

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

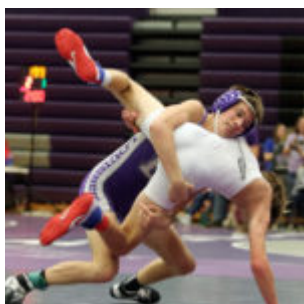
and 1973 and Meek coached one state champion and 31 state qualifiers during his tenure as head coach.

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.

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.

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 11th overall with a 3-over par 74.

It was the second consecutive state medal for Dillon after he finished 10th 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 4×400 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 15th 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.

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

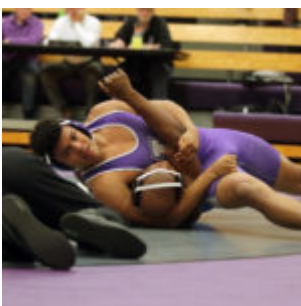
until the holidays as they get some time to heal up from their injuries.

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.”

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."