

# Meek, Graham inducted into inaugural LHS Wrestling Hall of Fame



Don Meek (left) and Dee Graham were inducted as the first class of the LHS Wrestling Hall of Fame on Saturday during the Wildcat Classic, the same tournament Meek started almost 50 years ago.

The Louisburg High School wrestling program is in its 50<sup>th</sup> season of existence and current head coach Bobby Bovaird wanted to do something special to recognize those Wildcats who came before him.

So, he decided to start the Louisburg High School Wrestling Hall of Fame in hopes of honoring those who have left their mark with the program. Bovaird figured what better place to start than the forefathers of Louisburg wrestling.

Before the championship matches of the Wildcat Classic on Saturday at Louisburg High School, Bovaird introduced the two first members of the hall of fame – and not ironically – they were the first coaches in the program's long history.

Don Meek, the program's founder

and first head coach, along with long time coach Dee Graham were recognized in front of the Louisburg faithful and were presented with plaques to commemorate their hall of fame induction.

“I’ve been in contact with them throughout the years I’ve been at Louisburg, and I’ve always had the notion of honoring them at our home tournament – the tournament that Don Meek started in 1971 and the tournament that both Don and Dee Graham won multiple times during their tenures as head coach,” Bovaird said. “Having them present at the tournament was pretty special, but I think one of the most amazing things was the gratitude, respect, and love I saw expressed for both coaches at the tournament and through social media afterwards.

“These guys were integral in the legacy that LHS wrestling is built upon, but more importantly, they touched a lot of lives beyond the wrestling mats. I hope our wrestlers recognize the tradition that these men established and that it helps bolster their pride in the program.”

During the 1969-70 school year, Meek began the LHS wrestling program and served as head coach from 1969 until 1977, when he retired from coaching to take on full-time administrative duties.

As the head coach, Meek took a team that was 0-8 in its first season to an undefeated Jayhawk League championship the next year. The

Wildcats were also  
Jayhawk champions in 1972 and 1974.

Louisburg was the Class 2A district runner-up in 1971, 1972 and 1973 and Meek coached one state champion and 31 state qualifiers during his tenure as head coach.

Graham, who served as an assistant coach under Meek, took over head coaching duties in 1977 before retiring in 1999.

In his time as head coach, Graham notched more than 100 dual wins. The Wildcats were Jayhawk League champions in 1983 and Frontier League champions in 1984, 1997 and 1998.

Louisburg was the Class 4A regional runner-up in 1980 and Graham coached two state champions in Tim Dozier and Sonny Ewalt, along with nine state medalists and 68 state qualifiers.

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**Caplinger, Holtzen wins home  
tourney titles; Wildcats  
medal 8**



**Louisburg sophomore Cade Holtzen takes an opponent down to the mat Saturday during the Wildcat Classic on Saturday at Louisburg High School.**

The beginning of the season hasn't exactly been a smooth one for the Louisburg wrestling team as it has dealt with numerous injuries, which has forced several wrestlers to move around weight classes.

That is why the Wildcat Classic couldn't have come at a better time.

After a little time off for the holidays, the Wildcats took part in their home tournament Saturday at Louisburg High School and ended the day with eight medalists, including a pair of champions.

It was a nice change of pace for Louisburg to compete in front of its home fans.

"We had a very smooth tournament," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "All the people who chipped in to help made it a great event for our program, whether it was setting up the gym, donating for our hospitality room, or cleaning up. I love hosting a tournament in our gym – it's almost as if the architects had wrestling in mind when they designed it. What a

fan-friendly venue  
for a wrestling tournament.

“The guys wrestled really well, too. I think having lots of family, friends, and fans cheering us on throughout the day really kept them pushing hard in their matches. Actually, when I look back on past performances at this tournament, I’m really happy with our conditioning and competitive mindset. We’re coming off a long break, but the guys were focused and working hard all week at practice.”

Louisburg senior Blue Caplinger (170 pounds) and sophomore Cade Holtzen (113) both came away with top honors as they were champions of their respective weight classes.

Caplinger finished the day with a 4-0 record, including a pair of pins, but his final two victories were the most impressive. Caplinger, who is currently ranked No. 5 in Class 4A, defeated No. 6 Brandon Martin of Piper by a 6-2 decision.



**Senior Blue Caplinger won the 170-pound title Saturday at the Wildcat Classic.**

In the championship match, Caplinger then defeated Anderson County's Logan Allen by a 4-2 decision to improve his record to 19-1 on the season.

"Those wins over Allen of Anderson County and Martin of Piper should be pretty good confidence boosters for Blue," Bovaird said. "Both are extremely talented wrestlers. Blue keeps himself in great position every match and the more experience he gets, the more he's been able to start taking advantage of his scoring opportunities. He's really matured a lot as a wrestler, and now that he's a senior, he's been pretty dominant."

Holtzen breezed through his 113-pound bracket as he finished the day with a 4-0 mark as well to go along with four pins. He pinned Blue Valley West's Joey Nichols in the championship in the second period to improve his record to 19-1 on the year.

Holtzen is currently ranked No. 4 in Class 4A at 113 pounds and captured his second consecutive Wildcat Classic title.

"I especially liked how Cade utilized his mat time this weekend,"

Bovaird said "I saw him hitting some crisp techniques and trying out some new moves. He's got a mindset that's keeping him focused on his end goals for the season, and he's taking advantage of the process of improving every match. That takes discipline.

"A lot of wrestlers will see a match against a lesser opponent as an opportunity to try "funk" moves or to try to embarrass their opponents. I'm proud of how Cade took advantage of his matches to work on improving the techniques that will win him key matches at regionals and state."

Six other Wildcats captured medals, including sophomore Ryan Owens, who took second at 120 pounds. Senior Gabe Bonham (138) and freshman Brandon Doles (145) took third overall, while sophomore Anthony Welborn (138), freshman Aiden Barker (145) and sophomore Ben Wiedenmann (182) finished fourth.

Owens improved his record to 17-4 on the season after he began his day with four consecutive wins, including a pin of Tonganoxie's Hunter Harris in the semifinals. Owens was pinned by Anderson County's Ryland Wright in the championship match in the second period.

"All season long, Ryan has been sacrificing for the better of the team, and I couldn't be any prouder of him," Bovaird said. "He's not just bumping up to fill in at 120; he's competing there. He's got a lot of experience with wrestling throughout the years, and here he is at full strength battling with kids who are cutting weight. He's a warrior on the mat, and if he's bothered by the weight difference, you couldn't tell."



**Louisburg senior Gabe Bonham works for a pin Saturday during a 138-pound match.**



Bonham went 3-2 on the day, including a pin over Welborn in the third-place match. Doles also had a 3-2 performance at 145 pounds and won by major decision over Barker in the third place match.

Wiedenmann started his day with three straight wins, but lost a pair of decisions to Anderson County's Dominic Sutton and Baldwin's Cy Hockey to end his day. Both Sutton and Hockey are ranked No. 5 and No. 6 at 182 pounds.

Luke Kelly (113 pounds, fifth), Nathan Hamilton (132, eighth), Jacob Briley (160, eighth), A.J. Reed (182, ninth) and Sam Kratochvil (220, sixth) also wrestled for the Wildcats.

As a team, Louisburg finished seventh in the team standings with 134 points. Blue Valley West won the tournament title with 204.5 points and Anderson County was second with 179.

"Toward the end of the tournament, when I looked at the team scores, I was honestly surprised that we were so low," Bovaird said. "We were winning a lot of matches and doing well overall. It's just a matter of having some gaps in our lineup. Brandon Doles moved down a weight, leaving us open at 152, and Brian Houck got sick, so we were open at 195. Hunter Day's season was ended with a torn labrum in his shoulder. He had surgery right after New Years Day. We were open at five weights, and two kids who've been winning

matches for us –

Anthony Welborn at 138 and Aiden Barker at 145 – were wrestling unattached, so their wins didn't gain us any team points.

“This was one of those tournaments where the team score isn't the right way to evaluate our success. The individual wins and the style of wrestling we had are the methods we're using to evaluate our progress. I saw several gaps we need to focus on, but at the same time, I love the progression the guys have been making all season.”

Louisburg will get another chance to wrestle at home Thursday when it hosts Spring Hill for Alumni Night. Matches are set to begin at 6 p.m.

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## Top 10 Stories of 2018



It was a successful, and eventful, 2018 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 to Louisburg.

Below are the Top 10 stories from 2018, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the explanation is the link to the actual story from the event.

This year was a blast to cover and I was blessed to have the opportunity to go along for the ride with many of these. As much fun as it was, I can't wait for 2019 to begin. Looking forward to it!



## **10. Dillon medals at state golf for second straight year**

EMPORIA – All season, Calvin Dillon had been atop or near the front of leaderboard and that didn't change in what was his biggest tournament of the season.

The Louisburg High School sophomore went up against the state's best during the Class 4A state golf tournament on May 19 at the Emporia Municipal Course and did more than old his own. Dillon earned a state medal as he finished 11<sup>th</sup> overall

with a 3-over par 74.

It was the second consecutive state medal for Dillon after he finished 10<sup>th</sup> overall last season at Wamego as a freshman.

“It is a real honor to earn another state medal, especially with the quality players that were at the state tournament,” Dillon said. “There were lots of good players and lots of good teams.”

It was another notch on Dillon’s list of accomplishments that included a Frontier League title and six straight tournament victories during the 2018 season.



Louisburg football coach Robert Ebenstein



Louisburg girls soccer coach Kyle Conley

## **9. Conley, Ebenstein named Class 4A Coach of the Year**

Louisburg girls soccer coach Kyle Conley and Wildcat football coach Robert Ebenstein both led their respective teams to special seasons.

Those seasons were special enough for both coaches to earn two big awards.

Conley was rewarded for all his hard work in June when it was announced that he was named as the Kansas Soccer Coaches Association's Girls Coach of the Year for Class 4-1A.

He guided the Wildcats to a 14-7 record and a spot in the state championship match, where the Lady Cats finished second

overall. The finish was something to remember for Wildcat fans as that was accomplished in just the program's third year of existence.

He has posted a 41-18-2 record during his time as the Wildcat girls head coach and also guided the Louisburg boys soccer team to its best finish in program history in 2017 with a fourth place finish at state.

As for Ebenstein, he guided the Wildcats to 10 straight victories and a regional championship to start the 2018 season, before getting knocked out in the sectional round against eventual state champion, Bishop Miege.

Following the season, the Kansas Football Coaches Association named Ebenstein as the Class 4A Coach of the Year. Ebenstein, who is just in his second season as head coach, has a 16-4 record with the Wildcats as he guided his team to a Frontier League championship this year.



## 8. Holtzen finishes Louisburg career with 12 varsity letters

Once Isabelle Holtzen received her diploma and walked out of Louisburg High School for the last time as a student, she officially became one of the most decorated female athletes in school history.

No, she doesn't have any individual state championships, or even one as part of a team. Holtzen's decorations aren't ones in the form of trophies or all-state honors, but instead, they can be found on the front of

her letter jacket.

Holtzen became the first female athlete in at least 20 years to earn 12 varsity letters, which means she lettered on the varsity level in three sports in each of her four years of high school.

In research done by Louisburg Sports Zone, it was unable to find the last athlete to accomplish the feat, which could mean Holtzen could be the first Lady Cat to do so. She competed in cross country, basketball and track and field

The last athlete to come close was in 2001 when Krystal Bowes earned 10 varsity letters before moving on to a collegiate track career at Wichita State.

“The biggest thing that it means to me is to just have an opportunity to participate in three sports at a school like Louisburg,” Holtzen said. “The bigger the school that you go to, the harder it is to play multiple sports at the varsity level and I think Louisburg is unique in that fact. The best part of this whole journey was I think my freshman year because there was no pressure and no one was expecting anything from me. It was surprising and exciting to be able to letter in all three sports.”

Holtzen is currently at Northern Iowa, where she received a scholarship to pole vault for the Panther Track and Field Team.





7.

## **Dixon earns All-American, Player of the Year honors, signs with Kansas State**

Louisburg

senior Anna Dixon led the Lady Cat volleyball program all season and she was recognized for her play on the court.

Dixon was named to the Under Armour Volleyball All-American team as she received a spot on the honorable mention squad when the list was released in November.

Dixon, the 6-foot-3 outside hitter, was recently named the Class 4A Player of the Year by the Kansas Volleyball Association, and along with that was also selected to the all-state first team.

It was the second year in a row Dixon was named player of the year, as she had to share the honor last season with Rose Hill's Gracie Van

Driel.

The honors certainly didn't stop there as Dixon was all named to the All-Frontier League first team as she helped guide the Lady Cats to an undefeated league season.

Dixon led the Lady Cats in kills with 584 in 105 sets played. She also finished with 325 digs, as she played all six rotations and also had 50 aces and 42 blocks.

In her four years with the program, Dixon finished with 2,003 kills, which would place that total among the best the school has ever seen.

All that success resulted in a dream come true for Dixon as she made it official last November when she signed to play volleyball at Kansas State.

"I have always known Kansas State was going to be my home," Dixon said. "Even since I committed as a sophomore, I always wanted to go up to Manhattan and see the girls and spend time with the team. K-State is where I need to be."



## **6. Louisburg wrestling sends six to state, Holtzen earns first state medal**

SALINA – As the final whistle sounded in his blood round match, Cade Holtzen looked up into the rafters of the Tony’s Pizza Events Center and smiled.

He had finally reached his goal.

Holtzen defeated Columbus’ Gabe Porter by a 6-0 decision Saturday during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in Salina and secured his state medal.

“It is one of the best feelings that I have had in my life,” Holtzen said. “Just knowing that I’m going to place – you just can’t match that with anything else.”

It certainly wasn’t

easy for the Louisburg freshman as he faced a win or go home with nothing scenario heading into his match with Porter. Holtzen pulled out the victory and eventually finished sixth overall at 113 pounds to give Louisburg a state medalist for the third consecutive season.

“It is pretty cool,” he said. “I have been working for this all season, so to get a state medal is great. It may not have been as high as I wanted, but any state medal is pretty amazing.”

Holtzen had a special year for the Wildcats as he finished with a 45-6 record and broke the school record for most wins in a single season. He won four different tournaments and was a Frontier League and regional tournament runner-up.

To add to his resume, he became only the second freshman in school history to earn state medal – second to only Austin Hood, who would go on to win three state titles.

Austin Moore finished one victory shy of earning his first state medal, while Ryan Adams, Thad Hendrix and Blue Caplinger also picked up wins at the state tournament.



**5. Moore, Johnson finished in top 10 at state cross country, girls qualify for second straight year**

WAMEGO – It was going to be hard for the Louisburg High School girls cross country team to duplicate its magical season of 2017.

Not only did the Lady Cats qualify their team for state for the first time in program history, but they also had a top five finisher in Trinity Moore.

Fast forward to 2018, Louisburg wasn't able to match that successful run – the Lady Cats took it a step further.

Moore, along with freshman Reese Johnson, each had a top 10 finish during the Class 4A Kansas State Cross Country Championships at Wamego Country Club, and it is the first time

in school history that two female runners had medaled at a state meet. Louisburg added on to that as the girls finished fifth in the team standings with 154 points, which is also the highest finish in school history.

Moore, who finished fifth at state a year ago, bested her performance by one place as she took fourth with one of her better performances of the season. Johnson was right behind her as she crossed the finish line in sixth.

Shaylor Whitham, Carlee Gassman, Kaitlyn Lewer, Delaney Wright and Kennady Wilkerson were also members of the Lady Cats' team to run at state. Emily Williams was a member of the regional team that finished second overall.



**4. Louisburg track earns six state medals, Gassman state runner-up in**

## 300 hurdles

WICHITA – Carlee Gassman had broken the Louisburg High School 300-meter hurdle record three different times in 2018 prior to the state track meet.

She picked the perfect time to make it a fourth.

Gassman broke her own school record in the 300 hurdles in May at the Class 4A Kansas State Track and Field Championships in Wichita as she ran a time of 45.68 seconds to earn a silver medal as she was the Wildcats' top performer on the weekend. Andale's Abby Smarsh, who is a senior, won the event in 44.73.

It was the Louisburg sophomore's first time competing at the Kansas meet as she transferred in from Iowa last year, where she qualified for the state meet there in the 400 hurdles.

Gassman's medal in the 300 hurdles was just one of six the Wildcats were able to bring home following the two-day meet. Those six medals were the most Louisburg has earned since 2011, when the Wildcats combined to medal in 10 events and the boys won their first team state title.

The 300 hurdles wasn't the only event Gassman found success in as she also medaled in the long jump. Gassman, who hadn't competed in the event prior to this year, finished fifth with a mark of 17 feet, 0.25 inches.

Isabelle Holtzen would go on to finish sixth in the pole vault, the boys 4x400 team of Chris Williams, Blue Caplinger, Ben Wiedenmann and Justin Collins went on to take seventh. Williams finished eighth in the 400-meter run and

Trent Martin medaled eighth in the boys pole vault.



### **3. Louisburg volleyball takes runner-up at state for second straight season**

HUTCHINSON – The feeling was much of the same.

The pride of finishing as a state-runner up was a popular one among the members of the Louisburg volleyball team. At the same time, the frustration of taking second in state in back-to-back seasons was just as prevalent.

Louisburg wasn't quite sure what to feel following its 25-13 and 25-14 loss to Bishop Miege in the championship game of the Class 4A state tournament Saturday at Hutchinson Sports Arena.

In 2017, the Lady Cats fell to Rose Hill by two points in the championship



match, and fast forward to the present, they were in the same spot – holding the state runner-up trophy. It was the 15<sup>th</sup> time in program history that Louisburg finished in the top four at state.

The Lady Cats rattled off four straight wins to start the tournament, including knocking off No. 1 seed Independence, and defending state champions Rose Hill and Topeka Hayden. Louisburg then battled back to defeat Andale in the state semifinals.

“The loss was tough,” Louisburg coach Jessica Compliment said. “To come so close to a state title two years in a row, only to come up short is tough. But with that being said, it is a huge accomplishment for this team to get back to the state championship and make it two years in a row. Finishing second is nothing to hang our heads on. Last year’s finish fueled the fire for the team this year, and I challenged the returning players to use this loss and feeling to fuel them for next year.”

Louisburg has been one of the more dominant teams in Class 4A in the last decade as the Lady Cats have made the state tournament seven out of the last nine years and have finished as a state runner-up on three different occasions, along with several third and fourth place finishes. They finished 2018 with a 36-9 record.



## **2. Louisburg girls soccer advances to title game, has best finish in program history**

NORTH NEWTON – The obstacle seemed insurmountable – and it was.

The Louisburg High School girls soccer team found itself in the Class 4-1A state championship match in the program's third year of existence, but if they wanted to take it another step further, the Wildcats were going to have to knock the defending state champion of its perch.

Unfortunately, Bishop Miege wasn't about to be moved.

In a state title game that was played in the sweltering heat in late May at Bethel College, the Wildcats couldn't stay with the Stags in a 5-0 defeat. It was the third consecutive title for Bishop Miege, while Louisburg earned a state plaque for the first time in its short history.

It was special season for the Wildcats as the night before they knocked off Topeka Hayden, 1-0, in the state semifinals to secure the program's first state plaque. In 2017, Louisburg

both games in its state tournament appearance and finished fourth.

The road to this state championship appearance has been an interesting one for the Wildcats. More than three years ago, a group of Louisburg parents and citizens raised enough money to begin the girls soccer program and fund it for three years.

Louisburg was in the final year of that funding, and while the program isn't going away, the team realized they needed to play for more than themselves.

"We played for the community tonight," Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher said after the Hayden win. "We have to remember that when they raised money for this program, it was just through this year, so I think we owed it to them to play well. I really think it might have helped with how we played and I think it was one of the best games we played all season."

"It is a third-year program with 41 wins, three regional championships, two state final fours and now a state runner-up," Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said after the title game. "We just have kids who come in and work their butt off. They are not soft, they aren't weak and from top to bottom they are going to work hard."

"We worked hard, but we just played Miego. That is one of the best teams in the state, and that stinks, but our kids played hard, worked

their tail off and it was a great year. We had people criticize us for how we got there, but we won games and that really motivated the kids. It got them fired up to go do something bigger than themselves. I couldn't be more proud of they stuck together and what they accomplished."



## **1. Football wins 10 straight, takes Frontier League title and regional championship**

It had been almost two months since Louisburg and Piper squared off on the football field in what was one of the more entertaining games on the Wildcats' schedule.

Back in early September, Louisburg left Piper High School with a seven-point win – a victory that would help propel them to a Frontier League championship and a perfect regular season.

The two teams squared off again and the stakes were a bit higher. The game, at least for Louisburg anyway, was even more exciting.

The Wildcats dominated action from the opening kickoff and never looked back in a 48-0 win over the Pirates. In the process, Louisburg won the school's first regional championship since 2016 and are off to a 10-0 start for the first time since 2010.

Louisburg advanced to the sectional round where it fell to eventual state champion Bishop Miege, 55-21, and finished its season with a 10-1 record.

It was as season marked with special moments, including a 28-7 victory over then-undefeated Paola late in the year to secure a league title.

"Being 10-0 and then having that first loss of the season was very disappointing," Louisburg coach Robert Ebenstein said. "Losing always sucks, but losing in the playoffs and having to wait until next August is the worst. At the end of the day, Miege is a very good team and we did some good things. We got them to fourth down on multiple drives in the first quarter, we just couldn't make the plays on those big downs. Then we got behind a little and started pressing.

"Overall it was a great year. I am very proud of our guys and excited for them that they were able to get double digit wins for only the third time since 2000, and

there was a lot of really good football played during that time period. It was a lot fun to be a part of.”



**Austin Moore was named to the Kansas Shrine Bowl and was a first-team all-state player for the Wildcats. Moore was also named as the Kansas Small-Class Player of the Year by 810 Varsity.**

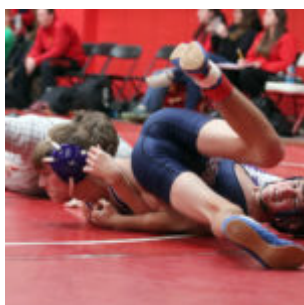
With all that success, honors started to roll in for its players as running backs Austin Moore and Blue Caplinger, along with linemen Brayden White and Kiefer Tucker all earned all-state honors.

Moore and White went on to be semifinalists for the Simone Awards and Moore was also selected to participate in the Kansas Shrine Bowl in the summer of 2019. Ebenstein was also named as coach of the year by the football coaches association.

Most recently, Moore was named the Kansas Small-Class Player of the Year and Running Back of the Year by 810varsity.com, while White was named the Small-Class Lineman of the Year. Ebenstein was also named Kansas Small-Class Coach of the Year by 810 Varsity.

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## **Three Wildcat wrestlers go undefeated at Tonganoxie**



**Louisburg sophomore Cade Holtzen gets ready to pin his opponent from Eudora on Saturday during the Randy Starcher Invitational in Tonganoxie.**

TONGANOXIE – Even with the injuries that kept the Louisburg wrestling team from finding much success in the team standings Saturday at the Randy Starcher Invitational, the Wildcats were still able to find plenty of positives.

Louisburg had three wrestlers in Ryan Owens (120 pounds), Blue Caplinger (170) and Ben Wiedenmann (182), who each finished the day with a 5-0 record and provided the Wildcats with some big victories during the dual tournament at Tonganoxie High School.

Although several open weight classes led to the Wildcats'

sixth-place team finish, Louisburg also went up against a couple state-ranked opponents, including Lansing (No. 9 in Class 5A) and Tonganoxie (No. 9 in Class 4A).

Louisburg lost its first dual to Lansing (46-24), but rebounded to beat Atchison (54-21) before falling to Frontier League rival Eudora (45-35). The Wildcats defeated Independence (42-33) in the consolation semifinals and then fell to Tonganoxie (42-23) in the fifth-place match.

“It was a tournament filled with some quality wrestlers from all the teams, and the dual format made it even more challenging,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “There were ranked kids from Shawnee Heights, Frontenac, Lansing, Tonganoxie and Eudora and we saw several of those kids throughout the day.

“In any other season, we’re right in the mix with a lot of those duals we lost. This year, since our numbers are so low, it’s tough to compete in a dual tournament. We’ve got quality kids, and they’re winning some good matches.”

Caplinger, who is currently ranked fifth in the state at 170 pounds, continued his strong season with a 5-0 record to go along with three pins and a technical fall.

Owens finished the day with five wins, with three of those coming by pin. Wiedenmann also racked up points for the Wildcats as he was 5-0 with four pins.

“Those three guys going undefeated on the day was pretty nice to see, that’s for sure,” Bovaird said. “Ryan has shown that he’s very capable of adapting to the new weight class. He’s at full strength and not cutting any weight, so combine that with the confidence he’s gained over the past year and you’ve got a kid who’s going to be dangerous this season.

“Ben is also getting more and more confidence as the season progresses. I’m seeing him less tentative and more aggressive



on the mat. He's getting used to the fact that he's got a presence on the varsity mat and he can beat good kids at his weight. Blue is coming closer and closer to turning the corner with his wrestling abilities. He's nearly at 100 career wins, but even more important, he's getting the experience he needs to be in the mix for a state medal."



**Sophomore Anthony Welborn works for a pin against Atchison on Saturday in Tonganoxie.**

Sophomore Cade Holtzen, who is ranked No. 4 in the state at 113 pounds, suffered his first loss of the season when he lost a 3-2 decision to fellow state-ranked wrestler Greyson Sontag from Tonganoxie. He still finished the day with a 4-1 mark with two pins and a technical fall.

Freshman Aiden Barker (145) and Hunter Day (220) each ended their day with three wins and Day earned a big pin in his match against Independence that allowed the Wildcats to get the team win. Freshman Brandon Doles (152) and sophomore Anthony Welborn (138) also recorded a pair of victories.

The Wildcats will get a much-needed break as they are off

until the holidays as they get some time to heal up from their injuries.

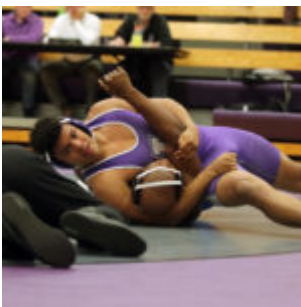
Louisburg will return to action on Jan. 5 when it hosts the Louisburg Invitational and the bracket tournament is set to begin at 9 a.m. Louisburg also plans to celebrate 50 years of Wildcat wrestling during a ceremony at the event.

“The break couldn’t come at a better time,” Bovaird said. “Lots of our guys have been getting banged up, but that’s the nature of the sport. Some time off will help us get healed up. We already have five guys with at least 10 wins, and nine of our varsity wrestlers have a record above .500.

“When we host our home tournament, we’re going to have a special presentation before the finals. This season marks the 50th season of Louisburg High School wrestling, and I want to use this home event as an opportunity to help celebrate this.”

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## **Wildcats get back on track with home dual win**



Louisburg sophomore Ben Wiedenmann works for a pin during his 182-pound match Wednesday against Olathe West at Louisburg High School. The Wildcats won the dual 47-29.

After a rough tournament last week, the Louisburg wrestling team needed a little pick-me-up and there was no better place for the Wildcats to do it than on their home mats.

Louisburg hosted Olathe West on Wednesday for its home opener and the Wildcats didn't disappoint their fans. The Wildcats recorded several key pins late in the match and came away with a 47-29 victory over the Owls on Youth Wrestling Night.

"On paper, heading into that dual, the odds were stacked against us," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "We're still battling injuries at some key weights, but we had an outstanding team effort where several guys stepped up and put the team first. It's tough to get kids to believe in the process – in the team aspect – at first, and I really am so proud of what these guys showed they were capable of doing."

Sophomore Cade Holtzen opened the dual with a technical fall win at 113 pounds to give Louisburg a 5-0 lead, but Luke Kelly lost by pin at 120 pounds as Olathe West grabbed the lead.

Another sophomore, Ryan Owens, jumped up two weight classes to give the Wildcats lead right back as he responded with a pin at 126 pounds to give Louisburg some much-needed momentum.

"Ryan opened the year wanting to wrestle at 106 pounds and I really think he showed the most guts by bumping up and wrestling at 126 to fill a gap," Bovaird said.



**Sophomore Jacob Briley won his 160-pound match by pin Wednesday against Olathe West.**

Sophomore Anthony Welborn followed with a pin at 138 pounds after Louisburg was open at 132. Freshman Aiden Barker lost by technical fall at 145 pounds and the dual was tied at 17-all.

It was then where the Wildcats went on a roll as freshman Brandon Doles (152), sophomore Jacob Briley (160), senior Blue Caplinger (170), sophomore Ben Wiedenmann (182) and senior Hunter Day (285) all came up with pins for Louisburg.

Wiedenmann's match the biggest one for Louisburg as he defeated a state qualifier from a season ago to seal the win for the Wildcats despite having open weights at 195 and 220.

"Ben stepped up against a kid who was a state qualifier last year and had a great match that should be giving him some much-needed confidence," Bovaird said. "Ben is a sophomore bumping up a weight, and he knows that going into each match. Once he solidifies his confidence, he's going to be even more dangerous."

“Then you have kid like Hunter, who’s been nursing an injured shoulder, gave up 40 pounds against his opponent, but because of his mat awareness and aggression, put the icing on the cake with his pin at the end of the dual. Jacob, who is filling in at 160 by bumping up a weight, got his first win of the season in a match that might have swung everything our way.”

The victory gives the Wildcats a much-needed confidence boost as they head into the Randy Starcher Invitational on Saturday at Tonganoxie High School.

“I told the guys afterwards that on paper, the dual could have been much different,” Bovaird said. “I take a conservative approach when analyzing a dual’s potential outcome, and I love how we’ve got a group of wrestlers who aren’t afraid to step up to a challenge. They don’t roll over and give up because we have so many open weights or our lineup is full of younger kids. They’ve got pride in the program, and I’m very thankful for how uncommon they are.

“Wrestling is a tough sport, and most kids can’t stomach the pressure, the exposure, and the challenge of it. Among other wrestling program seven, these guys are uncommon, and I wouldn’t trade them for anything.”

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## **Wildcat wrestling faces tough competition at Baldwin**



**Louisburg senior Brian Houck competes against a Prairie View wrestler at 195 pounds during the December Duals on Friday at Baldwin High School.**

BALDWIN CITY – The Louisburg wrestling team certainly has a difficult schedule to start its season and it continued Friday when it traveled to the December Duals at Baldwin High School.

The tournament featured state-ranked teams and wrestlers, and although the Wildcats had to deal with some injuries, they were able to pull some positives after finishing with a 1-4 mark.

Louisburg ended the tournament with a 42-36 victory over Independence, but recorded losses to Prairie View (43-24), Baldwin (45-27), Burlington (61-18) and Oak Park, Mo., (52-15).

Injuries still continue to be a problem for Louisburg as it was open for four weight classes and had to wrestle from behind in every match. Senior Gabe Bonham (138) and Hunter Day (285) had to sit out due to injuries, while Austin Moore (220) and James Nelson (195) hope to come back later this season.

“I think we wrestled pretty tough in a lot of matches, but it’s tough to get the team totally focused when there’s that nagging reality lingering in the back of their minds,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “We’re giving up 24 points each dual, and that’s putting us in a pretty big hole every time.

“I’d originally intended the first month of competition to be all about bringing the guys together to create a sense of team

unity as we get our first matches under our belts. With the circumstances of this season, it's been a humbling experience. We're doing well, and the guys are competing. I've seen positives out of every kid each time we've competed."

Sophomore Cade Holtzen continues his perfect season as he posted a 5-0 record on Friday with four pins. He was also named to the all-tournament team at 113 pounds.

Senior Blue Caplinger suffered his first loss of the season, but still finished with a 4-1 record with two pins. Caplinger, the No. 5-ranked wrestler at 170 pounds, wrestled No. 2 Brett Bober from Burlington, and came up short in a 5-1 decision for his lone defeat.

Freshman Brandon Doles also had a 4-1 day, with his only defeat coming to Cael Johnson from Burlington, who is ranked No. 3 in the state at 152 pounds.

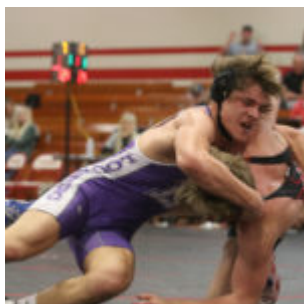
Sophomores Ryan Owens (120 pounds), Anthony Welborn (138) and Ben Wiedenmann (182) all finished with a 3-2 record. Freshman Aiden Barker (145) was 2-3 and senior Brian Houck (195) was 1-4. Sophomore Jacob Briley (160) and junior Sam Kratochvil (220) were 0-5 and 0-4, respectively.

Louisburg will make its home debut today when it hosts Olathe West for a dual and then will travel to Tonganoxie for a tournament Saturday.

"There's still plenty of time in the season," Bovaird said. "We've been identifying areas to focus on improving, and the guys are getting some great workouts in during practice."

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# Wildcats finish third at Fort Scott to open season



Louisburg senior Blue Caplinger puts an opponent from Anderson County on his back Saturday during the Fort Scott Dual Tournament. Caplinger finished with a 5-0 record on the day and the Wildcats took third overall as a team.

FORT SCOTT – Before the start of each dual during the Fort Scott Tournament on Saturday, the Louisburg wrestling team found itself having to play catch up.

The Wildcats were open in four different weight classes and were giving up 24 points to each of their five opponents. It was not exactly a formula for success, but the Wildcats were able to make the best out of a tough situation.

Louisburg finished third overall with a 3-2 record, behind Paola and Anderson County, to open its season on a strong note and got some good experience for a lot of its wrestlers.

“We structured our season to begin with several dual tournaments,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “The idea is to foster the team aspect of the sport in the wrestlers’ mindsets. Scoring bonus points, fighting out of pinning situations, being willing to step in where the line-up needs them. Aside from that deficit we were in at the start of each dual, the guys wrestled very well.”



“Of course, with it being the first competition of the season, we saw quite a few things that need to be addressed, but ultimately, I’m pretty happy with the technique, the physicality, and the attitudes of the guys. In our Wrestling Mindset training sessions, we’re focusing on the three things we can control: effort, attitude, and aggressiveness, and I’m pretty happy with our first matches of the season based on those three things.”

The Wildcats opened the tournament with three straight victories, including wins over Blue Valley Southwest (46-34), Fort Scott (42-28) and Shawnee Mission West (42-18). Louisburg lost its final two duals to Anderson County (36-29) and Paola (45-33).

A pair of state-ranked wrestlers led the way for Louisburg as sophomore Cade Holtzen (No. 3, 113 pounds) and senior Blue Caplinger (No. 5, 170 pounds) both went 5-0 on the day and each had a close victory.

Caplinger notched a 6-2 victory over Anderson County’s Logan Allen, in what was a low-scoring match late in the third period.

As for Holtzen, he also finished the day with three pins and he bumped up a weight class to 120 pounds to wrestle Anderson County’s Ryland Wright, who was a state qualifier last year. Holtzen recorded two points late in the third period to win the close 7-5 decision.

“I love getting these guys some tough matches to kick-start the season,” Bovaird said. “There’s no better way to get in wrestling shape than to be on the mat wrestling, and to do so against some quality opponents is great for these guys. Against Anderson County, Cade and Blue both wrestled against returning state qualifiers and pulled out some tight victories. Cade was bumping up a weight class, and Blue’s match was pretty close until the end. Both were very smart

with their wrestling.”



**Louisburg freshman Aiden Barker grapples with an opponent from Shawnee Mission West on Saturday at Fort Scott.**

Freshmen Aiden Barker (145 pounds) and Brandon Doles (152) both had a strong debuts for the Wildcats as they finished the day with 4-1 records. Doles won all four of his matches by pin and Barker recorded three pins.

“Both Aiden and Brandon held their own against their opponents, and that’s a great sign for the rest of the high school careers,” Bovaird said. “It’s a huge difference between kids club wrestling and high school wrestling. Now, these guys are often stepping on the mat with men who are about to graduate high school. The conditioning is at a higher level, and the techniques that worked before will often be ineffective up here. They both showed how resilient they can be by adapting to the new level and scrapping with their opponents.”

Sophomore Ben Wiedenmann, who wrestled at 182 pounds on Saturday, pulled off the biggest upset of the day for the Wildcats as he knocked off Anderson County's Dominic Sutton in a 6-4 decision. Sutton was state-ranked coming into the match and Wiedenmann's victory moved him into the state rankings at No. 4 this week.

Wiedenmann, who finished the day with a 4-1 record and two pins, suffered his lone loss to Paola's Mikey Stribling in the final dual of the day. Stribling is ranked No. 3 at 182 pounds.

Fellow sophomore Ryan Owens had a big day at 113 pounds with a 4-1 record with a pin and a technical fall. Sophomore Anthony Welborn also filled in for an injured Gabe Bonham at 138 pounds and was 2-2 on the day.



**Louisburg sophomore Ryan Owens was 4-1 on the day as he split time at 113 and 120 pounds.**

Senior heavyweight Hunter Day also had a strong performance with a 3-1 mark with two pins, while junior Sam Kratochvil had a 3-2 record on the day with two pins at 220 pounds.

“Ryan, Ben and Anthony are some sophomores who are undersized for their weights,” Bovaird said. “Ryan has been trying to get down to 106 and he spent the night trying to get the weight off, but it wasn’t going to happen. He came in Saturday morning, weighed in at 113, and never complained once going between 113 and 120. The one match he lost was against a 120 kid from Fort Scott who was pretty strong. Ryan had been leading most of the match before the weight difference wore him down too much.

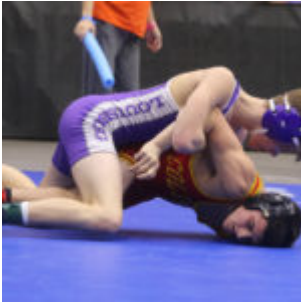
“Anthony was trying to get to 132 this weekend but couldn’t quite get there, even after coming in early Saturday morning to run it off. He bumped up to 138 and filled in for Gabe after he hurt his knee the first match. Ben is about the same size as Blue, but he’s filling in at 182 for our lineup in duals and got a big win against a state-ranked opponent from Anderson County.

“Sam is showing a lot of growth after having his season end early last year. Hunter’s only loss last weekend was against a state ranked opponent from 220 who bumped up a weight for the competition. Jacob Briley (160) is another sophomore who is stepping in at a higher weight class. He’s shown that he’s much more comfortable this season and is looking very natural on his feet during matches.”

Louisburg hopes to continue to see improvement Friday when it travels to Baldwin High School for the December Duals. The first match against Prairie View is set for 4 p.m.

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# Wildcat wrestlers excited to get season underway



Louisburg's Cade Holtzen had a memorable freshman season that finished with a state medal and a school record for wins in a season. Holtzen hopes to improve on that this season as a sophomore.

It was another solid season for the Louisburg High School wrestling team last year as the Wildcats sent six to the state tournament and one came away with a state medal.

The 2018-19 season has the same type of promise for the Wildcats as three of those qualifiers return to lead Louisburg, including the team's lone state medalist from last season – Cade Holtzen.

Although Louisburg has a chance to make a statement at the state tournament against this season, the Wildcats were delivered a couple different blows prior to the season.

Returning state qualifier Austin Moore was lost for at least half of the season with a broken collarbone he sustained during the football season. On top of that, participation numbers came down from previous years, but the Wildcats are trying to make the best out of a tough situation.

“The sport of wrestling is like a roller coaster for a lot of reasons, and that applies throughout a season as well as from

one season to the next," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "This year we have 17 wrestlers on the roster, which is the lowest I've had in the past 8 years. It's tough to stomach at first because we're not retaining kids like we need to be doing, and we're not getting a lot of new kids to try out the sport.

"On the other hand, of all the kids on the roster, only one is brand-new to the sport. Everyone else has wrestled for the program at least a couple of years. Practices have been very smooth, and I feel like we've been picking up and taking off at a quicker pace than in previous seasons."

Holtzen will look to take another step forward off of what was a successful freshman season. He finished sixth overall in the 113-pound division at state and also broke a program record for wins in a season with 45.

The Louisburg sophomore will look to take another stab at the 113-pound division this year and is hoping for an even higher finish at state.

"You'll see kids have a successful season one year and then walk into the next with a huge ego and a sense of entitlement," Bovaird said. "Not a kid like Cade. He put in the time over the summer, attending various camps and a few competitions on his own. He's as focused as ever, and the best part is that he's totally bought into the 'wrestling mindset' approach we're taking this season. He's a smart kid, which will help him with goal setting, staying focused, evaluating his progress throughout the season and recovering when he gets knocked down."

Seniors Blue Caplinger and Moore are the other two returning state qualifiers and both have a chance to end their Wildcat wrestling careers with a state medal.



**Louisburg senior Blue Caplinger finished one win away from earning a state medal last season.**

For Caplinger, he has been making steady progress since his freshman year and he was two victories away from earning a state medal last winter. It is that consistent improvement that will put Caplinger over the top, according to Bovaird, as he will bounce back and forth between 170 and 182 pounds to start the year.

“Blue has been a staple in the program for three years now, and one thing I can tell you about him is that he’s one of the toughest kids to score on,” Bovaird said. “From his freshman year through last year, I don’t think there were any other wrestlers who saw as much overtime or 1-point matches as he did. He wrestles smart, keeps matches close, and puts himself in great scoring positions to win those tight matches. He’s been training to win key matches, like a regional semifinal or

a state quarterfinal, by focusing on crisp technique and positioning.”

As for Moore, he will have a tough road back to try and get ready in time to prepare himself for the regional tournament in February. He also finished one win away from a state medal last season and will look to try for that first medal this year at 220 pounds.

With everything going against him, Bovaird believes Moore will be ready to go when the time comes and is excited to see what he can do.



**Austin Moore hopes to return for the second half of the season after suffering a broken collarbone during the football season.**

“Every year you’ll see tough wrestlers sidelined by football injuries, and then they’re able to make a solid comeback to



salvage the remainder of their wrestling seasons,” Bovaird said. “Austin is so physically and mentally tough that you can bet on seeing him finding success in February. Not having him on the mat and in our lineup will hurt us a little, but he’s still a captain and will be there to help lead the team.”

Caplinger, Moore and senior Hunter Day were all voted on as team captains for this season and the Wildcats will put out close to a full lineup, especially early in the schedule that features a lot of dual competitions.

Sophomore Ryan Owens will hold the 106-pound spot, while Holtzen and sophomore Luke Kelly will compete at 113 and 120, respectively. Sophomore Anthony Welborn and freshman Nathan Hamilton are battling for the 132 spot.

Senior Gabe Bonham returns after a solid season last year for Louisburg and will wrestle at 138 pounds, while freshman Aiden Barker, junior Dalton Hilt and sophomore Jacob Briley are competing for the 145 pound spot.

Freshman Brandon Doles will make his high school debut on the varsity level at 152 pounds, while senior Brian Houck will try for 160 pounds. Caplinger and sophomore Ben Wiedenmann, who saw a lot of varsity action last year, will flip-flop between 170 and 182 pounds to start the season.

Sophomore James Nelson, who is also recovering from a football injury, will be at 195 pounds and junior Sam Kratochvil will have the 220 spot until Moore returns. Day also returns as the team’s heavyweight for this year.

Even though there are some new names to the varsity lineup this year, Bovaird is excited for the potential of his group.

“I’m excited for Ryan Owens to get a shot at full-time varsity this season,” Bovaird said. “He was a USAWKS kids state champ last year, and always gave Thad Hendrix a close match. He’s stronger and more confident this year. Aiden Barker, Nathan

Hamilton and Brandon Doles are three freshmen who have a lot of kids wrestling experience, and they were pretty dedicated summer wrestlers. Doles won USAWKS kids state two years ago. Gabe Bonham and Hunter Day will be in position to have good seasons, too. Both of them were state qualifiers for the Wildcat Wrestling Club last March.”

Louisburg will open its season Saturday when it travels to the Fort Scott Dual Tournament. The first dual is set for 9 a.m.

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## **Hinkle ready to take on role as LHS activities director**



Walking into Scott Hinkle’s office, it doesn’t appear he started a new job two weeks ago.

The moving boxes are mostly gone. His desk is organized with everything in its place, along with a calendar crammed full of upcoming events.

Hinkle is not shy to tell people about his love for the Boston Red Sox. Sitting on one wall are two older chairs from Fenway Park, along other memorabilia.

The one thing that Hinkle hasn’t caught up on is his efforts to get some purple gear. An avid Kansas Jayhawk fan, he hasn’t had need to purchase any purple flair in the past. Seems like

that will change shortly as he was hired as the new activities director and assistant principal at Louisburg High School earlier this summer.

“I have been a Jayhawk fan all my life,” Hinkle said. “It will be a little weird to wear purple that is for sure, but I am sure I will get used to it. Before I left my old job, people found out where I was going so they started giving me little gifts with purple on it, like markers and stuff like that. They definitely got a kick out of that.”

Hinkle takes over for Jeremy Holloway, who was promoted to principal at LHS and becomes the third activities director in as many years to take over that spot.

“My wife has family in Kansas City and I have family in Wichita and so we were looking to come this way,” Hinkle said. “I had a couple friends that told me that the Louisburg position had opened up. I had heard of Louisburg a long time ago. I actually coached at Ottawa University in the early 90s and was familiar with the area. I came up, interviewed and here I am. It has obviously worked out well.

“Everyone has been so helpful and friendly and it is a good time to be coming to Louisburg. I am excited to be here.”

Before taking the job in Louisburg, Hinkle had spent the last 22 years in the Liberal school district in a variety of roles. He served as the boys high school basketball coach, along with nine years as an activities director, a year as the head girls basketball coach at the local community college and last year he served as assistant principal at the high school.

Hinkle graduated from Valley Center High School, and went on from there to earn his bachelor's degree from Friends University, where he played basketball, and his master's from the University of Kansas.

Basketball has always been a passion for Hinkle, but during

his time as activities director at Liberal, he had a chance to learn the life of other sports as well.

“Liberal changed a lot from when I first got there in the mid 90s when they were a football and track powerhouse,” Hinkle said. “There were just athletes galore, but the culture kind of changed. We were really good in soccer and decent in track and volleyball. We still had good kids and good athletes, but it was a big transition as far as sports go when I first got there. My kids grew up there and being involved and being able to watch their events was something that has always appealed to me.

“Basketball has always been in my blood. Other than my nine years as athletic director, I have coached in some capacity and I am a big basketball fan. Obviously, being an athletic director I am just a big sports fan in general.”

Still new in town, Hinkle is still trying to get to know his coaching staff, but he is excited about the situation he is walking into with the Wildcats finishing as state runner-ups in volleyball and girls soccer last season. Several cross country, golf, wrestling and track athletes also earned state medals.

However, if there is one thing he wanted to relay to everyone is that he wants to give his coaches the freedom to run their programs.

“I want to let the coaches, coach,” he said. “I am not going to be the guy that says this is how we did things in Liberal and I am not that type of leader. If it comes to the point where they need some advice, I want to be a resource for them. I don’t want to be someone that is looking for something.

“I have met a few of the coaches. I have let them know that I am here if they need anything. I have stopped by the weight room to speak to a few coaches and some have stopped by to introduce themselves. I am still learning names and faces. We

have a coaches meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> and I will see and learn a lot more about them then.”

With all the success the Wildcats had last season in the sports arena, Hinkle is happy to be a part of the LHS family and is learning new things about the town every day.

“I have heard all types of things,” he said. “I have heard they take football pretty seriously here. I know they were state runner-up in volleyball and girls soccer last year and that is an exciting thing to walk into. I think expectations are obviously high in those sports, but I think everyone always has high expectations. I am not going to do anything different than normal and I am just going to sit back and observe for a while and take it all in.”

Hinkle will experience some different things along with his new position. This season, the Frontier League will welcome three new teams – Bonner Springs, Piper and Tonganoxie – and will say goodbye to De Soto.

Another big change will be the postseason formats with several sports as the Kansas State High School Activities Association reshuffled their classification system, eliminating Class 4A-Division II.

“With the changes in the league, the classification system and being a new AD, it is probably a good time to be coming on,” Hinkle said. “The learning curve is going to be the same for all of us.

“I walked into a good situation for scheduling because (Holloway) already had everything all taken care of,” he said. “I think the dynamics of the league are going to change. Liberal’s former girls basketball coach is the coach at Piper and I know a little bit about them. As far as the programs and rivalries, that is something that is going to come with time.”

Even with all the changes in his life – moving, starting a new

job, getting to know new faces – Hinkle is ready for what lies ahead and the staff at Louisburg has helped with that transition.

“It has been a whirlwind and it has been information overload,” he said. “It is a lot of the same things I did in Liberal as athletic director, I just haven’t done it for the last five years. Being an assistant principal at Liberal last year, I think, helped me prepare for the principal side.

“People have just gone out of their way to be helpful. From the administration to the custodial staff to the secretaries, everyone has been super helpful. When I was out around town, people have welcomed me and it has been a friendly feel everywhere I have been.”

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## **Wildcat wrestlers get advice from NCAA champ during camp**



Mark Ellis, a former NCAA champion wrestler from the University of Missouri, spoke to members of the advanced Louisburg wrestling camp earlier this month. Ellis was the camp clinician during the four-day session.

The first day of practice might have been four months away,

but members of the Louisburg High School wrestling team, and some younger wrestlers, invaded the practice room earlier this month like it was December.

LHS head coach Robert Bovaird hosted his four-day advanced wrestling camp that went from July 9-12 and he had 37 wrestlers sign up for the session. Bovaird has run camps in the past, but this one was different.

Bovaird got in touch with former NCAA champion wrestler for the University of Missouri, and Division I coach, Mark Ellis and asked if he would come and work with his team for the four day session. It worked out well for the Wildcats as Ellis was able to teach the wrestlers both on and off the mat.

“He’s been coaching at the D1 level for a while, and has recently been named Director of the Greater KC Area and Midwest Region for FCA Wrestling,” Bovaird said. “He did a little clinic for us last summer, and he’s followed the high school team’s successes over the past couple of years. I asked him to come talk to the team right before regionals last season, and he agreed. When he got here, he said the right things at the right time – working on getting kids into the right mindset for the end of the season. I love the message of positivity that he brings.

“One of the main things he preached was the idea of “Life and death and the power of the tongue.” While that’s from Proverbs, it’s absolutely a great way for anyone to approach life. The words you use, the things you say are powerful tools. They can bring great positives or they can lead to horrible negatives. He asked the guys on the team if they were ‘life givers’ or ‘life takers.’ That’s such an important message.”

Ellis also talked with the Wildcat wrestlers about his experience on the mat and his road to becoming an NCAA champion. It was a road that was filled with ups and downs.

“Wrestling is a tough sport as it is, and a positive mindset goes a long way and can truly make the difference in how a kid’s season goes,” Bovaird said. “I’ve seen it happen year-in and year-out – great wrestlers struggle to reach their goals because they’re ‘burned out’ or unable to see beyond the negative. With the ups and downs of the sport, the mixed signals from parents, coaches, and season rankings, it’s tough to stay focused.

“Mark shared a lot of great stories, and he kept revisiting these messages throughout the week. Mark has become a good friend and supporter of the program, and he’s excited to see how we continue to succeed down the road. He’s said that he’ll definitely be back to visit and work with the team.”

Along with the advanced session, Bovaird also held a beginner’s camp that had 22 wrestlers and he was glad to see such a good interest in the program.

Bovaird even tried to change things up and created a little more competition with the beginner group.

“I copied and adapted a couple ideas from something my son experienced with the British Soccer Camps this summer,” he said. “I split the beginners camp into five groups, each assigned an NCAA team name (Iowa Hawkeyes, Nebraska Cornhuskers, Penn State Nittany Lions, Oklahoma State Cowboys, and Mizzou Tigers). Throughout the week, they competed for team points that were awarded based on good behaviors, doing well with the techniques, winning competitions, and more.

“On Wednesday, I had the wrestlers wear their teams’ colors, and then on Thursday, I had them make something creative for their team mascot (drawings, sculptures, paintings, etc.). In the end, Team Mizzou were the champs, and the kids really got into the excitement of earning points for the team competition.”





**Mark Ellis gives instruction to a pair of younger Wildcat wrestlers during the camp held at Louisburg High School earlier this month.**

As far as the high school level was concerned, several wrestlers have been working hard over the summer. They have attended open mat sessions that were provided and have also attended a few camps in the last couple of months.

Most recently, Louisburg had 10 wrestlers compete in the Sunflower State Games in Topeka and a lot of them found success.

In the high school division, sophomore Cade Holtzen, who is a returning state medalist, finished second in both folkstyle and takedown. Fellow sophomore Ryan Owens was third in folkstyle and fourth in takedown.

Freshman Aiden Barker was second in takedown in his weight class to go along with a third place finish in folkstyle.

In the 14-and-under division, Kaven Bartlett earned first place in takedown and fourth in folkstyle. Jay McCaskill was third in folkstyle and third in takedown for the 12-and-under group, while Canaan Clayton was third in takedown and fourth in folkstyle for his weight class.

Josiah Clayton was second in takedown and third in folkstyle at 8-and-under, while Bo Ballard was third in the folkstyle and third in takedown.

LHS alums Chris Turner and Shea Cox also competed in the 29-and-under division. Turner was fourth in takedown and Cox was fourth in folkstyle.

“It was great mat time for them all. That’s the thing, whether you win or lose, if you compete in the off-season, you’re already a step ahead of your opponents who are doing nothing on the mat,” Bovaird said. “Each year we’ve encouraged kids to do the Sunflower State Games, the kids who take up the challenge really show improvements the next season.”

As the summer is coming to a close, Bovaird has liked what he has seen from his group. He has seen wrestlers from the high school level on down, that have committed themselves to the sport.

“We’ve had a number of guys on the mats in different ways since school got out,” Bovaird said. “Cade Holtzen, Gabe Bonham, Anthony Davis, and Hayden Hoy attended the “24 Hours with God” camp at Raymore-Peculiar, which was hosted by Mark Ellis and sponsored by FCA Wrestling. They got to learn from premiere clinicians like 4-time NCAA finalist Isaiah Martinez, Mizzou head coach Brian Smith, and Baker University head coach and NCAA D2 champion Cody Garcia.

“I had over 30 different kids come to open mats this summer,

too. They ranged from veteran high school wrestlers to some of our 1st and 2nd year wrestlers from the club level. Right now, four of our wrestlers – Holtzen, Kaden Allen (6th grade), Kaven Bartlett (8th grade) and Aiden Barker (9th grade) have earned at least 100 points to become this summer's "Ironman" award winners, and there are 3-4 more wrestlers in the chase. They've gone to various club practices, wrestled in the Sunflower State Games, and attended a few local camps."

Bovaird also believes the success the Wildcats had last season in qualifying six wrestlers for state, along with the work over the summer, will lead to even bigger things this coming season.

"The summer has been successful so far – busy and time-consuming at times, but it'll be rewarding in the winter," he said. "I'm very grateful for the help I've gotten from LHS assistant coach Brandon Ott and from Wildcat Wrestling Club coaches Shawn Crossley, Jon Clayton, Adam Noll, Sam Campbell, James Auth and Janson Lanier. We're really coming together as a vertically aligned program, and in future seasons, we'll be seeing the difference at the high school level. The coaches are great with the kids, they're excited to work with both the youth and the high school wrestlers, and they're committed to making Louisburg wrestling better.

"It's tough getting kids to buy in to the idea of off-season wrestling, especially when a lot of them are playing summer baseball or getting ready for fall football. Wrestling season is still pretty far away for most of them. We're building a wrestling culture here in Louisburg, and I think we're building it the right way – and we're building it to last."