

Thank you, Louisburg!



Getting to cover so many great kids was an honor for me, including these guys as they were generous enough to let me in their group picture.

Eleven years ago, I was a nervous wreck.

I had just been laid off from my newspaper job, one where I had spent seven years covering Louisburg. Like so many others in this profession, I suddenly found myself staring at an uncertain future as newspapers continued to disappear. Jobs were scarce. Stability was gone. And I had a family to support.

I knew I was probably going to have to take a job I didn't want – something far from journalism – just to make ends meet.

Then an idea hit me.

With news media shifting more and more online, I wondered: *Would Louisburg support something like this?* Would the community care enough about local sports to follow an independent site dedicated solely to their athletes?

As it turned out, the answer was an overwhelming yes.

Because of the relationships I had built during my first seven years here, there was an appetite from local businesses to support the idea – and many of them never wavered. Eleven years later, a lot of those same businesses were still standing beside Louisburg Sports Zone, believing it was an important piece of the community.

They were right – and I couldn't agree more.

This past decade-plus has been some of the best years of my life. Through Louisburg Sports Zone, I formed incredible relationships with coaches, athletes, administrators, parents and community members. Even as a graduate of rival Paola, the Louisburg community adopted me as one of their own.

For those of you around my age or older, this might resonate.

I often felt like *Norm* from *Cheers*.

Every time I walked into a gym, stadium or field, I'd hear, "Hey Andy!" or "Thanks for coming!" or "We appreciate you." So many people knew my name – even people I didn't know – simply because they appreciated what I did.

Instead of an icy cold glass in my hand, I carried a camera. My barstool wasn't at a counter – it was on the sideline, capturing moments as they happened. And there were plenty of them.

State championships. State tournament appearances. Individual champions and medalists. Record-breaking performances.

I was lucky enough to see it all.

But my favorite part was always watching kids grow – seeing freshmen mature into seniors and leave as confident, capable young adults. That transformation never got old.

My very first event as Louisburg Sports Zone was a home basketball game. I was only a couple months removed from being laid off and still unsure if this idea would work or if anyone would even care.

Those worries disappeared quickly.

As I walked into the gym, Natalie Moore, Kirstin Lowry and Kallie O'Keefe stopped their warmups to smile and wave. Coach Shawn Lowry walked clear across the court to shake my hand and welcome me back.

More than a decade later, I still get those same smiles from athletes and handshakes from coaches and parents alike. Those connections are what made this decision so difficult.



Was fortunate to interview so many student athletes these last 11 years.

Six months ago, I was offered a position with KSHSAA Covered and the Kansas High School Activities Association. Honestly, I

never thought I'd have another writing job outside of Louisburg Sports Zone. I fully intended to keep doing this until the appetite for it simply wasn't there anymore.

But the opportunity was too good to pass up – and it was the right move for my family.

I knew the connections wouldn't be the same. Starting over is hard, especially when you know what you're leaving behind. My favorite part of this job was feeling the appreciation from the community and knowing I was giving people something positive to read.

I wasn't perfect. I made mistakes along the way. But this community allowed me to grow – as a writer, photographer and a person. I always tried to do the best I could and to cover every sport as fairly and equally as possible.

The last five or six years put me in an interesting position, as my own kids were playing varsity sports. How do you balance being a supportive dad and a journalist at the same time? I hope I did it right.

One of the biggest perks of this job was getting to write about my kids – their first varsity goal, first basket, first shutout or a big volleyball performance. I know how lucky I was to experience that.

None of this would have been possible without my family – especially my wife, Jennifer. I wasn't home much in the evenings, especially with young kids, and that wasn't easy. She never stopped supporting me.



It was awesome to have my family with me as I was surprised with Louisburg Citizen of the Year a few years ago.

To my kids – Jordan, Ally and Carter – thank you for understanding the crazy hours and for supporting me even when

I couldn't be at everything like other parents. I love you more than you know.

I also want to thank all of my advertisers, past and present. Louisburg Sports Zone doesn't exist without you. Craig Holtzen and Edward Jones, Dixon Contracting Services, White's Automotive, Prime Accounting Services, Amborn Stone, Wildcat Vet Clinic, Dr. Andy Hill, Destination Fun Travel, Vance Brothers, Go Brolly, First National Bank, First Option Bank, Landmark Bank, Dr. Laura's Orthodontics, IronHorse Family and Cosmetic Dentistry, Louisburg Family Dental, Vohs Pharmacy, Elliott Insurance, Magnum Equipment, Louisburg Athletic Club, Louisburg Library, Tri-County Pest, Midwest Collision – and so many others along the way.

I also wanted to give a big shoutout to a Louisburg graduate – Kenneth Sweeney. He has been my “web guy” this whole time. He helped design the site and has also been there to help me troubleshoot what problems have come up since then. I couldn't have done it without him.

Thank you to every coach I've worked with. Getting to know you and promote your programs has truly been an honor. I appreciate you enduring my countless emails that I send out every week. You have helped make Louisburg Sports Zone what it is as well. I will miss you all.

And finally, the student-athletes – you are the reason this worked. Thank you for letting me into your lives and giving me so many incredible stories to tell. And consider this a long-overdue apology to anyone I ever did “dirty” with an unfortunate action photo.

So here I am, 11 years later, feeling some of those same nerves as I move into something new. The last six months with KSHSAA Covered have been great, and I've been welcomed with open arms.

Still, walking away from something I built was not easy.

I only hope that Louisburg Sports Zone has been as much of a blessing to you as it has been to me. These have been some of the best times of my life – and I will treasure them always.

Thank you, Louisburg.

Top 10 Louisburg Sports Stories of 2025



It was a successful, and eventful, year for Louisburg High School athletics and for those who are connected to the Wildcat program.

This past year created a lot of school history for LHS and a

few programs made their way to state competition.

Below are the top stories from 2025, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the writeup 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.

Although 2025 will be the last for Louisburg Sports Zone, I am looking forward to seeing, from a distance, what Louisburg athletics can accomplish in the future. Thank you all for the support in these last 11 years. I will never forget it.



Louisburg senior Sam Frederick carded an 87 during the May 19 regional tournament and earned a top 10 finish and a state

bid, along with teammate Derek Frederick.

10. Wildcat golf qualifies two for state

A year ago, the Louisburg golf team suffered heartbreak when the Wildcats were completely shut out of the state tournament.

Not this year, however.

The Wildcats sent two golfers to the state tournament this past May as senior Sam Frederick and junior Derek Frederick both represented Louisburg after earning a spot following the May 19 regional tournament at the Independence Country Club.

Both players competed in their first state tournament, which was held May 27 at the Sand Creek Station Course in Newton.

Sam Frederick earned a regional medal with a top 10 performance as he led the Wildcat team. The Louisburg senior finished 10th with an 87 on a tough Independence Country Club course. Independence had the top three individual finishers, led by champion Ethan Small, who had a 75.

Derek Frederick was the final individual to qualify for the state tournament as he carded a 91 and took 17th overall.

9. Coaching changes as Brown, Crossley, Schonning take over volleyball, wrestling, girls soccer programs

There were some coaching changes in 2025 as three teams found new leaders to take charge of their respective programs.

Rich Brown (volleyball), Shawn Crossley (wrestling) and Dawson Schonning (girls soccer) were all hired new Louisburg head coaches.

Brown, who took over from Leanna Willer, helped the Wildcats to the sub-state championship game this past season.

Crossley takes over from long-time coach Bobby Bovaird, who resigned following the season earlier this year. Crossley, who is an LHS alum and former Wildcat wrestler, was an assistant coach the last several years.

As for Schonning, he takes over from former coach Jordan Roquemore who helped lead the Wildcats to a fourth-place state finish a year ago. Schonning, who is new to the district this year, was an assistant coach on the boys team this past fall.



Louisburg senior Sabra Brueggen swims the 200 individual medley on May 24 during the Class 5-1A Kansas State Swim and Dive Championships in Topeka.

8. Brueggen earns pair of state swim medals

TOPEKA – As Sabra Brueggen stepped onto the state swim podium for the final time, a flood of memories came rushing back.

Memories of when it all started, the friends she made and all her successes along the way. Brueggen has been one of the top swimmers in Class 5-1A the last four years and she proved it once again on May 24 during the Kansas State Swim and Dive Championships in Topeka.

The Louisburg senior ended her high school career with two state medals and a lifetime full of memories.

“Ending my high school career was a very sentimental moment for me,” Brueggen said. “It was the last time I would be racing some of the girls I have been swimming against since age six. Being able to share the podium with them one last time made it even more meaningful, making me very proud of how I performed at my final state meet.”

Brueggen had strong swims throughout 2-day meet that began on May 23 at the Capitol Federal Natatorium. In the prelims, she qualified for the finals in fifth in both the 200-yard individual medley and 100 backstroke.

In the finals, Brueggen found her way to the medal stand as she finished sixth in the 200 individual medley in 2 minutes and 14.42 seconds.

The 100 backstroke proved to be much of the same for Brueggen there as she also medaled sixth in a time of 58.81 seconds. It completed a string of four straight years of earning a state medal.



The Louisburg girls cross country team of (from left) Talen McMurray, Annie Hornberger, Karissa Williamson, Maddox McGhee, Hailey Shelton, Reese Smith and Felicity Allen won the program's first regional title.

7. Wildcat girls make history with first regional cross country title

NEODESHA – For the first time in program history, the Louisburg girls cross country team left a regional meet as champions.

On a rainy, muddy Saturday at Riverside Park in Neodesha, the Wildcats powered through the slick conditions to win the Class 4A regional championship with 39 points – seven ahead of runner-up Paola. The victory also secured a state berth for the entire Louisburg squad.

"It was awesome and emotional to see the girls leave Neodesha as regional champs," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "It has been a long time in the making as we have had multiple teams qualify for state but have never won a regional title. The rankings had us winning the meet, but those are just rankings. The girls showed up to compete and that is exactly what they did."

It was a youthful lineup that led the Wildcats to history, featuring two freshmen, four sophomores and one junior – and the youngest runners set the tone. Freshman Karissa Williamson finished fourth overall in 22:40.26, just ahead of fellow freshman Maddox McGhee, who took fifth in 22:40.46. Sophomore Hailey Shelton placed sixth in 22:57, giving Louisburg three runners in the top 10.

Sophomore Reese Smith finished ninth in 23:50, junior Talen McMurray placed 16th in 24:16, and sophomores Felicity Allen and Annie Hornberger rounded out the lineup in 23rd and 27th, respectively.

The team went on to run at state along with Truman Ellison, Titus Ellison and Spencer Mattison, who qualified for state on the boys side.



Louisburg senior Ashton Moore wrestles in the 215-pound state championship in Salina. Moore finished second overall.

6. Moore state runner-up in wrestling, Wildcats qualify 7 for state

SALINA – In the final match of his wrestling career, Ashton Moore found himself competing for a state championship.

It was exactly the place he envisioned himself being, even before the season started. The result, however, was a different story.

Moore's dreams of a state title were dashed Saturday at the Class 4A state wrestling tournament in Salina. Smoky Valley's Parker Gardner ended his run with a 13-5 major decision at 215 pounds.

As disappointing as the loss was for Moore, looking back on his long wrestling career helped ease the pain – as did the second place state medal.

“It was tough taking that loss,” Moore said. “I was pretty down about it, but then I had a moment that put things more into perspective for me. After our practice on Friday, Coach (Bobby) Bovaird took us up to the top of the arena to talk about the tournament. Sitting there I remembered being in that same spot as a sixth grader watching the championship round there. At that age I thought those guys were amazing and the toughest people I’d ever seen.

“So after my loss I thought back to that moment being a sixth grader and I was able to realize how far I’ve come. To see myself at that level now made me very proud I was able to make it to that stage.”

The Wildcat program also had six other wrestlers compete at the state tournament, including two on the girls side.

Seniors Brayden Yoder (215), Canaan Clayton (120), Mika McKittrick (132) and sophomore Levi Cotter (106) each finished the tournament with an 0-2 mark.

On the girls side, Leola Eslinger and Brooklyn DeWeese became the first Wildcat girls to ever qualify for state.



The Louisburg Jazzy Cats pose with their third place state plaque.

5. Jazzy Cats take third at state dance

The Louisburg High School Jazzy Cats made their mark in program history on Nov. 21, earning a third-place finish in Class 4A at the State Game Day Spirit Showcase at the Stormont-Vail Events Center in Topeka.

In their first-ever trip to state competition, the Jazzy Cats not only reached the finals but left with some hardware.

Coach Sarah Alexander said the entire experience was meaningful, not only because of the results, but because it was all uncharted territory for the program.

“This was the first time the Jazzy Cats had ever attended state, so the entire experience was brand new for all of us,” Alexander said. “To come home with a state plaque was absolutely incredible. The girls were thrilled just to have the opportunity to compete, and bringing home a plaque made all of their hard work feel truly rewarding. It was such a special moment for the team and a huge milestone for our program.”

Louisburg scored 81.41 in the finals, just enough to edge Holton (81.23) by the slimmest of margins for the final spot on the podium. Ottawa won the state championship with a score of 90.13, while Bishop Miege secured second at 85.77.



The Louisburg cheer team finished as the state runner-up at the 4A state competition on Nov. 22 in Topeka. It is the sixth top 3 finish for the Wildcats in the last seven years.

4. Louisburg cheer earns Class 4A state runner-up

TOPEKA – The Louisburg High School cheer team added another trophy to its growing collection on Nov. 22, earning the Class 4A state runner-up title at the Game Day Cheer Championships at Stormont-Vail Events Center.

The Wildcats posted an 87.73 in the finals to take second place behind defending state champion Paola, which won with a 94.27. Holton finished third at 85.

For Louisburg, the return to the podium was nothing new. The Wildcats have now finished in the top three six times in the last seven seasons, cementing themselves as one of the state's

most consistent programs.

Louisburg entered the finals in fourth place, boosted by a Fight Song and Crowd Leading routine that ranked second among all teams. The Wildcats had roughly 20 minutes to review score sheets and adjust before stepping back onto the mat—pressure they handled with poise.

“It was truly a special day for all of us,” head coach Breanna Kostroske said. “From the moment we arrived, the athletes were focused, calm, and determined. They’ve poured so much into this season, so seeing them step onto the mat with confidence and joy made the entire experience incredibly meaningful.”



Louisburg senior Cooper Wingfield won the Class 4A state pole vault title on May 30 at Wichita State University.

3. Wingfield wins state pole vault title; Meyer, Vohs earn three state medals to lead Wildcat track

For the last four years, Louisburg has dominated the pole vault on the boys side in Class 4A and had its fair share of success on the girls side.

Caden Caplinger and Maddy Carpenter-Ross earned back-to-back state titles during that span and now it was Cooper Wingfield's opportunity.

Wingfield won gold in the pole vault in 2024 and was the favorite to win again this season – and he did it with ease. The Louisburg senior cleared 15 feet, 6 inches to win his second consecutive state championship during the Class 4A meet on May 30 at Wichita State University.

“It means a lot to win it back to back, not only for myself, but also to continue what Caden and Maddy had done before me,” Wingfield said. “This year made it four in a row that Louisburg had a state champion in the boys pole vault. It also made me the third back to back pole vault state champion for Louisburg in the last four years. I really wanted to continue that legacy and cement the dynasty we had and I am proud that I did.”

It had been a special year already for Wingfield as he broke his own school record earlier in the year with a clearance of 15-7.75 at the Kansas Relays.

Just like a year ago, his teammate Jacob Brown joined Wingfield on the state podium. Brown earned a fifth place medal after he cleared 14 feet as the Louisburg senior ended his Wildcat career as one of the best in the state.

Aidan Meyer and Myles Vohs each recorded three state medals as

they helped the Wildcats to a ninth-place finish with 32 points.

Meyer cemented his place in the Wildcat track history books in one of those events. The Louisburg senior broke a 14-year-old school record in the 400-meter dash as he earned a fourth place finish in 48.83 seconds.

As for Vohs, he opened the state meet with a fifth-place finish in the long jump. Meyer, Vohs, along with Gavin Lohse and Caleb Feldkamp, finished sixth overall in the 4×100 relay in 43.76 seconds.

Vohs, Meyer, along with Colton Blue and Emmett White, put together an all-senior 4×400-meter relay that took sixth in 3:27.

Another Louisburg senior, Jerynce Brings Plenty, ended his Wildcat track career with a state medal as well. Brings Plenty finished seventh in the 1,600-meter run in 4:39.78.

On the girls' side, the Louisburg 4×100-meter relay, Kendall Crossley (100-meter dash) and McKenna Lohse (shot put) all found their way to the state podium.

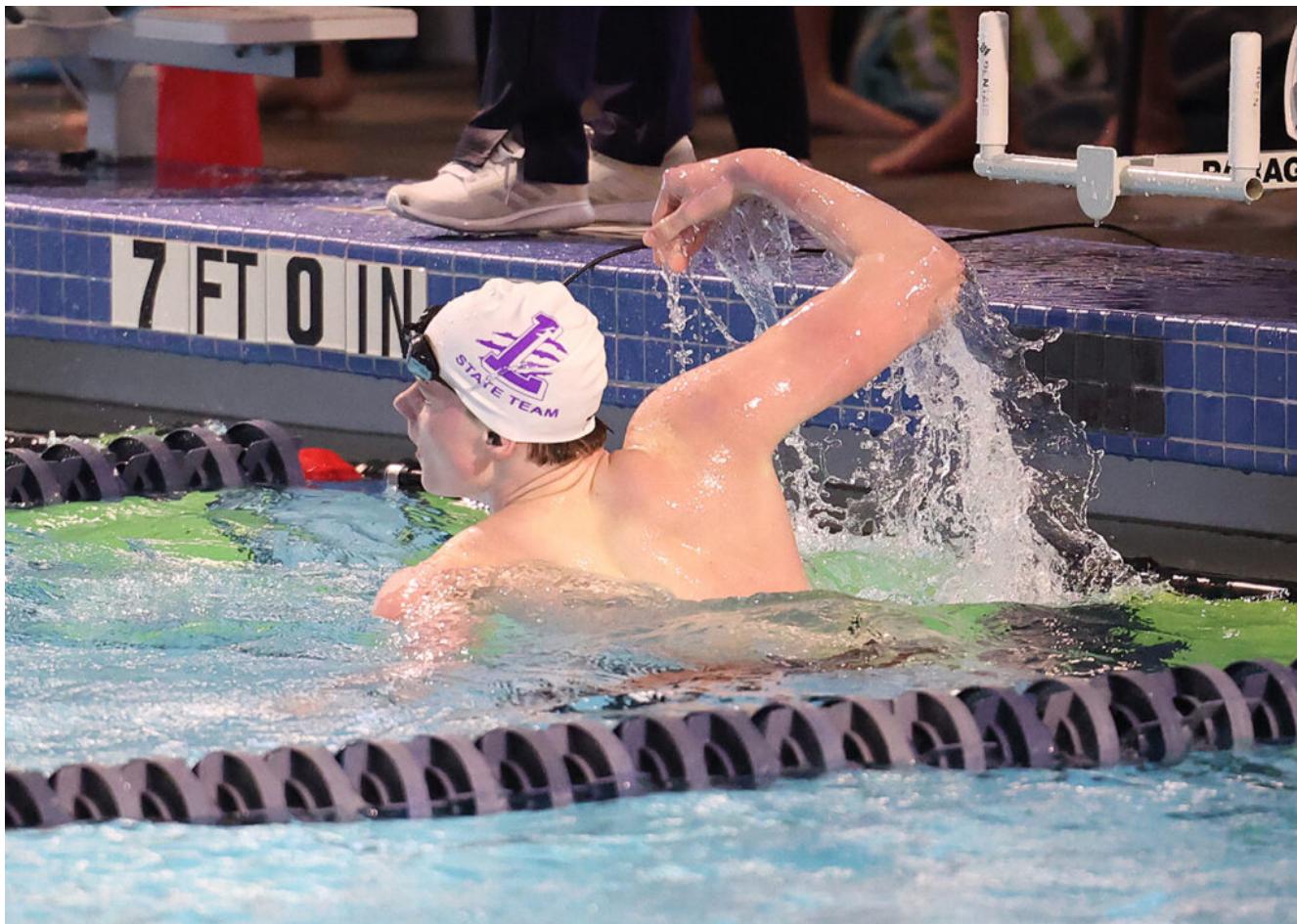
Louisburg's 4×100-meter relay team of senior Mackenzie Rooney, along with juniors Kendall Crossley, Addi Mallett and Suzanna Dansel finished fourth at state. The Wildcat group broke the school record during the regional meet and posted another fast time of 49.14 seconds during the prelims, which gave them the second fastest time heading into the finals.

That wouldn't be the only time Crossley found her way to the medal stand.

The Louisburg junior qualified for the finals of the 100-meter dash earlier in the day, and then in the finals, medaled eighth overall in 12.82 seconds.

In the shot put, Lohse put herself in good position in the

prelims. She recorded a throw of 37 feet, 1.25 inches in her first three attempts and was sitting in second place going into the finals, before taking fifth overall.



Louisburg junior Colin Brown celebrates after winning his prelim of the 100-yard butterfly at the Class 5-1A state championships in Lenexa.

2. Brown first Wildcat to win 2 state swim titles; Wildcats medal in 6 events

LENEXA – Colin Brown was all about making school history Saturday at the Class 5-1A Kansas State Swim and Dive Championships.

Brown became the first Louisburg swimmer in school history to win a state title and did so by winning the 100-yard butterfly. Some athletes would have been content with just the

one, but not Brown.

The Louisburg junior took to the water again in the 100 backstroke and won his second state title in a matter of minutes. It was also his fourth state medal of the day, which included a pair of relays.

"It was a surreal experience and an incredible honor," Brown said. "It was really cool to see all of the hard work and countless hours pay off. It also gave me a sense of pride knowing that I was representing the school while doing so."

That was the some of the success the Louisburg swim team had at the Shawnee Mission School District Aquatic Center. The Wildcats medaled in six events and finished seventh in the team standings with just four swimmers.

Louisburg junior Andrew Jamison also tallied four medals as made his way to the state podium in the 200 individual medley, 100 breaststroke and two relays. Senior Colton Prettyman and sophomore Noah Sharp joined the other Wildcats as state medalists in the relays.



The Louisburg girls soccer team took fourth at the Class 4-1A state tournament on May 31 in Wichita. Members of the team are (front row, from left) Brinley Ewy, Lila Edwards, Rylee Moore, Baileigh Johnson, Jaden Bentz, Ally Brown, Riley May, Rowan Yows, Merritt McIntire, Faith Sewell; (back row) assistant coach Lily McDaniel, Courtney Johnson, Ellia Gibbons, Sydney York, Caroline Apple, Cora Roche, Kahlan Harris, Juanina Schmidt, Briella Diehl, Mena Fercho, Faith Sewell and head coach Jordan Roquemore.

1. Wildcat soccer takes fourth at state for best finish since 2021

It may have been wet, muddy and just miserable weather for a day in late May, but for the Louisburg girls soccer team, all that didn't matter.

For the Wildcats, it was a beautiful day. Nothing was going to dampen their spirits.

Louisburg faced off against Eudora in the Class 4-1A state quarterfinal game on May 25 as it played for a spot in the state final four.

For the first time since 2021, the Wildcats got it. Louisburg shutout Eudora, 2-0, to earn its first state quarterfinal win in four years.

“It is an amazing achievement to make it to the state final four and I couldn’t be more proud of this team,” senior captain Jaden Bentz said. “This really shows the amount of hard work we’ve all put in throughout the season and it’s nice knowing it has paid off. I couldn’t ask for a better group of girls to play with. When the final whistle blew we all were filled with excitement and ran to each other, and that shows the tight sisterly bond our team has.”

Louisburg head coach Jordan Roquemore was an assistant the last time the Wildcats were in the state semifinals and he could tell his team wanted this one more than any game this season.

“I have never seen the team so jazzed about anything all season as when the game was over,” Roquemore said. “We are all really excited for the opportunity to compete in the Final Four this year.”

Louisburg squared off with Rose Hill in the third-place game of the Class 4-1A Kansas State Soccer Championships on May 31 at Wichita’s Stryker Complex. It didn’t take long for the Wildcats to get on the board.

The Wildcats struck first in the game’s opening minutes, but Rose Hill tied it in the first half and scored late in the second to hand Louisburg a 2-1 loss.

Louisburg was coming off a 2-0 loss in the state semifinals on May 28 as it hosted its first state semifinal game against Topeka-Hayden.

"Honestly, I was really proud of how we played this game," Louisburg coach Jordan Roquemore said. "Rose Hill is an exceptional squad and we not only kept them at bay defensively, we were very successful in creating attack opportunities. We were nearly even with them for shots on goal and I thought it was a very well-matched game for us."

Wildcat boys medal four at Randy Starcher tourney in Tonganoxie



The Louisburg boys wrestling team earned four medals at the Randy Starcher Memorial Tournament last Saturday in Tonganoxie.

The Louisburg boys wrestling team tested itself against a deep field last Saturday at the Randy Starcher Invitational in Tonganoxie, finishing tied for seventh place as the Wildcats

balanced competition with an emphasis on health early in the season.

Louisburg scored 75.5 team points to tie Lincoln Northeast (Neb.) for seventh in the 11-team tournament. Savannah claimed the team title with 212.5 points, edging host Tonganoxie (206.0), while Lansing finished third with 179.5.

"It's a tough, early season tournament," Louisburg head coach Shawn Crossley said. "We erred on the side of caution with some of our athletes nursing some injuries, and held them out of the tournament. We have an extended break coming up with the holidays, so our goal is to get healthy. We understand that February is more important than late December."

Individually, senior Vance Hahn delivered the Wildcats' top performance, placing second at 190 pounds. Hahn went 5-1 on the day with four pins, advancing to the championship bout and anchoring Louisburg's scoring effort.

"Obviously, Vance Hahn had a great day," Crossley said.

Freshman Sylas Weichert continued to impress at 120 pounds, finishing third with a 3-2 record that included two technical falls and a major decision.

"Sylas Weichert continues to make an impact as a freshman," Crossley said. "His wrestling style is a lot of fun to watch. He wrestles free, isn't afraid to make mistakes, and is always looking to score points. Sylas is going to beat some kids this season that may surprise a lot of people, but it won't be a shock to us."

At 106 pounds, Brooks Rankin went 2-3 with two pins and earned a fourth-place finish, while Levi Cotter also placed fourth at 113 pounds with a 2-4 record and two pins.

"Brooks continues to get better every week," Crossley said. "He was dominating his consolation finals match, but just got

himself out of position and ended up giving that match away to a very talented wrestler. Brooks has a good mindset, and I know he's already looking to see that kid again down the road. Levi wasn't feeling well but still gave it everything he had. I was very proud of his efforts."

Other Louisburg placers included Keegan Rogers (seventh at 126), Myke McKittrick (seventh at 132), Josiah Clayton (seventh at 150), James Langner (ninth at 175), while several Wildcats gained valuable mat time in a competitive bracket.

Louisburg girls take seventh at Effingham, medal three overall



The Louisburg girls wrestling team finished seventh overall last Saturday in Effingham

On Saturday, the Louisburg girls wrestling team traveled to Effingham to compete at the ACCHS Girls Invitational, where

the Wildcats turned in their best team finish in the event's history.

Louisburg placed seventh out of 17 teams with 62.5 points. Sabetha won the team title with 107.0 points, followed closely by Washburn Rural (104.0) and Royal Valley (92.0).

"It was our best team finish ever at this tournament," Crossley said. "The girls are kind of in the same boat as the boys as far as regulating participation due to injuries, so again, we erred on the side of caution with a few of our girls."

Leola Eslinger highlighted the girls' effort with a strong performance at 155 pounds, going 3-0 with three pins to capture first place.

"Leola took first in dominant fashion," Crossley said.

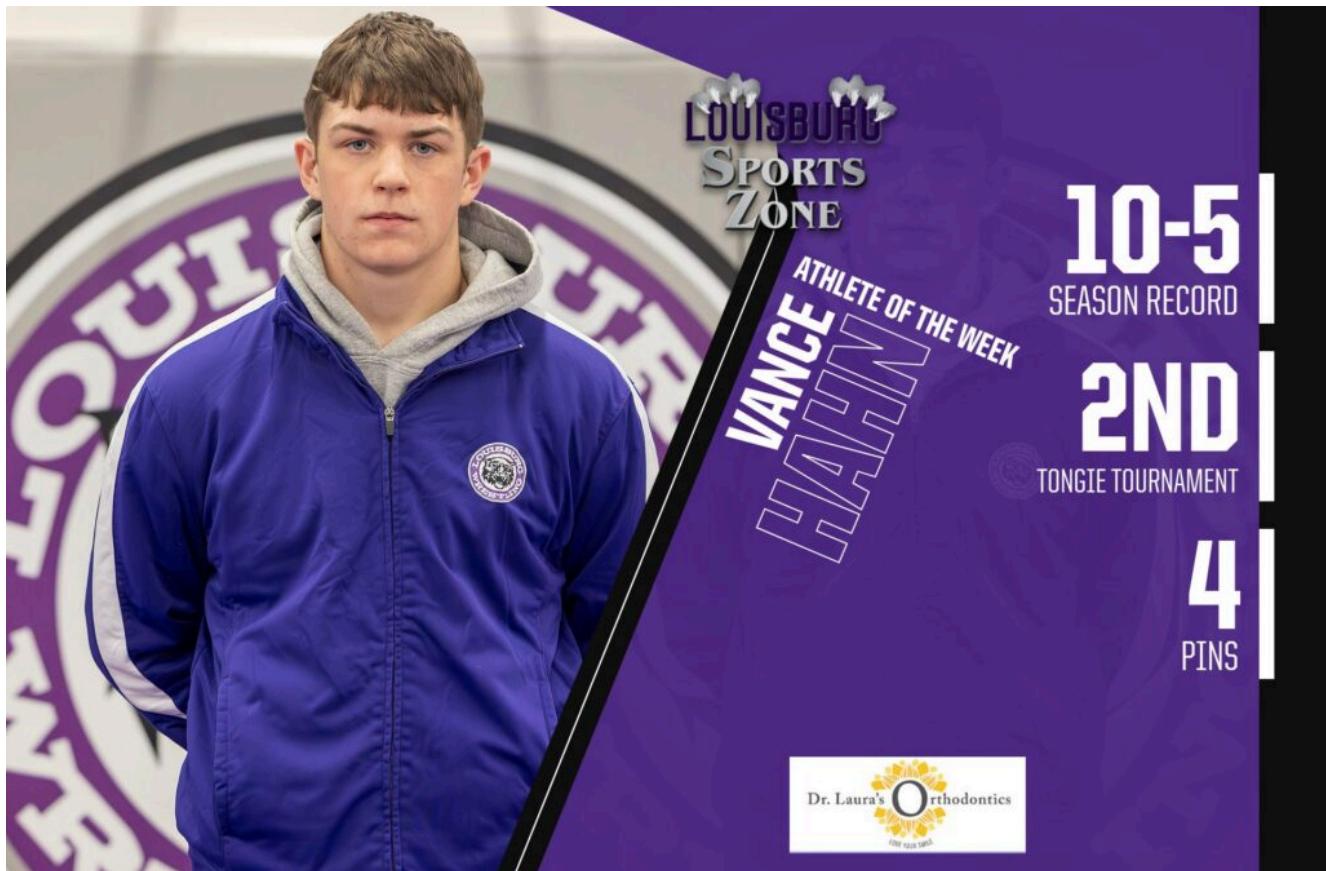
Brooklyn DeWeese placed second at 135 pounds with a 2-1 record in her season debut, while Maliya Collins continued her strong start by taking third at 125 pounds after going 3-1 with three pins.

"Brooklyn got second in what was just her first action of the year," Crossley said. "Maliya continued the hot start to her season, and took third."

With the holiday break approaching, Crossley said the focus now shifts to recovery and preparation for the stretch run.

"We'll look to get healed up over the break, enjoy some down-time with family and friends, and be ready to hit the ground running on Dec. 29 when we get back to practice," he said.

Week 3 Athlete of the Week: Vance Hahn



Here is the Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Week for week three of the winter sports season, sponsored by Dr. Laura's Orthodontics.

VANCE HAHN, SENIOR, WRESTLING

Louisburg senior Vance Hahn put together one of his better tournaments in his career last Saturday at the Randy Starcher Memorial Tournament at Tonganoxie High School. Hahn made it to the championship of the 190-pound bracket and finished second overall to improve his record to 10-5 on the season.

Hahn pinned his way to the championship as he tallied four falls, before losing to Royal Valley's Cyrus Harding by a 6-0 decision. He helped the Wildcats to a seventh-place team finish in a very talented tournament field.

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

However, this will be the final Athlete of the Week that will be given by me as Louisburg Sports Zone is closing on Dec. 31. Graciously, Louisburg High School has agreed to continue to give out Athlete of the Week awards in my absence.

I've had a chance to honor close to 300 student athletes since I started doing Athlete of the Week in 2016 with the help of some generous sponsors around the community. Hope it all meant a little something to you along the way.

Previous Winners:

Week 1: Herschel Strumberger

Week 2: Noah Sharp

The collage features several elements:

- Ironhorse Family & Cosmetic Dentistry:** A logo with a purple horse head and the text "IRONHORSE FAMILY & COSMETIC DENTISTRY".
- QR Code:** A yellow QR code.
- Dr. Laura's Orthodontics:** A logo with a yellow sun-like design and the text "Dr. Laura's Orthodontics LOVE YOUR SMILE".
- QR Code:** A red QR code.
- Image:** A photo of a smiling family of five (two adults and three children).
- Text:** "Comfortable dental care for the entire family", "No shots, no drills, no pain", "We offer sedation dentistry", and "Orthodontics, TMJ and Sleep Apnea Treatment".
- Address:** "5321 W. 151st Street, Leawood, KS 66224 (913) 851-9969" and "1270 W. Amity, Louisburg, KS 66053 (913) 837-3096".

Wildcats take third at Fort Scott Dual Tournament



The Louisburg boys wrestling team went 4-2 at the Fort Scott Dual Tournament took third overall.

The Louisburg Wildcats used grit and late-match heroics to secure a third-place finish at the Fort Scott Dual Tournament last Friday at Fort Scott High School.

Louisburg went 4-2 on the day, opening the tournament with three straight victories.

The Wildcats started fast, edging Anderson County 42-37 in the opener – a dual that came down to the final match. Heavyweight Owen Ebenstein delivered the decisive blow, pinning his opponent to clinch the team victory.

“The boys showed up and wrestled like I know they are capable of,” Louisburg coach Shawn Crossley said. “Before we started I

told them there were three ranked teams we would wrestle and we had a chance to make a statement early in the season."

Louisburg made another statement in round two, earning a tight 39-36 win over 3-2-1A No. 6 Jayhawk-Linn, again sealed in the final match – this time with heavyweight Hunter Brotherton, who closed the dual with a pin.

Crossley said one of the day's most memorable performances came earlier in that dual, when freshman Sylas Weichert (120) battled the state's No. 3 ranked wrestler, Tanner Holt, to the wire.

"Sylas wrestled him to a very close match," Crossley said. "We had a team meeting after that dual and I could tell they were hyped. They were starting to see that if they wrestled up to their potential, we could wrestle with some of the best."

Louisburg rolled into its third dual and handled host Fort Scott 54-27 to improve to 3-0. That dual – and the moment of the day – belonged to Tristan Weller (150).

Weller trailed 12-5 when his opponent bit him to stop the action. The officials ruled the bite incidental.

"Tristan was rightfully angry and upset," Crossley said.

Entering the final period still down seven, Weller insisted on choosing the top position.

"He told me he wanted to choose top and he knew he could turn the kid," Crossley said. "Coach (Shea) Cox and I liked his confidence and Tristan pinned him like he said he was going to. I was very impressed with how he handled himself – gathering himself and hitting the reset button."

Louisburg's momentum was halted in round four with a 56-22 loss to 3-2-1A No. 2 Atchison County, but the Wildcats still found bright spots.

At 190 pounds, Vance Hahn pushed the state's No. 2-ranked wrestler, Elijah Webb, to the ultimate tiebreaker before falling by an escape point.

"Vance came up just short, but I think he looked strong," Crossley said. "He understands what he could have done differently next time."

Louisburg bounced back with a 54-27 win over Prairie View before closing with a 50-25 loss to No. 6 in 5A, Blue Valley Southwest.

Despite the tough closing matchup, Crossley said the Wildcats proved plenty.

"All in all, the positives we took away from the Fort Scott duals is that the hard work we've been putting in at practice is paying off," he said. "We are young but experienced. The team continues to buy in and it's paying dividends. This was an early-season measuring stick, and I think we exceeded some expectations. I was extremely pleased with how we performed."

Wildcat girls compete at Olathe West

The Louisburg High School girls wrestling team stepped into one of the state's toughest early-season environments Friday, finishing 15th as a team at the Wild West Classic hosted by Olathe West.

Despite injuries and several wrestlers still settling into weight classes, the Wildcats turned in a gritty performance highlighted by multiple individual honors.

Maliya Collins led the way with a 3-2 record and three pins to place seventh at 125 pounds. At 155, Leola Eslinger also secured seventh place with a 2-2 day.

Other notable efforts included Alina Wojciechowski (120) and Brianna Caraway (140) going 2-3 for 10th, Allison Martin (145) finishing 2-2 with two pins for ninth, and freshman Mya McKittrick placing 11th at 100 with a pin. Nora Smith earned her first career pin while wrestling up a weight class at 170.

Louisburg totaled 115 points to finish 15th in a loaded 21-team field topped by Manhattan, Staley and Kearney.

Head coach Shawn Crossley said he was proud of the resilience his squad showed throughout a demanding day.

“It’s a tough early season tournament,” Crossley said. “Going into it, the girls were still trying to determine what weights they were wrestling. When the dust settled, they all made the weights they said they would that afternoon.

“We were a little banged up going into the tournament, but the girls gutted it out and battled all day long. Maliya and Leola both took seventh, one short of the podium. Maliya had a good day, going 3-2 with three pins. Nora Smith got her first career pin, and she was wrestling up a weight, so I was very excited for her. Mya McKittrick, as a freshman, continues to impress with her mental and physical toughness.”

Wildcat wrestlers feature young, experienced roster heading into season



Louisburg junior Leola Eslinger returns to help lead the Wildcat girls squad as she is one of three returning state qualifiers for the girls and boys program.

A new era of Louisburg wrestling officially begins this winter, and first-year head coach Shawn Crossley believes both the boys and girls programs have the work ethic and leadership to make it a smooth transition.

Crossley, a longtime Wildcat assistant who takes over for Bobby Bovaird after his 14-year run, inherits a roster that is young but hungry. The boys team enters the year having lost four state qualifiers – including 215-pound state runner-up Ashton Moore – and three 100-match winners from last season. Only one state qualifier returns, but Crossley said the program's foundation remains solid.

"Practice has been going really well," Crossley said. "We have a great group of leaders in our room. We set expectations

early, and so far we've lived up to them. This is a hard-working group of kids."

Junior Levi Cotter, who qualified for state at 106 pounds a year ago, moves to 113 this season and is expected to anchor a developing boys lineup.

"In regard to Levi, I expect him to have a great year," Crossley said. "He's planning to wrestle 113, and I think he'll be very strong there."



Louisburg sophomore Levi Cotter puts an opponent on his back during a match last season. Cotter is the lone returning state qualifier for the Wildcat boys.

Louisburg opens with only five seniors – Myke McKittrick, Keegan Rogers, Vance Hahn, Anis Ghannam and Broden Vargo – as competition for varsity spots continues through the early part of the schedule. The Wildcats return 47 athletes overall, including 16 freshmen, 15 sophomores and 16 juniors.

Rogers (126), McKittrick (132), Hahn (190) and junior Spencer Mattison (144) are also team captains on the boys side as all four look to lead the Wildcats this season.

"Clearly, we lost a lot of talent from last year's team," Crossley said. "Not only that, we lost all of our team captains and a great group of leaders. But this team is very young and experienced."

While the boys focus on rebuilding, the girls enter with higher expectations – and more depth than ever before. Louisburg returns two state qualifiers in team captains Brooklyn DeWeese (135) and Leola Eslinger (155). Eslinger begins the year ranked No. 6 in Kansas.



Louisburg's Brooklyn DeWeese works for a pin during regional action last season.

Brianna Caraway (140), Allison Martin (145) and Maliya Collins (125) also return for the Wildcats after nearly earning a state qualification themselves.

"I believe this is our largest girls team ever," Crossley said. "Leola and Brooklyn are poised to have great years once again. Brianna, Maliya, and Allison were all knocking on the door of a state qualification last year and could break through."

The Wildcats also have wrestlers sidelined with injuries who will return next season, but Crossley said they have remained involved as team managers.

Crossley added former Louisburg wrestler Shea Cox, a 2015 LHS graduate and the program's 2024–25 Contributor of the Year, to his coaching staff.

"He has that passion for LHS wrestling like I do, and bleeds purple and white," Crossley said. "He's been a great addition and shares my vision."

Moore named 2025 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year



**ASHTON
MOORE**

**LOUISBURG
SPORTS
ZONE**



Male Athlete of the Year 2024-25



Louisburg senior Ashton Moore was voted as the 2024-25 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year.

For Ashton Moore, life on the football field and on the wrestling mat was a good one in his final campaign at Louisburg High School.

Whether it was all-league or all-state honors, postseason football awards or selections to all-star matches, Moore had a long list of accomplishments during his senior season.

As memorable as those things were, he found himself more focused on other things. He was a team captain for both the football and wrestling teams and wanted to be leader to those around him.

That turned into on-the-field success as he finished his football career as one of the top players to come through the Wildcat program and earned scholarship to join the Kansas State football program.

Moore experienced that same type of success in the wrestling arena where he was one victory away from winning a state championship. It is those reasons, among others, that Moore was voted as the 2025 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of

the Year.

The award was given based on a vote by Louisburg High School coaches as Moore was recognized for his achievements with the football and wrestling programs.

"It means so much to me to be named Athlete of the Year," Moore said. "We have a lot of great athletes, so to be considered one of the best means a lot to me."

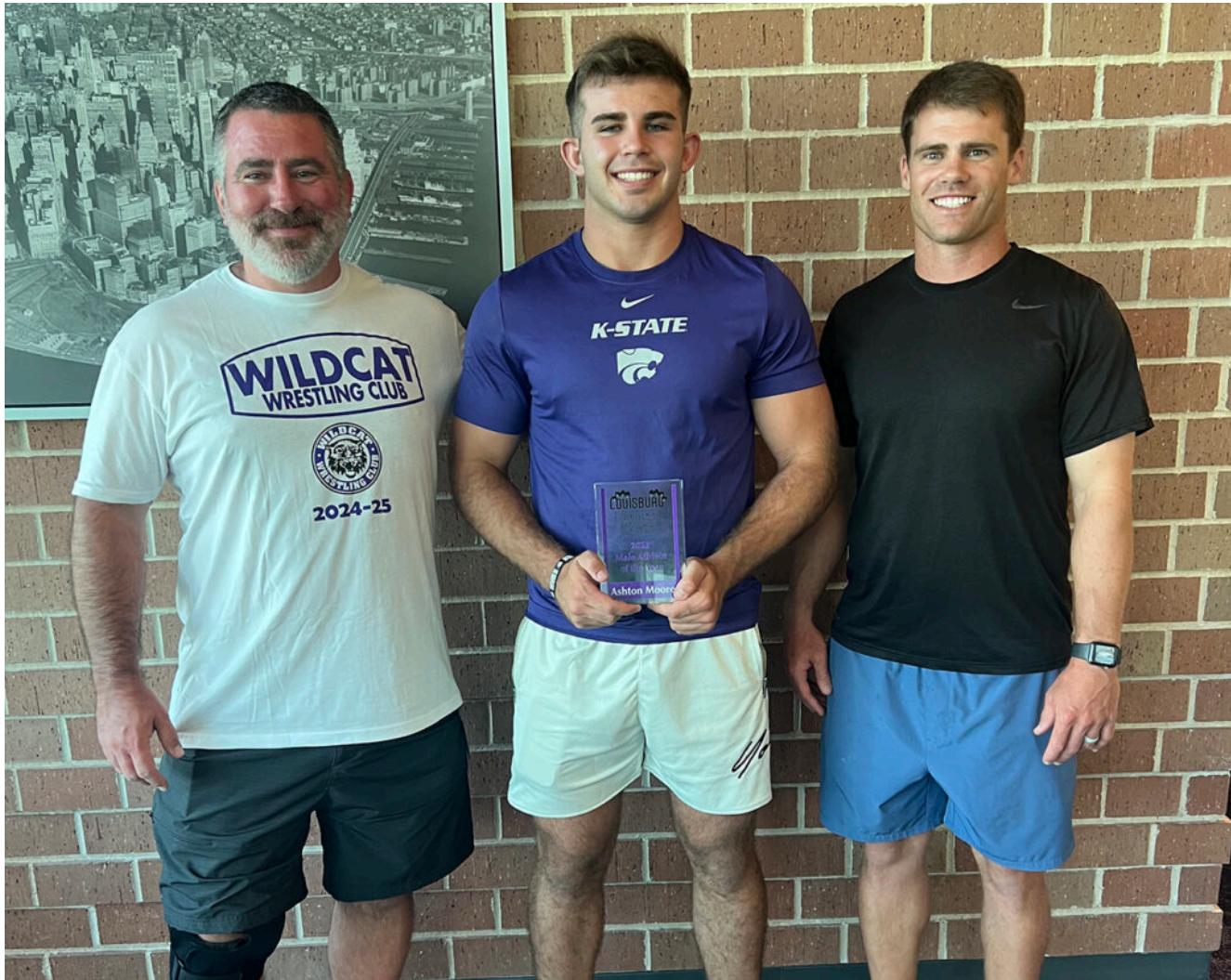
On the football field, Moore was a first-team All-Frontier League selection on both sides of the ball and earned first team All-State honors as the team's starting linebacker.

Moore was a first team all-league running back as he led the way with 611 yards on the ground and 11 touchdowns. He also had 14 catches for 132 yards and another touchdown to amass 750 yards of total offense, despite only playing defense for the first few games of the season.

He was also named a first team all-league linebacker as the K-State commit led the Wildcats with 80 tackles on the season and had 6.5 tackles for loss.

Moore also became the program's all-time leading tackler with 324 stops, surpassing Garrett Griffin's mark of 274 that ended with the 2011 season.

He also received the Bobby Bell Award, which is given to the best small-class defensive lineman/linebacker in the Kansas City metro area, along with being selected to play in the Kansas Shrine Bowl.



Louisburg senior Ashton Moore receives his athlete of the year award along with former wrestling coach Bobby Bovaird and football coach Drew Harding.

"Ashton is very deserving of being named athlete of the year based on how he has impacted both the wrestling and football programs this past year," Louisburg football coach Drew Harding said, "For the football team, Ashton was the leader of our team and always set a positive example for his fellow teammates to follow. He always carried himself the right way and was always representing himself and Louisburg in a positive light.

"He had just a phenomenal year for the football team. He battled through a hamstring injury all year that very easily could have made him sit out. Ashton finished his career as the all team leading tackler in Louisburg history as well as being a key factor in our offense being successful. He was a

tremendous part of our team's success over the past few years and we are extremely excited to see him continue to represent Louisburg while playing at K-State."

On the wrestling mat, Moore cemented himself as the one of the program's best wrestlers. At 215 pounds, Moore advanced to the state title match and finished as the Class 4A state runner-up.

He finished his season with a 41-3 record and ended his Wildcat career as a 2-time state medalist and a 4-time state qualifier. Moore was a team captain the last two seasons and was selected to participate in the Metro Classic. He also did work in the classroom as a 3-time academic all-state recipient.

However, it was more than just his talent on the mat that made Moore stand out among the rest.

"Ashton's accomplishments on the wrestling mat speak for themselves," former Louisburg wrestling coach Bobby Bovaird said. "He's one of the most decorated wrestlers in school history. But what truly sets him apart is his heart as a leader. He mentored younger and less experienced teammates with compassion and humility, and he made every kid, regardless of sport or ability, feel seen and valued.

"Ashton didn't just lead by performance – he led with integrity, inclusion, and relentless work ethic. That's why he's not just our athlete of the year – he's our standard."

Representing Louisburg has been a privilege for Moore and one that he will remember for a long time.

"I loved every second of playing sports in Louisburg," Moore said. "From a very young age I was at almost every Louisburg sporting event watching my cousins or siblings play. Making it to high school and getting to be the one playing was such an amazing feeling. There's something very special about playing

for Louisburg and being able to feel the support of the whole community. I know there's not many other places like that."

Moore, who was a 3-sports athlete his first three years of high school, decided to just do two his final year to focus on resting and healing up for the start of his college football career.

However, playing multiple sports throughout his high school career was something that led to all his successes.

"Playing multiple sports was very important to me," Moore said. "Football was always my main sport, but I wouldn't have been the player I am without the other sports I've played. I would say out of all the sports I played, wrestling helped me with football the most. Not just physically, but it made me much more mentally tough.

"I think every athlete should play as many sports as they can in high school. It will not only develop you into a better athlete, but also give you so many great memories you'll have forever. There aren't many schools where you have the opportunity to be a part of multiple sports teams like you do in Louisburg. It's a very special thing and you should take full advantage of it."

Previous winners:

2018: Austin Moore

2019: Blue Caplinger

2020: Garrett Rolofson

2021: Weston Guetterman

2022: Tom Koontz

2023: Mason Dobbins

2024: Declan Battle

2025 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year Finalists

2025 MALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR



ASHTON MOORE MYLES VOHS BRAYDEN YODER

Senior - Football, Wrestling Senior - Football, Basketball, Track Senior - Football, Wrestling, Track

**LOUISBURG
SPORTS
ZONE**

MALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

Louisburg seniors Ashton Moore, Myles Vohs and Brayden Yoder are the finalists for the 2025 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year Award.

For the eighth consecutive 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. Then I sent the nominations back to the coaches and they voted for their top 3 male and female athletes. The recipient will be announced in

the coming days.

Below are the three finalists for the Male Athlete of the Year award in alphabetical order by last name.



Ashton Moore – Senior – Football, Wrestling

Ashton was a letterwinner for both the Louisburg football and wrestling teams this past season. On the football field, Moore was a first-team All-Frontier League and All-State selection at running back and linebacker for the Wildcats as he led Louisburg to a 7-2 record.

On defense, he became the Wildcats' all-time leading tackler with 324 stops and he is second in program history with 26.5 tackles for a loss. He also earned the Bobby Bell Award this past season as the Kansas City area's top small class

linebacker/defensive lineman. At running back, he led the Wildcats with 611 yards on the ground to go along with 12 total touchdowns. He was also selected to play in the Kansas Shrine Bowl.

Moore was also the Class 4A state runner-up in wrestling at 215 pounds. Moore is a 4-time state qualifier for the Wildcats and a 2-time state medalist. He finished the 2025 season with a 41-3 record and has 128 career wins for the Wildcat program. Moore was also a team captain for both the football and wrestling teams.



Myles Vohs – Senior – Football,

Basketball, Track

Myles was a 3-time letterwinner this season for the football, basketball and track and field teams. On the football field, Vohs was the Wildcats' favorite target at wide receiver as he had 41 catches for 852 yards and 9 touchdowns. He also averaged more than 20 yards per catch. He was an All-Frontier League first team selection and honorable mention all-state.

On defense, Vohs was an honorable mention all-league selection at cornerback with 20 tackles, 7 pass break-ups and he also had an interception for a touchdown. For his efforts, Vohs was also named to the All-Simone Team and was selected to play in the Greater Kansas City Football Coaches Association all-star game.

On the basketball court, Vohs was the team's starting point guard and was one of the top scorers on the team with nearly nine points a game to go along with a team-best 56 assists and 32 steals.

On the track, Vohs earned three state medals this past season, including two in a pair of relays. He ran on the 4x100 and 4x400-meter relay teams and both earned a sixth place finish at the state meet. Vohs also placed at state in the long jump as he was fifth with a jump of 21-6.5.



Brayden Yoder – Football, Wrestling, Track

Brayden was a 3-time letterwinner for Louisburg this past season in football, wrestling and track and field. In football, Yoder was a first-team All-Frontier League selection on defense and was a fixture on the Wildcat defensive line. He was second on the team with 68 tackles, including 6 for a loss and a team-high 5.5 sacks.

He was also a second team all-league selection on offense as a lineman. Yoder was one of the leaders on the offensive line that amassed nearly 3,000 yards of total offense. He also earned honorable mention all-state honors.

On the wrestling mat, Yoder was a state qualifier for the Wildcats and finished the season with a 35-12 record at 190 pounds. He was also a regional champion and finished one win

shy of a medal during the Class 4A state tournament.

On the track, Yoder was one of the Wildcats' top javelin throwers on the season and his best throw was just under 150 feet.

Crossley excited to lead Louisburg wrestling as head coach



Shawn Crossley was hired as Louisburg's new head wrestling coach during the board of education meeting earlier this month. He takes over from Bobby Bovaird, who spent the last 14 seasons as head coach.

Wrestling has always been a big part of Shawn Crossley's life.

Whether it was as a high school wrestler, or later becoming a coach, the passion for the sport has never left Crossley.

Now, he gets to use that passion to lead the program at his alma mater.

During the Louisburg USD 416 Board of Education meeting earlier this month, Crossley was hired as the new head coach for the Wildcat wrestling program. Crossley takes over from former coach Bobby Bovaird, who resigned his post last month after 14 years in the position.

"I couldn't be prouder and more excited to take over the Louisburg wrestling program," Crossley said. "I am honored and extremely grateful that the administration and the school board entrusted me with this opportunity."

Crossley has served as an assistant coach for the Wildcat program for the last several seasons, so he is already a familiar face in the wrestling room.

It is a transition that he believes will be a smooth one as he tries to continue to build up the program – not just at the high school level.

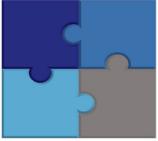
"The fact that I have been an assistant coach at the middle school and high school levels for quite a few years will be incredibly beneficial for myself, our coaches, our parents, and our wrestlers during the transition," Crossley said. "I've also coached a large number of our wrestlers since they started in the sport through our youth club."

"One of the best decisions Coach Bovaird made, and he and I worked to achieve together, was aligning the wrestling program from top to bottom. Having the opportunity to coach them at the beginning of their wrestling journey, and also being lucky

enough to coach them up until their high school wrestling career ends is a blessing. I think it was imperative to keep this alignment and cohesiveness."

Crossley has also been very involved in the Wildcat Wrestling Club and helped start the kids program back in 2016. He still helps coach the club, along with the East Kansas Eagles Club.

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“I just love the sport of wrestling and am extremely passionate about this sport,” Crossley said. “I’m thankful for what the sport provided me. I’m passionate about providing kids in our community, our state, and our region the opportunity to wrestle at the local and national level. I’m passionate about Louisburg wrestling and giving back to the school and community that has always supported me, my daughter, and my family. Being a wrestling coach is not a seasonal thing for me. I coach this sport year round.”

Getting an opportunity to coach his alma mater was something Crossley couldn’t pass up. Crossley, who is a 1998 graduate of Louisburg, was a 3-time state qualifier and a member of two Frontier League championship teams.

“As an LHS wrestling alumni, this program is very important to me, and obviously very near and dear to my heart,” Crossley said. “It is unbelievably special to come full circle like it has. With that being said, I don’t think I ever could have envisioned becoming a head coach while wrestling in high school. I turned down opportunities to wrestle in college after graduation, and at that time felt like I was walking away from a lifelong commitment with a little bit of relief. That’s a decision I have regretted for a long time. This sport has a funny way of sucking you back if you give it a chance.”

Crossley believes there will be a lot of similarities between his coaching style and with that of Bovaird’s. The expectations that have always been within the program will stay the same.

“Coach Bovaird has done an incredible job with this program,” Crossley said. “He and I share a lot of the same philosophical ideals when it comes to coaching. We both believe in coaching the student athlete as a whole. He has been a great mentor,

leader, and friend to me throughout the years. I plan to continue the path we've been on, which aligns our program K-12, and has proven to be the successful model to increasing our numbers year in and year out.

"It will be of the utmost importance to continue our academic success in the classroom. What people should expect from our team in years to come is accountability, discipline, mental/physical toughness, aggressiveness, and that we will be the hardest working team in the state."

Moore leads Wildcat wrestling with state runner-up finish



Louisburg senior Ashton Moore wrestles in the 215-pound state championship Saturday in Salina. Moore finished second overall.

SALINA – In the final match of his wrestling career, Ashton Moore found himself competing for a state championship.

It was exactly the place he envisioned himself being, even before the season started. The result, however, was a different story.

Moore's dreams of a state title were dashed Saturday at the Class 4A state wrestling tournament in Salina. Smoky Valley's Parker Gardner ended his run with a 13-5 major decision at 215 pounds.

As disappointing as the loss was for Moore, looking back on his long wrestling career helped ease the pain – as did the second place state medal.

“It was tough taking that loss,” Moore said. “I was pretty down about it, but then I had a moment that put things more into perspective for me. After our practice on Friday, Coach (Bobby) Bovaird took us up to the top of the arena to talk about the tournament. Sitting there I remembered being in that same spot as a sixth grader watching the championship round there. At that age I thought those guys were amazing and the toughest people I'd ever seen.

“So after my loss I thought back to that moment being a sixth grader and I was able to realize how far I've come. To see myself at that level now made me very proud I was able to make it to that stage.”

Moore, who finished the season with a 41-3 record, had a successful first day on Friday. He opened with a pin of Hiawatha's Gabrial Johnson in the first round.

In the quarterfinals, Moore earned a 4-2 decision over Augusta's Devin Carroll. Then, in the semifinals, Moore faced

off with a familiar Frontier League foe in Ottawa's Seth Ferguson.



Louisburg senior Ashton Moore earned a second place medal Saturday at the Class 4A state tournament in Salina. He ended his season with a 41-3 record.

Moore took care of business as he won an 8-4 decision over Ferguson to advance to the championship against Gardner.

Gardner got on the board early against Moore as he registered three takedowns of the Louisburg senior to build a big lead.

"That championship match was a tough one," Moore said. "I hadn't seen that kid at any other tournaments, so I didn't know a ton about him. He had a quick single leg and you don't see that much at heavier weights like 215."

"Overall I really enjoyed this year. I was lucky enough to have a full season and be able to finish out my season

healthy. It was a very bittersweet moment when that last match was over, but I'm very grateful I got to spend these last four years with such great teammates and coaches."

Despite the loss, it was still a successful season for Moore who recorded his second straight state medal and became the ninth Wildcat to wrestle for a state crown.

"Watching Ashton earn his way to the state championship match was incredible," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "He put in so much work throughout the season and he's been an outstanding leader for our program. Being able to sit in his corner at that level on the biggest stage was really special.

"Finishing as the state runner-up is a huge accomplishment, and I couldn't be prouder of how he competed and represented our program. This is the seventh straight year our program has had a state semifinalist, and Ashton is now one of nine Louisburg wrestlers who have earned the title of state finalist."

The Wildcat program also had six other wrestlers compete at the state tournament, including two on the girls side.

Louisburg senior Brayden Yoder went 1-1 on Friday at 190 pounds after a close 3-2 loss to Mulvane's Cameron Hagerman in the first round, but Yoder bounced back to get a 11-3 major decision over Goodland's Logan Franz.



Louisburg senior Brayden Yoder finished 1-2 at the Class 4A state wrestling tournament in Salina.

In his first match on Saturday, Yoder was eliminated by Abilene's Pierce Casteel. Yoder lost by a 4-1 decision ending his season with a 35-12 record.

Seniors Canaan Clayton (120), Mika McKittrick (132) and sophomore Levi Cotter (106) each finished the tournament with an 0-2 mark.

On the girls side, sophomore Leola Eslinger went 1-1 on the first day at 145 pounds. After she was pinned in her first match by Marysville's Ella Johnson, Eslinger responded with a pin of her own against Prairie View's Kimberlee Eastwood in the first round of consolation to earn the program's first state win.

Eslinger (23-19) saw her season come to a close in her first match Saturday after she was pinned in the second period by Pratt's Miranda Webb.



Louisburg sophomore Leola Eslinger records a takedown Saturday at the state tournament in Salina.

Freshman Brooklyn DeWeese (31-13) went 0-2 at 115 pounds in what was her first state tournament.

“It’s always tough when you see kids put in the time, the effort, and the sacrifice, only to come up just short of their goal,” Bovaird said. “In that way, wrestling can be a pretty brutal sport. Thursday night after we had our last practice, I talked to the team about the idea of competitive greatness, inspired by the great John Wooden. I told them that they needed to be prepared, to be disciplined, and to be focused.

“This one tournament will not define their season or who they are as competitors; they’ve accomplished great things already and they’ve prepared themselves for something much bigger than just a single tournament like state. Each of them grew and improved, and that’s what really matters in the long run.”

The state tournament ended what was a successful season for

the Wildcat program as they try and build for the future.

"It has definitely been a season of growth for our program, and we've made a ton of huge milestones," Bovaird said. "I'm especially proud of how this group of wrestlers has contributed to the foundation of our program. We had wrestlers pushing themselves to new levels, we had a strong presence at the state tournament, and we continued to make an impact in our sport. While we always aim for more, I'm proud of the work these athletes put in. The young men and women in this program are building something special, and this season was definitely another major step forward for us, for a lot of reasons. We had our first girls state qualifiers with Brooklyn and Leola. We boasted our biggest numbers ever (65 total, with 54 boys and 11 girls). We had our first ever girls dual. We had another winning dual season, and we finished in the top 3 at Frontier League after several seasons toward the bottom.

"The season motto was 'Carpe Diem' (Seize the Day), and from day one, that's what we asked our kids to do. They learned to step up and face adversity, take on opportunities, and be fearless in the face of challenges. In the bigger scheme of things, that's what it's all about. Not winning matches, medals, or trophies, but learning how to be champions in life. I'm proud to say that the young athletes who stick it out through our tough sport will emerge much better prepared for being successful beyond the mat."