

Week 1 Athlete of the Week: Elijah Eslinger



Here is the Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Week for week one of the winter sports season, sponsored by IronHorse Family and Cosmetic Dentistry.

ELIJAH ESLINGER, JUNIOR, WRESTLING

Louisburg junior Elijah Eslinger got off to a good start to his wrestling season Friday at the Fort Scott Dual Tournament. Eslinger went 5-0 in his five matches and recorded three pins in the heavyweight division to help the Wildcats to a second place finish in their season opener.

Eslinger came up big in the Wildcats' dual against Fort Scott. Louisburg was down three points going into the heavyweight match and Eslinger recorded a pin to give the Wildcats the victory.

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.



Dr. Laura's Orthodontics

Whether your child needs 1 set or 2 sets of braces you never pay twice at our office



Orthodontics, TMJ and Sleep Apnea Treatment

Comfortable dental care for the entire family: No shots, no drills, no pain
We offer sedation dentistry for high anxiety patients




5321 W 151st St, Leawood, KS 66224 (913)851-9969
1270 W Amity, Louisburg, KS 66053 (913)837-3096

Follow us on Facebook for special contests and discounts 

Numbers up for Louisburg wrestling as Wildcats prepare for opener



Louisburg senior Aiden Barker is one of four returning state qualifiers from a season ago for the Wildcats. Louisburg opens its season at 3 p.m. on Friday at the Fort Scott Dual Tournament.

When Bobby Bovaird saw how many athletes there were in his wrestling room on the first day of practice, he was a little taken aback.

As the Louisburg wrestling team approaches its first competition, the Wildcats have 46 out this season, which is the most under Bovaird.

It was a welcome sight to a coach that lost two state placers and another state qualifier off his team from a year ago.

“Those might be our highest numbers since I’ve been here,” Bovaird said. “Since the 2018-19 season, which had unusually low numbers, we’ve been growing back up with each year. I thought we’d have somewhere in the 30s, but in October when I sat down and projected how many we could potentially get, I was caught off guard when I had numbers in the upper 40s. We had a few guys I’d expected not come out, and we’ve been blessed with a bunch of unexpected new additions.”

The Wildcats have a mixture of veteran leadership and underclassmen, but it all starts with their returning state qualifiers.

Senior Aiden Barker (195 pounds), senior Brandon Doles (182) and junior Kaven Bartlett (126) are the team captains this season and have all had experience in the postseason.

Barker and Doles have each won a regional title in the past, while Bartlett and junior heavyweight Elijah Eslinger (285) also placed at the regional tournament a year ago.



Louisburg junior Kaven Bartlett will compete at 126 pounds again this year and is one of four returning state qualifiers for the Wildcats.

Doles missed all of last season with an injury, but Bovaird is happy with what he is seeing from each of the four athletes.

“Brandon and Aiden have both been regional champions, and with Kaven and Elijah placing at regionals last year, that will help get them higher seeds at tournaments,” Bovaird said. “All four of them are looking pretty solid so far, and I’m excited to see them test themselves against competition these next few weeks.”

Louisburg also has a few returning wrestlers from its varsity squad last year. Sophomore Noah Cotter (106) will lead things off and sophomore Traden Noll will compete at 138 pounds.

Junior Jesse Murphy will also return at 152 pounds and will compete against senior Aidan Cannon for the spot.

The Wildcats were also blessed with an handful of experienced freshmen as many of them have spent time wrestling at kids state.

One of those is Colton Blue and he will wrestle at 113 pounds this season, while fellow freshman Greysen Dixon is at 120.

Sophomore J'Lee Collins will compete at 132, while freshmen Jay and Reid McCaskill will wrestle at 145. Sophomore Gage Gilliland will also battle for a 138-pound spot.

Freshman Lucas Swartz is the Wildcats' 160-pounder. Freshmen Ashton Moore and Brayden Yoder will compete at 170.

Juniors Cameron McClellan and Kyle Oram could each see time at 220 pounds.

"We've been battling things out in the practice room, and the thing about wrestling is that the lineup can change every week," Bovaird said. "This weekend at our opener at Fort Scott, we're taking multiple guys at some weights, just to see what our options are.

"Practices have been great this year," Bovaird said. "The team is focused and ready to learn and get better every day. We've got a new assistant coach, Shane Miller, who comes to us from Norton Community High School. His experience and leadership has been great this season so far."

Senior Bailey Hallas is the team's lone girls wrestler this season and will compete at 109 pounds. Bovaird is looking forward to seeing what she can accomplish.

"Bailey has a year under her belt, and with that comes a lot more confidence," he said. "I'm hoping that she'll be able to get on the medal stand at regionals in February to become our first girls state qualifier."

Louisburg opens its season this Friday when it travels to the Fort Scott Dual Tournament.

It is the first part of the journey where many of the wrestlers hope to finish at the state tournament at the end of the year.

“With the team’s experience, whether it’s youth wrestling or high school wrestling, the major thing we need to do is to have the best mindset with every match,” Bovaird said. “This year’s motto is “True GRIT,” which stands for Gratitude, Resilience, Improvement, and Trust. We’ve been using the Wrestling Mindset program for the past four years, and I find that it’s been a game changer for a lot of the athletes in the program.

“We want to win matches and medals. We want our wrestlers to perform at their best. We’d like to be back at the top of the Frontier League, win a regional team plaque, and take a ton of kids to state. But we also want to make sure that our wrestlers leave the program and are better prepared to be good people and contributing members of society.”

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



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

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

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

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



Just look at what was accomplished last year:

- Boys cross country qualified for state for the first time in school history.

- Girls cross country placed at state for the first time in its history as they took third in Class 4A. Maddy Rhamy, Lola Edwards and Reese Johnson also earned medals.
- Boys soccer had its best finish in school history with a 3rd place state finish.
- Boys basketball advanced to the state championship game for the first time and took second.
- Girls basketball advanced to the state tournament for the first time in 47 years and recorded its best finish in third.
- Wrestlers Alec Younggren and Cade Holtzen took second and third, respectively, at the state tournament.
- Boys golf qualified for state as a team.



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

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

However, with so much positivity from last season, it is time

to turn the page and focus on what the 21-22 season has in store.



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

As I talked about earlier, there is a lot of negativity going on in the world right now, but I am more than thankful to have a job where I can get away from all that and cover all the special moments.

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

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

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

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

Grapple on the Gridiron event a success for Louisburg wrestling



The first-ever Grapple on the Gridiron event was held at Wildcat Stadium last Friday as way to end the week of wrestling camp.

Louisburg wrestling coach Bobby Bovaird wanted to find a memorable way to end his week of camp and he may have found the perfect solution.

Wrestling on the football field.

As weird as it sounds, the “Grapple on the Gridiron” event held at Wildcat Stadium last Friday, was a success.

The event featured more than 20 matches, had volunteer coaches and Bovaird himself officiated all of the matches in the humid Kansas weather.

“The last few years, I’ve been seeing more and more wrestling programs try to pull off an outdoor wrestling event,” Bovaird said. “Sometimes it works out, but it seems like there’s a big risk based on the weather. During the wrestling season, it’s usually way too cold or there’s snow on the ground, and if you do it during the summertime, the heat from the sun really becomes a factor. I’ve heard of kids getting burned from the mats because they’re so hot.

“With the July 4th holiday falling on a Sunday and Monday being the federally observed holiday, I had to make my 4-day camp run Tuesday through Friday. I got to thinking, how on earth could I get kids to come back for the last day? I mean, who wants to spend time at wrestling camp from 6:30-8:30pm on a Friday in the middle of summer? Then I got a whim to try to end camp with a special event that kids would not want to miss – a dual on the football field.”



Louisburg senior Aiden Barker (left) and Brandon Doles dual each other last Friday during the Grapple on the Gridiron.

The Grapple on the Gridiron had a good turnout from parents to community members and featured matches from wrestlers from the kids club to the high school level.

Wildcat Wrestling Club coaches Shawn Crossley and Trevor Finch were the coaches for the two teams, while former Louisburg wrestler Sonny Ewalt and his grandson, Joey, were also honorary coaches.

Joey also served as the camp clinician for the week. He was a state placer at Prairie View High School, and was a NJCAA national qualifier for Barton Community College. He is also an NAIA national qualifier for Baker University.

Another WWC coach, Jon Clayton, and parent Justin Weiss provided commentary for each of the matches as well.

"I think it went off with a huge bang," Bovaird said. "The kids loved it, and so did the families and fans. I'm very thankful for all the help I got from the community and the program. Doug Key and Michael Pickman were very helpful with getting it arranged and letting us use the facility and the stadium lights. Jon and Justin did an awesome job announcing. They gave more than just an announcement of who was wrestling; they used their knowledge of the sport to make it really entertaining for the crowd.

"Former LHS wrestling team manager and 'superfan' Jamie Watrous worked with LHS alum Mike Ewalt served as score keepers. We had tons of help getting the mats moved, set up, torn down, and returned to LHS. Parents, wrestlers, and alumni chipped in with that major task."



Louisburg fourth-graders Brilyn Stamm (left) and Emma Robertson compete last Friday at Wildcat Stadium. Stamm

finished fourth at USAWKS state earlier this year and Robertson was fifth.

For the week of camp, Bovaird said he had 48 athletes in his advanced camp and more than 20 for the beginner session. He also had several high school graduates that came back to help with the camp as well.

“I was a little worried about how the camp would go this summer,” he said. “Traditionally, I try to have camp the week leading up to the Sunflower State Games wrestling tournament in Topeka, and this year it was immediately after the July 4th holiday. I feared there would be a lot of families traveling around that time, but I think our numbers this year were some of the highest we’ve ever had. Our biggest turnout was 48 kids Tuesday and Wednesday evening for the advanced session, and it was awesome to see the wrestling room so crowded. We had lots of kids from elementary through middle school and high school.

“Joey Ewalt was our featured clinician, and he did an excellent job. His dad Mike was a 2x state placer for LHS in the late 80s, and he’s a third-generation wrestling coach. Our beginners camp was tons of fun as well. The kids were enthusiastic, attentive, and very enjoyable to work with.”



WWC coach Shawn Crossley gives some words of advice to Eli DeCavele before his match.

As for whether the Grapple on the Gridiron will be an annual event is still yet to be decided, but Bovaird is hoping it can make a return.

“Despite all the hard work that went into setting it up, I’d love to try to do it again in the future, making it an annual event,” Bovaird said. “There’s always the question of weather, but that’s something we can deal with. Some fans suggested trying to make it a fundraiser, but I really like the fact that we were able to offer something free on a Friday evening for folks to come and watch.

“One of the crucial elements of building a program is making the program well-known in the community – to make it something that kids want to be a part of. Getting the chance to wrestle on the football field under the lights is something that is

exciting for everyone.”

2021 Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Year nominees



For the past five years, Louisburg Sports Zone has given out Athlete of the Week awards during each of the three sports seasons. I do it to recognize special athletic achievements and to highlight the athletes.

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

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

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

ATHLETES OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

FEMALE



Reese Johnson – Junior – Cross Country, Soccer

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

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

In the spring, Johnson was one of the leaders on the girls soccer team that advanced to the Class 4-1A state final four

this past season. Johnson earned second team All-Frontier League honors after she finished the season with seven goals and nine assists as the Wildcats finished fourth at state.



Alyse Moore – Senior – Volleyball, Basketball, Track

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

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

Moore was also a starter on the girls basketball team and

helped the Lady Cats to their best finish in school history. Moore and the Lady Cats advanced to state for the first time in 47 years and took third overall. Individually, Moore eclipsed the 500-career rebound mark and was an honorable mention all-league player. She led the team in rebounds with 8.6 boards a game and also averaged 7.3 points and 1.7 steals.

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



Delaney Wright – Junior – Basketball, Track

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

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

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

MALE



Weston Guetterman – Senior – Football, Basketball

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

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

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



Cade Holtzen – Senior – Cross Country, Wrestling, Track

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

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

On the wrestling mat, Holtzen had a year to remember as he finished his career with a 155-19 record and a third-place state finish at 132 pounds. He was a four-time state qualifier for the Wildcats and a three-time state placer. Holtzen served

as the team captain this past season and currently holds eight program records, including most season victories and most career wins. He was also chosen to participate in the 2021 Metro Classic.

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



Kolby Kattau – Junior – Football, Baseball

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

In the spring, Kattau helped the Wildcats to their first regional championship game since 2009 as he played both first

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

On the football field, Kattau played on both sides of the ball for a team that finished with a 4-3 record and tied for third in the Frontier League. He finished with two touchdowns from the running back spot and had 41 tackles at linebacker.



Alec Younggren – Senior – Football, Wrestling

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

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

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

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



Braden Yows – Junior – Soccer

Louisburg junior Braden Yows was vital part of the Wildcats'

best finish in school history this past season. Yows helped the Wildcats to a third place finish in the Class 4-1A state tournament.

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

Six Wildcats named to all-league wrestling team



In a normal season, the wrestling all-league selections would be handled in a league tournament and not by vote.

However with COVID-19 precautions, the Frontier League tournament was cancelled this season, but the league coaches still wanted to honor their wrestlers in some way.

The coaches got together for a vote and put together the All-Frontier League wrestling team. For Louisburg, the Wildcats earned five spots on the boys side, and an honorable mention selection on the girls squad.

Cade Holtzen (132 pounds), Aiden Barker (182) and Alec Younggren (220) were named first team all-league. Ryan Owens (120) and Kaven Bartlett (126) were selected to the third and

honorable mention team, respectively.

On the girls side, junior Bailey Hallas was named as an honorable mention at 109 pounds.

“Historically, our ‘all-league’ selections have been determined by the league tournament,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “It was objective and results-based. This year was a little different – it was based on season performance and honors determined by coaches during a Zoom meeting after the season. Luckily, wrestling coaches are experienced with seeding meetings for regular tournaments and we’re able to look at objective criteria to determine seeds: head-to-head, record against common opponents, record against strong competition, tournament finishes, and post-season performance. When we met to talk about our selections, there was very little debate because the results would speak for themselves.”

Younggren had an historic season for the Wildcats, one that took him to the 220-pound state championship match, where he ultimately finished second with a 37-1 record. It was Louisburg’s highest placing at state since 2012.

After the season Younggren, along with Holtzen, were both selected to represent Kansas in the Metro Classic last month.



Louisburg senior Alec Younggren was an all-league first team selection at 220 pounds after a state runner-up finish this year.

"It's not often that a kid like Alec moves into a new school for his senior year," Bovaird said. "The great thing about Alec is that he had no trouble becoming a part of the Wildcat wrestling family. It helped with him being a football player, as well as with him knowing Cade and Ryan from the Olathe Southside youth wrestling program, but with the rest of the team, it quickly seemed as though Alec had always been a part of the program. He's one of the strongest kids I've stepped on the mat with, and he knows the sport. He's done the international styles of wrestling (freestyle and greco-roman), and he's got an agility that you don't often find with kids in that weight.

"He's a great leader on the mat with his competitiveness and

his physicality. In the short time he was a part of our program, he had a phenomenal influence on his teammates. I felt he deserved to be a state champion, and I wish that match had done differently. At the end of the day, though, I know he gave it everything, and he's got nothing to be ashamed of."

As for Holtzen, the Louisburg senior finished third at state and ended his season with a 38-2 record. He also became just third wrestler in school history to win three state medals and just the eighth wrestler to become a 4-time state qualifier.

He's got school records for most in a career (wins, takedowns, match points, nearfall-2, nearfall-3, and team points) and most in a season (wins and nearfall-2), and he's 17th in the entire state of Kansas for most career team points.



Senior Cade Holtzen was named to the All-Frontier League first team at 132 pounds after this third place finish at state.

"Cade's become a major fixture in the pages of Louisburg wrestling history, and I'm very proud to have had the chance

to be a part of his time here at LHS,” Bovaird said. “He’s a two-year team captain, and last season he was honored by the National Wrestling Coaches Association and the US Marine Corps as a Character and Leadership All-American.

“This season, Cade set the bar pretty high when it came to what’s expected for hard work. He stayed late after practice, and he came in early before school to get extra time on the mat, along with Alec Younggren. He’s been a role model for his teammates, whether it’s with our mindset training, the skills on the mat, or the mentoring of younger kids.”

Barker, a junior, had a big season for the Wildcats and was one win away from making the state tournament, or the final eight in his 182-pound weight class. He ended his season with 27-10 record.



Junior Aiden Barker was named a first team All-Frontier League

wrestler at 182 pounds.

"Aiden has progressed so much since I first got to work with him," Bovaird said. "He began working with the Wildcat Wrestling Club in middle school, and I've had the pleasure of seeing him mature and develop in the sport ever since. He's dedicated himself to off-season wrestling and weight-lifting, and he is starting to reap the benefits.

"He's become a great team leader and is getting more and more confident with his abilities. Add on top of that, he's got a crazy sense of toughness that's tough to match. He spent the whole season getting into it with Alec every day at practice. That's a 40-pound difference, and Alec was never the kind of partner to take things easy."

Owens, who was a state placer as a junior, was also a win away from making it to the final eight at state. The 120-pound senior ended his season with a 25-8 record and a sixth-place finish at the sub-state tournament.

"There's something about Ryan that has always made his contributions to the program immeasurable," Bovaird said. "He's tough as nails, he's open to new approaches to making his techniques work, and he's got a sense of maturity that is inspiring to his teammates. He made it to state as a sophomore giving up nearly 7-8 pounds every match, and as a junior he was a state placer.



Louisburg senior Ryan Owens was selected to the All-Frontier League third team at 120 pounds.

"While I really wish his season had ended differently, I also understand that 120 is one of the toughest and deepest weights year-after-year. On any given day, that sub-state bracket could have been played out differently. Ryan went out and battled in his matches, and that's one of his greatest characteristics. He sets a goal and pursues it with an uncanny focus and dedication."

Bartlett competed in one of the toughest weight classes in the state – 126 pounds. It was that way in the league as well, but the Louisburg sophomore still earned honorable mention honors after a 21-15 season.

"This year especially, Kaven has been the epitome of toughness and hard work," Bovaird said. "Combine those two traits with his great wrestling abilities, and you've got a kid who's going to win a lot of matches. This year he certified at 120 pounds., but he made the sacrifice to compete at 132 to start

off the year.



Louisburg sophomore Kaven Bartlett was named honorable mention all-league at 126 pounds.

"After Cade moved up to 132, he was a little closer to his natural weight. Even though he gave up that weight in most of his matches, he went out there and wrestled his hardest. Both matches he lost at sub-state were 1-0. It's disappointing for him that he didn't go further, but at the same time, he's right on the verge of turning the corner. The next two years will be special seasons for him."

Hallas made history on the girls side as she was the first female wrestler in Louisburg history to take part in the postseason tournament and made it to regionals this year.

"Bailey made a huge commitment to try out wrestling, and I'm so proud of her for taking those steps," Bovaird said. "She became our first ever girl to compete in the post-season, and she earned her way to the regional tournament this year. She's

an athletic young lady with a great sense of competitiveness. I'm definitely excited to see what she can do next season, as well as how she will help the program grow by bringing in more girls."

BAILEY HALLAS

JUNIOR
109 LBS.

Honorable Mention All-League
2021 KSHSAA 4A Regional Qualifier



The awards weren't done there as the Wildcat team earned was named to the KWCA All-Academic first team.

Barker, Brandon Doles, Holtzen and Luke Kelly were named to the individual all-academic first team, while Jarrett Hoyle and Hallas were selected as honorable mentions.

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE WRESTLING

106 pounds

First team: Brock Coleman, Tonganoxie, sophomore

Second team: Zack Cunningham, Ottawa, junior

Third team: Ayedin Johnson, Baldwin, freshman

HM: Ja'Diz Simmons, Piper, junior

113 pounds

First team: Braeden Moore, Tonganoxie, freshman

Second team: Ethan Cook, Bonner Springs, freshman

Third team: Macoy Johnson, Paola, sophomore

HM: Dalton Dempsey, Baldwin, freshman

120 pounds

First team: Clayton Younger, Paola, freshman

Second team: Trevor Andrew, Bonner Springs, senior

Third team: Ryan Owens, Louisburg, senior

HM: Nakos Benton, Baldwin, junior

126 pounds

First team: Grayson Sonntag, Tonganoxie, junior

Second team: Parker Guge, Ottawa, freshman

Third team: Ryan Pankov, Paola, sophomore

HM: Kaven Bartlett, Louisburg, sophomore

132 pounds

First team: Cade Holtzen, Louisburg, senior

Second team: Noah Bailey, Tonganoxie, freshman

Third team: Charlie Seller, Paola, sophomore

HM: Liam Sutton, Ottawa, senior

138 pounds

First team: Cruz Lara, Bonner Springs, senior

Second team: Cael Lynch, Eudora, senior

Third team: Collin Creach, Ottawa, junior

HM: Kelson McAllister, Spring Hill, junior

145 pounds

First team: Cassius Vanderpool, Bonner Springs, senior

Second team: Derek Duffett, Tonganoxie, senior

Third team: Holden Andrews, Eudora, senior

HM: Josh Broyles, Baldwin, senior

152 pounds

First team: Gabriel Bailey, Tonganoxie, junior

Second team: Will Schreiner, Eudora, senior

Third team: Shane Daniels, Bonner Springs, junior

HM: Joel Brown, Ottawa, sophomore

160 pounds

First team: Dayton Fraser, Eudora, junior

Second team: Colton Brusven, Tonganoxie, freshman

Third team: Carson Gleghorn, Paola, senior

HM: Jacob Waller, Bonner Springs, senior

170 pounds

First team: Kael Lane, Ottawa, senior

Second team: Dakota Whitaker, Eudora, senior

Third team: Jack Harvey, Baldwin, freshman

HM: Ben Timpe, Paola, senior

182 pounds

First team: Aiden Barker, Louisburg, junior

Second team: Wyatt Sink, Ottawa, junior

Third team: Hunter Benedict, Tonganoxie, sophomore

HM: Nate Criqui, Eudora, senior

195 pounds

First team: Branden Martin, Tonganoxie, senior

Second team: Draven Pipken, Spring Hill, sophomore

Third team: Jared Ferguson, Ottawa, junior

HM: Dakota Mortell, Bonner Springs, junior

220 pounds

First team: Alec Younggren, Louisburg, senior

Second team: Toby Thomas, Baldwin, senior

Third team: Andrew Campbell, Spring Hill, junior

HM: Devon Moncrief, Eudora, senior

285 pounds

First team: Tony Caballero, Bonner Springs, junior

Second team: Denver Gardner, Spring Hill, senior

Third team: Aaron Clevenger, Ottawa, junior

HM: Jason Newton, Paola, sophomore

Holtzen, Younggren return home as state medalists



Louisburg senior Cade Holtzen tries to hold Andale's AJ Furnish to the mat during the third-place match Saturday in Salina.

SALINA – Cade Holtzen and Alec Younggren didn't get to leave Salina on Saturday with what they were hoping to earn.

Only a select few get to leave with the title of "state champion," and both Louisburg seniors were close to reaching their goal. Despite that, both wrestlers helped the Wildcat team to their best state finish in nearly 11 years.

Younggren reached the championship match, only to finish second at 220 pounds, while Holtzen rallied back to medal third at 132 during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships at the Tony's Pizza Events Center. The two wrestlers combined to score 30 points, which put them 14th in the team standings.

Louisburg hadn't finished that high since 2010, when Austin Hood won his first of three state titles and his brother Bryce, took second. The Wildcats were 10th that year.

The Wildcats nearly had their first state champion since 2012 when Younggren reached the 220 pound finals and he was more than ready to finish out his perfect season.

To start the tournament, Younggren opened with an 8-2 decision

against Goodland's Dexter Dautel in the quarterfinals. Then in the semis, he pinned Clay Center's Keegan McDonald in the third period to earn a spot in his first state championship match.

Then came the battle of unbeatens when Younggren took his perfect record against No. 1 ranked Cayden Winter of Andale.

Winter got out to a quick start and led Younggren 5-1 going into the third period. The Louisburg senior got an escape to start the third period, but Winter responded with a takedown to make it 7-2.

Younggren followed with another escape and a takedown to cut it to 7-5. He just couldn't the back points he was looking for as Winter scored a reversal in the final seconds and handed Younggren his first loss in a 9-5 decision.

"I felt like I wrestled to the best of my ability and I gave my all and that's all I could do," Younggren said. "It may not be the outcome I wanted, but at the end of the day I know I gave my all that's I can do.

"I think my finals match the hardest part for me. Wrestling Winter's speed was something I haven't seen the whole year and being down early in the match didn't help. Going into the third period I just could make up the ground I had lost."



Alec Younggren reacts to advancing to his first state championship match Saturday at the state tournament in Salina.

Younggren finished his season with a 37-1 record and a second place medal, which is the school's highest individual placer since 2012.

"All season long, Alec has been a beast on the mat for us," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "He was a great addition to the program this year, and he fell right in with the team as though he'd been a part of it all four years. From the very beginning, he bought into the Wildcat Wrestling philosophy and he had an immediate impact on his teammates. Over the years, I've worked with a lot of strong athletes, but I think pound-for-pound, Alec has to be one of the strongest kids I've ever worked with. It doesn't matter the position – top, bottom, or neutral, he's immovable. When he wants to move, he's like a charging bull and there's not much you can

do to stop him.

"I'm especially proud of his work ethic and competitiveness, and I know those qualities definitely influenced the other wrestlers. Also, he's got a great wrestling knowledge that includes a style that matches very well with my own and a style influenced by freestyle and greco-roman wrestling. I know how much he wanted to win that state title this year, and the thing that I praised about him is the fact that he overcame so much this year. There was the broken foot, the fact that he was a new kid in a new school his senior year, the uncertainties of Covid, and the move to a new classification. He was untouchable this season, though. All the way to the state tournament, he'd only seen the third period one time. He'd put so much work into getting that state title, and it breaks my heart that he came up so close of that goal."



Alec Younggren works to take down Clay Center's Keegan McDonald during the 220-pound semifinal match.

Holtzen's tough moment came in the semifinals as he was vying for his first state championship appearance. He opened the tournament with a 4-2 decision over Pratt's Kaiser Pelland to move on to the semifinals to square off with Mulvane's Chadwick Stahl.

The match had a lot of action as a scramble seemed to Stahl on his back and Holtzen with a pin. Instead, Stahl fought it off and another scramble put Holtzen on his back and he wasn't able to get out of it.

Stahl pinned Holtzen in 1 minute and 18 seconds and Holtzen was forced to try for the third place medal instead.

"Oh I definitely know that I had the pin," Holtzen said. "I was looking at his shoulders and he was flat. But sometimes

the ref doesn't call the call and he got a little lucky and flipped me and then I just couldn't get out of it. I feel like I was 100 percent the best wrestler in that bracket, so it's tough knowing I should've been holding that bracket on top of the podium."



Cade Holtzen looked like he had a pin of Mulvane's Chadwick Stahl during the 132-pound semifinal match on Saturday.

Holtzen, who is the program's leader in wins, responded to record two more to his end career on a winning note.

The Louisburg senior won a 2-0 decision over Scott City's Zach Rohrbough and then followed it up with a convincing 7-2 decision over Andale's AJ Furnish. Furnish was the No. 1 ranked wrestler in the weight class going into the tournament.

After the match, Holtzen got a hug from his coach after realizing his wrestling career was over.

“There were a lot of tears shed, but not as many as I would’ve thought,” Holtzen said. “I think that’s just because of all that I fought through and accomplished this season that it would be a shame to be anything but proud of the result. Of course I’m sad that it’s over, but I have nothing but love and gratitude to the sport that has given me so much.”

Holtzen finished his season with a 38-2 record and a third place state medal, which is a career-best. He also became a 3-time state medalist in the process as he was wrestling with a heavy heart after his grandfather, C.D., passed away earlier that week.



Cade Holtzen shares a hug with head coach Bobby Bovaird following his final state match Saturday in Salina. Holtzen finished his season with a 38-2 record.

"Ten years ago when I first came to Louisburg, Cade was one of the first wrestlers I got to meet," Bovaird said. "For years, I'd been looking forward to seeing this skinny second grader grow up and join our high school program, and from the very beginning of his high school career, I knew he'd leave a huge footprint on our program. In addition to the past four years of LHS wrestling, I've worked with him throughout the years as a youth and middle school wrestling coach, his high school English teacher, and his gifted teacher. I've formed a bond with him that has taught me more about wrestling, coaching, and teaching than I think he'll ever realize. I'm the coach I am today due in part to my relationship with him.

"As he finishes up his high school career, I can say that I am nothing but proud of him and grateful for the opportunity to coach him. He had a tough tournament, coming so close to getting that state title. There's a series of photos that were taken during his semifinals match where you can clearly see that he had his opponent pinned, but that's the way it goes. He suffered a huge setback, and, as I told him after his third place match, 99 percent of people who come that close to a goal would throw up their hands and say, "Why bother?" Not Cade. I asked him what he chose to do instead of that, and he said he finished the job. He battled back and overcame all the disappointment and emotions by knocking off two very strong wrestlers. By doing that, he became the 1 percent. I told him that I was so proud of him, but more importantly, his grandfather is looking down, even more proud. With that, we both cried, but I know that Cade has found some peace from it."

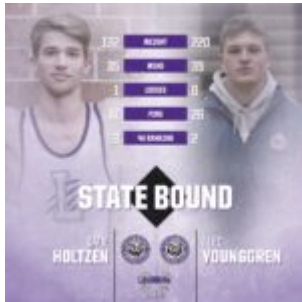
It was an emotional ending to what had been a successful season for the Wildcats, one that sees the departure of three seniors who made big impacts on the program in Holtzen,

Younggren and Ryan Owens.

"With these seniors, along with Ryan Owens, they've brought five state medals to our program, and Alec brought a state medal from his previous school," Bovaird said. "They earned 10 trips to the state tournament in their careers. It was pretty special at state this weekend when a wrestler from another league school came up to me, shook my hand, and said, 'Coach, congratulations on this season. You're really building something special there in Louisburg.' This kid had no reason to say that to me, nothing to gain. It got me thinking about things. It's not that I'm building something myself; it's all the youth coaches who've had an impact on these kids, the middle school coaches, the assistant coaches, the parents, the teammates, the alumni, and the families.

"Cade and Alec represent a diverse scope of influence that has led the Louisburg Wrestling program to where it is today – and where it's going in the future. Cade and Ryan are grassroots, home-grown products of Louisburg, and with Alec, it's an example of a stellar athlete and his family having trust in our program to continue building on what he'd already accomplished. Cade and Ryan wouldn't have stayed here if they didn't have faith in the program, and Alec wouldn't have come here if he and his family hadn't liked the whole program. Seeing these seniors graduate is definitely bittersweet. They leave huge shoes to fill, but at the same time, I know that each of them will be incredibly successful in anything they choose to do in life."

Drive for state titles fuel Holtzen, Younggren



With a combined 70-1 record, Louisburg seniors Cade Holtzen and Alec Younggren are ready to take Salina by storm.

Today is the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships that will be held at the Tony's Pizza Event Center in Salina. It is the place where wrestling dreams are made.

It is where champions are crowned, but it is also a place where tears are shed. The best of the best will square off today as the top eight wrestlers in each weight class will battle it out at noon today to try and earn a state medal.

For Holtzen and Younggren, however, just getting a state medal is not enough – not by a long shot.

Both wrestlers have their eyes squarely focused on a state championship. If either of them were to do it, they would be the school's first state champion since 2012.

"I'm expecting great things from both guys this weekend," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "They've both been coming in early this week to get in an extra workout, and they've been impeccably focused at practice after school. They've had some great support from teammates who've continued to come in to help them prepare for state.

"Both Cade and Alec have been very open to coaching this week, whether it's adjusting hip levels before shooting, keeping

shoulder pressure while on top, or hand control on bottom. They listen, and they apply what they learn. We're all excited for the tournament. It's not a matter of pressure where they're feeling like they have to go out and win. It's a matter of them being excited to compete, being thankful for the opportunity to pursue a state title. They have the mindset that they're not afraid of losing or making mistakes. That's where they need to be, and I think we have an incredible chance to bring home two state champions at the end of the day.

A lot is on the line and each wrestler has different things that have driven them this past week. It has been an emotional several days for the two Wildcat seniors and one they hope ends atop the medal stand.

Cade Holtzen

After winning the 132-pound sub-state championship, and breaking the school's all-time win record last Saturday, Cade received a text from one of his biggest fans – his grandfather, C.D. Holtzen.

"He just let me know how proud he was of me and how he couldn't wait to see me wrestle," Cade said. "He loved watching me wrestle."

Just two days later, that text took on a whole different meaning.

Cade learned that C.D. passed away from a bout with cancer Monday. It made a week that started out with a lot of excitement, all of sudden one filled with sadness and grief.

"This has been a really tough week for me," Cade said. "It has been tough trying to stay focused. It has been harder than normal for sure, but I feel like I am in the right spot. I am practicing hard, wrestling hard and it is all about your drive at this point and who wants it more."



Before the week started, Cade really wanted to win a state title, but that drive has gone into another gear after learning of his grandfather's passing.

"In my day-to-day activities it is just always in the back of my mind that he is not around anymore," Cade said. "I never really got to say goodbye to him and that is hard, but it does make the drive more important. Instead of wrestling for me and my own goals, it adds another layer of what I am wrestling for."

Cade's father, Craig, made the journey up to visit C.D. last weekend and there was one topic C.D. didn't want to let go of.

"He loved watching me wrestle," Cade said. "He was a basketball guy for sure, actually my whole family is. My dad went down to see him last weekend after we wrestled at sub-state. He was the only one allowed to visit him and he was

trying to get my grandpa to make some videos to say hi to everyone, and all he would talk about was my wrestling and how excited he was to watch me. It meant the world to me.”

C.D. will be on the forefront of Cade’s mind as he competes in Salina today as he tries to win a 132-pound state championship.

Cade will open the tournament against Pratt’s Kaiser Pelland (30-9), who he beat in the blood round at last year’s state tournament. It was a win that assured Cade of his second state medal.



Cade Holtzen talks with Louisburg head coach Bobby Bovaird following a match earlier this season.

In fact, Holtzen will only need to win one match to assure himself another state medal, but that is not his goal.

“Winning one match isn’t enough,” he said. “I know one win gets me a medal, and that would make me a 3-time state placer. That is a big accomplishment, and I am not trying to downplay that, but the ultimate goal is to win a state title and for that I need three wins. You have to take it one match at a time, but after that one win it will make me a little less nervous.”

Should he win his first match, Holtzen could draw Mulvane’s Chadwick Stahl, who is a two-time state runner-up and the No. 2 ranked wrestler in the state, in the semifinals.

Cade has found himself watching a lot of matches of Pelland, Stahl and the rest of the 132-pound field and that has led to a lot of work in practice.

“I have done quite a bit of research on who else is there,” he said. “Stahl is the No. 2 kid in the state and I have watched some of his matches this year and have tried to figure out what he likes to do. I am just working on those things in the wrestling room so I can be more successful.”



His goal of a state title hasn't changed this week, but for Cade, who he is doing it for, has.

"I am wrestling for my grandpa this week and I am dedicating this to him," Cade said. "I want it more than anyone, not just for me, but for him and my family. It would mean the world. I know he will have the best seat in the house."

Alec Younggren

Alec Younggren was won 35 straight matches through the 2021 season, is currently ranked No. 2 in the state at 220 pounds and is one of the favorites to possibly win a state title.

It hasn't always been this easy for the Louisburg senior.

Still, with all he has accomplished, Younggren still cannot get his last loss out of his head.

That loss came a year ago at the Class 6A state tournament when Younggren, a junior at the time, was wrestling for Olathe South.

He found himself in the semifinals against Wichita North's Jackson Stroud and it was a close match.

"It was back and forth," Younggren said. "He scored a takedown on me late in the third period. He was called for stalling once earlier in the match. Then we went neutral and he just ran away from me for the rest of the match. It is how he won and it just never sit right with me. He ended up winning state and that made it tougher."

Younggren would bounce back to finish third at state, but it was that one loss that has stuck with him for the next 365 days.



Now at a new school, Younggren has asserted his dominance while at Louisburg. He is stronger than he has ever been, and most of all, more driven.

“No doubt it has driven me to want to be that state champ,” he said. “After that match, I didn’t even know what else to do and where to go. I had to step up and get the next best thing and get third. I went out there and did it.

“I have been thinking about that day ever since it happened. Every single day I have gone over it in my head on what if I would have done something different, would I have won that match? It has been driving me to get better and do better things.”

Younggren isn’t the only one who wants him to do well as several members of the Wildcat team that saw their season come to an end last week, have returned to the practice room to help him and Cade Holtzen stay sharp for the state tournament.



Alec Younggren leaps in the air to celebrate a teammate's victory earlier this season.

"It is amazing," Younggren said. "I appreciate them so much for coming in. Their season is done and they could be home sleeping or eating or doing whatever, but they chose to come back into the wrestling room and help us get ready for what we want to do. I just love them for it because that is hard to do after your season has just come to an end. That proves how much you love the sport."

The Louisburg senior certainly has a love for wrestling and his drive for a state title hasn't slowed any. He and Holtzen have reported to the school at 6:15 a.m. for 45 minutes of conditioning, and then they will be in the practice room for a couple hours after school.

"It has definitely been a tougher week getting up early before school to workout for 45 minutes, going to school and then

practicing for a couple hours in the evening has definitely been tough, but it is what I have to do to place at state," Younggren said. "It is what I have to do to win that match I want to win."

That match is the state championship and Younggren knows he will have a lot of competition along the way.

Up to this point in the season, Younggren has earned 26 pins and getting past the first period has been a rarity. Only five of his matches have gone past the second period, and only one has gone the distance – which was a 12-1 major decision in December.

He will face Goodland's Dexter Dautel (26-12) in the first round, and should he advance, will face the winner of Clay Center's Keegan McDonald (28-5) and Baldwin's Toby Thomas (24-5). Younggren has yet to see McDonald, but he pinned Thomas two weeks ago.



On the other side of the bracket is No. 1 ranked Cayden Winter from Andale, who is 19-0 on the year. He has held that top ranking the entire season.

“I have watched a lot of his matches and I am trying to figure different things I need to do to beat him if we were to see each other,” Younggren said. “He is a good wrestler.”

A year later, Younggren feels he is in a different place with a different mindset.

“I feel like I am 10 times stronger and 10 times more experienced than I was last year,” he said. “I learned so much last year, and coming into this year, on what I need to do and I what I need to do to win state. Leaps and bounds from where I was and know I know what it takes to win that title. I am a full 220 and last year I wasn’t filled out. I weighed like 210 then, but now I am 220 on the dot and that helps me out a lot

with strength. I have worked hard for this moment.”

Needless to say, it is state title or bust for Younggren.

“Not winning a state title would be a disappointment for me,” he said. “There is nothing else I am thinking about.”

Four Wildcat wrestlers have season come to a close



Louisburg senior Ryan Owens finished one win shy of making it to state Saturday during the Class 4A sub-state tournament in Chanute. Owens ended his Wildcat career with a state medal and his season with a 25-8 record.

CHANUTE – As happy as Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird was to watch two of his wrestlers, Cade Holtzen and Alec Younggren qualify for state, he was just as heartbroken for the four that saw their season come to an end.

Senior Ryan Owens, junior Aiden Barker and sophomores Kaven Bartlett and Elijah Eslinger all finished outside of the top four Saturday during the Class 4A sub-state tournament at Chanute High School. It ended the season of all four wrestlers, but Bovaird couldn't have been more proud of his team.

"I consider the other four guys to be state qualifiers," he said. "Had this season been like any normal season, they would have been in the top 16 at the state tournament. Making it to "state" this year is just like being in the blood round any other year. Cade and Alec only have to win one match and they're state medalists. I'm so proud of the guys who made it to sub-state."

Owens, who medaled at state last season at 120 pounds, fell one win short of reaching the final eight this season.

The Louisburg senior lost his opening round match to Fort Scott's Shawn Barrager, but bounced back to beat Perry-Lecompton's Mason Bahnmaier by a 12-4 major decision.

Unfortunately, it would be his only win of the day as he fell in a 14-4 major decision to Independence's Kohen Wright in the blood round. He then went on to lose his fifth place to Barrager.

Owens finished his season with a 25-8 record after the sixth place finish in the sub-state tournament.

"Ryan's senior season definitely didn't end how we all wanted it to end, and this is one of the toughest parts of coaching this sport," Bovaird said. "He's given so much to the program these past four years, and he made a huge impact on his teammates. Whether it was demonstrating focus and toughness on the mat or mentoring younger guys, I'm so proud of him. My heart breaks for him, and he's been a great leader for us."



Aiden Barker puts Topeka Hayden's Will Devader on his back during his blood round match Saturday in Chanute. Barker was one win shy of making it to state.

Barker was also win victory away from punching his ticket to state at 182 pounds. He reached the semifinals by pinning Osawatomie's Seth Carrow in the first period of the quarterfinal round.

He then faced Chanute's Brayden Dillow, the eventual sub-state champion, and was pinned in the second period.

In a must-win match in the consolation semifinals, Barker had a rematch with Topeka-Hayden's Will Devader. The two squared off in the regional title match the week before, with Barker getting the win.

Devader got his revenge in a back-and-forth match as he outlasted Barker in a 14-10 decision and ended the Louisburg

junior's shot at state. Barker (27-10) did rebound to win his fifth place match with a pin of Carrow again.

"Aiden lost a real heart-breaker in his second-to-last match," Bovaird said. "It was against the same kid he'd beaten the week before in the regional finals, and just like last time, it was a back-and-forth match. He left it all out there, and I'm really proud of how he bounced back to win his final match for 5th place. Most kids would have just thrown their hands up and said 'who cares?' Aiden stepped out there, overcame the strong emotions after losing the previous match, and finished his season with a win."



Louisburg sophomore Kaven Bartlett lost a pair of 1-0 decisions Saturday at the Class 4A sub-state tournament.

As for Bartlett (126 pounds) and Eslinger (285), both finished with 0-2 records after competing in two difficult weight classes.

Bartlett (21-15) battled in both of his matches as he fell in a 1-0 decision to Independence's Cooper Anderson in the quarterfinals. Then in his first consolation match, lost by another 1-0 decision to Iola's TJ Taylor.

Eslinger (18-16) was pinned in the second round in both of his matches by Coffeyville's Brady White, the eventual champion, and Holton's Dustin Chermok.



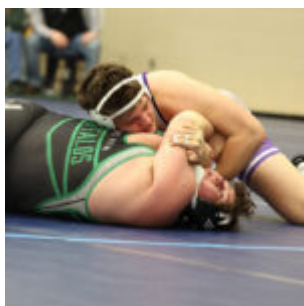
Sophomore heavyweight Elijah Eslinger finished his sub-state 0-2, but ended the season with a winning record.

"Kaven went 0-2, but you've got to consider how tough he's been wrestling," Bovaird said. "Both losses were 1-0, and that shows how close he was. Just think how many opportunities that could have gone his way to make the score 2-1, 3-1, or 1-1 even. He's been dedicated all season, and he wrestled his heart out at Sub-State.

"Elijah has really made huge strides this year, and I'm so excited for his future. He's really figured a lot of things

out, and with gained confidence and experience on the mat, he's got two solid seasons ahead of him. He's really getting strong on his feet and on top, which require skills that will definitely pay off not only in wrestling, but also football."

Younggren pins down state berth in convincing fashion



Louisburg senior Alec Younggren gets a pin of Prairie View's Noah Nordgren on Saturday during the Class 4A sub-state tournament.

CHANUTE – Alec Younggren has struggled more to break a sweat this season than he has to beat his opponents.

It was much of the same Saturday during the Class 4A sub-state tournament in Chanute. Younggren spent a total of about four minutes in his three matches combined on his way to another title.

Younggren won the 220-pound sub-state championship in convincing fashion with three pins and kept his perfect season intact.

"Since my sophomore and junior year, I have always been gunning for a state title and to be where I am means so much to me and it has been an amazing experience for me," Younggren

said. "Being at a new school, coming to new places and seeing different opponents, it just means so much to be able to get this point in my senior year."

The Louisburg senior transferred to the school from Olathe South, where he finished third at state in Class 6A last year. Since his last loss in the 6A semifinals, Younggren has won 37 straight matches, including a 35-0 record this season.

Younggren has been as dominant as any wrestler in the state and it showed Saturday.

He opened the tournament with a pin of Prairie View's Noah Nordgren in 52 seconds and then pinned Topeka-Hayden's Clayton Stephenson in 57 seconds.

In a rarity, Younggren had to go to the second period in the championship match, but pinned Holton's Dalton Roush in 2 minutes and 26 seconds.

"He didn't really make me mad till the second period, so I had to get after him a little bit," Younggren said. "I felt I wrestled pretty good. I feel like I can get better every day and every time I step on the mat I need to improve somehow. I feel amazing right now and I can't wait for state."

Getting past the first period has been a rarity for Younggren. The Louisburg senior has 23 pins on the season, and only five of his matches have gone past the second period.



Alec Younggren takes Topeka-Hayden's Clayton Stephenson to the mat Saturday during the semifinals of the Class 4A sub-state in Chanute. Younggren pinned Stephenson in 57 seconds.

Only one of his 35 wins have gone the distance, which was a 12-1 major decision against a Shawnee Heights wrestler back in December.

The one setback with all of the early wins has been trying to stay in wrestling shape as he hasn't logged many minutes on the season. So Younggren has been doing different things to stay in shape.

"You have to push yourself inside and outside of practice," Younggren said. "You have to find different ways to build your endurance, even if it is not on the mat. Whether it is running or working out more, I just have to get better any way I can."

Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird has seen his hard work first

hand and he knows Younggren has been a great fit with the Wildcat team.

“He’s been a great leader in the practice room,” Bovaird said. “There’s always something about him that rubs off on his teammates. He’s excited for the postseason, not because he’s ready for it to be over, but because he’s itching to get after his own goals. He puts himself through extra workouts all the time, and he helps coach his teammates whenever he gets the chance.

Even though it is Younggren’s first season with the program, he has fit right in with the Wildcat team. He already knew Ryan Owens and Cade Holtzen from kids wrestling, which made the transition pretty seamless.

Holtzen will join Younggren at the state tournament this Saturday in Salina. Holtzen also won a sub-state title at 132 pounds.

“It is awesome,” Younggren said. “When I first got here I really didn’t know a whole lot of people and (Cade) was one of the first one to talk to me and helped me get to know some other people. It really means a lot that I can spend my senior year and have Cade go to state with me. I feel really welcome here in Louisburg.”