

# Dennis wins hurdles in opening meet



Louisburg senior Sean Dennis pulls away from the field in the 110-yard hurdles Tuesday during the Leavenworth Invitational at Mill Valley High School. Dennis won the event in a personal best time of 15 seconds

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SHAWNEE – It didn't take long for Sean Dennis to pick up his first, of what he hopes to be several top finishes this season.

Dennis, who qualified for the state track meet last season in the 110-meter hurdles and 100-meter dash, blew by the field in one of those events Tuesday at the Leavenworth Invitational.

The Louisburg senior recorded a personal best time of 15 seconds in the 110-yard hurdles to win the event that was held at Mill Valley High School. The Wildcats ran on a yard track, instead of the normal meter track they will run on the rest of the season.

“It was a personal record time for Sean and he ran well even when it was not a great hurdler wind,” Louisburg boys coach Gary Griffin said. “I think he has a shot in all hurdle races he runs this year.”

The Wildcats also picked up several medals in the throws,

including two from Connor McMullen.

McMullen, a senior, found himself in a battle with Leavenworth's Willie Morrison in the discus. McMullen recorded a throw of 179 feet to start the season, but Morrison topped him with a throw of 189 to win the event.

McMullen also fared well in the shot put as he finished third with a toss of 44 feet, 10 inches. However, teammate Jarod Woodward picked a good day to set a personal best throw.

Woodward, a junior, recorded a throw of 45-9 to finish second and get his season off to a good start. Both Wildcats went up against the best in the shot in Morrison. The Leavenworth senior hit a throw of 68-2, which was the second largest mark in state history.

"I think Connor threw alright, I know he will work hard and they will probably see each other again at the KU relays," Griffin said of the discus battle. "I was happy to get major points in the shot put and I think Jarod and Connor will continue to get better in that event. I think they can both throw over 50 feet this year."



**Louisburg freshman Bailey**

**Belcher was third in the high jump after clearing 4 feet 8 inches.**

On the girls' side, freshman Bailey Belcher had an impressive debut in her first varsity meet. Belcher finished third in the high jump after she cleared 4-8.

Belcher also had some success as she tied for fourth in the long jump with a mark of 15-5 and also fared well on the track as she was fifth in the 100-yard dash in 12.94 seconds.

"I really feel that Bailey did a great job competing in her first track meet," Louisburg coach Greg Darrington said. "She has the potential of placing in three or four events at our league meet, which would be a great accomplishment for a freshman. With coach (Kyle) Littrell working with her, I'm sure he will get her performing at her best that time of the year."

The Lady Cats also earned some points in throws as Lexie Reece was seventh with a throw of 86 feet in the discus. Makayla Quinn came in sixth in the 400-yard dash in 1:06.45 and Isabelle Holtzen was seventh in 2:45.84 in the 800-yard run.

"I was very proud of our young throwers and how hard they are working to make progress," Darrington said. "This was a tough first meet and the girls will keep improving. I really like their attitude and I am expecting good things from all the throwers. They know now what they need to improve on and can get this done at practice. The girls know that working on footwork and drill will benefit them more than just throwing implements."

Louisburg returns to action Thursday when it travels to the Paola Invitational. The meet is set to begin at 3:30 p.m.

*(EDITOR'S NOTE: Full results from the meet were not made available at the time of his story's release as the school was not given final times and distances. Should I get full results I will add them to the story at a later date)*

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## LHS track returns state qualifiers



Wildcat sprinters (from left) Mason Wilde, Ben Minster and Ashley Ruder get some work in during Monday's practice at Wildcat Stadium. Louisburg track opens its season Tuesday in Leavenworth.

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There is nothing Connor McMullen likes more than throwing the discus and he does it pretty well.

McMullen, who finished second at the state track and field meet last season, has even higher goals for himself this season. The Louisburg High School senior would like nothing more than to be the school's next state champion.

He is already well on his way to doing that as he competed in

a meet in Dallas, Texas, over spring break and won with a throw of 180 feet, 1 inch. McMullen, who has signed to throw the discus for the University of Kansas next year, is one of the favorites to win state in Class 4A.

McMullen won't just compete in the discus this season for Louisburg track as he will also be one of the team's best in the shot put.

"I think Connor should be the favorite in the disc in 4A," Louisburg boys track coach Gary Griffin said. "He already won a meet in Texas over spring break and threw 180 feet. I would love to see him break the 50-foot barrier in the shot and score some points in the state track meet in that event."

McMullen is one of several returning state qualifiers for the Wildcat track teams that feature several underclassmen. The boys team has approximately 50 out this season, while the girls feature 30 athletes.

On the boys' side, senior Sean Dennis returns after qualifying for state in two different events a year ago. Dennis made the state meet in the 110-meter high hurdles and the 100-meter dash.



**Senior Sean Dennis works on his form in the hurdles. Dennis is a returning state qualifier in the hurdles and**

## **100-meter dash.**

Joining Dennis are fellow seniors Mason Wilde and Dawson Christy who have also qualified for state in previous relays and both will help out in the relays again. According to Griffin, Christy will compete in the 400-meter dash and Wilde will also compete in the sprints.

“Sean had a good year last year and came into this season in good shape,” Griffin said. “Mason and Dawson have also qualified for state and I am expecting good things from them.”

Outside of McMullen, junior Parker Cates leads the Wildcats in the field events after qualifying for state in the pole vault last season.

“We are in the process of sorting out our jumpers and throwers, but hope some of our younger kids can step up in those events,” Griffin said. “We have 30 freshmen and sophomores and some are talented enough to help us at the varsity level.”

On the girls’ side, the Lady Cats return two groups of state qualifiers.

Senior Ashley Ruder, juniors Makenzie Kallevig and Megan Lemke, and sophomore Kaitlyn Gaza return after qualifying in the 4×100-meter relay a year ago. All four will also compete individually in the sprints.

“So far the practices have been going great,” Louisburg girls coach Greg Darrington said. “We have 30 girls out for track and almost all freshman and sophomores. I really like how hard the girls are working and their athleticism. We are really young and could struggle early in the year but we have some strong sprinters and jumpers this year to help carry us.”

In the field events, junior McKinley Mathews comes back after a strong sophomore season that led her to advancing to the

state meet in the pole vault. Darrington also expects freshman Bailey Belcher to make her mark in the jumps.

“Bailey is someone who could do great things for us in the jumps,” Darrington said. “Our strength will be on the track this year and think our girls have a lot of potential for a few years to come if I can get the throwers competitive. The throwers are still young with no upper-class athletes but plenty of potential with some young girls. I think by the end of the year we should be competitive in all three throwing events.”

The Wildcats won't have to wait much longer to compete as they travel to the Leavenworth Invitational at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday. Louisburg will also hold its home invitational on April 23.

#### **LOUISBURG HIGH SCHOOL TRACK SCHEDULE**

Mar. 31	@Leavenworth 3:30 p.m.
Apr. 6 Varsity)	@ Prairie View (Junior 4:30 p.m.
Apr. 9	@ Paola 3:30 p.m.
Apr. 13	@ Chanute (Junior Varsity) 3 p.m.
Apr. 16	@Anderson County-Garnett 3:30 p.m.
Apr. 20	@Paola (Junior Varsity) 3:30 p.m.
Apr. 23	Louisburg Invitational

3:30 p.m.

Apr. 30

@Prairie View  
3:30 p.m.

May 1

@Gardner  
3:30 p.m.

May 8

@Wellsville  
3:30 p.m.

May 12

@Eudora (Junior Varsity)  
4 p.m.

May 14  
meet)

@Baldwin (Frontier League  
3:30 p.m.

May 22

@Regionals  
TBA

May 29  
University)

@State (Wichita State  
TBA