

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's 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 4x800-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.

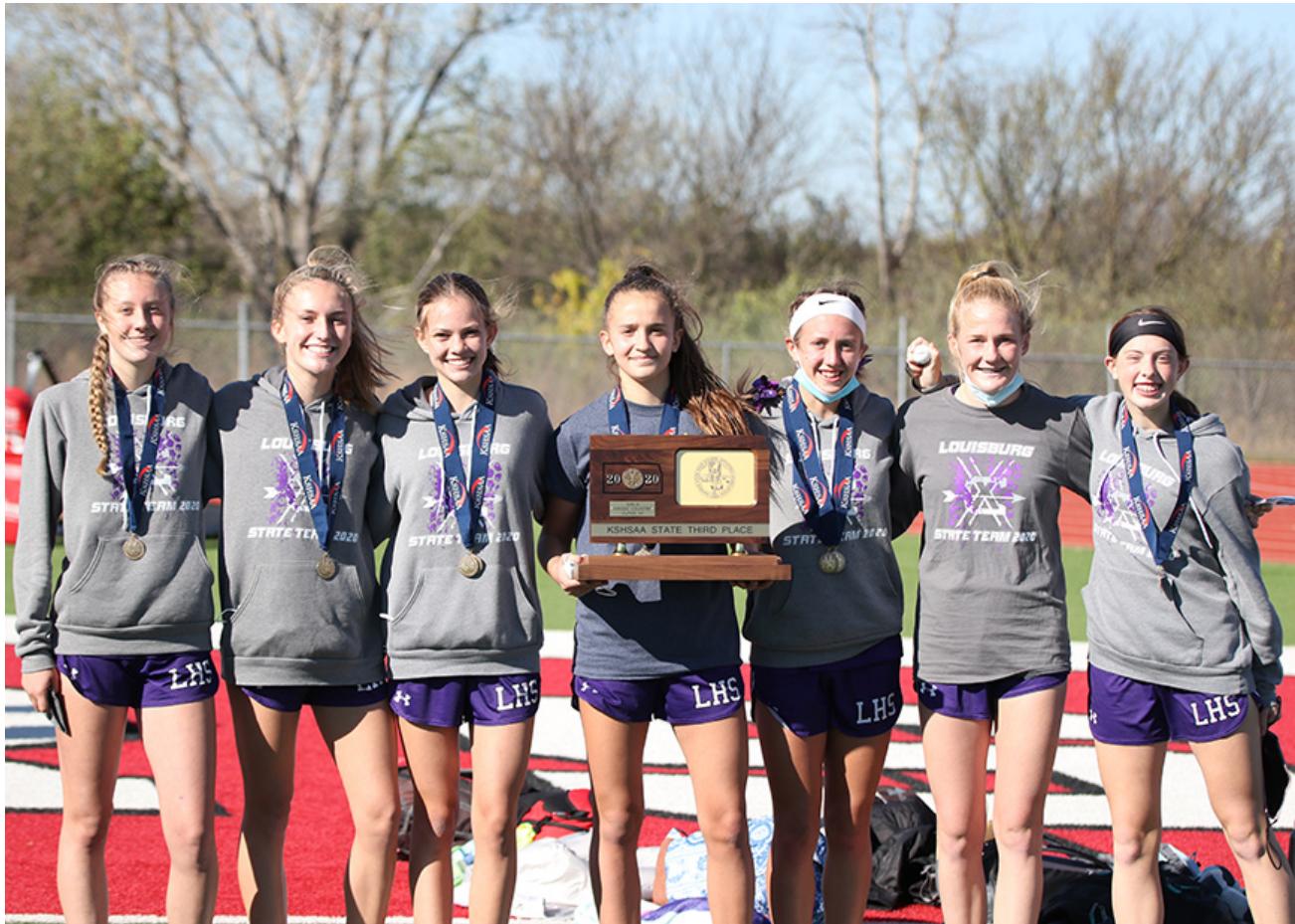
He has taped thousands of ankles, seen even more patients and has touched many lives during his time in Louisburg. That is why this week is one of the more emotional times in his life.

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 it 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.

Making HER-STORY: Lady Cats finish third at state



Members of the Louisburg girls cross country team are (from left) Nova Ptacek, Claire Brown, Maddy Rhamy, Reese Johnson, Lola Edwards, Bree Gassman and Erin Apple.

WAMEGO – 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.

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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.



Louisburg freshman Maddy Rhamy finishes eighth overall at the Class 4A state meet in Wamego.

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 meant so much to me that we got third as a team," Johnson said. "Honestly it was the best feeling ever, and I'm so proud of everyone, especially our freshman. They really stepped up and got us there. I was very surprised that we got third, and when I heard, I was ecstatic."

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."

"They went out and did what they needed to do individually. That is hard to do at a state competition. Your adrenaline gets pumping, sometimes you go out too fast and they didn't do that. They were very composed throughout the race. Maddy, Lola and Reese just kept moving through the field, and I think after the first mile they were like in 20 or 25th place. As the race played out, they were able to move up because they ran their race. It is just incredible."



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

It was also an all-Frontier League finish as the top three Class 4A teams were all league members. Baldwin won the state title with 39 points, Eudora was second with 60 and Louisburg was third with 100 points.

They were the teams that battled each other all season and that competition helped the Wildcats throughout the year. It certainly helped the two Louisburg freshmen as they made statements in their inaugural state race.

Rhamy surpassed her teammate Edwards late in the race to take the top spot on the Wildcat team for the first time all season.

“I am very happy about how I ran at the state meet,” Rhamy said. “I was ready to run my heart out, and I was so happy to

place in the top ten. I know I will never forget the moment when I crossed the finish line and saw my place. I wanted to do the best I could for the last meet of the season, and I think I did just that."

Edwards ran a strong race from the beginning as she was in fifth place at one point and was able to secure her first state medal.

"Overall I felt that I gave my all on Saturday's race," Edwards said. "Unfortunately I was gone from training the previous week, but I wasn't going to let that change the way I prepared for the big race. My goal was to finish in the top ten, and I was so happy to reach that goal when I crossed the finish line. It was a great experience and I can't wait to do it again next year."



Junior Reese Johnson makes her way up a hill Saturday at Wamego Country Club.

As for Johnson, the Louisburg junior was coming off an injury herself. She missed three meets late in the season, but was able to come back at regionals.

It was that hard work that propelled her to her second state medal after finishing in the top 10 two years ago as a freshman.

"I think I ran alright for being out for a few weeks," Johnson said. "It definitely could have been better, but it is what it is and I'm very proud. Getting to where I was this year means

a lot to me after having an off year last year. It meant a lot to get that state medal and it was one of the best days of my life. Nothing can beat that feeling."

The rest of the Lady Cats also ran strong races as Brown finished 49th overall in 22:57 and Gassman was 57th in 23:25. Apple took 67th in 23:42 and Ptacek was 77th in 24:33.

It was also an historic day for the Louisburg boys as the Wildcats competed in their first ever state race as a team.



The Louisburg boys cross country team gets out to a good start in its first-ever state race as a team.

Although, the Wildcats didn't earn a spot on the medal stand, they were still able to put together a memorable season.

Senior Carson Houchen led Louisburg in 33rd place with a time of 18:12.

Junior Ryan Rogers was 46th in 18:29 and senior Cade Holtzen

was 56th in 18:46. Juniors Hayden Ross (19:09) and Caden Bradshaw (19:16) took 66th and 72nd, respectively.

Sophomore Leo Martin was 81st in 19:39 and sophomore Trent Allen was 90th in 20:26.

“I went back and looked at the boys times, and they are going to see a huge improvement from the first time that we ran here,” coach Reese said. “Qualifying for state was really the goal. That is not to say that we didn’t come here to run our best, but getting to state was just icing on the cake for those boys and it completed our season.

“The boys did what they did all year long, which is they ran their races. I thought Carson had a fantastic race, and while he may have not run his best time, you don’t usually run your best on a tough course like this one. Everyone supported each other, day in and day out, and that was pretty awesome to see.”

Now both teams will begin training for what they hope could be another historic season in the fall of 2021.

“I am very excited for next season considering we’ll be returning our whole team, and I think we can be even better next year,” Johnson said. “I’m looking forward to another top 3 finish next year and can’t wait to get back on the cross country grind.”

Week 9 Athlete of the Week:

Maddy Rhamy



Here is the Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Week for week nine of the fall sports season, sponsored by Edward Jones-Craig Holtzen.

MADDY RHAMY, FRESHMAN, CROSS COUNTRY

Louisburg freshman Maddy Rhamy saved one of her best performances for last. Rhamy helped the Lady Cat cross country team to a third-place finish at the Class 4A state meet Saturday in Wamego and made school history as they became the first time to place at state.

In doing so, Rhamy earned a state medal as she led Louisburg with an eighth-place finish with a time of 20 minutes and 58 seconds. She was one of three Lady Cats to medal, along with fellow freshman Lola Edwards and Reese Johnson.

The athlete of the week award is announced every Wednesday morning during the fall season and the winner is selected by Louisburg Sports Zone with the help of nominations from coaches.

Previous winners:

Week 1: Weston Guetterman

Week 2: Lola Edwards

Week 3: Logan Faulkner

Week 4: Rinni McMullen

Week 5: Carson Houchen

Week 6: Cade Gassman

Week 7: Alyse Moore

Week 8: Braden Yows



TWICE AS NICE: Wildcats qualify both cross country teams for state



Members of the Louisburg state qualifying cross country teams are (front row, from left) Bree Gassman, Claire Brown, Nova Ptacek, Reese Johnson, Lola Edwards, Erin Apple, Maddy Rhamy and Alexis French; (back row) assistant coach Shelby Marten, Braden Branine, Trent Allen, Caden Bradshaw, Ryan Rogers, Hayden Ross, Carson Houchen, Cade Holtzen, Leo Martin, head coach John Reece and assistant coach Erin Davis.

BALDWIN CITY – For the last four seasons, the Louisburg cross country team has seen its program grow over that time and history has been made on several occasions and 2020 has been no different.

For the first time in school history, both the boys and girls cross country teams will be heading to the Class 4A state meet together as both teams finished third Saturday at the Class 4A regional meet in Baldwin City. In relation to that, the boys team qualified for the first time ever and head coach John Reece will have a full roster for Saturday's state meet in Wamego.

"Coming into the meet on paper, both teams were sitting in fourth," Reese said. "We just had to come out here and do what we have done all year long. The boys especially ran together and ran hard. I think they all PR'd and I think that just shows the team effort that goes into it. For the first time making it for the boys team is awesome and we have two great seniors leading the way and it is an awesome group of kids.

"As for the girls, there wasn't a senior on the squad, and with that in mind, makes it a lot of fun to see what they can accomplish. They were in the same position, and with Reese (Johnson) coming back from injury to do what she had to do, was great to see. It really was a great day."

For the boys, getting to state has been a goal for several years, especially for seniors Carson Houchen and Cade Holtzen. Along with Ryan Rogers, Caden Bradshaw, Hayden Ross, Leo Martin and Trent Allen, the Wildcats will step on the Class 4A state course for the first time as a unit.

All seven runners earned personal best times at the Baldwin Golf Course, which led to them earning 91 points and the third place finish. It helps fill a void that, to this point, had been empty.

"It meant the world for our team to earn a trip to state," Houchen said. "Our goal all four years I've been in cross country has been to earn a team spot at state. A joke on the boys team the past three years has been that we would always be in the girls' shadow because they pretty consistently go to

state as a team, so it feels really good to be on the same level as them.



Senior Carson Houchen leads a group of runners up a hill during Saturday's regional race in Baldwin City.

"Our goal this whole year has been to put a name on the only blank state board in the gym. We knew it would be close with Baldwin, but they were running on their home course and we knew we had to race our best to keep up with them. As soon as we finished the race, and I saw how everyone had done, there was no doubt in my mind that we'd made it to state."

Bishop Miege won the regional crown with 22 points, Eudora was second with 57 and Louisburg had 91 to take third. The Wildcats beat Baldwin by 11 points to earn that state trip.

The Louisburg girls also performed well in their third place

finish as they took third with 68 points, and were just six points behind second place Eudora as they qualified for state for the fourth straight season. Baldwin won the regional crown with 31 points.

Louisburg got a pair of strong performances from freshmen Lola Edwards and Maddy Rhamy. Edwards took third overall in 19 minutes and 49 seconds, just 10 seconds off Trinity Moore's school record set a year ago, and has the second fastest time in school history.



Freshman Lola Edwards (left) gains on a Baldwin runner Saturday during the Class 4A regional race.

"When I found out both teams were going to state, I was at a loss for words," Edwards said. "State has been a goal, not just for myself, but the team as well the entire season. To accomplish that goal has been a great achievement. Going to state is a big deal, especially as a freshman, but I am going to treat it like any other race and run to compete. I am

blessed to have this opportunity and to be sharing it with such amazing teammates."

As for Rhamy, she was fourth in 20:29 and it vaulted her to fourth on the school leaderboard with a new personal best time.

"I am so excited to be able to go to state as a team," Rhamy said. "I have really bonded with my teammates this year and I can't wait to run at state with them. I think that it's amazing that I get the opportunity to compete at state as a freshman."

However, it might not have been possible without the help of Reese Johnson. The Louisburg junior has been out the last two weeks with an injury and Saturday was her first competition back.

Johnson gutted out the race to take 14th in 21:09 and helped the Lady Cats secure a spot in the state meet.

"She had to come out and run her race and do well and she did that," coach Reece said. "In no way would I expect a PR from her because she hasn't run for two weeks, but she did what she had to do. She got tight and her legs got kind of heavy there toward the end, but she is a tough kid and she finished it and that is what we needed out of her to accomplish what we did."



Freshman Maddy Rhamy sprints to the finish line on Saturday in Baldwin.

Freshman Erin Apple also made school history as she set a new personal record time of 21:50 in 23rd, which is the seventh fastest in school history. Sophomore Claire Brown was right behind her in 24th in 21:52.

Sophomore Bree Gassman was 28th in 22:12 and sophomore Nova

Ptacek finished 46th in 23:47.

Houchen put together the best race of his career to help lead the Louisburg boys as he finished 10th overall in 17:45, which is good for the seventh-fastest time in school history.

"Carson ran a fantastic time," Reece said. "What these boys have done all year is that they run their race and this was a prime example of that. Carson and some of the other boys were at 15th or 20th place through that first mile, but since they were running their races, they just moved through the field. It was just one at a time. Considering this could have been their last race for some of them, they definitely ran their best of the season."

Rogers and Holtzen each recorded top 20 finishes for Louisburg. Rogers ran an 18:28 to finish in 16th, while Holtzen ran an 18:45 to take 20th overall.

Ross (18:46) and Bradshaw (18:47) finished close behind as they took 22nd and 23rd, respectively, while Martin was 25th in 18:54. Allen took 40th in 19:47 to round out the Wildcat lineup.



Senior Cade Holtzen rounds a turn to stay ahead of a Tonganoxie runner. Holtzen took 20th overall.

For Holtzen, the opportunity to go to state his senior year was the perfect way to end what was already a successful senior season.

“To make it to state my senior year meant everything in cross country,” Holtzen said. “Carson and I have been talking about making state since freshman year and to have that come to

fruition as a senior is something I will never forget. We knew that we were on the bubble of third and fourth, but once I crossed the finish line and saw Caden and Ross right behind me, I had a feeling that we were going to state."

Now, the Wildcats will prepare for the final race of their 2020 campaign. Louisburg will take part in the Class 4A state meet Saturday at the Wamego Country Club. The boys will run at 9:30 a.m. and the girls will follow at 10:05 a.m.

"I think both teams are going to run well," Reece said. "A lot of the runners have been on the course the last couple of years now, so they are familiar with it. As far as the girls go, Maddy is the only one that hasn't run on it, but she is such a great runner that she will just hop in with her teammates and she will be fine. I think if we can go down there and be top half with both teams, I would be thrilled with how the season ended."

Four Wildcat runners earn All-Frontier League honors



Senior Carson Houchen (right) earned second team all-league honors Thursday during the Frontier League Invitational in Ottawa. His teammates Cade Holtzen (left) and Ryan Rogers earned honorable mention honors. Freshman Lola Edwards led the

girls with a first-team all-league selection.

OTTAWA – The Louisburg cross country team competed on one of the toughest courses on its schedule last Thursday, along with running alongside its most difficult competition to date.

The Wildcats competed in the Frontier League Invitational at the Eisenhower Road Course in Ottawa and went up against many state ranked teams and returning state medalists. When it was all said and done, four Louisburg runners left the meet with all-league honors.

Freshman Lola Edwards finished fifth overall in the girls race as she ran a time of 21 minutes and 7 seconds to earn a spot on the all-league first team.

Three Louisburg boys also garnered all-league honors. Senior Carson Houchen took 12th in 19:12, which cemented him a spot on the second team. Junior Ryan Rogers, who finished 16th in 19:23, and senior Cade Holtzen, who took 20th in 19:47, were named honorable mention.

“Lola had a great race and moved through the field as the race played out,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “She has improved her racing this year for sure. Then having three runners receive league honors for the boys was awesome. They have put in the time and they are being rewarded for it.”

The Louisburg boys took fourth in the team standings with 95 points and Eudora won the league title with 49. Tonganoxie’s Eli Gilmore won the individual league crown in 17:25.

Wildcat junior Caden Bradshaw just missed out on all-league honors as he took 23rd overall in 19:55 and fellow junior Hayden Ross was 25th in 20 minutes flat. Sophomore Trent Allen took 33rd in 20:25 and junior Sawyer Richardson was 39th in 20:37 to round out the top seven Louisburg runners.

The Lady Cats, who were without one of their top runners in Reese Johnson due to an injury, took fifth in the team standings with 143 points. Eudora won the league team title with 50 points, just five points ahead of Baldwin.

Piper's Grace Hanson won the individual girls crown with a time of 20:12.

Louisburg freshman Maddy Rhamy just missed out on all-league honors herself as she took 24th overall in 23:10 and sophomore Claire Brown was 38th in 23:48. Sophomore Bree Gassman took 44th in 24:18 and freshman Erin Apple took 49th in 24:36.

Sophomore Nova Ptacek crossed the finish in 53rd in 25:02 and senior Alexis French rounded out the Lady Cat lineup in 56th in 25:30.

Along with the competition, both Wildcats teams went up against a difficult Eisenhower Road Course that features numerous steep hills on the 3-plus mile terrain.

"I thought both teams ran well at Ottawa," Reece said. "They worked hard on a tough course and some of the first timers said they could have run it differently and faster. Frontier League is a tough league and we basically repeat this meet for regionals minus Spring Hill, Bonner Springs and Piper."

Louisburg will try for a trip to state this Saturday when the Wildcats compete at the Class 4A regional meet at the Baldwin Golf Course. The top 3 teams, along with the top five individuals who are not among the state qualifying teams, will advance to the Class 4A state meet next week in Wamego.

The girls race is scheduled for 10 a.m. and the boys will follow.

"Regionals is going to be a tough meet," Reece said. "We set a goal to qualify both teams and they are going to do all they

can to accomplish their goals. Reese (Johnson) will be running as her ankle has improved over the past two weeks. It is going to be an exciting finish."

Wildcat boys finish runner-up at home invite; Edwards takes second



Junior Ryan Rogers took ninth overall to help the Louisburg boys to a runner-up finish last Thursday at the Louisburg Invitational. The Wildcat boys medaled four.

In its final tune-up before the postseason begins, the Louisburg cross country team got a chance to run on its home course one final time last Thursday for the Louisburg Invitational.

Although it was a small meet, one that consisted of six teams, it brought a lot of competition from around the area and the Wildcats more than held their own at the Lewis-Young Park course.

The Louisburg boys were two points shy of first as the Wildcats finished runner-up to Fort Scott with 53 points. In the process, Louisburg also medaled four individual runners and continued to show its progression despite missing one of

their main runners in Caden Bradshaw.

"The boys continue their mission to improve weekly and this was another example of the reward received for hard work," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "Four individual medals is outstanding and to finish just behind Fort Scott, a ranked team, and to beat the other league schools for a second place finish as a team is awesome. I want to put them in ghillie suits and quietly roll into the post season and surprise everyone like I know we can."

Along with Fort Scott, the Wildcats competed against Spring Hill, Ottawa, Paola and Piper and saw some of the best competition in the Frontier League.

Louisburg senior Carson Houchen ran another strong race to lead the Wildcats. Houchen finished sixth in 18 minutes and 23 seconds.

Junior Ryan Rogers was the next Wildcat to medal as he finished ninth in 18:57 and senior teammate Cade Holtzen was 10th in 19:12. Junior Hayden Ross also earned a medal as he took 12th in 19:23.

Sophomore Leo Martin finished one spot out of a medal in 16th in 19:31 and freshman Noah Cotter took 17th in 19:49. Junior Sawyer Richardson was 28th in 21:19.



Sophomore Claire Brown leads a pack of runners up a hill toward the finish line last Thursday at Lewis-Young Park.

Freshman Lola Edwards continues to make her mark on the Louisburg girls squad as Edwards took runner-up and set a new personal-best time of 20:27. That time gives her the third fastest time in school history.

Another freshman, Maddy Rhamy, also made a statement as she ran a time of 21:48 to medal seventh and recorded the sixth fastest time in program history. Sophomore Claire Brown also garnered a medal as she took 15th in 23:26.

"It is always nice to run on your course, even if we goofed up

the first go-round with a new path," Reece said. "I feel that we have one of the toughest late season small meets around. The girls ran well again. Lola improved on her PR and Maddy also set a PR which is great to see. We are hopeful for a return at regionals for Reese (Johnson)."

The Lady Cats ran without one of their top runners, Reese Johnson, and took fourth as a team with 78 points.

Sophomore Bree Gassman was 26th in 24:18, while Nova Ptacek (24:23) and Erin Apple (25:05) came in 28th and 32nd, respectively.

The postseason will begin this Thursday when the Wildcats compete in the Frontier League Invitational at Ottawa's Eisenhower Road Course. The following week the Wildcats will compete at regionals as they try to earn a state berth.

"We are in the toughest league in 4A and competition is incredible," Reece said. "Our regional will be our league plus three schools so we will have to bring our A-game. There will be schools not qualify for state that would be a top half finisher, but we are 'Built Different' and we will be ready to compete."

Edwards runs way to her third consecutive title



Louisburg freshman Lola Edwards leads a group of runners during the Perry-Lecompton Invitational last Thursday at Perry Lake.

PERRY – She may only be a freshman, but Louisburg's Lola Edwards is running like a seasoned veteran.

Edwards, who had won two consecutive meets prior to Thursday's Perry-Lecompton Invitational, put together another strong showing. The Wildcat freshman captured her third straight first place finish as she won with a time of 23 minutes and 18 seconds on the Perry Lake course.

In fact, Edwards wasn't the only Louisburg freshman to record a top five finish. Maddy Rhamy finished toward the top of the pack in fourth overall in 25:10.

"The race was done in three groups, so Lola ran by herself in front in that third group and won the meet," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "She has an internal drive that is unbelievable. She has the ability to get into her rhythm of the race and go. Maddy ran an awesome race and was second to Lola. She was in the flow and was smiling the whole race."

The Lady Cats had another top three team finish as they recorded 80 points to finish third overall. They did so without one of their top runners – Reese Johnson – who was unable to compete.

Tonganoxie won the meet with 45 points and Paola was second with 74.

Sophomore Claire Brown ran strong for the Lady Cats as she

also medaled in 20th with a time of 26:40. Sophomore Bree Gassman (27:11) and freshman Erin Apple (27:17) also earned medals in 27th and 30th, respectively. Sophomore Nova Ptacek rounded out the Louisburg lineup in 26th in 27:55.

On the boys' side, senior Carson Houchen continues to run well for the Wildcats as he finished ninth in 20:45. It was his fourth consecutive meet in which he has medaled.

"Carson is on a mission," Reece said. "He is leading the boys team and not holding back. After our little hiccup at the beginning of the season, he has cranked it up and the whole team is running strong. If I did my job correctly, the whole team will be rolling come regionals."

Senior Cade Holtzen also earned a medal for Louisburg as he finished 24th in 21:36.

Junior Ryan Rogers was 34th in 22:22 and fellow junior Hayden Ross was 40th in 22:30. Freshman Noah Cotter (22:32) and sophomore Leo Martin (23:17) took 43rd and 55th, respectively.

It was the first time any of the other runners had competed at the Perry Invitational, which was a replacement on the schedule. Louisburg was originally scheduled to compete in Pittsburgh, but had to be changed due to COVID-19.

Reece said his runners fared well on the new course, but it did have its fair share of challenges.

"Perry was an interesting course," he said. "There were lots of turns and for almost a mile the runners were not in sight as they were running in the woods on a horse trail. The course also measured long by almost a quarter of a mile, so times were not even looked at. Both teams competed well as that is always our goal and it is not always about time."

Louisburg is back in action this Thursday, this time on their home-friendly course at Lewis-Young Park for the Louisburg Invitational. Races are set to begin at 4 p.m.

Week 5 Athlete of the Week: Carson Houchen



Here is the Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Week for week five of the fall sports season, sponsored by Louisburg Family Dental.

CARSON HOUCHE, SENIOR, CROSS COUNTRY

Louisburg senior Carson Houchen has guided the Wildcat boys cross country team for most of the season and that continued Thursday at the Perry-Lecompton Invitational. Houchen led the Wildcats with a ninth place finish in 20 minutes and 45 seconds to earn a medal. This was his fourth consecutive medal to start the season as he also had top 10 finishes at Wellsville and Prairie View.

The athlete of the week award is announced every Wednesday morning during the fall season and the winner is selected by Louisburg Sports Zone with the help of nominations from coaches.

Previous winners:

Week 1: Weston Guettermann

Week 2: Lola Edwards

Week 3: Logan Faulkner

Week 4: Rinny McMullen

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