into my office early that afternoon to inform me I was being let go. The job of covering Louisburg athletics was no longer mine. I packed up my things, turned in my key, went home, punched the wall a couple times and cried.

I was scared.

After all the tears came the questions. How was I going to support my family? What am I going to do for a job? The list went on and on and I couldn’t come up with many answers.

As it turned out, one of the worst experiences of my life turned into one of the best.

Thanks to a lot of prayers, and support from family and friends, I decided to start Louisburg Sports Zone. Yep, that’s right, I went from being unemployed to starting my own business for the first time in my life.

Not exactly the best way to alleviate fears.

However, when I kicked off the site just a month later, I was overwhelmed with the amount of support from students at Louisburg High School, employees throughout the district, parents and several others who offered encouragement and supported my new venture.

I finished the last half of the winter season and all of the spring doing what I took for granted the previous seven years. I got the chance to cover Louisburg athletics again.

You know, this whole starting your own business thing might not have been a bad idea after all. I would have never had the courage to go out on my own had I not been pushed in that direction.

Fast forward to the present and I am still alive and kicking, ready to start my eighth season of roaming the Wildcat sidelines with camera in hand, waiting to tell that next story.

This fall brings a lot of story lines to the Wildcat programs. The football team is looking to improve off its 3-win season a year ago and find its way back to the playoffs with a veteran group returning.

Volleyball is primed and ready to make its fourth consecutive state tournament this year after placing in the top four in the last three years. The Lady Cats return five seniors that have a lot of state experience and that bodes well for another trip to Salina.

The Wildcat soccer team returns an experienced group from a year ago as they try to crack the top of the Frontier League standings. The cross country team also has several returning runners who will try and qualify for the state meet.

There is a lot to be excited about when it comes to Louisburg sports, but for me personally, I am just fortunate enough to still be a part of it in a small way.

I take a lot of pride in what I do and I hope that it shows when you read stories or look at pictures on this site. I started this business knowing that I will never be rich, but it gives me an opportunity to continue to do what I love.

Thanks to all those who have supported me and for the more than 23,000 views on the site in the last six months. I have said it before, but I am extremely blessed to live in a community that supports each other through good times and bad.

Every day I am fortunate enough to be able to go to work and support my family doing what I know how to do. That is all I have ever wanted, so thank you Louisburg for allowing me to do it.

I am still scared, though.

It is that fear that drives me to do the best I can in what I do in my job and in life. I don’t want what happened on that day in January to happen again and I will do everything to make sure it doesn’t.

Right now I am living the good life. I have the opportunity to work for myself, support my family and do what I enjoy. I can’t ask for any more.

I am living the American dream.

I just don’t want to wake up.

LHS cross country hits ground running



Members of the Louisburg High School cross country team (from left) Austin Raetzel, Spencer Rogers, Abby Bergman, Wyatt Reece and coach John Reece wrap up a morning workout Wednesday at the school.

Nearly every morning during the summer, Louisburg High School

cross country coach John Reece woke up before the sunrise, laced up his running shoes and got ready for a nice jaunt around Louisburg.

More than a dozen Wildcat runners joined Reece on his daily routine to help get in shape for the upcoming season. Instead of holding just a week-long camp, Reece wanted to give his runners a chance to work out on a daily basis throughout the summer.

“I am here for them five days a week and I am here if they want to run,” Reece said. “Coach A (Arianne Seidl) comes over 2-3 times a week, brings her youngest son, puts him in the stroller and away we go. The core group has been better this year and hopefully that will pay off come this season.”

So around 7 a.m. every day, the group of Wildcat runners racked up the miles in an effort to put themselves in the best possible position to find success for the 2015 season.

Reece also got strong leadership throughout the summer from a few different people. Senior Spencer Rogers and sophomore Wyatt Reece were there most days for the boys team, as was senior Abby Bergman for the girls squad.

“Spencer has been here almost every single day to work out,” Reece said. “He is a good person to work around and is a great kid and a great student. He is an all-around kid that has put in the time here and he, and our team, is going to benefit from it. Wyatt has been here unless he was at cross country camp or we were on vacation and he has stepped up to become a spiritual leader and talking everybody up.

“Abby has been great and has been here almost every day as well as a senior. She ran six miles for the first time the other day and she was thrilled about it. She has put the time in and will be a good leader and running from the middle of our group. She will keep the other kids honest with her work ethic.”

There was a big change made to the Kansas cross country landscape in June when the Kansas State High School Activities Association voted to move all girls postseason competitions from a 4-kilometer to a 5-kilometer race – the same distance as the boys.

Each school that hosts a meet has the option to keep the 4K or move to a 5K, but postseason races will go to the new distance. Reece is in favor of the change and doesn't think his girls will have a big problem adjusting to the new format.

"We won't change a whole lot with them," Reece said. "We will increase their long run base a little bit and that should help them out a little. I think it is great that we are running the 5K now. College coaches are excited about it. Some high schools coaches aren't, and some girls are a little iffy about it, but it is less than a half-mile farther and that is what they have to understand. It is not a huge change.

"We are planning on running the 5K at our home meet because that is the meet before league and I believe they (the Frontier League) will decide to run the 5K to prepare them for regionals and state. Eventually all invitationals will do it in the near future."

In just a matter of days, Reece will have his entire squad working with him as the first day of practice begins Aug. 17 and he is hoping he can duplicate the strong turnout from a year ago.

"We had a few freshmen run with us this summer, but I am not sure what the turnout will be," Reece said. "I hope to hit 30 again, but not sure if we will get there. I had some girls say they aren't coming back because of the increase to the 5K, but we will just have to see. I am happy with the group I have coming back though."