

LHS athletic trainer Damon Dennis honored with KWCA award



Louisburg athletic trainer Damon Dennis was honored last week with the Kansas Wrestling Coaches Association Support Personnel of the Year Award.

Damon Dennis knew something was up when Louisburg head wrestling coach Bobby Bovaird asked him if he would attend the team's postseason awards banquet.

In his close to three decades as serving as the USD 416 athletic trainer, Dennis (aka Doc D) had been to these types of things before and enjoys getting to look back on the season with athletes, coaches and parents. However, this time it wasn't all about the wrestlers.

Bovaird announced at the banquet that Dennis had been awarded Support Personnel of the Year by the Kansas Coaches Wrestling Association (KWCA). Dennis, along with other KWCA winners, will be recognized in October during an awards banquet in Salina.

Along with that award, he was also named as the 2019 Contributor of the Year by the LHS wrestling team.

"I was quite surprised," Dennis said. "I don't do the things that I do to get awards, but it is nice to know that you are appreciated."

Dennis, who spends his afternoons and evenings helping to mend the bumps and bruises of the Wildcat athletes while also running his Louisburg Chiropractic business, went above and behind the call of duty this season according to Bovaird.

During the season, Dennis helped a wrestler who suffered a serious concussion at practice and accompanied Bovaird and another district administrator to the emergency room to visit the wrestler and his family.

"It was an icy evening, and most people would let a phone call or text suffice, but Doc D took the extra step to show his support," Bovaird said. "Should we ever have an injury during practice time, Doc D has always been a phone call or a text away. At various points of the years, he's dropped everything at his chiropractic practice to rush to the school to attend to an injured athlete."

Winter weather provided a lot of obstacles for the Wildcats this past season and Dennis helped in that area as well. During the inclement weather, he arranged with the Louisburg Athletic Club for the varsity wrestlers to get in a good workout prior to the regional tournament since they couldn't practice at the school.

"He's gotten to know the families very well ever since he first came to Louisburg, more than 25 years ago," said Bovaird, who nominated Dennis for the award. "He has been here

long enough that
he's worked with multiple generations of LHS athletes. He
knows the community
very well, he's been extremely active in the community, and he
truly has been
an integral part of all our sports teams' successes.

"Doc D has become an extraordinary
part of our community, and his role is truly invaluable. These
awards are the
least we can do to thank this outstanding man for all he's
done."

As busy as Dennis was during this
wrestling season, he enjoys getting to know the athletes and
their families. He
also is willing to do whatever is needed to help the
wrestling, or any other
Wildcat athletic program, when problems arise.

"I am quite close with many of the wrestlers," Dennis said. "I
am
at the school every day after school to get the kids prepared
for practice or
evaluate any injuries that they are concerned about. I also
coordinated
the concussion testing and evaluate skin lesions as needed,
which can be quite
often with wrestlers. It stands to reason that by the time the
athletes are seniors,
I know them quite well. This year, we had one of the best
classes we have
ever had. I mean that athletically, academically and character
wise. We
had several injuries this year that were a bit of a challenge,
from Austin
Moore's broken collarbone to Blue Caplinger's concussion and
so on.

“It is the highlight of my day to go to the high school every day and be around the coaches and athletes. I appreciate them allowing me to be a part of the program in any capacity. I am always ready to help.”

Moore's comeback ends with first state wrestling medal



Louisburg senior Austin Moore (right) battles Wellington's Kenny Fehrman during the third-place match at 220 pounds Saturday during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in Salina.

SALINA — Back in early November of 2018, Austin Moore was in a sling with a broken collarbone and he wondered why all this was happening.

Moore suffered the injury during the regional football playoffs and he didn't get to finish his final high school season. Not only that, his hopes of getting his first state wrestling medal was in serious jeopardy.

A little more than four months later, Moore was on the medal stand with some of the state's best wrestlers in his weight class.

The Louisburg senior earned a fourth-place medal at 220 pounds during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships last Saturday at the Tony's Pizza Events Center in Salina. It was his first high school state medal and it marked the end of a long journey for Moore.

"It was pretty special for me to get a state medal, especially because it has been a goal of mine ever since I started wrestling," Moore said. "Overall, I felt like I wrestled pretty well, but I just wish I could've ended it on a win."

Moore got out to a strong start in the state tournament as he earned a spot in the semifinals. He opened tournament action with a 30 second pin of Chanute's Toker Davis and then pulled out a 3-2 decision in overtime against Scott City's Kyle Sherwood.

Unfortunately for Moore, he ran into eventual state champion Braden Morgan of El Dorado in the semifinals and was pinned.



Senior Austin Moore pulls his opponent to the mat Saturday during the Class 4A state tournament in Salina.

Still, Moore was able to win another match on the back side of the bracket with a 7-2 decision over Winfield's Zach Phillips and went up against Wellington's Kenny Fehrman for third place.

Moore and Fehrman went into overtime, but the Louisburg senior lost a 3-1 decision to give him the fourth-place medal. The match was tied at 1-all in the third period, but Moore couldn't get the escape he needed to take the lead and Fehrman forced overtime, where he was able to get a takedown.

Despite the loss, and shortened season, Moore was happy with his year and he was able to accomplish his goal of a state medal.

"It was definitely a quick season, but I had a lot of fun with my teammates and coaches," Moore

said. "I wasn't even sure if I was going to be able to wrestle at all during most of the season because of the injury, so at first I didn't even know if it would be possible for me to get a medal. I am very thankful that I got healed up and decided to wrestle my senior year.

"I'm already missing it quite a bit. It feels like I should have more matches left since I really only wrestled half of the matches that most people usually do in one year. I was a little disappointed with my last match, but I was also thankful that I even had the opportunity to wrestle in the state tournament and earn a medal."

Moore's return to the team in late January also helped the rest of the Wildcat squad as they geared up for their stretch run.

"When you think about the fact that Austin missed nearly two-thirds of the season because of the broken collarbone, he finished remarkably well," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "He went out and wrestled with kids who had 30-plus matches this season, kids who have been to state before, and kids who had been ranked throughout the season.

"Last season was a tough ending for him, losing a decision in the blood round on a last-second takedown, and then there was the uncertainty for this

season. We missed having Austin in the practice room the first part of the season, but once he got cleared, he never looked back and the team morale was definitely boosted with his presence.”

Although Moore was the Wildcats’ lone medalist on the season, Louisburg had two other wrestlers who were one win away from accomplishing that goal in senior Blue Caplinger and sophomore Cade Holtzen.



Louisburg senior Blue Caplinger tries to keep Prairie View’s Hunter Boone on the mat during his blood round match Saturday in Salina.

Caplinger was on the verge on the earning a state medal on two different occasions, but in both instances, he was on the wrong end of a call in the final seconds of both matches.

The Louisburg 170-pounder began his state tournament with a 14-1 major decision of Winfield’s Cole Finney and then met Smoky Valley’s

Dax Hopp in the quarterfinals.

Caplinger had a one point lead with less than five seconds left in the match when the two wrestlers were scrambling and Hopp was able to get the takedown as time expired. The lead official didn't see the takedown and didn't award the points, but the second official went over after time was up and told the lead official what he saw and gave Hopp the two points and the win in the 6-5 match.

Despite the disappointment, Caplinger (32-5) battled back to pin Frontenac's Storm Niegsch in 42 seconds and advanced to the blood round where Caplinger met Prairie View's Hunter Boone.

Caplinger, who had defeated Boone on a couple different occasions this season, found himself in a close match with the Prairie View junior. The two went into overtime, and Caplinger was able to get a takedown to take a 4-2 lead.

As time was running out in the third overtime, Boone was able to take Caplinger down to the mat as time expired to tie the match again. Officials confirmed with the table that time hadn't expired and it went to an ultimate tie-breaker.

Caplinger had to ride out Boone for 30 seconds to get the win,

but

Boone was able to get the escape for the victory. The loss ended Caplinger's

Wildcat career as he was trying for his first state medal.

"I think Blue's state tournament is one that will stick with me the

rest of my career," Bovaird said. "Anyone who knows Blue understands what a

great young man he is. Blue embodies so much about what wrestling is all

about. I wanted him to get that state medal so badly, and he came so close not

once, but twice. He'll get over the pain of the loss, as will I. With these

sorts of setbacks, Blue has demonstrated that he's gained the resilience to be

a champion in life."



Sophomore Cade Holtzen tries to turn his opponent Saturday during the Class 4A state tournament at 113 pounds.

As for Holtzen, the Wildcat 113-pounder opened the tournament with a

pin of Augusta's Collin Jackson and then met the state's No. 1-ranked wrestler in the quarterfinals in Abilene's William Stroda.

Holtzen and Stroda were in a low scoring match, but Stroda was able to get a third-period escape and leave with a 1-0 decision.

That loss sent Holtzen (33-6) to the consolation side where he won a 4-2 decision over Russell's Stephan Baldwin that sent him to the blood round.

It was there where he saw Rose Hill's Kyle Sackett and lost a 4-0 decision that dashed Holtzen's hopes of earning his second consecutive state medal.

"That sophomore year is always tough when it follows such a successful freshman season," Bovaird said. "Cade made some huge strides this season with his technique and his mindset approach to wrestling. Regardless of the preparation and the focus we put on our wrestling mindset, there's always going to be that pressure in the back of the guys' minds. It's human nature to remember past successes and for those things to be present.

"That's the mark of a champion, to be able to overcome those voices of doubt and questioning. And I think Cade did just that. He demonstrated it throughout the season. He just fell in a tough part of the bracket."

Freshman Brandon Doles (145 pounds) finished his first state tournament

with a 1-2 record after winning a regional title the week before, while senior Gabe Bonham (138) and sophomore Ryan Owens (120) each finished the tournament 0-2.

“One of the toughest parts about coaching wrestling is when you have a senior who has just wrestled his last match,” Bovaird said. “There’s not a lot you can say to make it easier, and sometimes all you can do is pick him up and give him a hug, let him know it’s going to be all right. Gabe wrestled phenomenally for us this season, and he was a great addition to the program.

“Ryan and Brandon both had some great moments at state, and that’s awesome experience for them down the road. Ryan overcame the fact that he’s giving up so much weight and he still battled with some of the state’s toughest. Brandon came out as a freshman in the middle weights – a weight usually populated by seniors – and won a regional championship for us. At state, he won a big match to make it to the second day.”

Wildcats hope to bring home

multiple medals from state



Senior Blue Caplinger is one of three state-ranked wrestlers from Louisburg High School that will compete in this weekend's state tournament in Salina. The Wildcats qualified six wrestlers in all.

It has been a few years since Louisburg has left the Class 4A state tournament with multiple state medals.

The Wildcats hope to reverse that trend this weekend when their six qualifiers travel to the Kansas State Wrestling Championships at Tony's Pizza Events Center in Salina.

Louisburg features three state-ranked wrestlers going into this tournament with Austin Moore (No. 3, 220 pounds), Blue Caplinger (No. 4, 170) and Cade Holtzen (No. 6, 113). Added to that list is Brandon Doles, the 145-pound regional champion, and senior Gabe Bonham (138) and sophomore Ryan Owens (120) who qualified for state for the first time.

The road to a state medal won't be easy for any of the six wrestlers, and Holtzen is the lone Wildcat to have earned a state medal in the past when he finished sixth last season.

"The way the brackets were drawn and the regionals were matched up, it'll be a tough road to the finals for our guys," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said.

“Every year, you see crazy match-ups that happen before the state finals. Austin has the No. 1 ranked guy on his side of the bracket, so hopefully that will be our semifinals match. If Cade wins his first match, he has the No. 1 wrestler in the quarterfinals.

“Brandon is getting a rematch with a Buhler kid who pinned him at Baldwin last month. Blue has a tough quarterfinals match, but if he gets through that, he’s looking good for a spot in the finals. Gabe and Ryan are both in great positions to win some matches, too. You never know. It happens all the time that top-ranked kids get upset early in the tournament. Kids who are ranked all year get beaten by wrestlers who aren’t supposed to win. It’s all about the mindset and the preparation.

“With all we’ve done this season, I’m anxious to see the team’s hard work pay off,” Bovaird continued. “They’ve bought in to the mentality we’ve been preaching this season. Believe, compete, and do one more. These guys aren’t finished yet. They’re already working hard at practice this week, getting ready to bring home some hardware from state.”

Moore, who is currently 12-0 on the season and won regionals last week, is among the favorites to earn a medal at

220 pounds but his path to the finals is a difficult one as he has the defending state champion, Braden Morgan from El Dorado, in his half of the bracket.

He will open with Chanute's Tucker Davis (17-25) in the first round, and if Moore were to advance, he will face the winner between Scott City's Kyle Sherwood (30-8) and Santa Fe Trail's Caleb Harmes (26-12).

Caplinger (30-3) also hopes to bring home his first state medal as he earned a favorable first round matchup after winning regionals last week. He will meet Winfield's Cole Finey (5-14) in the first round.

The Louisburg senior could have a tough second round match-up at 170 pounds as he will meet the winner of Rose Hill's Grant Scheer (26-5) and Smoky Valley's Dax Hopp (36-8). Scheer is currently the No. 2-ranked wrestler in 4A.

At 113 pounds, Holtzen (31-4) is ready to bring home another state medal as he will meet Augusta's Collin Jackson (20-12) in the first round. If he should advance, he will meet the winner of Abilene's William Stroda (39-3) and Towanda Circle's Wyatt Wright (32-12) in the quarterfinals. Stroda is currently the No. 1-ranked wrestler at 113 pounds.

Doles (28-9) will take part in his first high school state tournament as the Louisburg freshman will square off

with Buhler's Nick Elliott (34-8), while Doles lost to earlier in the season at Baldwin. He will then meet the winner/loser of the other match between Chanute's Brady McDonald (33-11) and Abilene's Austin Wuthnow (21-23).

After finishing third last week at regionals at 138 pounds, Bonham (18-9) will meet Chanute's Parker Winder (42-6) in the first round and will face the winner/lose between Scott City's Kaden Wren (34-3) and Abilene's Jackson Randles (24-14).

Owens (28-12), a sophomore, will have a tough first round match as he will face Santa Fe Trail's Christian Rowe (39-3) in the first round. He would then meet the winner/loser between Winfield's Chris Ray (23-13) and Pratt's Koda Dipman (32-9) in the next round.

Wrestling begins at 10 a.m., on Friday at the Tony's Pizza Events Center and will wrestle through the semifinal round and one round of consolation. The rest of the consolation rounds and the finals will be held Saturday. All that action begins at 9 a.m.

To view all the state brackets and to follow along with all the action from the weekend, make sure to [click here](#).

Wildcats qualify six for

state; Moore, Caplinger, Doles win regional titles



Louisburg senior Austin Moore works for a pin of Perry's Hayden Robb during the 220-pound regional title match Saturday in Paola. Moore, along with teammates Blue Caplinger and Brandon Doles, won regional crowns.

PAOLA – It wasn't easy, and nor is it supposed to be, but the Louisburg wrestling team made it look that way at times during Saturday's Class 4A regional tournament at Paola High School.

The Wildcats qualified six wrestlers for state, had three regional champions and took third place in the team standings – all while not being able to field a full team.

Louisburg's talent was certainly on full display during the two-day tournament in Paola. Brandon Doles, Blue Caplinger and Austin Moore won regional crowns, Cade Holtzen was a regional runner-up, while Gabe Bonham and Ryan Owens also qualified for state by placing third and fourth, respectively.

As a team, the Wildcats ended up with 138.5 points and was just 2.5 points out of second place.

Ottawa won the regional with 149.5 points and Eudora was second at 141. It was the highest regional team finish for Louisburg since 1998.

"The way these guys wrestled this weekend shows that the program has been doing so many things right this season," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "We've had the obstacle of low numbers, which hurt us in our duals, but when it comes to tournament time, we have a bunch of guys who are placing high and that gives us a lot of team points. Taking six to state feels pretty encouraging, and finishing third at regionals is an awesome statement for this team.

"If a few things had gone the other way, we would have been in second as a team. On paper, we weren't supposed to be in the race for a regional plaque. Almost all of our guys stepped up and scored huge team points for us."

Moore was certainly one of those wrestlers for Louisburg as he recovered from a broken collarbone before the season started and eventually turned that into a regional title at 220 pounds and a 12-0 record.

The Louisburg senior advanced to the championship with a 7-2 decision over Anderson County's Dallas Higginbotham in the semifinals and then responded with a second period pin of Perry-Lecompton's

Hayden Robb in the finals.

Moore did have to come from behind against Robb as he found himself down 2-0 in the second period, but got a little extra motivation to help get the job done.

"I knew after I gave up that takedown, I had to come back, stay smart and try not to get all the points back at once," he said. "I tried to circle a little bit better and not get too heavy on my toes. He kind of egged me on a little bit and I was able to put him on his back. Once I got on him on his back, I didn't want to let him up.

"I am really happy to win regionals because when I broke my collarbone, I didn't even know if I was going to be able to wrestle or not. I'm just excited because this is the first time I have won regionals and I know this will help me a lot out at state and put me in a good place in the brackets."



Louisburg senior Blue Caplinger lifts Piper's Branden Martin during the 170-pound regional title match.

Caplinger marched through his 170-pound bracket much of the same way. He pinned his way to the finals, including a third period pin of Prairie View's Hunter Boone in the semis.

In the championship match, Caplinger squared off Piper's Branden Martin, and after getting a close win against Martin earlier in the year, Caplinger controlled the match from the start and won by an 8-3 decision.

"Last year I got fourth at regionals, and this year there was a lot of pressure coming in with the No. 1

seed, but I was able to come in and do what I needed to get the job done,”

Caplinger said. “I am just happy going into state and we will see how everything plays out.

“I feel I did pretty well. I could have done better, honestly. I had some matches where I got a little too tired, but just coming off a concussion that is to be expected.”



Freshman Brandon Doles was all smiles after he qualified for the state tournament Friday after his win in the regional semifinals.

As a freshman, Doles had the regional debut he had hoped for as he went out and won the 145-pound title to secure his first trip to the state tournament.

On Friday, Doles started out with a 2-0 decision over Prairie View's Damien Kline and then followed that up with a

tough 4-2 decision over Eudora's Holden Andrews in the semifinals to cement his state bid.

In the finals on Saturday, Doles squared off with Fort Scott's Jon Daniels and controlled the match for an 8-4 decision.

"It is crazy," Doles said of getting a regional title. "I didn't think I was going to do that well this year since I was a freshman and cutting some weight that I did. I wasn't sure how strong I was going to be. I just did a lot of work in practice to get to where I am right now.

"After the first period in the finals match I was a little gassed, but I had to stay with it. I just started shooting in on him, would get the shot and work through that and kept him on that mat."



Sophomore Cade Holtzen works for a pin Friday during the Class 4A regional tournament in Paola. Holtzen finished runner-up at 113 pounds.

Holtzen also earned a spot in the regional championship at 113 pounds. The returning Wildcat state medalist advanced to the finals with a tough 11-7 decision over Prairie View's Bodi Isenhower.

That set up a rematch between Holtzen and Osawatomie's Chance Mitzner, the No. 2-ranked wrestler in the state, as they both squared off earlier in the year in Baldwin, with Mitzner winning in overtime.

Mitzner also took round two on Saturday when he downed Holtzen in an 11-2 major decision in the finals.

"I really wasn't wrestling my match in the first period," Holtzen said. "I was kind of tense and not taking

shots. I think I just got off my game plan and he got his game plan going and it went his way from there.

“It is still a pretty good feeling to be able to go back again. Hopefully I can place a little higher than I did last year, but it is a pretty awesome feeling.”



Louisburg senior Gabe Bonham finished third overall at 138 pounds and qualified for state for the first time in his career.

Bonham put a nice stamp on his senior season as he qualified for state for the first time. The Louisburg 138-pounder finished the tournament with four pins and his only loss came in the semifinals on a 6-3 decision to Perry-Leocompton's Thad

Metcalfe.

He bounced back from that loss nicely with a pin of Paola' Caden Marcum in the consolation semifinal to qualify for state. Bonham then recorded a first period pin of Fort Scott's Silas Taylor in the third-place match.

"It means a lot to be able to qualify for state," Bonham said. "It has been a long time coming. I should have probably qualified a couple other times, but I was in my head too much. This time, I just went out and wrestled my match.

"I am really proud of all the guys. We have all busted our butts in practice and we get overlooked a lot in duals and tournaments. To be able to take third with only 11 guys is impressive."



Sophomore Ryan Owens gets some back points Saturday during his third-place match at 120 pounds.

Owens, a sophomore who is in his first year as a full-time varsity wrestler, moved up to 120 pounds to start the season and hasn't looked back as he also qualified for state for the first time.

He opened the tournament with a 5-3 decision over Baldwin's Lucas Hopper before getting pinned by Anderson County's Ryland Wright in the semifinals.

Owens bounced back Saturday with a 10-6 decision over Eudora's Larry Gulley in the consolation semifinals, before falling to Atchison's Jake Rebant in the third-place match.

"It feels really good because I wasn't expecting to be where I am at right now, bumping up to 120," Owens said.

"I have learned how to handle to kids who are taller and bigger than me and I feel it has improved how I work in practice. I have to work harder to beat good kids."

Sophomore Ben Wiedenmann finished one win shy of a state berth at 182 pounds. Wiedenmann met Paola's Mikey Stribling in the consolation semifinals, but couldn't get the one last win he needed in a 9-1 loss to Stribling. Wiedenmann finished his day with a 3-2 record.

Senior Brian Houck saw his Wildcat career come to a close with a 1-2 record at 195 pounds and sophomore Jacob Briley was also 1-2 at 160 pounds. Freshman Nathan Hamilton was 0-3 at 132 pounds.

Louisburg will try for state medals this weekend when it travels to Salina for the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships. Friday's opening action begins at 10 a.m. with matches continuing into Saturday.

Holtzen, Moore win league titles; Wildcats place six in

top four



Louisburg sophomore Cade Holtzen celebrates his victory in the 113-pound finals over Bonner Springs' Cassius Vanderpool during the Frontier League Tournament on Saturday at Paola High School.

PAOLA – It may not have been as important as the regional and state tournaments, but Saturday in Paola, the Frontier League Tournament gave several Louisburg wrestlers a nice boost heading into those bigger stages.

You could certainly count Cade Holtzen and Austin Moore in that group.

Both wrestlers left the mats as Frontier League champions, and for Moore, it was his second league crown in as many years. The Wildcats had six wrestlers in all finish in the top four and Louisburg took fifth in the team standings.

Louisburg did all this without one their state-ranked senior captains, Blue Caplinger, who had to sit out with an injury.

Bonner Springs won the league crown, Ottawa finished runner-up and Paola was third.

“I’m pretty happy with where we finished up at league,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said.

“The thing is, we’re not descending with our wrestling; we’re on the move up. I think the guys have pushed themselves this season and kept the right mindset so that we’re working toward peaking at the right time.

“If we’d had Blue in the lineup, things would have been better with the team score. We may have finished in third or fourth, which isn’t too bad at all. Bonner Springs and Ottawa both have some great athletes in their lineups. Paola and Piper both have some solid wrestlers, too. By adding Bonner Springs, Piper and Tonganoxie to our league, we’ve definitely made it a pretty competitive tournament.”

Holtzen found out first-hand how competitive the league tournament was as he made his way to the finals at 113 pounds, where he squared off with Bonner Springs’ Cassius Vanderpool. Holtzen, who is ranked No. 6 in Class 4A, found himself down 4-0 early to Vanderpool, who is ranked No. 2 in Class 5A.

The Louisburg sophomore didn’t let the early deficit get him down as Holtzen wrestled aggressive in the third period and recorded some back points before pinning Vanderpool with 21 seconds left in the match to earn his first league title and improve his record to 28-3 on the season.

“Right before his finals match, I pulled Cade aside and told him to go have fun and to do what he does best,” Bovaird said. “I told him to enjoy

himself. That's the thing about wrestling. If you don't enjoy it, you're not going to perform at your best. It's a tough sport, and not everything is going to be fun. The enjoyment has to be there, however. I think that's what he did. He just went out and kept wrestling. He wasn't watching the clock, and he wasn't panicking when he was down by points. He kept pressing on, and that's what wins key matches."



Louisburg senior Austin Moore works for a pin Saturday during the Frontier League Tournament. Moore won the league crown at 220 pounds.

Moore, who is in just his second tournament back from injury, made his presence known. The Louisburg senior rolled through the 220-pound bracket and pinned his way to a league title, including a pin of Ottawa's Jared Ferguson in

the second period.

Moore improved his record to 8-0 on the season and is currently No. 2 in the state in Class 4A.

"I'm loving having Austin back in the lineup," Bovaird said. "As long as I've known him, since about 4th grade, he's been one of the hardest working, most disciplined wrestlers to come through our program. That young man has been raised right, and it shows with everything he does, whether it's in the classroom, on the football field, or on the wrestling mat. You wouldn't be able to tell that he's only been back on the mat since the end of January just by watching him wrestle at meets. He's a fierce competitor, and he's relentless."

Freshman Brandon Doles made his first league tournament a memorable one as he reached the league finals at 145 pounds. He defeated Paola's Corey Holub by a 4-1 decision and Eudora's Holden Andrews by a 6-3 decision earns a spot in the finals.

Doles met Bonner Springs' Holden Lentz, and despite getting pinned, earned a second-place league finish and improved his record to 25-9 on the season.



Louisburg freshman Brandon Doles finished second in the Frontier League at 145 pounds.

Senior Gabe Bonham (138 pounds) and sophomore Ben Wiedenmann (182) each had big days as they finished with just one loss and both medaled third. Bonham (14-8) pinned Bonner Springs' Shane Daniels in the third place match, while Wiedenmann (21-9) navigated a tough 182-pound bracket and won a close 5-4 decision over Baldwin's Cy Hockey in his third-place match.

Sophomore Ryan Owens also found his way to the podium at 120 pounds as he finished fourth. Owens was 2-1 heading into this third-place match with Baldwin's Lucas Hopper, but could lost a close 1-0 decision to run his record to 26-10 on the season.

"Brandon stepped up and won a couple tough matches to make the finals, and I love how coachable

he is," Bovaird said. "He's made the transition into the high school level of wrestling very well. Gabe and Ben are seeing the benefits of their hard work now paying off on the mat. Gabe is probably one of the hardest workers in the practice room, and it's helping him and his practice partners. Ben is such a smart athlete, and now that he's seeing more success, he's gaining a huge boost in confidence.

"Ryan is still demonstrating that he's an absolute warrior. It's not easy bumping up a weight, but he's been doing that all season without complaint, and I love the attitude he's showing. The postseason is looking pretty bright for all these guys."

Senior Brian Houck ended his tournament on a strong note at 195 pounds as he pinned Bonner Springs' Ismael Hernandez in the second period to finish in fifth overall. Freshman A.J. Reed filled in for Caplinger at 170 pounds to take seventh and sophomore Jacob Briley was eighth at 160.

The season will end for some of the Wildcats this weekend as they return to Paola. Louisburg will take part in the Class 4A regional tournament beginning Friday and wrapping up Saturday at Paola High School.

The top four in each weight class will earn a berth in the state tournament in Salina and the

Wildcats are
excited to see what their future holds.

“Sunday, I had a pretty good sized group come in for an optional practice, and the thing we ended with was a little talk about the mindset we need to have,” Bovaird said. “No one needs to worry about their records, their seeds, having to beat so-and-so, or anything like that, which is beyond their control. We need to focus on one thing: wrestling our best. That’s the only pressure they should have, and that’s one of the few things within their control.

“Attitude and effort have been awesome this year for all our guys. They believe in themselves, and they compete every day, whether it’s drills, sprints, or live wrestling. Now, the kids who have been putting in extra work are poised to see big things happen. Regionals is always exciting – you never know what can happen.”

Wildcat wrestling falls to Piper on Senior Night



Louisburg senior Blue Caplinger works for a pin Thursday during the Wildcats' dual with Piper on Senior Night at Louisburg High School.

In what was its final time to wrestle on its home mats, the Louisburg wrestling team wanted to leave a positive impression.

The Wildcats battled hard Thursday when it hosted Piper on Senior Night, but came up just short as they fell, 39-31. Louisburg had to give up points in three open weight classes, which turned out to be the difference.

"On paper, I thought we matched up pretty well with Piper," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "It looked like several of the matches were going our way, and we should have been able to pull out the dual win, despite giving up opens at 126, 132 and 285. Their coach did some last-minute playing around with their line-up, and it worked out in their favor unfortunately."

With both teams open at 106, the Wildcats got on the board first as sophomore Cade Holtzen earned a pin at 113 pounds and sophomore Ryan Owens won by decision at 120.



Louisburg senior Gabe Bonham tries to pick up his opponent during the 138 pound match.

Louisburg was open at the next two weights, but picked up victories when senior Gabe Bonham won by pin at 138 and freshman Brandon Doles won by major decision at 145. Piper won two matches before senior Blue Caplinger won by pin at 170 pounds.

However, Piper had the upper-hand in three of the next four matches to help seal the win over Louisburg. Senior Austin Moore was the Wildcats' lone victory when he won by pin at 220 pounds.

"There were lots of positives worth noting, but in the end, it was the holes in our lineup that hurt us," Bovaird said. "We're a small and young team. Next season, we'll be looking to solidify our lineup some more. It's just tough dropping our last dual of the season on Senior Night. I was hoping for a little bit of a morale boost from that win. That's the way things go. We've got no choice but to refocus and hit our

reset button for the next three weeks.”

Before the dual, the Wildcat had a chance to honor their five seniors in Brian Houck, Hunter Day, along with Bonham, Caplinger and Moore. All five wrestlers have left their stamp on the Wildcat program and they still plan on doing more when postseason wrestling begins later this week.

“Gabe moved here from Gardner the summer before his junior year,” Bovaird said. “He’s been a welcome addition to the program, bringing a very strong background in wrestling and a very positive attitude. He’s a very dynamic wrestler who’s dangerous on his feet and on top.

“Blue has been a quiet team leader for a long time now. He’s got a work ethic and discipline that you don’t find too often with teenagers. He’s got a charismatic personality that inspires his peers.

“Hunter wears a friendly smile on his face all the time, and that positivity will be missed. This season has been tough seeing him sidelined with a shoulder injury. I know it’s been killing him not being able to finish his senior year. He’s remained with the program and been a very positive supporter for the guys every week.



Gabe Bonham



Blue Caplinger



Hunter Day



Raven Hamilton



■ Brian Houck



Kammy Mitchell



Austin Moore



Claire Reitz

“Brian moved here from West Virginia his sophomore year. I saw him in the hallway and struck up a conversation with him. ‘You look like a wrestler,’ I said to him. He had no experience in the sport, but he gave it a shot and he’s been a hard worker for us ever since. He’s got an incredibly promising future and I’ve been very proud to work with him these last three years.

“Austin is the kind of kid who inspires his teammates, and he doesn’t even have to say much,”

Bovaird continued. "Once he got cleared to return to wrestling after his broken collarbone, we feel an immediate change in the practice room atmosphere. He's a dedicated leader, an example of the term 'hard work,' and an incredible motivator for his peers. I can't tell you how happy I am that he's able to salvage the remaining part of his senior season."

Along with the wrestlers, Louisburg also honored its three senior managers as Raven Hamilton, Claire Reitz and Kammy Mitchell were recognized for their years of service as well.

"These three managers have been dedicating so much time these past four years," Bovaird said. "I'm not sure what we'll do without them next year. I can only hope the younger managers have paid attention to the awesome work they've been doing, whether it's washing uniforms, keeping stats at tournaments, videoing matches, taking photographs, running errands, or any other odd task the coaches have given them. They're all outstanding young adults and we can't thank them enough for everything they do."

Louisburg will begin its postseason schedule starting Saturday when the Wildcats travel to Paola for the Frontier League Tournament. Matches are set to begin at 9 a.m.

Moore wins title in first tourney back to lead Wildcats at Baldwin



Louisburg senior Austin Moore rolls an opponent to his back Saturday during the Baldwin Invitational Tournament. Moore won the 220-pound crown.

BALDWIN CITY – It's been more than two months since Austin Moore broke his collarbone during football season and the Louisburg senior has finally found his way back to the wrestling mat.

Moore was cleared for action last week and he was prepared to ease back into grind of the wrestling season. As it turned out, he picked up right where he left off a year ago.

Moore, who was a state qualifier last season, made quick work of his opponents Saturday during the Baldwin Invitational. He recorded three pins in a total mat time of 2 minutes and 28 seconds to win the 220-pound title, including an 11 second pin of Baldwin's Toby Thomas

in the championship match.

The victory shot Moore up the state rankings as he is currently the No. 2-ranked wrestler in Class 4A at 220 pounds. He made his official return Thursday in a dual with Ottawa where he won by decision.

"After Austin's first match Saturday, I shook his hand and told him how glad I was to have him back," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "I missed his style – strong shots to dominant turns. He spent less than three minutes total on the mat Saturday. I think he's definitely ready to be back, and after his first match jitters on Thursday, he looks like he's hardly missed any time on the mat. Thursday's match was against a tough kid, and we could see that Austin wasn't quite in wrestling shape, but it didn't cause him to make mistakes. It only made him a little more conservative.

"I told him not to worry about match outcomes these next few weeks. He just needs to focus on the process of getting back to where he needs to be to be his strongest for league, regionals, and state."

Moore wasn't the only Wildcat to have success Saturday at Baldwin as senior Blue Caplinger (170 pounds) and sophomore Cade Holtzen (113) both earned a spot in the championship match. Freshman Brandon Doles (145) also medaled and finished third.

Holtzen, who won by technical fall and a pin to reach the finals, squared off with Osawatomie freshman Chance Mitzner, who was undefeated. Holtzen (No. 4 in Class 4A) and Mitzner (No. 5 Class 4A) provided lot of dramatics, but Holtzen lost a tough overtime match in a 7-5 decision that saw two state-ranked foes going at it.

"I think that loss was more damaging for his confidence than anything, but the great thing about Cade is that he's a smart kid," Bovaird said. "He's a resilient kid. He'll take a loss like that and it'll bug him, but he won't dwell on it. He'll watch match footage, he'll refocus his mental game, and he'll double his efforts in the practice room."

As for Caplinger, he picked up two big wins on his way to the finals.

Caplinger earned a pair of quick pins to reach the semifinals and went on to earn a tough 3-1 decision over Prairie View's Hunter Boone.

That set up a finals match with Storm Slupianek from Marysville. Slupianek is ranked No. 5 in the state and Caplinger is No. 6, and the finals match remained close in the third period when Caplinger was down just two points. Caplinger ended up falling in an 8-1 decision to finish second overall.

"Blue came through with a great semifinals win against a very strong kid from Prairie View," Bovaird said. "He continues to keep himself in every match with his physical strength and his self-discipline. You don't see Blue get out of position too often, and because of that, kids struggle to score on

him. That's what opened up the finals match against the Marysville wrestler.

"It was 3-1 midway through the third period. Blue took a risk, opened up a little, and got caught. That match, along with his semis match, highlighted a few key areas we need to focus on these next few weeks."



Freshman Brandon Doles works for positioning during a match Saturday in Baldwin.

Doles had a difficult road at 145 pounds, including a loss to the eventual champion in the semifinals, but he responded with a close 1-0 decision over Marysville's Keegan Caudillo and then went on to defeat Rock Creek's

Hunter Nold for the second time in the tournament by a 7-2 decision.

“Brandon has been one of the most coachable kids on the squad this season,” Bovaird said. “He’s got extensive youth wrestling experience, but here he is as a freshman scrapping with some of the best in the state. As the No. 5 seed in the tournament, he had to face a tough kid in the quarterfinals. He upset that kid 5-3, and ended up having to wrestle him again for third. That kid had been ranked in state earlier this season, so I’m really happy with Brandon’s progress.”

Four other Wildcats also earned places at Baldwin. Senior Gabe Bonham (138 pounds) finished in sixth place overall and sophomore Ryan Owens (120) was seventh. Anthony Welborn (138) and Jacob Briley (160) each took eighth.

Louisburg finished sixth in the 11-team tournament with 123 points.

Marysville won the tourney title with 204 points and Santa Fe Trail was second at 139.

“We wrestled really well, and I was pretty happy to see them bounce back strong after the tough dual loss Thursday and the snow day on Wednesday,” Bovaird said. “I feel like the focus was definitely in line at Baldwin.”

The Wildcats will host their final home meet of the season

Thursday

when it squares off with Piper on Senior Night. Matches are set to start at 6

p.m. as the Wildcats will honor their five seniors – Gabe Bonham, Blue

Caplinger, Brian Houck, Austin Moore and Hunter Day.

Wildcats medal five at Parsons Invitational



Louisburg's Anthony Welborn (left) was one of five Wildcat wrestlers to medal last Friday in Parsons.

PARSONS – There aren't many breaks, if any, in the Louisburg wrestling schedule this season and that was true again Friday when the Wildcats traveled to the Parsons Invitational.

Louisburg competed against two ranked teams in Mill Valley and Lebanon, Mo., among several other tough opponents. Still, the Wildcats were able to find their way to the medal stand.

The Wildcats medaled five wrestlers in the top four and two of those found their way to

the championship match. Sophomore Cade Holtzen and senior Blue Caplinger each finished second overall in their respective weight class.

Senior Gabe Bonham and freshman Brandon Doles each finished third, while teammate Anthony Welborn, who was wrestling unattached, took fourth.

“It was a good tournament for us in a lot of ways, but chiefly it highlighted that we still have some areas to work on,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “I love that our kids are staying competitive in our matches.

There were some solid teams there last weekend. Mill Valley is No. 6 in 6A and Lebanon is No. 5 in Missouri 3A. Throw in all the individually ranked kids in the tournament, and it was tougher than it has been in the past.”

Caplinger made Louisburg history at 170 pounds when he picked up his 100th career victory. He recorded a pin and won by major decision to reach the title match.

He squared off with Quentin Sanders, the No. 2 ranked wrestler in Class 6A from Wichita West, and Caplinger held his own despite the 3-0 loss.

“Blue ran into a freshman phenom from Wichita West,” Bovaird said. “He lost 3-0, but the thing I liked most about that match was that Blue was technically sound. With the exception of the quick escape and takedown his opponent scored, Blue initiated every

move in that
match.”

As for Holtzen, he cruised to his final match at 113 pounds against Lebanon’s Cole Patten. Holtzen controlled the match, but was caught in a move and was pinned to hand Holtzen just his second loss this season.

“Cade was looking strong in his finals match, but he got caught in a funk move,” Bovaird said. “It was just a simple mistake of getting a little too high in a scramble and then his opponent was able to lock him up tight in a ‘high flyer.’ Cade has watched the video of that match, and I think the lesson has been learned.”

Bonham (138 pounds) and Doles (145 pounds) both reached the semifinals, but each lost by decision. However, both wrestlers bounced back to take third as Bonham defeated Welborn by major decision, while Doles pinned Labette County’s Braden Barragar.

The Wildcats finished sixth in the team standings with 66.5 points, while Lebanon was first with 238 points. Mill Valley was second with 172.

“This season, we’ve been talking a lot about believing in the process and competing in everything we do. It’s derived from our ‘Wildcat Style’ philosophy that I’ve adapted from the University of Missouri head wrestling coach Brian Smith,” Bovaird said. “The final component of ‘Wildcat Style’ is the idea of ‘doing one more.’ Whether it’s doing one more rep

at practice, one more drill after training is over, or one more lift in the weight room, the philosophy of doing one more is infectious in everything we do.

“It helps the wrestlers remember that we have outcome goals – going to state, having a winning record, winning state, etc. – and then we have process goals. Those are the goals we set each week to work toward our final outcome goals. I think the Parsons meet helped reinforce a lot of things, but it also showed us that we need to be digging deeper and doing a little more to get ready for competitions.”

Louisburg returns to the mat tonight when it travels to Ottawa for a dual. Then on Saturday, the Wildcats will compete in the Baldwin Invitational. That tournament is set to begin at 9 a.m.

Louisburg falls to Spring Hill, celebrates alumni reunion



Louisburg's Jacob Briley grapples with a Spring Hill opponent Thursday during the Wildcats' home dual with the Broncos. Louisburg came up short in a 54-24 loss.

The Louisburg wrestling team fell to Spring Hill in a home dual last Thursday in a 54-24 loss to the Broncos, but like it has been most of the season, the open weights have hurt the Wildcats.

Louisburg was open at three different weights, and along with that, lost some key matches to the Broncos.

"On varsity, we ran into some tough kids," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "Some of our usual match-winners couldn't come out with a win, especially at 138, 145 and 152. Again, our open weights hurt us pretty badly. Having so many opens doesn't do us well when we have a lot of dual competitions.

"I was hoping that we would match up better at other weights, but it just didn't go in our favor. We wrestled well, that's for sure, but Spring Hill's style helped us identify several key areas we need to be working on. They're a very technical, disciplined, and strong team. You can always expect that when you go up against a group coached by Tucker Woofert. Even though I don't like taking a loss at home, we needed something like that dual to help us refocus. It's time to hit our 'reset buttons' and get back to work.

The Wildcats found themselves down 12-0 early, but came back to tie. Sophomores Ryan Owens and Cade Holtzen both weighed in at 120 for the dual, and after Owens won by forfeit at 120, Holtzen bumped up two weight classes from his normal 113-pound spot.

Holtzen responded with a pin at 126 pounds to give Louisburg some momentum, but after another open at 132 pounds for Louisburg, Spring Hill rattled off four straight victories to all but put the dual meet away.

Louisburg did manage to get a couple more wins as senior Blue Caplinger recorded a quick pin in 13 seconds to win at 170 pounds. Sophomore Ben Wiedenmann followed with a pin of his own at 182.

It was also Alumni Night for the Wildcats as several former wrestlers came back to be recognized in front of the crowd, among those was 1977 graduate Terry Scott, who flew in from Houston to attend the event, along with his father, Wayne, who helped start what became the Louisburg Wrestling Club.



Terry Scott, a 1977 graduate of LHS, waves to the crowd after he was recognized during Alumni Night on Thursday. Scott, who lives in Omaha, flew in from Houston to attend the event.

"This is one of my favorite events we host," Bovaird said. "I got the idea from Damon Parker, the new coach at Washburn Rural in Topeka. Five years ago, he hosted an alumni reunion and I had the chance to attend with Washburn Rural being my alma mater and the school I coached at my first eight years as a teacher. I decided to try it out with Louisburg, and it's been phenomenal ever since. Shawn Crossley ('98) and Bruce Caldwell ('90) have been huge in helping get word out.

“We had guys from all throughout the years show up. The biggest class represented was 1977 (Jene Vickrey, Terry Scott, and Dan Cook), and the farthest distance traveled was Terry Scott – he flew in from Houston, but lives in Omaha). We had over 23 various alumni in attendance from wrestlers to coaches to managers. We had 12 state qualifiers and three state medalists attend. They collectively earned over 800 varsity wins, and that number doesn’t include everyone’s stats.”

The event helped brighten a tough defeat for the Wildcats, which turned out to be their first home dual loss since 2014, when they fell to Paola. However, the Wildcats were able to find success on the junior varsity level as they finished the night with a 7-1 record.

Louisburg was scheduled to participate in the Topeka Invitational last Saturday, but it was cancelled due to weather. The Wildcats will try and rebound Friday when they travel to Parsons for a dual tournament.

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 50th 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.