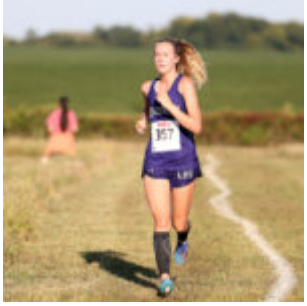
Lady Cats win third straight meet; boys take second at Perry Lake



Louisburg junior Nova Ptacek was one of six Lady Cats to medal at the Perry-Lecompton Invitational last Thursday. The Lady Cats took first in the team standings and the boys were second.

OZAWKIE – The Louisburg girls cross country team has won its previous two meets, but following the Perry-Lecompton Invitational last Thursday, the Lady Cats made it a third.

Louisburg cruised to a team title with 39 points and finished 32 points ahead of runner-up Tonganoxie in the 8-team race.

The Wildcats boys also found themselves in the top two of the team standings for the third straight week as Louisburg took second with 62 points, just three points behind champion Bishop Miege.

The Louisburg girls had three runners finish in the top 10. Sophomore Emma Vohs led the way in second in 21 minutes and 32 seconds. Senior Reese Johnson was fourth in 21:57 and sophomore Maddy Rhamy was sixth in 22:14.

“As far as another win, we do not go to meets to win them, we go to do our best individually and by doing so we will perform well as a team,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “We have performed well as a team in the past weeks for both teams.

Placing three in the top ten is an accomplishment for sure and the other four girls were not far behind, which is what makes the team strong.”

Three other Lady Cats earned medals as junior Nova Ptacek was 14th in 23:34. Junior Bree Gassman was 18th in 24:07 and sophomore Erin Apple was 20th with a time of 24:15.

On the boys side, senior Jaden Vohs was near the front the pack once again as he was runner-up in 17:26, just nine seconds behind Tonganoxie’s Eli Gilmore.



Louisburg senior Hayden Ross was one of five Wildcats to medal last Thursday at Perry Lake.

“Jaden ran a strong meet again,” Reece said. “He and Eli have had some great races and they will run against each other the last three weeks of the season so that should make for some fierce competition.

“The boys team is running well and finishing second, by only 3 points, to a good Miege team is a real positive.”

Four other Wildcats also earned medals as freshman Jerynce Brings Plenty was seventh in 18:27 and sophomore Noah Cotter was 13th in 18:57. Senior Hayden Ross took 18th in 19:19 and junior Leo Martin was 22nd in 19:36.

Senior Sawyer Richardson rounded out the Louisburg lineup in 45th with a time of 21:24.

The course at Wild Horse Trails at Perry Lake State Park was a difficult one for the runners as they had to run on a lot of uneven surfaces.

“Perry’s course is literally a horse trail,” Reece said. “Approximately 2 miles of the course is in the woods on a path that is very difficult to pass on. We had to work on getting in a good spot before entering the woods so as to not get caught up behind slowing runners.

“Just ask Jerynce about the course as he lost a shoe and finished seventh with a sore foot, thankfully not injured. The runners seem to like the challenge and embrace its difficulty with enthusiasm.”

Louisburg will be back in action this Thursday as they host the Louisburg Invitational at Lewis-Young Park. Races are set to begin at 4 p.m.

“We always love to compete on our home course,” Reece said. “It is great to have members of the community out there cheering on the runners. We love our parents, but to hear a different voice rooting for you is great. We host a tough meet so the races should be good ones.”

Lady Cats take first at Prairie View; Vohs wins boys race



The Louisburg girls cross country team took first at Prairie View on Thursday. Members of the team (from left) are Erin Apple, Nova Ptacek, Maddy Rhamy, Bree Gassman, Emma Vohs and Reese Johnson. Lola Edwards was not pictured.

LA CYGNE – The Louisburg girls cross country team continues to show why it is one of the top teams in Class 4A

Its latest example came Thursday during the Ramsey Invitational at Prairie View High School. The Lady Cats edged out the host school Prairie View to win the team title with 35 points.

Not only that, the Lady Cats won without one of their top runners – Lola Edwards – who had to step out of the race with an injury.

The team of Emma Vohs, Maddy Rhamy, Reese Johnson, Nova Ptacek, Erin Apple and Bree Gassman took it the rest of the way as they guided Louisburg to its second straight team crown.



Louisburg junior Nova Ptacek stays with a Jayhawk-Linn runner Thursday at Prairie View.

Louisburg's boys also had a strong outing as the group of Jaden Vohs, Jerynce Brings Plenty, Noah Cotter, Leo Martin, Hayden Ross, Landon Henry and Sawyer Richardson took second with 42 points, just five points behind first place Fort Scott.

Individually, however, Jaden Vohs took home top honors individually as he won going away in 17 minutes and 30 seconds.

"The girls ran well again," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "We are still in the midst of some solid training, so to finish first as a team was great. We are beginning to see the fruits of our labor."

Emma Vohs led the Lady Cats as she was runner-up individually

with a time of 21 minutes and 13 seconds and teammate Maddy Rhamy was third in 21:42.

Senior Reese Johnson also had a top 10 finish as she took sixth in 22:27. Junior Nova Ptacek was 14th in 23:42.

Erin Apple (24:04) and Bree Gassman (24:16) rounded out the Lady Cat roster in 17th and 19th, respectively.



Louisburg freshman Jerynce Brings Plenty was second overall Thursday at Prairie View.

On the boys side, Jaden Vohs once again had another strong race, but this time he was joined by Brings Plenty as the Wildcat duo finished 1-2.

Brings Plenty, a freshman, was 13 seconds behind Vohs in 17:43. Sophomore Noah Cotter was 11th for the Wildcats in 18:43.

“Jaden and Jerynce are great teammates and are pushing each other,” Reece said. “As we near the end of the season they will be ready to run down the competition.

“Noah has moved into a solid No. 3 for us. He is training great and is much improved over last year. There is no sophomore slump for him.”



Sophomore Noah Cotter races to the finish Thursday during the Ramsey Invitational.

Martin was right behind Cotter in 14th in 19:12 and Ross was 20th in 19:44. Henry took 23rd in 20:07 and Richardson was 26th in 20:48.

Louisburg will look to continue its success this Thursday when it competes at the Perry-Lecompton Invitational. Races are set to begin at 4 p.m.

Wildcats sweep team titles at Wellsville Invitational



Louisburg senior Reese Johnson (left) and sophomore Emma Vohs have their eyes on the finish line last Thursday at the Wellsville Invitational. Both runners went on to earn medals.

WELLSVILLE – The entire Louisburg cross country team had that winning feeling last Thursday during the Wellsville Invitational.

Both the varsity boys and girls squads won the team title and finished with a combined nine individual medals in the nine-team meet.

The Louisburg girls finished with 61 points and edged out runner-up Prairie View by three points to take the top spot. The boys had 48 points, two points head of second place West Franklin.

Louisburg's junior varsity boys and girls also won team titles as the Wildcats swept the Wellsville meet.

"Having all four teams win their races was amazing," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "We never go into a meet looking to win as a team, but rather compete individually to our best and know that will create a strong team finish. They were both close races, which was exciting."

The Wildcat boys earned five medals overall, including two in the top 10.

Senior Jaden Vohs was third overall in 18 minutes and 1 second, while freshman Jerynce Brings Plenty was seventh in 18:44.



Senior Jaden Vohs (left) and freshman Jerynce Brings Plenty (right) get out to a good start during the Wellsville Invitational on Thursday.

Sophomore Noah Cotter took 13th in 19:15, while seniors Hayden Ross (19:28) and Ryan Rogers (19:36) were 18th and 19th, respectively.

“Jaden and Jerynce ran well,” Reece said. “They quickly found out that racing two 5K’s with only four days in between is a tall task. They put in a solid effort and were rewarded for their work as well as the whole team.”

Junior Leo Martin was next on the Wildcat team in 29th in 20:14 and junior Landon Henry was 32nd in 20:32.



Senior Hayden Ross races to the finish line Thursday at Wellsville.

Sophomore Lola Edwards led the Lady Cat runners as she medaled fifth overall in 21:56 after missing the previous race with an injury.

Emma Vohs, another sophomore, was 11th in 22:29 and senior Reese Johnson was right behind her in 13th in 22:32. Sophomore Maddy Rhamy also earned a medal in 19th in 23:29.

“The girls showed real resilience and grit coming off a big race and racing again so soon,” coach Reece said. “Lola performed well and ran a controlled race as directed, so she could ease back into the racing mode.”

Junior Bree Gassman was fifth on the Lady Cat squad as she took 36th overall in 24:49 and junior Nova Ptacek was 45th in 25:52. Freshman Madison Huggins, who also raced on varsity, had to leave with an injury.



Louisburg sophomore Lola Edwards gets out to a lead at Wellsville. Edwards finished fifth overall.

Louisburg had to take a different approach to the Wellsville meet after coming off a taxing Wamego Invitational with just four days rest.

However, the Wildcats are excited for their next meet, which is at Prairie View this Thursday.

“The team ran great at Wellsville. We always approach the Wellsville race differently as we just ran Wamego on the Saturday before and know that times will be different even on an easier course,” Reece said. “With getting back to our

normal weekly schedule, I hope to see some great performances at Prairie View. There is still some shuffling between varsity and junior varsity on both sides as we continue to push each other to be a top seven runner.”

Wildcats medal four at Wamego Invitational



Louisburg sophomore Maddy Rhamy leads a pack of runners Saturday during the Wamego Invitational at Wamego Country Club.

WAMEGO – In what is its most challenging regular season meet of the year, the Louisburg cross country team brought home four medals.

The Wildcats traveled to the Wamego Invitational on Saturday and competed against some of the top Class 4A teams across the state. They more than held their own.

Senior Jaden Vohs had a top 10 finish and medaled for the boys, while sophomore Emma Vohs, senior Reese Johnson and sophomore Maddy Rhamy each earned an individual medal as well.

“Despite having to leave an hour earlier to start our day, the kids ran well at Wamego,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “Anytime you get a chance to preview the State course and 4A

competition, you jump at the chance. With both junior varsity and varsity running this year, all runners that were ready got to experience the course.”

Jaden was toward the top of the pack for most of the race and took seventh overall in 17 minutes and 2 seconds. He shaved 50 seconds off his previous personal best time from a week ago.

“Jaden is the epitome of a new cross country runner,” Reece said. “He is learning the sport quickly and his performances are indicative of his hard work. He ran a great race on a challenging course and made those around him earn their place. He put in some big surges to break some and drag some to top performances.”



Senior Reese Johnson cruises down a hill Saturday at Wamego Country Club.

On the girls side, Emma Vohs led the Lady Cat runners in 12th place in 21:38 and senior Reese Johnson was 21st in 22:04. Sophomore Maddy Rhamy was 25th in 22:16.

As a team, the Louisburg were girls were sixth out of 15 teams with 190 points. Eudora won the meet with 50 points.

Juniors Bree Gassman (24:14) and Nova Ptacek (24:16) were 69th and 70th, respectively. Freshman Madison Huggins was sixth on the team in 73rd in 24:28 and sophomore Erin Apple was 88th in 25:47.

“The girls continue to improve and medaling three was awesome,” Reece said. “They are training great and are really working together in practice to improve as a group. Cross country is an individual-team sport and all of the runners are pushing to improve themselves, which makes the team stronger.”



Sophomore Noah Cotter finished second on the team Saturday at Wamego.

The Louisburg boys finished 10th out of 15 points teams with 257 points.

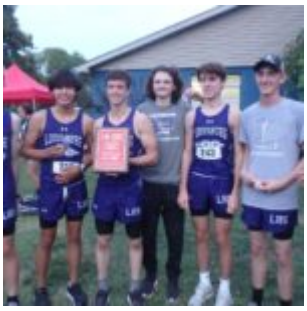
Sophomore Noah Cotter was second on the team in 52nd with a

time of 18:57. Freshman Jerynce Brings Plenty was 55th in 19:00 and junior Leo Martin was 74th in 19:52.

Junior Landon Henry took 90th in 20:54, while senior Sawyer Richardson (21:22) and sophomore Max LaJoie (21:31) were 97th and 98th, respectively.

Louisburg is back in action today when the Wildcats travel to the Wellsville Invitational.

Wildcat boys win Garnett title, Lady Cats finish second



Members of the first place Louisburg boys cross country team are (from left) Leo Martin, Jerynce Brings Plenty, Jaden Vohs, Ryan Rogers, Hayden Ross, Sawyer Richardson and Noah Cotter.

Jaden Vohs, Jerynce Bring Plenty and Emma Vohs had never competed in a high school cross country race before.

It certainly didn’t look that way during the Randy Howarter Invitational on Thursday at Garnett Country Club.

Jaden Vohs and Brings Plenty finished 1-2 in the individual standings and helped the Wildcat boys to a first place team.

As for Emma Vohs, she medaled fourth to lead the Lady Cats and help them to a runner-up team finish.

“We started the season well,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “We definitely have a great group of runners, which will make for a fun season. It was awesome to see Jaden and Jerynce go 1 and 2 in their first meet. They both seemed in control of their race and worked well together.”

Jaden, a senior, widened his lead through the race and finished with a time of 17 minutes and 52 seconds. Brings Plenty, a freshman, earned the second place medal in 18:13/



Photo courtesy of Linda Ptacek
Louisburg senior Jaden Vohs won the boys race in 17:52 Thursday in Garnett.

As a team, the Wildcats finished with 43 points and finished 12 points in front of runner-up Iola. In all, they earned six medals on the day.

Noah Cotter was third on the team in 13th place in a time of

19:32 and Leo Martin was 17th in 19:52. Seniors Ryan Rogers (20:09) and Hayden Ross (20:40) medaled 19th and 26th, respectively. Senior Sawyer Richardson was 35th in 21:39.

Emma Vohs, a sophomore, shined in her first race as she recorded a time 21:20 to medal fourth. She was one of three Lady Cats to leave Garnett with some hardware.

As as team, the Lady Cats took second with 67 points, despite having one of their top runners, Lola Edwards, leave the race early with an injury. Baldwin won the girls side with 26 points.

“Emma Vohs led the way for us in her first cross country meet and finishing fourth was amazing,” Reece said. “She is adding to an already talented group which makes us even stronger as a team.

“The girls ran well, and even though Lola stepped out of the race, we were excited to get a second place team finish with multiple individual medal winners.”



Photo courtesy of Linda Ptacek
Sophomore Emma Vohs sprints to the finish line Thursday in Garnett. Vohs took fourth overall.

Reese Johnson had a strong inaugural race to her senior season as she medaled in a time of 22:41 to finish eighth. Sophomore Maddy Rhamy also medaled as she took 10th in 22:50.

Junior Bree Gassman finished just outside of the medals in 32nd in 25:51. Nova Ptacek, another juniors was 36th, in 26:17. Sophomore Erin Apple rounded out the varsity runners in 40th in 26:30.

“Anderson County is not a tough course but being the first race, there are always jitters and all runners handled it very well,” Reece said. “From varsity to the beginners race, everyone performed well.”

Louisburg is back in action Saturday when it travels to the

Wamego Invitational. The meet will feature some of the top teams across the state and gives the Wildcats a chance to get a preview of the state course.

“Everyone who will be running at Wamego is excited to get on the course and see the other 4A schools and what they have,” Reece said. “We are able to run the junior varsity there this year so all of those who could be competing for a top seven spot on the team will get the chance to run the state course.”

Johnson ready for big finish in her final year with LHS cross country



Louisburg senior Reese Johnson is a two-time state medalist for the Lady Cat cross country team and she is hoping to add a third medal to her resume, along with a team state title.

Reese Johnson has faced ups and downs throughout her cross country career, but it was after her sophomore year where the doubts started to creep in.

As a freshman, Johnson surprised some as she finished sixth at the Class 4A state meet and hung with the program’s most accomplished runner – Trinity Moore – in just her first season out.

Johnson seemed like she was poised for a great four year run, and for some people, she has. However, Johnson had higher goals for herself, which was why she considered her sophomore season a disappointment after she took 40th at the state meet.

For her, it was a step backward. Then last season, Johnson missed the final three regular season meets and she wondered if she would even be able to make it back to state.

Despite having to come back from an injury, Johnson went on to get her second state medal at last season's state meet and also helped the team achieve history as the Lady Cats took third in Class 4A.

It has been nothing but a wild ride so far for Johnson.

"I can't believe it's already been four years," Johnson said. "It really does feel like I was just running alongside Trinity. My freshmen year was a crazy experience. I was not expecting to do that well as a freshmen and getting sixth was a great feeling.

"I would say in a way I used to be disappointed in the runner I became, especially after my sophomore year, but that just gave me a reason to push myself. So after that I started working so much harder and training more and all the work paid off after my junior year season. I never thought I'd be able to place again after getting 40th, but getting 15th meant so much to me. I'm looking forward to this season cause I've been working harder than ever."



Junior Reese Johnson makes her way up a hill during last season's Class 4A state meet at Wamego Country Club.

Whatever doubts there were for Johnson are now gone as she enters her final season for the Louisburg cross country team. She is the lone senior on a squad filled with young, talented runners and is looking forward to taking that leadership role.

She is hoping for big things for herself and the rest of her teammates.

"This season I just have this feeling that we're gonna do great things," Johnson said. "I sense a state title for our team and I know we're all working for that ring. We're gonna

be better than we ever have been this season and everyone is working so hard.

“It really does feel different knowing this is my last season. Even though it’s running and it sucks, I’m gonna miss it. I didn’t think I would, but the emotions are already starting to come to me even though the season just started. I love this team and I love the hard work we put in. I’m gonna miss being part of such a successful program.”

It is easy for Johnson to get emotional after the season the Lady Cats had a year ago. It may have not been her best state finish individually, but it was her most memorable one.

“For me, my junior year individual medal and team medal mean the most to me,” Johnson said. “Although it wasn’t my best individual finish, it sure felt like my best finish. I worked so hard after my sophomore slump and after missing three meets before regionals due to an injury, so it really was great to be able to finish that well. I’ve been very fortunate in high school sports and making trips to state, but being able to be third in the state was the best feeling ever. I can’t even explain it. We all felt so proud and we all deserved it.”

Johnson’s team-first attitude was evident last season, but even more so in her final year with the program.

“Reese is a lead by example teammate,” coach John Reece said. “She works hard and puts in the time needed to accomplish what she wants. This is an individual/team sport and she is really focused on the team aspect this year and wants to succeed. She is going to put herself out there and run for her teammates every race.”

In what is a talented Class 4A field, especially in the Frontier League, Johnson has set high goals for herself and her teammates and she is ready to meet them head on.

“This season I would like to place top 20 at state again,” she

said. “It’s gonna take a lot of work, but I know with my team’s support I can do it. Along with an individual medal, I wanna bring that state champion plaque to Louisburg and get the girls cross country team’s name on the state champions sign.

“Our goal as a team this season is win state and get ourselves a ring, a plaque and a sign. Coach is rooting for us and helping us every step of the way. With his support and our hard work, this season is gonna be one to remember.”

Wildcat cross country ready for another historic season



The Louisburg girls cross country team is hoping to improve off of last season third place finish at the Class 4A state meet.

There was no better season for Louisburg cross country than in 2020.

The girls team earned their first state plaque after they finished third at the Class 4A state meet in Wamego. As for the boys, they qualified as a team for state for the first in program history.

It was a magical time for the Wildcats, but even after that

memorable run, they are ready to take that next step.

Nearly all of the girls off of the third place state team return to try and better their position in 2021, while the boys return a majority of their group and have added a couple key pieces.

It has all the makings of another historic season for Louisburg.

The Lady Cats return three state medalists in senior Reese Johnson and sophomores Lola Edwards and Maddy Rhamy, along with juniors Bree Gassman and Nova Ptacek and sophomore Erin Apple.

Louisburg has already set high goals for itself and it wants to improve off its third place finish.

“The girls are hungry for a better finish at state,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “They are a self-motivated group and there are at least 10 girls that will be battling for a varsity spot all year long. This makes for good intrasquad competition and real teamwork during training. As one of the girls stated after a workout, it’s ring season. So our expectations for them are already in their goals.”



Lola Edwards took 10th at the 4A state meet as she was one of three Lady Cats to earn medals last year.

Rhamy and Edwards are coming off impressive freshman seasons that saw them finish in the top 10 at the state meet. Rhamy finished eighth and Edwards was 10th as they competed against the best 4A had to offer.

Reece is expecting them, and others, to take another step forward this season.

“Lola and Maddy have put in the summer work and are coming into the season ready to go,” Reece said. “They will be much more race savvy this year as sophomores and will be there at the end.”

Johnson is also a returning two-time state medalist after she took 15th at last year’s state meet and will look to lead a group of improved runners.

“This season I just have this feeling that we’re gonna do great things,” Johnson said. “I sense a state title for our team and I know we’re all working for that ring. We’re gonna be better than we ever have been this season and everyone is working so hard.”

The Lady Cats will also have some new runners that could make an impact as well. Sophomore Emma Vohs, who earned a state medal in the 400-meter dash last spring, has cracked the top seven for the opening meet today in Garnett and could be a factor for Louisburg.

According to Reece, junior Nerea Ocerin and sophomore Ashley Branine will also compete for varsity time throughout the season.

As for the boys, the Wildcats lost two of their top runners from a year ago in Carson Houchen and Cade Holtzen, but found two replacements for them to include with a good group of returning runners.

Senior Jaden Vohs, who was a state medalist in the 800 and 1,600-meter runs last spring at state track, is out for cross country for the first time. He is joined by freshman Jerynce Brings Plenty, who set school record times at the middle school level.



Senior Ryan Rogers is one of several returners to lead the Louisburg boys team.

The returning group of seniors includes Ryan Rogers and Hayden Ross, along with junior Leo Martin and sophomores Max LaJoie and Noah Cotter, will open the season on the varsity level.

Juniors Trent Allen, Griffin Drew and Landon Henry, along with senior Sawyer Richardson and sophomore Vitus Aagaard with compete for varsity time this year.

“The boys team is going to be a solid group again,” Reece said. “Much like the girls team there will be multiple runners trying to earn a spot on the top 7. Jaden Vohs and Jerynce Brings Plenty will be leading the group with returners from last year.

“They do have a return trip to state in their goals as well. With multiple returners and a tight pack of runners, it is

going to be a fun competitive season amongst teammates to earn a top 7 spot.”

Louisburg will begin its season today when it travels to the Anderson County Invitational. JV races are set to begin at 5 p.m with the varsity to follow.

OPINION: Wildcat success provides getaway from ‘real world’ problems



There hasn’t been a whole lot of good to talk about in the last year or so.

Our life has changed around us. We are having to deal with a new normal and there are a lot uncertainties as to what our future holds.

It is an unnerving time for a lot of people and our country seems more divided than ever. Still, to get by in this difficult time, you have to look for positives.

For me, the last school year brought me some of the best moments in my journalistic life. The 2020-21 school was arguably one of the most successful seasons in Louisburg High School history from top to bottom, and I was more than

grateful to be there for it all.



Just look at what was accomplished last year:

- Boys cross country qualified for state for the first time in school history.
- Girls cross country placed at state for the first time in its history as they took third in Class 4A. Maddy Rhamy, Lola Edwards and Reese Johnson also earned medals.
- Boys soccer had its best finish in school history with a 3rd place state finish.
- Boys basketball advanced to the state championship game for the first time and took second.
- Girls basketball advanced to the state tournament for

the first time in 47 years and recorded its best finish in third.

- Wrestlers Alec Younggren and Cade Holtzen took second and third, respectively, at the state tournament.
- Boys golf qualified for state as a team.



- Girls soccer made an improbable run to advance to its fourth straight state final four and the Wildcats took fourth.
- Delaney Wright won three state track titles in the long jump, 200 dash and 400 dash and broke all three school records in the process.
- Maybe perhaps the best accomplishment of all, the Louisburg boys track and field team won the Class 4A

state championship as they edged out Andale for the title.

Just a year removed from losing their spring season due to COVID-19, the Wildcats came back stronger than ever and it showed. It was an exciting time to be a Louisburg sports fan.

However, with so much positivity from last season, it is time to turn the page and focus on what the 21-22 season has in store.



First day of fall practice begins this Monday and the football, volleyball, cross country and boys soccer team all have a chance to do some special things this season. I am fortunate I will be able to be there once again to cover it all.

As I talked about earlier, there is a lot of negativity going

on in the world right now, but I am more than thankful to have a job where I can get away from all that and cover all the special moments.

Last season was a much-needed get away for me and it was an unbelievable journey to see all the Wildcat history that was made.

This year has another chance to be a special one. There is no way to predict what will happen, but I do know there is a chance for even more history and records to fall this upcoming year.

Football numbers are up and the Wildcats are poised for a big season, while the cross country, volleyball and boys soccer team all return several key pieces to make a run in the postseason – and that is just what the fall will hold.

The seasons can't get here soon enough and I am ready to cover it all once again. Hope to see you all out there supporting the Wildcats and maybe you can forget all those stresses in life – even if it is just for a few moments.

2021 Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Year nominees



For the past five years, Louisburg Sports Zone has given out

Athlete of the Week awards during each of the three sports seasons. I do it to recognize special athletic achievements and to highlight the athletes.

For the fourth straight year, Louisburg Sports Zone will be handing out an Athlete of the Year honor to a male and female athlete at Louisburg High School. I wanted the opportunity to recognize those who exemplify what it means to be an "athlete."

Although I am giving out the award, I wanted the process to be subjective, so I asked the head coaches at LHS to help me out. I asked each coach to send me nominations of who they thought exemplified the Athlete of the Year honor. They will then vote for their top 3 male and female athletes and then I will tabulate the results and determine the winner. The winner will be announced later this month.

Below are the nominees for this year's award in alphabetical order by last name. Congrats to all those who were nominated and best of luck!

ATHLETES OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

FEMALE



Reese Johnson – Junior – Cross Country, Soccer

Junior Reese Johnson made history in a couple different sports for Louisburg this past season.

In the fall, Johnson played a big role on the girls cross country team. The Lady Cats finished third in Class 4A, as that was the first time a team had placed at state in girls cross country. Johnson also medaled 15th individually and was one of three Lady Cats to earn state medals that day.

In the spring, Johnson was one of the leaders on the girls soccer team that advanced to the Class 4-1A state final four this past season. Johnson earned second team All-Frontier League honors after she finished the season with seven goals and nine assists as the Wildcats finished fourth at state.



Alyse Moore – Senior – Volleyball, Basketball, Track

Alyse Moore ended her senior season as one of the most accomplished athletes in Louisburg High School history. Moore is the first female athlete in school history to compete at the state level in four different sports, including both softball and track in the same season in 2019.

In the spring, Moore earned her second straight track state medal in the javelin as she finished fourth in the Class 4A meet. Earlier in the year, Moore broke a 20-year-old school record with a throw of 149 feet.

Moore was also a starter on the girls basketball team and helped the Lady Cats to their best finish in school history. Moore and the Lady Cats advanced to state for the first time in 47 years and took third overall. Individually, Moore eclipsed the 500-career rebound mark and was an honorable

mention all-league player. She led the team in rebounds with 8.6 boards a game and also averaged 7.3 points and 1.7 steals.

On the volleyball court, Moore started as an outside hitter for the Lady Cats and was second on the team with 174 kills and 195 digs.



Delaney Wright – Junior – Basketball, Track

Delaney Wright ended the 2020-21 school year with a bang as she became the school's first athlete to win three state championships in track in one season.

At the Class 4A state meet in Wichita last month, Wright won state titles in the long jump, 400-meter dash and 200-meter dash. She broke her own 200 and 400 school records to reach those accomplishments. On the season, Wright set new school

records in each of those events.

Wright was also a key player on the girls basketball team and helped the Lady Cats to their best finish in school history. Wright and the Lady Cats advanced to state for the first time in 47 years and took third overall at the Class 4A state tournament. Wright was one of the team' best defensive players as she averaged two deflections and a steal per game. She was also assigned to the team's best player.

MALE



Weston Guetterman – Senior – Football, Basketball

Weston Guetterman played big roles for both the Wildcat football and basketball teams this past season.

On the gridiron, Guetterman was the starting quarterback for

Louisburg, which finished 4-3 and tied for third in the Frontier League standings. Guetterman earned honorable mention All-League honors on defense for his play in the secondary. He finished the year with 32 tackles, two interceptions, three tackles for a loss and seven batted balls. He also finished with 548 yards rushing and six touchdowns.

Guetterman was one of the team leaders on the boys basketball team that advanced to its first state championship in school history and took second at the Class 4A state tournament. He was a second-team All-Frontier League selection from the point guard spot and averaged 12.5 points, 4.3 rebounds, 3.7 assists and 2.2 steals a game. He was also an all-state selection by the Topeka Capital-Journal, Wichita Eagle and Sports in Kansas.



Cade Holtzen – Senior – Cross Country, Wrestling, Track

Cade Holtzen was a three-sport athlete this past season for Louisburg and became the first male athlete (that is known) to participate in state competitions in all three sports, in the same season.

Holtzen helped the Wildcat cross country team to qualify for state for the first time in school history as they finished third at regionals. At state, Holtzen took 56th overall in 18 minutes and 46 seconds.

On the wrestling mat, Holtzen had a year to remember as he finished his career with a 155-19 record and a third-place state finish at 132 pounds. He was a four-time state qualifier for the Wildcats and a three-time state placer. Holtzen served as the team captain this past season and currently holds eight program records, including most season victories and most career wins. He was also chosen to participate in the 2021 Metro Classic.

In the spring, Holtzen earned his second state medal of the year as he helped the 4×800-meter relay team to a third place finish. He also helped the Wildcats to their second team Class 4A state track championship in school history.



Kolby Kattau – Junior – Football, Baseball

Kolby Kattau was a two-sport athlete this past season and had a good year for both the football and baseball program.

In the spring, Kattau helped the Wildcats to their first regional championship game since 2009 as he played both first base and pitcher. Kattau finished the year with a .444 average and racked up 32 hits for the Wildcats to go along with a .560 on-base percentage. He finished with five doubles, two triples, 16 RBIs, scored 26 runs and stole nine bases. He was a first team All-Frontier League selection and was an honorable mention all-state selection by the KBCA.

On the football field, Kattau played on both sides of the ball for a team that finished with a 4-3 record and tied for third in the Frontier League. He finished with two touchdowns from

the running back spot and had 41 tackles at linebacker.



Alec Younggren – Senior – Football, Wrestling

Alec Younggren was a two-sport athlete for Louisburg as he shined on the football field and on the wrestling mat.

Younggren, who missed part of the football season with an injury, still played well-enough on the offensive and defensive lines to earn All-Frontier League honors on both sides of the ball. Younggren was named as a first-team offensive lineman and an honorable mention lineman on defense.

He was a key fixture on the Wildcat offensive line that amassed more than 2,400 yards of total offense and 20 touchdowns. He also had 23 tackles on defense. Younggren was also an all-state honorable mention selection.

The Louisburg senior had an historic season in wrestling as he advanced to the 220-pound Class 4A championship match, where he finished runner-up. He finished the year with a 37-1 record and had Louisburg's highest state finish since 2012.



Braden Yows – Junior – Soccer

Louisburg junior Braden Yows was vital part of the Wildcats' best finish in school history this past season. Yows helped the Wildcats to a third place finish in the Class 4-1A state tournament.

Yows was a first-team All-Frontier League and all-state selection from his midfield spot. He broke a program record with 21 assists and also finished with seven goals on the year.

Top Louisburg Sports Stories of 2020

There hasn’t been a year like 2020, and for most people, they are ready to put it behind them and forget it ever existed.

Still, with all the challenges that 2020 brought, there were still plenty of positives to talk about when it came to Louisburg High School sports. History-making state places and state medals were plentiful on this list, but it wasn’t all positive. Louisburg had to say goodbye to a beloved town figure and athletes had to deal with the loss of spring sports.

Below are the top stories from 2020, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the explanation is the link to the actual story from the event.

When putting the list together, I took a lot of things into account – whether it was team vs. individual, popularity of the sport, historical achievements and the interest it drew on the web site. Thanks to the cancellation of spring sports, I don’t have the top 10 like I normally do, but I got close.

This year was a blast to cover, when I had the opportunity, anyway. Still, I am looking forward to what 2021 will bring. Thank you for everyone’s support and can’t wait for it all to begin again.



8. Ratliff-Becher wins state powerlifting title

After winning a state championship in 2019 Reilly Ratliff-Becher had every intention of backing up her performance during the Class 4A State Powerlifting Championships on March 7 at Piper High School.

In fact, the Louisburg senior wanted to improve it. Last

season, Ratliff-Becher took first in everything but squat, which she got runner-up.

This time around, she got the clean sweep.

Ratliff-Becher took first in bench, squat and clean and that led to her second straight state championship in the 180-pound class.

“It means a lot to me that I was able to win the state title again,” Ratliff-Becher said. “I set a goal for myself to win first in everything since I had got second in squat last year and I achieved it. Even though it wasn’t my best showing with the numbers I got on my lifts.

“The competition was very good this year, as it always is. But, fortunately with all the work I put in to at least maintain my numbers from last year, meant I was able to lift bigger amounts than my competition.”



7. Conley named state and midwest coach of the year

After a third place finish to end the year, Louisburg boys

soccer coach Kyle Conley was recognized among the state's best.

Conley was named as the Class 4-1A Coach of the Year by the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association in November.

He guided the Wildcats to a 16-2 record on the season and the team's highest finish in program history when Louisburg ousted Rose Hill, 3-0, in the state third-place game.

Just a few weeks later, Conley was honored once again – this time on the girls' side.

Despite the lost season, the United Soccer Coaches wanted to recognize coaches for their past accomplishments and for what this past spring was supposed to hold.

Atop that list was Conley as he was named as the Small School Midwest Coach of the Year.

"I am absolutely honored to receive this award," Conley said. "There are so many great coaches in the Midwest, but to me this is a program award. None of this is possible without everyone involved; girls coming to work their tails off everyday, parents traveling and supporting us anywhere and everywhere, community helping with supporting the program, the school supporting the girls, etc. Without the support and buy in from the girls, parents and community none of this is possible."

The Wildcat girls program has had a successful start in its four years. Conley has a 54-22-2 record during that span, that included two state runner-ups and another state final four appearance.



6. Louisburg cheer places third at state

The Louisburg cheer squad had to do its postseason competition a little different this year thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It didn’t seem to bother them much as the defending state champions found themselves right in the thick of things again.

Although they didn’t repeat as champs, they were still among the state’s best as the Wildcats cheerleaders finished third in the state back in November.

Unlike performing in front of judges like they did in 2019, the Wildcats had to video tape their performance and send it in to be judged. It fared well as they tallied 83.35 points to finish in the top 3.

Baldwin earned the state title with 88.85 points and Abilene was second with 85.25.

Members of the Louisburg cheer squad are Bella Feikert, Addison Drake, Brooklyn Harmon, Jayden Trester, Maddy Carpenter-Ross, Sophie Katzer, Sammy McDaniel, Julia Arriola, Andrea Gaza, JoJo Hendrickson, Sydney Dudzik, Abby Bradley, Anna Poe, Sienna Finch, Mable Graham, Audrey Anderson, Zoe Weers, Anna Morrison and Maggie Madison



5. Holtzen, Owens earn state medals for Wildcat wrestling

Ryan Owens and Cade Holtzen both had their own agendas going into the state wrestling tournament.

Owens, qualified for state last year, but left without a win and he vowed to fix that this time around. As for Holtzen, he came up short in his efforts for a second state medal as a

sophomore last season and had all the motivation not to come home empty-handed again.

Both wrestlers more than made up for their rough patches a year ago.

Owens and Holtzen left Salina with a state medal during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships on Friday and Saturday at the Tony’s Pizza Events Center.



Owens made it to the semifinals and wound up earning a fourth-place medal at 120 pounds, while Holtzen finished fifth at 126 pounds.

It also marked the first time since 2016 that Louisburg finished the season with multiple state medalists, when Nathan Keegan and Mason Koechner each brought home medals.

The Wildcats nearly had three medalists as sophomore Brandon Doles finished one win shy of a state medal at 160 pounds with a 2-2 record.



4. Dennis steps down as LHS team doctor

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

Doc D – as he his affectionately known – opened Louisburg Chiropractic Office 28 years ago and has served as the

Louisburg High School athletic team doctor for almost that same amount of time.

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

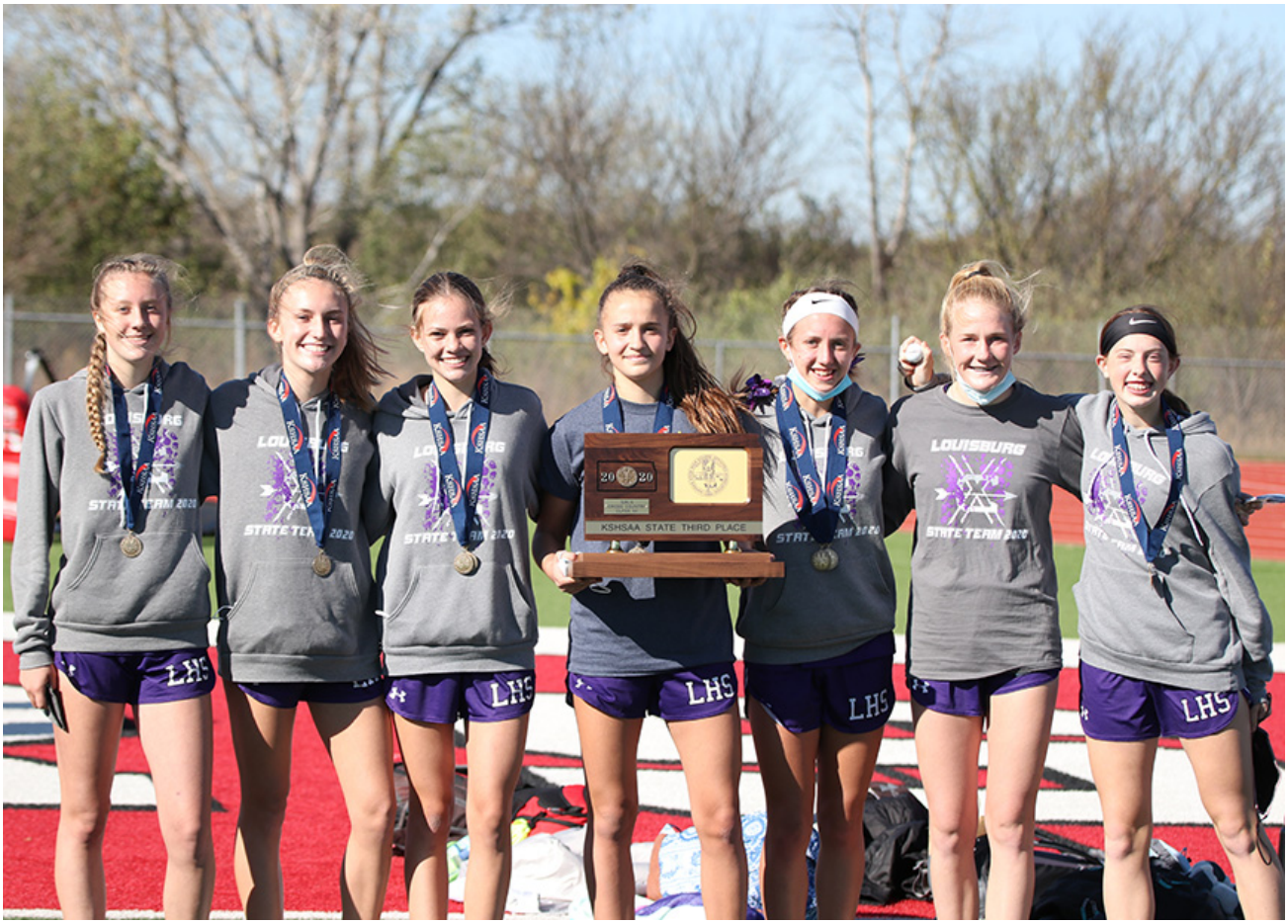
He has taped thousands of ankles, seen even more patients and has touched many lives during his time in Louisburg. That is why this week is one of the more emotional times in his life.

In May, he left Louisburg Chiropractic Office and handed the reins over to Dr. Jake Polzin. Add to that, Dennis also stepped away as LHS' team doctor and left an absence on the sidelines and behind the mic that many in Louisburg have come to know.

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

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

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



3. Girls Cross Country Takes Third at State

For 23 years, the Louisburg cross country program has been chasing a top three finish at the Class 4A meet.

The Wildcats have had several teams qualify, especially in the last few seasons, but have always come up short of their goal. Following Saturday's race in Wamego, the Wildcats can finally stop running after it.

The Louisburg girls put together an historic performance at the Class 4A Kansas State Cross Country Championships at Wamego Country Club. The Lady Cats earned a state plaque with a third place finish as they surpassed Buhler by eight points to record the school's first top three state finish.

Junior Reese Johnson, sophomores Claire Brown, Bree Gassman and Nova Ptacek, along with freshmen Lola Edwards, Maddy Rhamy and Erin Apple, will all go down in school history as they became the first Wildcat team to bring home state hardware.

“It means the world to me to be a part of the first team ever to place at state,” Rhamy said. “Coming into the state meet, I was just hoping our team would be in the top half, so you could imagine my excitement when our team placed third. I didn’t even know we made school history until our coaches told us.”

Rhamy was one of two freshmen who earned top 10 finishes individually, along with Edwards. Rhamy finished eighth overall in 20 minutes and 58 seconds, while Edwards was right behind her in 10th in 21:02.

Junior Reese Johnson also garnered a state medal as she was 15th in 21:28 to help the Lady Cats to an historic performance.

It was a proud moment for many in the Louisburg program, and included in that is John Reece. The longtime Wildcat head coach was all smiles following his team’s performance.

“It is 23 years the making,” coach Reece said. “You always have the plans and goals to get to state and then you get a group to go to state and do something great. This year was one of those. With the Frontier League as tough as it is, and then getting third there, put it in our heads that maybe we could do this. They all went out and ran their races, and that just shows their grit and determination and who they are.”

A week earlier, the Wildcats also made history as its was the first time in school history when they qualified the entire boys team to the state meet as they took third at regionals.



2. Boys Soccer Finishes Runner-Up At State

As the Louisburg players huddled around their state plaque, many of them looked at it in awe and wonder.

“Hey guys, we won this,” a player shouted.

The statement was obvious at the time, but nonetheless, their excitement was more than warranted.

For the first time in program history, the Louisburg boys soccer team brought home a plaque from the state final four as the Wildcats defeated Rose Hill, 3-0, on Saturday in the third place match of the Class 4-1A state tournament at Stryker Sports Complex in Wichita.

It was only the second time in school history that the Wildcats had it made it this far, with the other being in 2016, when they finished fourth.

“There are only six teams in the entire state that get to end their year with a win and we wanted to be one of those teams,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “We want to be able to hang up a banner on our field and we wanted a plaque so that no one can forget what these kids earned and what they did this season. I am so proud of all of them.”

It was a program defining moment for the Wildcats as they began the weekend searching for a state championship, but lost 2-0 to Bishop Miege on Friday in the semifinals. Still, recording the best finish in school history is nothing for someone to hang their head about, and the Wildcats came out Saturday wanting to make sure they brought some hardware home.

“It’s absolutely crazy to think about what we have accomplished this year, partly because I have only played soccer in high school,” senior captain Logan Faulkner said. “Bringing a state plaque back will just be a reminder of what we did and how we reached our goal.”



1. COVID-19 Cancels Spring Sports

In March, Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly closed all schools for the rest of the 2019-20 school year due to the spread of COVID-19.

When most students hear school has been closed, especially in the winter, cheers erupt. In this case, however, the tone was much more somber – especially among the senior class.

Proms were canceled. Any plans they had for a graduation ceremony were put on hold, and for more than 30 seniors, their last opportunity at playing a sport at Louisburg High School was taken away.

In fact, close to 200 students were planning on participating in an activity in the spring, but with no school, the Kansas State High School Activities Association followed suit and canceled the spring season the day after Gov. Kelly's declaration.

Students, parents and coaches alike have had to come to grips that a season they had been looking forward to all year, was never going to happen. Tears flowed, walls were punched in frustration and some were left speechless.

There would be no game days, no Senior Nights and no postseason runs. Athletes had to figure out how to cope with this fact and it was a challenge for the Louisburg girls soccer, track and field, baseball, softball, golf and swim teams.

Many of those teams had big postseason aspirations after success in 2019 and were left wondering what could have been.