

Wildcats face tough competition at Paola Invite



Louisburg senior Megan Lemke hands the baton off to sophomore Mikayla Quinn during the 4×100-meter relay Thursday at the Paola Invitational. The Louisburg girls finished sixth overall with 42 points and the boys were fifth with 38 points.

PAOLA – Usually this far into the season, the Louisburg High School track coaches can start to get some sort of an idea of what they have and who fits best in a certain event.

Now they are almost three weeks into the season and there are still plenty of questions to be answered thanks to Mother Nature. In the three meets the Wildcats have competed in, they have run, or thrown into a stiff, brisk wind each time.

During the Paola Invitational on Thursday, it was much of the same as the Wildcats faced tough competition to match the rough weather.

The Louisburg boys finished fifth in the team standings with 38 points and the Lady Cats took sixth with 42 points in the 11-team meet. Paola won the boys team title with 139.5 points and the girls with 215 points.

“I thought overall we kind of took a step backwards in some events,” Louisburg boys coach Gary Griffin said. “I didn’t

think we competed great. We have not had a good day yet for a meet so we are still trying to figure out what we have. I think overall our runners are improving and we will find out how much when we get a good day. Our young kids are still showing improvement and that is what I would expect from everyone on the team. We just need to be more consistent from week to week."

The Lady Cats earned points in eight events on both the track and field events.

Louisburg's 4×400-meter relay led the way as Megan Lemke, Kaitlyn Gaza, Reilly Alexander and Mikayla Quinn finished runner-up in 4 minutes and 34 seconds. Alexander was a late addition to the team

"Reilly Alexander did a great job stepping in with only five minutes to warm up and ran a great leg for the conditions in the 4×400," Louisburg girls coach Greg Darrington said. "She showed me she had a lot of guts and earned some respect from her teammates."

The Lady Cats 4×800 relay of Liz Hildreth, Lauren Becker, Isabelle Holtzen and Shaylor Whitham came in fourth in 11:41. It would be the first of three events that Holtzen scored in.

Following the relay, Holtzen went on to finish third in the pole vault after she cleared 9 feet, which was her best of the season. The Louisburg sophomore also took fifth in the 800-meter run in 2:47.

"I really believe our best performer this meet was Isabelle, who came home with three medals," Darrington said. "She did well in the pole vault and 800 run. She was very instrumental in the 4X800 relay to finish third."

Along with Holtzen's mark in the pole vault, the Lady Cats also scored points in the discus. Junior Ellie Katzer was fifth overall with a toss of 95-7.



Sophomore Wyatt Reece (left) rounds the curve at the start of the 4×800-meter relay in Paola.

Hanna Becker, Lemke, Gaza and Quinn came in sixth in the 4×100-meter relay in 56.09. Quinn and Gaza both ran a time of 1:08 in the 400-meter dash to take fifth and sixth, respectively.

On the boys side, senior Jarod Woodward had another strong performance in the shot put. Woodward took second overall with a toss of 49-2 to lead the Wildcat point-getters.

Freshman Chris Williams ran a strong 400-meter dash in 53.9 seconds to come in fourth. Williams, along with Scott Murphy, Quinn Rigney and Michael Minster, came in fourth in the 4×400-meter relay in 3:42.

In the high jump, Christopher Light also took fourth after clearing 5-6.

Minster, Wyatt Reece, Ben Hupp and Tanner Belcher helped the 4×800 relay take fifth in 9:22. In the 4×100 relay, Jackson Ewalt, Rigney, Brandon Cooper and Williams came in sixth (47.07).

Jacob Jensen rounded out the Wildcat point scorers as he took

sixth in the javelin with a toss of 131-0.

Louisburg returns to the track Thursday when it travels to the Anderson County Invitational in Garnett. It is set to begin at 3:30 p.m.

Wildcats win Show Me Showdown track meet



Louisburg senior Michael Minster rounds the curve during the 4×800-meter relay at the Leavenworth Invitational on March 29. On Friday, the Wildcat boys team won the Show Me Showdown meet at Belton High School.

BELTON, Mo. – The Louisburg High School track team crossed state lines last Friday as it took part in the Show Me Showdown, which was held at Belton (Mo.) High School.

It was the first time the Wildcats had participated in the event, but they were certainly happy they made the trip – especially on the boys side.

Louisburg finished first in the boys team standings with 167 points in the 12-team meet and held off runner-up Clinton

(Mo.), which finished with 161 points.

"I was proud of the way we competed," Louisburg boys coach Gary Griffin said. "The weather was not good. It was cold and windy and our times were not great, but we competed well and scored enough points to win."

The meet was a different one for Louisburg as it competed in seven relay events, when normally it is only three. It gave the Wildcats the chance to rack up more points, however.

Louisburg finished first in the 400- and 800-meter medley relays. Will Ridley, Ben Minster, Quinn Rigney and Chris Williams won the 400 medley in 1 minute and 45 seconds, while Brandon Cooper, Minster, Rigney and Williams ran a 4:17 in the 800 medley to come out on top.

The Wildcats also had a pair of runner-up finishes in the 4×100 and 4×200-meter relays. Cooper, Minster, Rigney and Williams came in second in the 4×100 in 47.24, while Ridley, Michael Minster, Rigney and Williams finished second at 1:40 in the 4×200.

Austin Moore, Scott Murphy, Kennedy Unthank and Jonathon Ventre came in third in the 4×400 in 4:02. Tanner Belcher, Ben Hupp, Michael Minster and Wyatt Reece also took third in the 4×800 in 9:16.

Ridley, Michael Minster, Murphy and Owen Staver came in fourth in the distance medley with a time of 13:30. All seven relays provided Louisburg with key points in its team victory.

Louisburg also racked up a lot of points in the individual track events.

Ben Minster (11.66) and Brandon Cooper (11.91) finished third and fifth, respectively in the 100-meter dash. Reece came in third in the 3,200-meter run in 12 minutes and teammate Devyn Small (12:45) was fifth. Reece (5:17) also took fourth in the

1,600-meter run.

Ventre, a freshman, ran a time of 46.29 seconds in the 300-meter hurdles to take fourth. Hupp came in right behind him in fifth. Eddie Murphy (2:29) and Austin Raetzel (2:30) rounded out the point-getters on the track as they finished fifth and sixth, respectively, in the 800-meter run.

The Wildcats also had a lot of success in the field events.

Junior Jacob Jensen won the javelin with a throw of 135-4 and teammate Dustyn Rizzo was second with a toss of 114-8.

Fellow junior Andrew Goff also earned top high jump honors after he cleared 5-8 and his teammate Chris Light was second with a clearance of 5-6.

Senior Jarod Woodward also stood out in a tough shot put competition as he took second. Woodward set a new personal record for the second time in a week as he recorded a toss of 50-8, more than a foot farther than his first toss of the season at the Leavenworth Invitational.

“Woody had another good day,” Griffin said. “I think he can get even better when the weather warms up and I believe he can get an even bigger throw.”

Teammate Bradley Trageser also had a toss of 44-3.5, which was good for fourth. Sophomore Garrett Lowry came in sixth in the discus with a toss of 110-10.

A pair of freshman also scored points for the Wildcats in the pole vault. Ian Combs and Blue Caplinger came in second and third, respectively, after both cleared 9-6.

“Our young kids like Chris Williams, Austin Moore, Ian, Blue, Brandon and Tanner Belcher have all competed well so far and they are not intimidated by being in a varsity meet,” Griffin said.

Girls finish strong at Belton

The Louisburg girls track team also had their fair share of highlights Friday as the Lady Cats finished fifth in the team standings with 96 points and won two events.

One of those events came in the relays when Reilly Alexander, Julianne Finley, Megan Lemke and Mikayla Quinn won the 4×400-meter relay in 4:43.

"I really believe our 4×400 is our best relay," Louisburg girls coach Greg Darrington said. "The girls are all strong in the 400 meter race. I was pleased with our competitive effort. I wish I could have taken the full team, but understand girls have choices to make during spring seasons. Otherwise, I think we could have had a chance to win the meet."

The other victory for Louisburg came in the pole vault as sophomore Isabelle Holtzen made a big improvement from just three days earlier in her first meet. Holtzen cleared 8-6 to win the event.

"I think Isabelle is a great competitor and will only get stronger as the season continues," Darrington said. "I also think I will have some freshman jumpers that will help score points as the season continues."

In other field events, sophomore Sophie McMullen came in second in the javelin with a toss of 90-09 in her first outing of the year and junior Zoie Gilliland took third with a toss of 80-02. McMullen also scored points in the discus with a throw of 92-11 to take third and fellow sophomore Lexie Reece was fifth at 89-03.

Junior Chloe Renner came in fourth in the high jump after she cleared 4-6 and Finley was sixth with a clearance of 4-4. Lemke finished fourth in the long jump with a mark of 13-5.5.

On the track, Quinn ran a 1:08 in the 400-meter dash to take fourth and later went on to take fifth in the 200 dash in 31.36. Freshman Shaylor Whitham scored points in the 800 (2:53) and 1,600-meter run (6:27) to take fourth and fifth, respectively.

The Lady Cats also finished strong in several other relays.

Carson Buffington, Finley, Holtzen and Klara Riester came in runner-up in the 800 medley relay in 5:04, while Buffington, Finley, Jordon Leach and Riester were fourth in the 400 medley in 2:14.

Alexander, Buffington, Leach and Lemke took fourth in the 4×200 relay (2:05). Quinn, Alexander, Leach and Leach took sixth in the 4×100 relay (58.5) to round out the point-getters.

Louisburg returns to action at 3:30 p.m. on Thursday in Paola for the Paola Relays.

Other Wildcat results are:

Boys

200 dash: Owen Staver, seventh, 27.09; Dustyn Rizzo, eighth, 27.23

400 dash: Austin Moore, seventh, 1:00

Discus: T.J. Dover, seventh, 107-04

Long jump: Andrew Goff, 10th, 16-00; Chris Light, 13th, 13-9.5

Triple jump: Tanner Belcher, 12th, 33-6.50; Brandon Cooper, 15th, 33-0.25

Girls

100 dash: Jordon Leach, 10th, 14.59; Reilly Alexander, 15th, 15.61

100 hurdles: Klara Riestler, 9th, 19.94

Shot put: Lexie Reece, 16th, 20-8

Wildcat track starts season with positives



Louisburg junior Kaitlyn Gaza finds her stride during the start of the 400-meter dash Tuesday during the Leavenworth Invitational at Mill Valley High School. The Wildcat boys and girls teams finished fifth and sixth, respectively.

SHAWNEE – It was windy, cool and the times and distances weren't where they wanted them to be.

Those are all the markings of the first track and field meet of the season and the Louisburg High School track team fit right into that category – except for one.

Wildcat senior Jarod Woodward looked in midseason form during the Leavenworth Invitational on Tuesday. On his first throw of the season, Woodward set a personal record in the shot put with a toss of 49 feet, 7 inches to win the event and was the Wildcats' lone gold medalist on the day.

"It was great for Jarod to have a good throw like that in the first meet of the year," Louisburg boys coach Gary Griffin said. "He could have a great year if he continues to work hard. Hopefully it is a starting point to some big throws."

In the team standings, the Wildcats finished toward the bottom of the seven-team meet. Against bigger schools like Leavenworth, Topeka High, Mill Valley and Bishop Miege, the Louisburg boys totaled 34 points on the day to finish fifth.

The girls team also finished with 34 points and came in sixth place during the meet that was held at Mill Valley High School.



Senior Jarod Woodward releases an attempt in the shot put Tuesday. Woodward won the event with a

**personal best throw
of 49-7**

The Louisburg boys scored points in eight different events, including all three relays, which turned out to be one of the highlights on the day.

Wyatt Reece, Tanner Belcher, Ben Hupp and Michael Minster ran a strong opening 4×800-meter relay to take third in 9 minutes and 18 seconds. The Wildcat 4×400 team of Ben Minster, Michael Minster, Quinn Rigney and Chris Williams ended the meet on a positive note as they came in third in 3:42.83.

Ben Minster, Will Ridley, Rigney and Williams ran a time of 47.42 seconds in the 4×100 relay to finish fourth overall.

Freshman Jonathon Ventre also scored some points on the track for Louisburg. Ventre took fifth in the 300-meter hurdles in 46.56 seconds

“I was pretty happy overall,” Griffin said. “There wasn’t great conditions, but we competed hard and now we have a starting point and hopefully we show improvement throughout the season.

“The 4×400 and 4×800 teams both ran good times for the conditions we had and the fact that we are still not in great shape yet. I thought they competed really well and will continue to get better.”

In the field events, junior Andrew Goff scored points in two events for Louisburg. Goff came in fourth in the high jump after he cleared 5-8 and later finished sixth in the triple jump with a mark of 37-3.



Junior Ellie Katzer lets the discus fly Tuesday at the Leavenworth Invitational. Katzer finished fifth overall.

Junior Jacob Jensen rounded out the Wildcat point-getters as he was fifth in the javelin with a toss of 143-9.

Sophomore Isabelle Holtzen scored points in three events to lead the Lady Cats and it started in the pole vault after she cleared 7-0 to come in third.

During the pole vault, Holtzen had to leave to run the 4×800-meter relay along with Lauren Becker, Liz Hildreth and Madelynn Yalowitz. The Lady Cat team ran strong as they took third in 11:28.

Later in the meet, Holtzen finished fourth in the 800-meter run with a time of 2:45.79.

Also on the track, Mikayla Quinn came on strong in the 400-meter dash and the Louisburg sophomore took fourth in 1:05.29. Junior Kaitlyn Gaza ran a 30.03 to take sixth in the 200-meter dash and sophomore Lilly Mick was sixth in the 300 hurdles in 55.55.

Julianne Finley, Gaza, Megan Lemke and Quinn teamed in the 4×400 relay to end the meet strong as they took fourth in 4:33.97. Gaza, Hanna Becker, Jordon Leach and Quinn ran the

4×100 relay and finished fifth in 55.58.

In the field events, sophomore Kaitlyn Urban had a good first outing in the triple jump as she took fourth at 31-11. Junior Ellie Katzer later came in fifth in the discus with a throw of 94-4.



Louisburg junior Andrew Goff clears a mark in the high jump Tuesday at Mill Valley High School. Goff took fourth overall.

Junior Chloe Renner scored in two events for Louisburg as she was sixth in the high jump (4-4) and long jump (15-4).

“I really feel we have some good young competitive girls,” Louisburg girls coach Greg Darrington said. “I really think the jumpers did well and feel good about our 4×400 team. I really feel the girls have a lot of potential and I’m excited as to where we will finish this year in the league.”

Louisburg returns to the track Friday when it travels to the Show-Me Invitational in Belton, Mo. Field events are set to begin at 3:30 p.m.

Other Wildcat results from Tuesday are:

Girls

100-meter dash: Hanna Becker, 15th, 15.34; Klara Riester, 16th, 15.40

200 dash: Mikayla Quinn, 11th, 30.76; Riester, 12th, 30.96; Julianne Finley, 14th, 31.09

400 dash: Kaitlyn Gaza, 8th, 1:08; Megan Lemke, 9th, 1:09; Finley, 12th, 1:10

800 run: Liz Hildreth, 9th, 2:53.27; Lauren Becker, 13th, 3:00

1,600 run: Shaylor Whitham, 11th, 6:33

3,200 run: Madelynn Yalowitz, 9th, 14:17; Whitham, 10th, 14:34

Long jump: Haley Earl, 14th, 14-6.5; Lemke, 16th, 14-2; Kaitlyn Urban, 17th, 13-10

Triple jump: Earl, 7th, 31-1.5; Chloe Renner, 8th, 30-11

Shot put: Morgan Strumillo, 9th, 27-11; Carson Buffington 14th, 24-7; Lexie Reece, 16th, 21-6.5; Ainsley Vance, 17th, 20-2.5

Discus: Reece, 9th, 85-7; Holly Turner, 13th, 74-9; Strumillo, 17th, 65-6

Javelin: Paige Buffington, 7th, 91-9; Zoie Gilliland, 8th, 86-8; Reece, 15th, 67-2

Boys

100 dash: Ben Minster, 15th, 12.62; Will Ridley, 20th, 13.18; Jonathon Ventre, 23rd, 13.35

200 dash: Minster, 10th, 24.75; Quinn Rigney, 14th, 24.96; Chris Williams, 18th, 25.59

400 dash: Williams, 8th, 55.47; Rigney, 11th, 56.40

800 run: Tanner Belcher, 9th, 2:20.04; Michael Minster, 10th, 2:20.11

1,600 run: Wyatt Reece, 11th, 5:32.80; Devyn Small, 15th, 5:46.67; Jacob Benne, 16th, 5:49.82

3,200 run: Reece, 14th, 12:15; Small, 17th, 12:50; Benne, 20th, 13:19

300 hurdles: Ben Hupp, 9th, 48.05

High jump: Marshall Rooney, 10th, 5-2

Long jump: Andrew Goff, 17th, 17-8.5; Rooney, 22nd, 16-11; Dalton Knipp, 23rd, 16-5; Will Ridley, 24th, 16-4

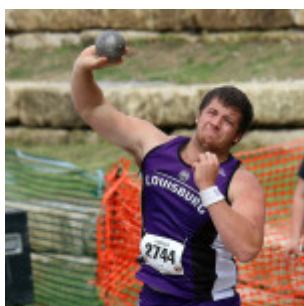
Triple jump: Knipp, 8th, 35-9.5; Rooney, 9th, 35-0

Shot put: Bradley Trageser, 11th, 41-1.5; Garrett Lowry, 12th, 39-6.5

Discus: Lowry, 7th, 118-6; Jarod Woodward, 10th, 98-0; Trageser, 12th, 90-03

Javelin: Dustyn Rizzo, 11th, 127-5

Louisburg track gears up for season



Louisburg senior Jarod Woodward is looking to make his second straight trip to the state track meet this season after qualifying in the shot put a season ago. The Wildcats open their season Tuesday at Mill Valley High School.

The Louisburg High School track and field team is going to have to replace some key pieces from last season's team that competed at the state meet.

Gone is Connor McMullen, a state champion in the discus and medalist in the javelin, along with state medalist hurdler Sean Dennis. Despite that, however, the Wildcats return several state qualifiers from a season ago.

Louisburg returns many key pieces from relays that qualified from state a season ago, along with qualifiers in the field events.

On the boys side, the Wildcats have approximately 60 out for track this year according to coach Gary Griffin, including 38 freshmen and sophomores.

Last season, Louisburg qualified all three relays for the state track meet, but did lose quite a few participants. In the 4×100 and 4×400-meter relays, sophomore Ben Minster is the lone member from both teams to return, while senior Michael Minster, junior Ben Hupp and sophomore Wyatt Reece come back to help the 4×800 team.

Along with those four runners, Griffin hopes other runners such as Quinn Rigney and Chris Williams will be able to fill those gaps.

“Ben, Michael, Quinn, Chris and Wyatt will be the mainstays on our relays, but we are not sure about how the teams are going to look yet,” Griffin said. “It will probably be a fluid situation for the first few weeks.”

Reece will also be looked to lead the Wildcats in the distance races as he is slated to compete in the 1,600 and 3,200-meter runs, while Hupp is the team’s lone returning hurdler.

As for the sprints, Louisburg will have youth on its side as the Wildcats will count on several underclassmen. Ben Minster, Rigney and Jackson Ewalt are the most experienced runners and Griffin hopes several freshmen progress as the season goes in the field events.

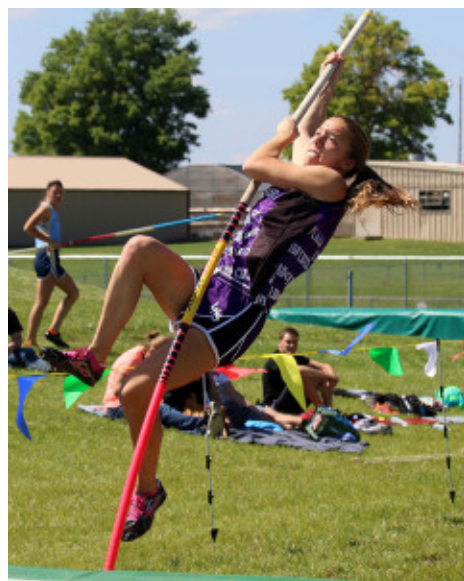
In the field events, senior Jarod Woodward is the lone state qualifier to return as he hopes to build off his state appearance in the shot put. Senior Bradley Trageser, junior T.J. Dover and sophomore Garrett Lowry will give the Wildcats some depth in the shot put and discus.

Juniors Jacob Jensen and Dustyn Rizzo also hope to give the Wildcats some points in the javelin.

“I hope Jarod steps up because he needs to be the leader of the throwers,” Griffin said. “I am expecting all those other guys to score some points in the throws as well.”

The Louisburg girls team also had a good season a year ago, including state appearances in the 4×100 and 4×400 relays and the pole vault.

Coach Greg Darrington has seen a rise in numbers this season as he has 43 girls out this year and believes the Lady Cats will be able to do some good things.



Sophomore Isabelle Holtzen will try for her second straight trip to state this season in the pole vault.

“This is more girls than we have had in several years,” Darrington said “So far it has gone well in practice. I am looking forward to this year and I really feel these girls will step up and be competitive by the end of the year.”

The Lady Cats return two members from their 4×400 relay team in senior Megan Lemke and junior Kaitlyn Gaza. Sophomore Mikayla Quinn will look to fill one of those spots after having a solid year in the 400-meter dash a year ago.

They also hope to score some points in the distance races as

well as Madelynn Yalowitz, Lauren Becker, Liz Hildreth and Isabelle Holtzen all return to strengthen the 4×800 relay team, along with the 800, 1,600 and 3,200-meter runs.

Louisburg's strong suit, however, might be in the jumps – specifically in the pole vault. Holtzen returns after qualifying for state a year ago in the pole vault, while teammate McKinley Mathews will also be a strong vaulter for the Lady Cats as she vies for a spot at state this year.

In the long and triple jumps, Kaitlyn Urban, Haley Earl and Chloe Renner will look to improve off last year's marks. Also, Ellie Katzer and Lexie Reece are making strides in the throws.

"I think the jumpers could be one of our strong areas this year," Darrington said. "Coach (Kyle) Littrell is doing a great job with those girls. I think in pole vault, Holtzen will push Mathews this year and both girls could qualify for state. Also Urban, Earl, and Renner have all been working really hard.

"All my throwers are young, but Ellie is looking good out of the gate. Lexie is showing signs of progress and is working very hard on her form to be able to hit some of her goals this year."

Louisburg will begin its season Tuesday when it travels to the Leavenworth Invitational, which is held at Mill Valley High School. Field events are set to begin at 3:30 p.m.

2016 LOUISBURG HIGH SCHOOL TRACK SCHEDULE

Mar. 29	at Leavenworth
Invitational	3:30 p.m.

Apr. 7	at Paola
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3:30 p.m.

Apr. 14 at Anderson
County 3:30 p.m.

Apr. 21
Invitational Louisburg 4 p.m.

Apr. 28 at Prairie
View 3:30 p.m.

Apr. 29 at Gardner-
Edgerton 3:30 p.m.

May 6 at Wellsville Redbud
Relays 3:30 p.m.

May 12 at Frontier League
(Eudora) 3:30 p.m.

May 20 at Regionals
(TBA) TBA

Paola AD proposes bill to help classification issue



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I am not a believer in participation medals," Hines said. "If they are kindergartners, sure, but when you start playing, part of being successful later in life is learning how to compete. We all competed for a job when you have gone in for an interview and that is good. You need to have that skillset and I am not saying that we need to give more trophies out and

give everyone a shot, but I just want a system in place that is equitable for all so that some don't have an unfair advantage at the expense of the rest and I think that is what is happening."

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

Here is what he found.

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

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

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

many activities, including football.

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

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

"Not only what it does for grades, but for what it does for the human spirit," Hines said.

"When I was the FFA advisor in Paola, we won 10 state championships in nine years and you could tell the interest by the students and the community went through the roof. You can say the same thing about Louisburg and what Jim Morgan does with his FFA kids. People flock to success.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Top 10 stories of 2015



Here are the Louisburg Sports Zone Top 10 Stories of the Year. In each brief explanation of the story, there will be a link to the full story of when the event actually happened. Thanks again for a successful 2015 and I am already looking forward to 2016.



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

10. Welch and Reece qualify for state

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

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

As for Reece, he qualified for the state cross country meet for the first time in his career in October. The Louisburg

sophomore came in 13th overall and was also one of five individual qualifiers. A week later Reece traveled to Wamego to compete at the state meet and ran a 18:43 to come in 71st.



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

9. Accidents bring Louisburg community together

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

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

It was a far cry from 9-year-old Mya who loves soccer, horses and spending time with her fourth-grade friends at Broadmoor Elementary. In a town of less than 5,000 people, the two had

never met.

Two tragic accidents changed all of that.

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

7. Griffin, Cook wrap up college careers

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

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

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



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

6. Wildcat football has big turnaround

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

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



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

5. Louisburg soccer wins regional crown

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

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

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



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

4. Louisburg wrestling qualifies five for state

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

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



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

3. Long-time coaches resign from post

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

1. Lady Cat volleyball takes third at state

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

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

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

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

Opinion: Rough patch leads to new beginning



I am just going to come right out and say it, "I'm scared."

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

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

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

That never took place.

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

I was scared.

After all the tears came the questions. How was I going to

support my family? What am I going to do for a job? The list went on and on and I couldn't come up with many answers.

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

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

Not exactly the best way to alleviate fears.

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

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

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

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

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

Volleyball is primed and ready to make its fourth consecutive state tournament this year after placing in the top four in

the last three years. The Lady Cats return five seniors that have a lot of state experience and that bodes well for another trip to Salina.

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

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

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

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

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

I am still scared, though.

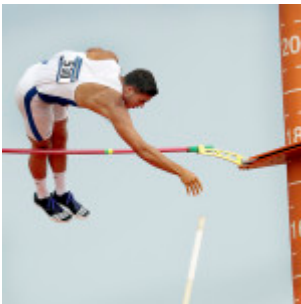
It is that fear that drives me to do the best I can in what I do in my job and in life. I don't want what happened on that day in January to happen again and I will do everything to make sure it doesn't.

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

I am living the American dream.

I just don't want to wake up.

Albright reaches new heights at Kansas



University of Kansas junior Jake Albright clears his personal best of 17 feet, 6.5 inches in the pole vault during the regional meet on May 30 in Texas. The Louisburg High School graduate finished 10th nationally in the pole vault on June 10 in Eugene, Ore.

Photo courtesy of Jeff Jacobsen/KAI

LAWRENCE — During his time at the University of Kansas, Jake Albright has had the chance to soar through the air with some of the best pole vaulters in the nation.

Now, after finishing his junior season, Albright has put himself in that elite group.

At the NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships in Eugene, Ore., Albright cleared 17 feet, 4.5 inches to finish 10th in the nation at the historic Hayward Field track on June 10.

Albright, along with his Jayhawk teammate Nick Meyer, who

finished 13th, made Kansas history. It was the first time since 1989 that two Jayhawks finished in the top 15 in the nation in the pole vault.

"I am very happy with my performance," Albright said. "To get 10th place was an awesome experience, no doubt. As with many things, once you attain it you always want more. In a sport like the pole vault, it is hard to be completely satisfied, though, because you are always striving for that next height, or a higher place in the meet."

Albright's finish also gave him some postseason honors as well. The 2012 Louisburg High School graduate earned Second Team All-America honors after placing in Eugene.

"Competing at the NCAA Championships has been a goal of mine since I came to KU," Albright said. "It was an amazing experience to fulfill that goal by advancing to Eugene, Ore., this year. There is no better place to have the championships than Hayward Field. The facility is amazing and the crowd that the meet brings in is excellent."

"I was definitely nervous before competing, but it was a good kind of nervous. I was excited to compete with top notch vaulters, and see how I could perform. Having my teammate Nick Meyer at the meet competing beside me helped calm me down as well. I can't forget my coach, Tom Hays. He is always there keeping me in check. I couldn't have asked for a better opportunity."

For his first appearance at nationals, Albright didn't seem too nervous as he vaulted with confidence from the very beginning. He needed just two attempts to clear his first two heights before coming up short in his attempt at 17-8.5.

Just two weeks prior to nationals, Albright put together his best performance of his career. He qualified for nationals in the pole vault on May 30 at the regional meet in Austin, Texas, and did so in a pressure packed situation.

On his final attempt, the Kansas junior cleared 17 feet, 6.5 inches to earn a spot in the national meet. The clearance was also a personal-best for Albright.

Of course it always hasn't been smooth sailing for Albright. Like any college athlete, he has hit his bumps in the road and it came earlier this season.

At the end of the indoor season, Albright and his coach were working on a longer approach and the new way didn't exactly suit him.

"The outdoor season started off kind of shaky," Albright said. "I wasn't quite used to the new approach by the time we started going to meets. I performed subpar in a couple early meets before I went back to the slightly shorter approach. I started jumping better in the latter half of outdoor season and I realized I made a qualifying mark for regionals, and I had a shot at making it to Oregon.

"Things came together just in time for regionals. With lots of help from coach Hays, I feel I have progressed considerably. My approach is getting better each year and I hope to nail down the longer approach soon."

Albright will get another crack at the national meet next season as he enters his senior campaign. He has enjoyed his experience on the Jayhawk track team and he hopes to soar to new heights next year.

"So far my experiences at KU have been great," Albright said. "The campus is amazing, and is always being added on to. Student life at KU can't be beat by many universities. As for track, the panel of coaches we have is one of the best in the nation, in my opinion. I couldn't ask for better guidance and instruction.

"The NCAA championship meet has me excited for the next season more than I ever have been before. There is plenty of work to

do until next year, and I am going work my hardest to make it back to Eugene."

O'Brien, Albright to compete at nationals



University of Kansas senior Colleen O'Brien and junior Jake Albright will compete in the NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships beginning today in Eugene, Oregon. Both athletes are graduates of Louisburg High School.

Colleen O'Brien and Jake Albright are about to embark on the most important track meet of their careers.

Beginning today, O'Brien and Albright will compete in the NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships for the Kansas Jayhawks in their respective events. The two Louisburg High School alums are two of 11 Jayhawks traveling to Eugene, Ore. for the national meet.

Albright qualified for nationals in the pole vault on May 30 at the regional meet in Austin, Tex. Albright finished ninth and did so in a pressure packed situation.

On his final attempt, the Kansas junior cleared 17 feet, 6.5 inches to earn a spot in the national meet. The clearance was also a personal-best for Albright.

Albright and fellow Jayhawk vaulter Nick Meyer will hit the runway at 6 p.m. today.

As for O'Brien, the Jayhawk senior finished fifth in the high jump at regionals on May 29. O'Brien cleared 5-11.5 to finish fifth overall thanks to a strong final attempt.

She cleared 5-11.5 on her first attempt which put her into fifth place and secured her a spot for nationals. O'Brien needed just three attempts to get over her first two heights of the day, but things would get a little tense.

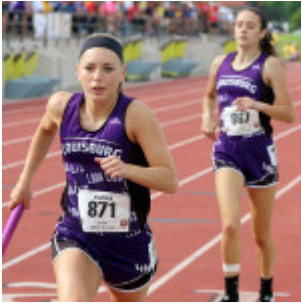
The top 12 in each event qualify for nationals, and with 14 competitors left, O'Brien was facing elimination at 5-10. On her third attempt, O'Brien was able to clear the bar to keep her season alive.

O'Brien has posted a clearance of 5-10.25 or better in each of her last five outings. She will also become the first Jayhawks to compete in the high jump at the NCAA Outdoor Championships since 1994.

Earlier in the season, O'Brien soared over the bar at 6-0.75 at the Kansas Relays in April to become just the third Jayhawk woman in history to clear six feet.

She will compete in the high jump at 3:30 p.m. on Saturday in Eugene.

Lady Cats gain experience at state meet



Louisburg senior Ashley Ruder makes the turn around the track after getting the baton from teammate Kaitlyn Gaza in the preliminaries of the 4×400-meter relay Friday in Wichita.

WICHITA – There were no trips to the medal stand for the Louisburg girls track and field team but that didn’t mean the Lady Cats didn’t gain anything from their experience at the Kansas State Track and Field Championships.

Louisburg competed in three events during the meet on Friday and Saturday at Wichita State University.

Isabelle Holtzen had the highest finish of the three as the Louisburg freshman finished 12th overall in the pole vault after she cleared 8 feet, 6 inches. It wasn’t the best of conditions either as Saturday morning was blustery and cold inside Cessna Stadium.

“I think with the conditions and everything I thought Isabelle did very well,” Louisburg coach Greg Darrington said. “She has had a great season and I couldn’t be prouder of her. I think state was a great experience for her and there are only better things to come.”

Holtzen has steadily improved over the last month in the event as she has set several personal records. She cleared 9-0 at regionals to finish second and qualify for state after starting the season clearing 7 feet.



Louisburg freshman Isabelle Holtzen clears the bar at 8 feet, 6 inches in the pole vault Saturday at the Class 4A portion of the state meet in Wichita. Holtzen finished 12th overall.

“She is a tremendous competitor and hard worker and that is why she has had so much success this year,” Darrington said of Holtzen. “She works hard in practice and she is very coachable. If she keeps that up she is going to be really good.”

Freshman Bailey Belcher took to the track on Friday for the preliminaries of the 200-meter dash and competed against the state’s best sprinters. Belcher came in 13th in 26.87 seconds.

Belcher had a strong season for the Lady Cats as she scored several points in the sprints all season. She had her best performance in the 200 at regionals when she broke the school record in the preliminaries in 26.17 seconds.

“The thing that impressed me the most about Bailey is how much of a competitor she is and it showed by how disappointed she was that she didn’t run her best time,” Darrington said. “I think that says a lot about Bailey. She wanted to go out to state and compete against herself and hopefully get a PR (personal record). She was disappointed she didn’t do that, but she is a great kid and had a good season.”

Also on Friday, the 4×400-meter relay of Kaitlyn Gaza, Ashley Ruder, Makenzie Kallevig and Megan Lemke competed in the preliminaries of the event.

The Lady Cat team ran a time of 4 minutes and 21 seconds to finish 15th overall against some of the state’s best. The four runners came off a regional meet where they ran a personal best 4:17, but still had a good season according to Darrington.

“At state it is always difficult if you are just doing one event because there is a lot of standing around and waiting, so it might have been a little tough on them, but I thought they ran ok,” Darrington said. “Anytime you get to state it has been a good year and it was a great experience for them.”