

# Week 4 Athlete of the Week: Kaven Bartlett



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

## KAVEN BARTLETT, JUNIOR, WRESTLING

Louisburg junior Kaven Bartlett had another strong performance for the Wildcat wrestling team Saturday during the Louisburg Invitational. Bartlett helped the Wildcats to a second place team finish and found himself in the championship match of the 126-pound bracket.

Bartlett recorded three pins on the day, to go along with a technical fall, to advance to the first place match. Despite getting down early, the Louisburg captain rallied to make it a one-point match, but came up just short in a 4-3 loss to finish second. Bartlett currently has a 14-4 record on the season.

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.

Previous winners:

Week 1: Elijah Eslinger

Week 2: Maverick Rockers

Week 3: Aiden Barker

The advertisement is a rectangular banner with a purple and white color scheme. On the left, it features the logo for 'Dr. Laura's Orthodontics' with a sunburst graphic. Below the logo, text states: 'Whether your child needs 1 set or 2 sets of braces you never pay twice at our office'. To the right of this text is a photo of a smiling child with braces. Below the photo, it says 'Orthodontics, TMJ and Sleep Apnea Treatment'. In the center, a line of text reads: 'Comfortable dental care for the entire family: No shots, no drills, no pain. We offer sedation dentistry for high anxiety patients.' Below this is a photo of a smiling family (father, mother, and child). To the right of the family photo is the logo for 'IRONHORSE FAMILY & COSMETIC DENTISTRY' featuring a horse head. At the bottom left, contact information is listed: '5321 W 151<sup>st</sup> St, Leawood, KS 66224 (913)851-9969' and '1270 W Amity, Louisburg, KS 66053 (913)837-3096'. At the bottom right, it says 'Follow us on Facebook for special contests and discounts' with a Facebook icon.

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# Top 10 Louisburg Sports Stories for 2021



It was a successful, and eventful, 2021 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 several programs brought back state hardware.

Below are the top stories from 2021, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the explanation is the link to the actual story from the event.

When putting the list together, I took a lot of things into

account – whether it was team vs. individual, popularity of the sport, historical achievements and the interest it drew on the web site.

This year was a blast to cover and I am looking forward to seeing what 2022 will bring. Thank you to everyone for their support and can't wait for it all to begin again.



## **10. Louisburg golf team qualifies for state**

INDEPENDENCE – For the second time in as many seasons, the Louisburg boys golf team qualified for the state tournament.

Except this time, the Wildcat team is made up of a completely new roster.

The Louisburg group of Johnny Eberhart, A.J. Arriola, Johnny Thompson, Sam Wheeler, Dacey Wieland and Jackson Olson shot a 392 to finish third at the Class 4A regional meet at Independence Country Club.

The Wildcats were just three strokes behind runner-up Field Kindley. Independence won the regional title with a 361.

Louisburg last went to state in 2019, but the 2020 season was canceled due to COVID-19.

Eberhart led Louisburg with an 87 and finished fourth overall and was the lone Wildcat to make the cut for the second day.



## **9. Compliment steps back from volleyball program after 15 seasons.**

When Jessica Compliment walked off the floor following her team's semifinal sub-state loss to Bishop Miege back in

October of 2020, the only thought on her mind was how that match was more like a state championship battle.s

It wasn't your normal match as the two perennial state contenders had to square off so early in the postseason. She was proud of her team and was looking forward to another season of helping Louisburg volleyball get to another state tournament.

Little did she know, it would be the last time she would find herself on the Lady Cat sideline.

In late January, Compliment submitted her resignation as head volleyball coach as she will be stepping away to spend more time with her growing family.

Compliment certainly left her mark on the Louisburg volleyball program as she finished her 15th season back in October and has an impressive resume to show for it.

In the decade-and-a-half as the Lady Cat coach, Compliment guided Louisburg to eight state tournament appearances and placed in the top four of seven of them.

She also finished nine wins shy of 400 as she posted a record of 391-226 and helped Louisburg to three state championship matches.

Shortly after, the district hired assistant coach Leanna Willer to take over the program.



## **8. Wildcat boys soccer wins Frontier League title, advances to regional title**

It had the drama of a state championship match, but instead the No. 1 and 3 ranked teams in the state were playing for the Class 4-1A regional championship title.

Louisburg hosted Bishop Miege in hopes ending the Stags' string of consecutive state championships.

Instead, the Wildcats once again saw their season come to a close after a 2-0 loss to the Stags at Wildcat Stadium and ended their season with a 12-5-1 record.

The loss was heartbreaking defeat for the Wildcats, who had

their sights set on another state final four – and possibly – a state title. To make matters worse, it was to a Miego team that has handed Louisburg a loss in five of the last six postseasons.

Earlier in the season, the Wildcats were crowned as co-champions of the Frontier League with Spring Hill.

132	WEIGHT	220
35	WINS	35
1	LOSSES	0
17	PINS	26
3	4A RANKING	2

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## 7. Wildcat wrestling medals two

SALINA – Cade Holtzen and Alec Younggren didn't get to leave Salina 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.



## **6. Louisburg cross country qualifies both teams for state, medals four.**

WAMEGO – It wasn't the finish Louisburg wanted following the Class 4A state cross country meet, but the Wildcats left with more than their fair share of hardware.

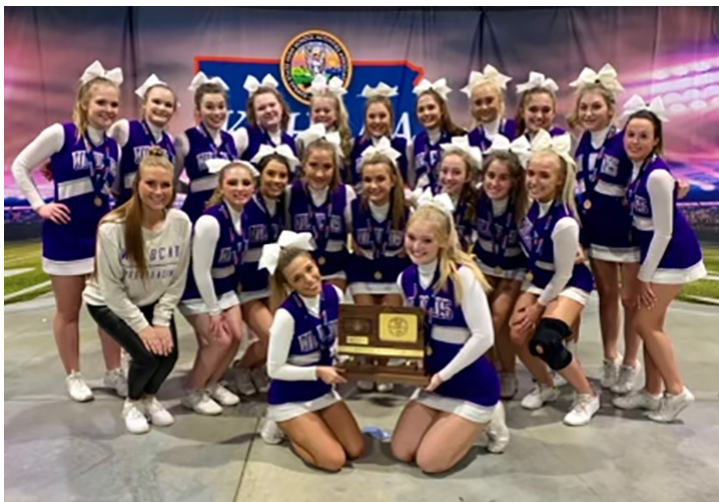
Louisburg was awarded four state medals following the meet at

Wamego Country Club, including three on the girls side for the second straight season.

The Lady Cats had hoped to earn a team plaque for the second year in a row, but took fifth overall with 144 points. Eudora won the girls championship with 56, Baldwin was second with 64 and Winfield was third with 93.

Sophomore Emma Vohs led the charge for Louisburg as she finished sixth overall. Sophomore Maddy Rhamy and senior Reese Johnson also medaled for the Lady Cats.

In his first year with the boys program, senior Jaden Vohs had a strong final run for the Wildcats as he medaled 12th overall.



## 5. Louisburg cheer finishes runner-up at state competition

TOPEKA – The Louisburg High cheer program knows a thing or two about being one of the last teams left standing at the Game Day Showcase.

Louisburg, which won a state title in 2019 and took third in 2020, found itself one of the two teams left standing.

When the final results were announced in November, the judges

awarded the Wildcat cheer squad the state runner-up plaque. Paola won the state title, while Baldwin made it a Frontier League sweep as it took third.



## 4. Wildcat girls take fourth at state soccer

WICHITA – The Louisburg girls soccer team may have left the Class 4-1A Kansas State Girls Soccer Championships with a pair of losses, but the Wildcats took a lot of pride in what they accomplished.

For the fourth straight season, Louisburg advanced to the state final four and the Wildcats finished fourth in the state – a far cry where many people thought they would end up. The Wildcats lost a pair of 2-1 matches to Mulvane and then to McPherson in the third-place match at the Stryker Sports

Complex in Wichita.

Louisburg, which lost 12 seniors from a season that didn't happen due to COVID, returned just three varsity players. Despite all that, they ended up being one of the top teams in the state.



### **3. Louisburg girls basketball snaps 47-year state drought, takes third at state**

SALINA – The tears were abundant following Louisburg's loss to McPherson in the Class 4A state semifinal game.

The Lady Cats saw their season come to an end after their 58-46 loss to the Bullpups in Salina, but as hard as the finality of it was to take, they know what is the bigger

picture.

Before the game even started, Louisburg already wrapped up its best finish in program history and became the first Lady Cat team to place at state as it finished third.

A season that finished with a 19-5 record and a third place state trophy, is one that will always be remembered in Louisburg history.

“It means the world to me to finish third at state,” senior Megan Foote said. “Obviously it wasn’t how we wanted to finish, but that’s okay. I’m still beyond proud of this group and the accomplishments we have made. We are the best girls basketball team in Louisburg history. I’d say to be a part of that, is pretty awesome. I’m honored.”

For the last three quarters of the game, Louisburg actually outscored McPherson 43-37, but it was the first quarter that the Lady Cats weren’t able to overcome.

McPherson scored the first 15 points of the first quarter and took a 21-3 lead going into the second period.



## 2. Wildcat basketball advances to first-ever state title game, finish runner-up

SALINA – The result of the state championship game is not what the Louisburg boys basketball team will focus on several years from now.

The fact that the 2020-21 Wildcats recorded the best finish in school history, will be more than enough for them to fondly reminisce about.

Louisburg, which played in its first-ever state championship game in Salina, fell to state power Bishop Miege, 94-40. As disappointing as the result was, many of the Wildcats were looking bigger picture.

“We will forever live in history with this senior class and with this team,” senior Weston Guetterman said. “Until someone

wins it at least, we are going to be the bar that everyone looks to. It is a proud moment for all of us.”

In the state semifinal, the Wildcats got a revenge victory with a come-from-behind 58-55 win over Augusta to advance to the state title game.



## **1. Wildcat track wins second state championship; Wright wins three state titles.**

WICHITA – On the 10th anniversary of the Louisburg boys' first state track championship, this year's team wanted to do something to commemorate the historic event.

The Wildcats decided they wanted to win one of their own.

Louisburg edged out Andale for the state championship Friday during the Class 4A Kansas Track and Field Championships at Cessna Stadium in Wichita.

It is just the second track championship for Louisburg and just the fourth team state championship in school history.

The first one was a golf title in 1977, and then football won its first state title in 2010. The track team followed with its first later that school year in 2011 and the Louisburg cheer squad won a state title in 2019.

“There are no words to describe how incredibly proud I was of the entire team,” Louisburg coach Andy Wright said. “It was a total team effort. It was a moment I will never forget as a coach, and how exciting that it came down to the final race. Everyone gave it their all, and I just couldn’t happier as a coach to see all of that hard work pay off for them with the greatest reward.”

Tom Koontz led the Wildcats with four state medals, including a state championship in the 110-meter hurdles.



On the girls side, Delaney Wright made some history of her own.

Wright was the favorite to win state titles in her three events at the Class 4A State Track and Field Championships.

She didn't disappoint.

Wright not only won three state championships, but she won them in convincing fashion, breaking two school records in the process. The Louisburg junior won the long jump, 400-meter dash and the 200-meter dash on her way to an historic day in Wichita.

"My experience at state track this year was amazing," Wright said. "The people competing there were super nice and my teammates made it more fun. It meant a lot to pull off winning three state titles."

Wright became the first female Wildcat athlete to win three state titles in the same year as she helped the Lady Cats to a fifth place finish in the team standings – also the highest finish for Louisburg girls track and field.

“I can’t say enough how awesome of a competitor Delaney is,” Louisburg girls coach John Reece said. “I know she went to state with one thing on her mind – win. She did just that and truly performed to her best. Winning three different events is an incredible feat.”

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## Wildcats take third at Tonganoxie, eight finish in the top four



***Louisburg freshman Jay McCaskill works for a pin during his 145 pound match Saturday at Tonganoxie.***

TONGANOXIE – Louisburg wrestling coach Bobby Bovaird couldn’t have asked for a much better way for his team to end the 2021 part of its schedule.

During the Randy Starcher Invitational on Saturday in Tonganoxie, Louisburg finished third out of 10 teams with 153 points. Tonganoxie was first with 210 and Lansing was second at 167.5

The Wildcats were also well-represented in the medal department as they had eight wrestlers finish in the top four.

"We had a pretty solid conclusion to the first part of the season," Bovaird said. "At Friday's practice, it was weird – we had the whole gym to ourselves. Basketball had practiced earlier in the day, so we were the only ones there. I went a little off-script from my original match prep practice place. We did some visualizing and breathing exercises.

"At Saturday's tournament, Tonganoxie had a classroom set aside for each school to store their bags and to have a place to decompress or get away from the craziness of the tournament. It was perfect timing to get the team to try some visualizing on their own. I think it definitely paid off. All of our guys were pretty focused and competitive."

Louisburg senior Aiden Barker had one of the more dominant performances of the tournament. Barker finished first at 195 pounds with a 5-0 record and won all of them by pin.

All of those pins were in the first period, except for the championship match against Lansing's Andrew Shields, in which Barker got the pin 20 seconds in the second period.

"Aiden has that senior confidence that I love to see," Bovaird said. "He's been driven by the past two seasons – coming so short of going to state as a sophomore and coming one match away from going to the final 8 last year. You could tell during football that he was on a mission to accomplish his goals in the fall, and you can tell the same thing now. He was dominant in all five matches."



***Louisburg senior Aiden Barker records one of his five pins Saturday at Tonganoxie. Barker won the title at 195 pounds.***

Juniors Kaven Bartlett (126 pounds) and freshman Colton Blue (113) also found themselves in the championship match.

Bartlett won his first three matches, including two by pin and an 8-4 decision over Independence's Cooper Anderson. Bartlett, who is ranked No. 5 in Class 4A, went up against No. 1 ranked Braeden Moore from Tonganoxie and lost by pin to take second.

Blue won his first four matches of the day and went up against Independence's Mason Gibbons in the championship. The Louisburg freshman fell in a 10-4 decision.

Of the top eight finishers, five of them were either freshmen or sophomores.

"This freshman class is pretty special," Bovaird said. "I've

been watching them grow from youth wrestling through middle school wrestling. Now that they're on the mats for high school, they're delivering on their potential and then some. It will be an amazing next four years to see their growth and accomplishments."

One of those freshmen was Jay McCaskill, who went on to take third at 145 pounds. After McCaskill lost his first match of the day, he rattled off four straight wins, including a pin in the third place match.

Sophomore Noah Cotter went 3-2 at 106 pounds, and all three came by pin to take third place.

Freshman Brayden Yoder had a big day at 182 pounds as he went 3-1, including a pin in his third place match.



***Louisburg junior Elijah Eslinger took third at 285 pounds***

### ***Saturday at Tonganoxie.***

Junior Elijah Eslinger also finished third at 285 pounds with a 3-1 record. Eslinger outlasted Tongnaoxie's Cooper Jones in a 4-3 decision in the third place match.

At 170 pounds, freshman Ashton Moore won his first three matches and took fourth overall.

"All of our guys are really coming together and making huge strides," Bovaird said. "Noah was 3-2 and finished in 3rd place. He got a revenge win from last year against his Tonganoxie opponent, and his two losses were tech falls. He just won't give up, and now that he's not giving up 15 pounds each match, he's going to see some great things this year. Colton only lost one match – a rematch against Independence. The week before, he lost by major, but this time it was much closer. Kaven got a revenge win against Independence, handing him his first loss of the season.

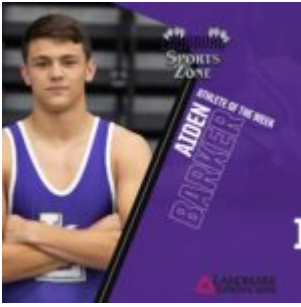
"Jay lost to the eventual champion in the first round, but he rattled off four pins to finish 3rd. Lucas Swartz made the drop to 152 for the weekend to fill in for Jesse Murphy. He was 1-3, but he was battling in each of his matches. Ashton and Brayden were a combined 6-3 on the weekend, with six pins."

Louisburg will look to use that momentum on Jan. 8 when the Wildcats host the Louisburg Invitational in their first action after the holiday break.

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## **Week 3 Athlete of the Week:**

# Aiden Barker



Here is the Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Week for week three of the winter sports season, sponsored by Landmark National Bank.

## AIDEN BARKER, SENIOR, WRESTLING

Louisburg senior Aiden Barker had a big week for the Wildcat wrestling team and turned out a standout performance during the Randy Starcher Invitational on Saturday in Tonganoxie. Barker won the 195-pound weight class with a 5-0 record and all five victories came by pin.

Barker is off to a good start in his final season with the Louisburg program. He is currently 13-1 on the season and is ranked No. 4 at 195 pounds in Class 4A.

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Previous winners:

Week 1: Elijah Eslinger

Week 2: Maverick Rockers



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## Wildcats go 1-2 at December Duals in Baldwin



BALDWIN CITY – The Louisburg wrestling team traveled to Baldwin High School on Friday as the Wildcats took part in the December Duals.

Louisburg squared off with Independence, Baldwin and Gardner-Edgerton in hopes of gaining more experience on the season for a team filled with freshmen and sophomores.

The Wildcats were able to do that as they went 1-2 on the day with a 54-26 win over Gardner. Louisburg also had a pair of close setbacks with a 39-37 loss to Baldwin and fell 43-32 to

Independence.

"I think psychologically, we're in a good place," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "Wrestling is a tough season for lots of reasons, but chiefly because of the timing. These kids have to monitor their weights and work hard to get in wrestling shape really quickly, while at the same time they're juggling all of their music concerts and fall semester finals. Despite some of the lumps we took on the mat, I'm encouraged by the positivity and the resilience of the team – varsity and JV alike."

Against Independence, the Wildcats got off to a tough start as they got down 19-0 and 31-12, before they were able to make it a little closer. Louisburg got wins from Jay McCaskill (145), Jesse Murphy (152), Lucas Swartz (160), Brayden Yoder (182), Aiden Barker (195) and Kyle Oram (220).

"Their lighter weights were pretty solid and they had a lot of experienced young guys on their roster," Bovaird said. "The Independence dual could have gone either way. Kaven (Bartlett) lost a close one against the same kid who beat him at sub-state last year. Last year it was 1-0, this time it was 3-2. He's making big strides already."

"Elijah (Eslinger) got caught by a physical attack and then lost his balance for a split second, and that's what cost him. Next time he sees that wrestler, it'll be a different story. We had big wins from McCaskill, Murphy, Swartz, Yoder, and Oram. Murphy has the most high school wrestling experience of all of them, and he just started in eighth grade."

The Wildcats came back strong against Gardner as they got wins from Noah Cotter (106), Colton Blue (113), Bartlett (126), J'Lee Collins (132), McCaskill, Murphy, Ashton Moore (170), Yoder and Barker.

Against Baldwin, the dual could have gone either way. Louisburg was down 33-25 with three wrestlers left.

Barker and Elijah Eslinger (285) each got a pin, but Oram was pinned at 220 which gave the Bulldogs the slight edge. Cotter, Blue, Bartlett, Traden Noll (138) and Moore also got victories for Louisburg.

“We had a tough night, losing two close duals that could have done either way,” Bovaird said. “I was hoping for different results, but there’s lots of silver linings to the night. We had winning records from Cotter, Blue, Bartlett, McCaskill, Murphy, Moore, and Yoder. Barker was undefeated on the night and is sitting at an 8-0 record so far. Collins got his first win of the season as well.”

Louisburg is back in action tonight as the Wildcats travel to Olathe West for a dual. They end the 2021 schedule with tournament action Saturday in Tonganoxie.

“We’ve got high standards for the program this year, so we’re taking our competitions very seriously,” Bovaird said. “The struggle is going to be keeping the team from dwelling on losses or mistakes. Big life lesson there – learn from the losses or they’re going to continue to impact your growth negatively. We need to be resilient and bounce back from the tough matches and work to improve every day.”

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## **Wildcats open season with runner-up finish at Fort Scott**



FORT SCOTT – The first dual of the season didn't go the way the Louisburg wrestling team had hoped it would Friday at the Fort Scott Dual Tournament.

However, it was the way the Wildcats responded that made the day all the more worth it.

After a setback to Blue Valley Southwest to start the day, Louisburg reeled off four straight victories to earn second place at the tournament and the Wildcats created some momentum moving forward.

"All in all, it was a pretty solid start to the season, and I'm proud of how the guys competed," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "If you look at our line-up compared to our opponents, we had a very young and inexperienced team. We had six freshmen and three sophomores, and four of the fourteen wrestlers are first- or second-year wrestlers. But we fielded a full team, top to bottom, for the first time in a long time, and because we had that depth and consistency, we were able to edge out a couple of teams in close duals."

Louisburg opened the tournament against the No. 5 team in Class 5A, Blue Valley Southwest, and came away with a 54-27 setback.

The Wildcats then went up against Fort Scott, and found themselves down three points going into the last match, but junior Elijah Eslinger came through with a pin in the heavyweight match to give Louisburg a 42-39 victory.

That momentum carried over into the rest of the day as the Wildcats defeated Atchison County, 42-37 and Anderson County,

60-24. Louisburg ended its day with a 78-6 victory over team mixed with junior varsity wrestlers.

Senior Aiden Barker had a strong first outing as he ended the day with a 5-0 record and three pins. The No. 4 wrestler in Class 4A opened the tournament with a victory over a state qualifier.

“Barker definitely had a great day,” Bovaird said. “His first match was the biggest test – he wrestled a strong kid from Blue Valley Southwest who was a state qualifier two years ago in 5A and a part of a phenomenal and well-coached BVSU program. Barker showed a great deal of maturity, composure, and leadership in his matches throughout the day.”

Eslinger also had a big day for Louisburg. Along with his match sealing win over Fort Scott, he finished with a 5-0 record and three pins as well.

“One of the most exciting things about this sport is seeing the growth from year-to-year,” Bovaird said. “Elijah started off as a freshman wrestling varsity at 285 because we had no one else. In the past two years, he’s gotten tons more confidence and experience. Last year, he started being our true anchor – in a close dual, we knew he could seal the victory at the last weight. All of the matches in a dual are important, but it’s pretty exciting when a dual comes down to the final match. He’s done a great job showing composure and reliability in his position on the team, especially in the Fort Scott dual.”

Junior captain Kaven Bartlett had a successful day with a 4-1 record and two pins at 126 pounds. Freshman Ashton Moore was 4-1 with four pins at 170 pounds, while sophomore Noah Cotter (106) and freshman Colton Blue (113) were also 4-1.

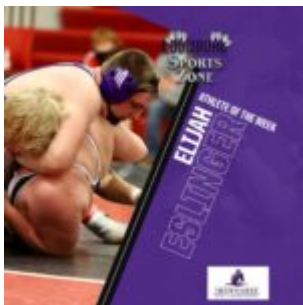
Freshman Greysen Dixon (120), junior Jesse Murphy (152), freshman Lucas Swartz (160) and freshman Brayden Yoder (182) also had winning records on the day.

“Noah Cotter and Colton Blue had a lot of opens in their weights, but they’re going to have great seasons,” Bovaird said. “Both are hammers on the mat and have great work ethics. Kaven was very strong in his matches, and his lone loss on the day (5-3 overtime loss) was not without controversy. He controlled that match and wrestled his tail off from the first to the last whistle, and that goes for all of his matches. Ashton also had a great day, losing only to the No. 1 ranked wrestler in Kansas 5A.”

Louisburg will try and keep its winning ways going Friday when the Wildcats travel to Baldwin for another dual tournament. Matches begin at 4:30 p.m.

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## **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.

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The advertisement is a rectangular banner with a purple border. It is divided into several sections. The top left section features the logo for 'Dr. Laura's Orthodontics', which includes a stylized yellow sunburst and the text 'Dr. Laura's Orthodontics' and 'ANY AGE PATIENTS'. Below this, it says 'Whether your child needs 1 set or 2 sets of braces you never pay twice at our office'. The top right section shows a close-up of a child's smiling face with braces, with the text 'Orthodontics, TMJ and Sleep Apnea Treatment' below it. The middle section has a light blue background and contains the text 'Comfortable dental care for the entire family: No shots, no drills, no pain' and 'We offer sedation dentistry for high anxiety patients'. The bottom left section shows a family photo of a man, a woman, and a child, with contact information below: '5321 W 151<sup>st</sup> St, Leawood, KS 66224 (913)851-9969' and '1270 W Amity, Louisburg, KS 66053 (913)837-3096'. The bottom right section features the 'IRONHORSE' logo, which includes a purple horse head and the text 'IRONHORSE FAMILY & COSMETIC DENTISTRY'. Below the logo, it says 'Follow us on Facebook for special contests and discounts' and includes a Facebook icon.

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# 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.”

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**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.

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## 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 Brilynn 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.”