

# Three schools to join Frontier League



Three schools have accepted invitations, or will soon, to join the Frontier League for the 2018-19 season and beyond.

Piper, Bonner Springs and Tonganoxie will be leaving their current home – the Kaw Valley League – to join the Frontier after all three were offered spots during a meeting in early April.

Their addition will now bring the Frontier League to 10 members, along with Louisburg, Paola, Ottawa, Spring Hill, De Soto, Baldwin and Eudora. The trio of schools made presentations to the current Frontier League members for admittance due to the fact the Kaw Valley is in the process of breaking up. Current member Bishop Ward is leaving the league next school year, which leaves them at six.

Piper quickly accepted the invitation following a vote of its board of education and is looking forward to joining the Frontier.

“We are extremely excited to get into a league with like-size schools and competition levels,” Piper High School activities director Doug Key said. “We believe Piper High School is good fit for the league due to the competition level in all activities and will match up well. We have played all current schools in various activities and felt like this would be a positive move for the future.

“Being in a league with various size schools and us being the smallest wasn’t going to be optimal. We are still are competitive in many areas, but we needed to secure a more balanced future. We feel like being in the middle, size-wise, will keep us competitive for years to come.”

According to this year’s classification numbers, Piper has a current enrollment of 601 students. Turner is the Kaw Valley’s biggest school with 1,114 students, followed by Lansing (910), Bonner Springs (758), Basehor-Linwood (710) and Tonganoxie (618).

Bonner Springs, Piper and Tonganoxie compare to other Frontier League programs. De Soto is the biggest school in the league with 854 students, followed by Ottawa (709), Spring Hill (699), Paola (612), Louisburg (563), Eudora (471) and Baldwin (410).

Bonner Springs’ board of education also approved the move to the Frontier League and Bonner Springs High School principal Rick Moulin echoed Key’s statement.

“We have competed against teams in the Frontier League the past several years,” Moulin said. “The schools in the Frontier League are a lot like Bonner Springs – we are competitive and value sportsmanship. The teams in the Frontier League are similar in size to Bonner Springs, which will be a great gauge for us as we try to compete at the highest level possible in 4A. Bonner Springs is a small town community, with great community support, much like the schools in the Frontier League.

“We are excited to be joining with Piper and Tonganoxie. We hope to continue to be able to compete against Basehor-Linwood, Lansing and Turner. I have a lot of respect for their schools and their programs. Ultimately, the Frontier League was a better fit for our students and our community.”

Tonganoxie hasn’t officially accepted the invitation, but it

is just waiting for its board of education to approve the move during its May 8 meeting. At that point, according to Tonganoxie High School principal Mark Farrar, it will immediately send letter accepting the invite.

“We are very excited to join the Frontier League,” Farrar said. “This new partnership will be very good for our students as well as our community. Joining the Frontier League will provide some great opportunities for our students from an athletic and activities standpoint. Tonganoxie mirrors many of the activities that most or all Frontier League schools offer. We see it as a league that will be a good fit for many years to come.

“One of the things that I think gets overlooked is the idea that a strong league doesn’t just offer opportunities on a playing field, but it also offers a chance for kids to network and make lifelong connections with students from all across the league. The Frontier League is a strong and stable league and we believe that it can advance the overall mission of what we want to do at Tonganoxie.”

Louisburg High School activities director Darin Gagnebin now believes the league is healthier than ever.

“By adding teams to our league, it solidifies our league numbers for years to come ensuring that we, as a league, will remain strong and competitive whether schools decide to leave or stay,” Gagnebin said. “We could have been in a situation in which the Frontier League could have dwindled to four or five schools, but instead we will be stronger at 10 teams, if all teams decided to stay.

That situation came about in March when it was reported by the Tonganoxie Mirror that Kaw Valley League member Lansing wanted to create a larger league that would have contained all or some combinations of Lansing, Blue Valley Southwest, De Soto, Leavenworth, Bonner Springs, Basehor-Linwood, Tonganoxie,

Ottawa, Piper, Spring Hill, Turner and Topeka schools Seaman, Shawnee Heights and Topeka West.

A meeting was held between all the schools to look at possibilities of building a stronger league that would rebuild the current Kaw Valley that has Lansing, Turner, Piper, Bonner Springs, Tonganoxie and Basehor-Linwood.

The Frontier League responded with meetings of its own shortly after to discuss each member's happiness in the league after De Soto, Spring Hill and Ottawa attended the March meeting with Lansing.

De Soto mentioned needing more competition at the sub-varsity level since it has a growing enrollment and looked at the possibility of playing in a league with bigger schools since it has made the jump to Class 5A.

Spring Hill's enrollment also looks to make that jump in three to four years, while Ottawa's enrollment usually hovers around the line between 4A and 5A. Still, all three schools stated during league meetings they were happy in their current position, with De Soto and Spring Hill stating they might need to make a move due to increasing enrollment numbers.

Faced with the possibility of losing at least two members, the Frontier invited Kaw Valley members to make presentations to join the league in order to fill those spots. Piper, Tonganoxie and Bonner Springs all made presentations and the Frontier League principals all offered invitations shortly after.

At this point, it appears the league is going to move forward with 10 members as no school has stated their desire to leave the Frontier – however, it doesn't mean it can't happen in the near future.

"I cannot speak for other schools in the Frontier League about their desire to stay or to leave," Gagnebin said. "I know some

are considering their options and will do what they believe is in the best interest of their school, and I would support them in whatever they decide. I do believe though whatever they decide, with the addition of these new schools to our league, the Frontier League will remain solid in numbers and will continue to be one of the most competitive leagues in Class 4A.

“I believe the three schools that chose to petition our league for membership will be a great fit for the Frontier League. They offer all sports and activities that are currently offered by the league at all levels. Their enrollments, though larger than Louisburg, will put them in the middle to upper middle in size within the league.”

The league schedule will also look different beginning with the 2018-19 season, as there will no longer be a double round-robin schedule in certain sports and not every school will play each other in football.

“The biggest challenge will be league scheduling,” Gagnebin said. “Although it will change how we schedule things as a league, most league schools already have some or all of these schools on some of their athletic schedules already. It could increase the amount of non-league games we have to go out and find in some sports, since with 10 teams you can no longer play a double-round-robin schedule as we have currently, due to the amount of games allowed by KSHSAA.

“This is both good and bad, meaning, it could increase travel and some expense, but it allows us greater flexibility in the schedule to play other teams outside the league as well. One negative will be in football. With 10 teams, we will not be able to play every team in the league as we do now. As stated before though, solidifying the league as far as numbers go and increasing the competitiveness of the league are also positives.”

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# Frontier League shakeup could happen soon



In a few months – or even weeks – the Frontier League as it currently stands could have a different look.

Since March, meetings have gone on within member schools of the Frontier League and Kaw Valley League to discuss possible realignment of both leagues.

The Frontier League currently has seven members – Louisburg, Paola, Spring Hill, De Soto, Ottawa, Baldwin and Eudora – and a meeting between the schools took place on March 28 to discuss where each school stood as far as their happiness in the league.

Brian Biermann, superintendent of USD 416, and Louisburg High School athletic director Darin Gagnebin attended the meeting on Louisburg's behalf and both relayed the fact that every school stated they were happy with the way the league is currently set up, but a couple schools came to the realization the Frontier League might not be able to offer what they are looking for.

De Soto and Spring Hill currently have growing enrollment numbers are interested in playing Class 5A competition. De Soto moved up to 5A this school year and Spring Hill will look to make the jump in the coming years with its larger

enrollment. The rest of the schools all compete in Class 4A.

Both schools stated they would like more competition at the sub-varsity level that schools like Louisburg, Baldwin and Eudora cannot provide. Competing in a mainly 5A league would relieve some of those problems.

“De Soto said they will probably open next year with 950 kids and they would grow by 100 the year after that,” Biermann said. “They are happy in the Frontier, but they feel like they need 5A competition and they feel like it could hurt them in football with seedings and tie-breakers. They could potentially get penalized by competing in a mainly 4A league.

“Spring Hill wants to be proactive. Their growth is coming. Their classes in the middle school are pretty good size. They won’t grow a lot next year, but they will in the next few years.”

What started the meetings is due to the fact that the Kaw Valley League is looking to rework their situation or create a brand new look altogether. The Kaw Valley currently has seven schools in Lansing, Turner, Bonner Springs, Tonganoxie, Piper, Bishop Ward and Basehor-Linwood, but one member – Bishop Ward – is leaving for a new league beginning next school year.

According to report in March from the *Tonganoxie Mirror*, Lansing wants to create a larger league that would contain all or some combinations of Lansing, Blue Valley Southwest, De Soto, Leavenworth, Bonner Springs, Basehor-Linwood, Tonganoxie, Ottawa, Piper, Spring Hill, Turner and Topeka schools Seaman, Shawnee Heights and Topeka West.

Many of those schools are either in Class 5A already or are close based on enrollment numbers. The idea of competing against bigger competition is intriguing to De Soto, Spring Hill – and possibly Ottawa – the three largest schools in the Frontier League.

An idea was thrown around of creating a league of two divisions between the Kaw Valley and Frontier. One division would be 5A schools and the other would be 4A.

“We visited with our board of education and we are not in favor of a mega-league,” Biermann said. “That has been talked about – having a league of 5A and 4A schools. We don’t want to invite new 5A schools. We are ok with Spring Hill and De Soto staying in the league, even though they are growing, but we don’t want to invite other 5A schools or have a mega league so they can have better competition.

“Our stance is if De Soto and Spring Hill feel like they need 5A competition and leave, then they can work towards that and we can work on filling those spots with 4A schools.”

Both Biermann and Gagnebin feel like the Frontier League needs to be proactive as changes could be made sooner rather than later.

“We aren’t panicking as a league as much as the Kaw Valley schools are because they know they are headed for a break up,” Gagnebin said. “We could easily stay with the seven schools we have. Pretty soon, De Soto will have close to 1,000 kids. It is more on them if they want to be in our league, and if they are happy, by all means stay. We are not saying they have to leave, but they have to do best what is for their school, and if this league isn’t the best option for you, then you have to look elsewhere.”

Due to the fact De Soto and Spring Hill could be moving on, the Frontier is being proactive and inviting some members of the Kaw Valley League to come make presentations at a meeting Wednesday to see if they would be a fit in the Frontier.

According to Biermann, Tonganoxie, Piper, Bonner Springs and Basehor-Linwood High Schools will all make presentations at the meeting and then schools from both the Kaw Valley and the Frontier will meet to discuss options at a later date.



"I led the (March 28) meeting and I wanted to make sure everyone was as honest and open as possible," Biermann said. "There were no hurt feelings. Collectively we don't want a mega-league, no additional 5A schools and that is firm from us, Paola, Baldwin and Eudora. Spring Hill and De Soto left the meeting, I think, that they need to start looking for potential 5A competition.

"The easy fix would be for De Soto and Spring Hill to join the bigger league and we take someone like Tonganoxie and Piper to replace them. Every school said they loved the Frontier League and competition, but it is time there has to be some conversations. The biggest thing is we don't have three baseball, softball or soccer teams to schedule, but De Soto and Spring Hill want that. We can't field C teams in some cases."

The leagues are on a sort of a time crunch. With football reclassifications and scheduling beginning this October for the next two years, it would be the best case scenario to get the reshuffling done before then so they can schedule for the 2018-19 season and beyond according to Gagnebin.

The Louisburg activities director also believes keeping the right number of teams is also imperative for a healthy league.

"We want to maintain the integrity of our league, whether that is with seven or even eight schools," Gagnebin said. "We want to maintain that number. Nine is a scheduling nightmare, and if you only have six teams, you are opening up a can of worms where if you leave an open spot, then the state could come in and assign certain schools to us that aren't a good fit.

"I don't necessarily want them to leave the league, but we need to be told if they are. I am more afraid of them leaving our league than them staying in our league. I am not afraid of the competition we face with them. We can compete with them in all the sports, but I am more afraid of us dropping from a

seven to a five-team league.”

However, one hiccup remains. The Frontier League bylaws state that a member school must give two years notice before leaving the league.

“If the dominoes start falling fast, the league could pass a bylaw amendment to allow for movement for De Soto or whoever, which is something I think they will have to do,” Gagnebin said. “Not much is happening now, but when it does it is going to happen quick. You better be ready to move with it and have a plan in place or you could be stuck on the outside.”

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## **Adams leads Wildcats at state with first medal**



Louisburg junior Ryan Adams points to the section of Wildcat fans following his win over Andover Central’s Bryant Page in the “blood round ” Saturday at the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in Salina. Adams earned a state medal with the win and would finish sixth overall.

SALINA – When the final whistle sounded in Ryan Adams’ “blood

round" match, the Louisburg High School junior turned and pointed to the section of Wildcat fans at the Salina Bicentennial Center.

He clapped his hands and walked to the center of the mat. A weight had been lifted off his shoulders – he was a state medalist.

Adams captured his first career state medal as he finished sixth at 138 pounds Saturday during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships. He was one of eight Wildcats to make the trip to Salina for the two-day tournament, but he was the lone Wildcat to get on the medal stand.

"It feels amazing," Adams said. "It feels great and very satisfying. I thought I wrestled pretty good overall, but I think the nerves were getting to me a little bit. I think the whole team wrestled well. I really want to thank my family, coaches and teammates for sticking with me and rooting me on."

The road back to Salina has been a long one for Adams.

As a freshman, Adams finished one win away from a state medal but lost in the medal round. He was forced to sit out his sophomore season with an elbow injury, but came back this season in hopes of getting that state medal.

"It was definitely motivation for me," Adams said of the last two years. "I wanted to be a four-time state placer, but I came up short my freshman year and I wasn't able to wrestle last season. It really put a spark in me and it really was a motivator to go out and place."

Adams opened the state tournament with a pin of Pratt's Kadence Riner in the first period and then faced off with Tonganoxie's Gad Huseman in the quarterfinals, where he lost a tough 6-4 decision.

That loss put him in the consolation bracket, but Adams

responded with a pin of Anderson County's Cole Denny. Then in the "blood round," Adams secured his state medal with a 6-1 decision of Andover Central's Bryant Page, who was ranked No. 5 coming into the state tournament.



**Ryan Adams works for a pin of Anderson County's Cole Denny on Saturday in Salina.**

Adams went on to face Baldwin's Levi Green in the consolation semifinals, where he lost a 10-1 major decision and was pinned by Burlington's Brett Bober in the fifth-place match.

"Ryan has had a tough run these last couple seasons," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "Losing his entire sophomore season was tough for him, but once he had his surgery and finished his rehab, he was back at it in the summer months. None of our other wrestlers put in as much off-season time as he did. During the high school season, I think he had it in the back of his mind, what if I hurt my elbow again? I think it kept him conservative in some matches. But at state, we got the old Ryan Adams back, and it happened at just the right time."

“He was able to hang with the No. 3 ranked wrestler (Huseman) and lost 6-4, and then he beat the No. 5 ranked wrestler 6-1 to get into the medal rounds. He showed a lot of toughness in all his matches, and he showed a good deal of resilience after he lost in the quarterfinals. One of the best moments of the season was when the final whistle blew in the blood round, and Ryan was so excited. He’d achieved one of his goals, to place at high school state.”

Six of the eight Louisburg state qualifiers each won a match, but none of those were able to advance to the medal round.

Thad Hendrix (106), Dylan Meyer (145), Austin Moore (170), Austin Raetzel (195) and Mason Koechner (285) each finished the state tournament with a 1-2 record. Senior Nathan Keegan (120) and junior Kyle Allen (126) lost their first two matches Friday.

“It was tough seeing seven of our eight guys lose there in the first round, but then again, we weren’t set up too well based on our regional results,” Bovaird said. “Other than Adams, Raetzel was the only one who didn’t have a ranked opponent in round one. Hendrix and Keegan both had the No. 1 ranked kids in their weights, Moore had the No. 2 guy, and Allen and Meyer each had the No. 4 guy in their weights.

“On the back side of the bracket, we had five guys win matches, which was nice to see. They wrestled tough in all their matches, but to come home winning a match is pretty good. When it comes down to it, the state tournament is tough, and I think this year was filled with some of the toughest brackets I’ve seen in a long time. Nathan Keegan was one of eight returning state medalists in his weight class. The same goes for Mason Koechner. Some guys in those brackets had to return home empty-handed. It just hurts that it had to be two of our guys. I thought we’d been better prepared than that.”



**Louisburg senior Mason Koechner battles with Holton's Kyler Tannahill during a consolation match Saturday in Salina.**

Koechner (39-4), who entered the tournament as the No. 2 ranked heavyweight in Class 4A, had a difficult opening round match. He met Colby's Ethan Jay, the defending state runner-up and eventual third-place finisher, and lost a 5-2 decision.

After a scoreless first period, Jay earned an escape in the second period and then took down Koechner for two more points. Koechner earned the escape in the third period, but Jay got another takedown to widen his lead even more.

The Louisburg senior responded to pin Clearwater's Brady Helton in the second period in his first consolation match. However, Koechner lost a 3-1 decision to Holton's Kyler Tannahill in the next round.

Despite missing out on a state medal, Koechner's career at Louisburg was a strong one as he was two-time Frontier League champion, a 3-time state qualifier, a third-place finisher at state as a junior and finished with a career record of 130-32 – which is the second most wins in program history.

“Koechner's tournament was very tough for all of us, but I know Mason can't define his identity as a wrestler based on one tournament,” Bovaird said. “He was 4-0 against the state finalists this year. He pinned (Sam) Christy of Spring Hill twice, and he beat (Jake) Hastings of Santa Fe Trail twice (5-0 and 6-1). That's painful to see both of those guys make the finals. It just goes to show how much of a psychological factor there is in the sport of wrestling. Mason went all season ranked toward the top, only to hit a couple road-blocks along the way at the state tournament.

“Mason was the first wrestler I got to know from the Louisburg wrestling program when I first took the job, and he has had more of a role in rebuilding the program than I think he realizes.”

Raetzel (31-13) fell in his first match in a 13-7 decision to Goodland's Cameron Gray, but stayed alive in the consolation round with a wild 15-12 victory over Ulysses' Ayston Perez. Raetzel was down 12-10, but earned a takedown and a 3-point nearfall with 25 seconds left to secure the win.



**Louisburg senior Austin Raetzel tries to hold down Goodland's Cameron Gray during his first round match Friday at the Class 4A state tournament.**

The Louisburg senior lost his next consolation match as he was pinned in the second period by Basehor-Linwood's Alex Bejarano.

As for Moore (33-11), he responded after his first round loss



with pin of Concordia's Tracer Workman in the first round of consolation. He then met Bonner Springs' Trai Warburton but was eventually pinned in the third period in what was a back and forth match.

Meyer (23-20), another Louisburg senior, got a state win in the first round of consolation with a pin of Andover Central's David Mumford. His season came to an end in the next round as he was pinned by Chanute's Gage Leedy.

Hendrix (31-12) won a 4-2 decision over Holton's Cameron Smith in the first consolation round to get his first career state win, but lost a 7-0 decision to Clearwater's Hunter Reddick to end his season.

Keegan, who was a 3-time state qualifier, finished with a 20-9 record. Allen made his first state tournament and ended his season with a 25-13 mark.

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## **Wildcats ready to begin medal quest at state tourney**



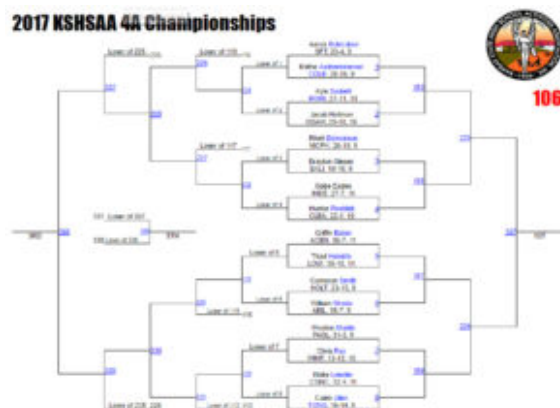
Louisburg senior Austin Raetzel was one of eight Wildcats to qualify last week at the regional tournament at Frontenac High School. The Wildcats will take part in the Class 4A state tournament starting Friday morning in Salina.

Following Tuesday's practice, Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird took his wrestlers over to the board that listed the program's state medalists.

He listed off several familiar names of Wildcat wrestling lore such as the school's first state champion in Doug Eaton. Then came champions Tim Dozier and Sonny Ewalt. He also talked about medalists like Mike Ewalt, Brian Becker, Tom Dozier and continued down the list of numerous others.

Bovaird wanted to give his eight state qualifiers a blast from the past and let them know what it takes to succeed in the toughest tournament of the season.

"I told the guys how it starts is with a dream of winning a medal, and it takes a supportive coaching staff who believes in them, a determined work ethic to pursue that goal, and a sense of faith in their abilities," Bovaird said. "I think we're right there with all those factors. We just have to get on the mat and do what we've been doing all season long. We need to score points and we need to battle to the last whistle."



### 106-pound bracket – Thad Hendrix

The eight Louisburg state qualifiers will begin their journey

to a state medal at 10 a.m. Friday when the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championship gets underway at the Salina Bicentennial Center. The tournament will continue into Saturday.

Thad Hendrix (106 pounds), Nathan Keegan (120), Kyle Allen (126), Ryan Adams (138), Dylan Meyer (145), Austin Moore (170), Austin Raetzel (195) and Mason Koechner (285) will try for a state medal against some of the state's best wrestlers. The top six in each weight class will receive a medal.



**120 pound bracket – Nathan Keegan**

“It’s been a great week of practice,” Bovaird said. “Our qualifiers are focused and ready to go make some noise in Salina. We had a number of guys coming in to work out with the qualifiers – our seniors who didn’t make it to state, along with some junior varsity and younger varsity guys. I loved the atmosphere of the room. They’re goal-driven and ready to peak at just the right time.

“State is never easy, and the road to a state medal is filled with all sorts of obstacles. I like several of our spots in the brackets, too. I think several guys have multiple possible chances to win tough matches and get in for state medals.”

Koechner will lead the Wildcats as he earned his third consecutive spot in the state tournament. He is currently the

No. 2-ranked wrestler at 285 pounds following his loss in the regional final last Saturday in Frontenac to Independence's Seth Stoble.

A senior, Koechner (38-2) will have a tough first match as he will face off with Colby's Ethan Jay (35-6) – the defending state-runner up. Koechner finished third at state last season at 220 pounds and is hoping for another good showing this time around.



### 126 pound bracket – Kyle Allen

“Just like last year, I didn’t wrestle very good at regionals and I took second in a match that I probably should have won,” Koechner said. “I came back at state and beat the kid I lost to and that is what I want to do this time around. I want to be more prepared than I was this week.”

Raetzl, a senior, will make his first state tournament appearance. Raetzl (30-11), who finished as regional runner-up last week, will meet Goodland’s Cameron Gray (34-8) in the first round.

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**138 pound bracket – Ryan Adams**

Adams, another regional runner-up, will make his second state tournament appearance after earning a spot as a freshman. The Louisburg junior had earned a 22-7 record on the season and will meet Pratt’s Kadence Riner (21-8) in his first match.

The Wildcats will have a veteran presence at state as Keegan will make his third state tournament appearance, while Hendrix will appear in his second. Allen, Meyer and Moore will compete for the first time.

“Mason Koechner, Nathan Keegan, Dylan Meyer, and Austin Raetzel are looking at their last matches this weekend,” Bovaird said. “They all have great stories. Mason and Nathan placed last year. Dylan qualified his senior year, 30 years after his dad Randy did the same thing for LHS. Austin has powered his way into a great position after being JV freshman and sophomore year and having a chance to prove himself these past two years. The four underclassmen are also in great positions. Thad and Ryan are making their second trips to state, and both have been ranked at various times this year. Kyle is reaping the rewards of all his off-season work, and I told him he’s wrestling the best I’ve ever seen him on the mat. Austin Moore is our youngest qualifier, but he’s so strong and determined that he can definitely upset some of the ranked kids.

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145 pound bracket -Dylan Meyer

“The guys have put their work in, and now it’s time to finish what we started this season. At this point, nothing is guaranteed for anyone, and I have full faith that they can all go out there and do some great things.”

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170 pound bracket – Austin Moore

**2017 KSHSAA 4A Championships**



**285 pound bracket – Mason Koechner**

**2017 KSHSAA 4A Championships**



**195 pound bracket – Austin Raetzl**

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**Elite 8: Wildcats qualify record number for state**



**Louisburg senior Austin Raetzel was one of three Wildcats to wrestle in the championship finals of the Class 4A regional tournament in Frontenac. Raetzel was one of eight Wildcats to qualify for the Class 4A state tournament in Salina.**

FRONTENAC – Sometimes good things come to those who wait and the Louisburg wrestling team has waited a long time for a day like Saturday.

For the first time in more than 30 years, the Louisburg wrestling team will have eight wrestlers compete in the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in Salina. All eight qualified for state during the two-day regional tournament at Frontenac High School.

Thad Hendrix (106 pounds), Nathan Keegan (120), Kyle Allen (126), Ryan Adams (138), Dylan Meyer (145), Austin Moore (170), Austin Raetzel (195) and Mason Koechner (285) will all compete in the state tournament beginning this Friday. Louisburg also finished fifth in the team standings

The Wildcats tied a school record of eight state qualifiers that was set in 1984 on a team led by former coach Dee Graham.

“Two years ago, I was ecstatic – and relieved – to be taking five guys to state,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Last year, I was proud to take five again. This year, I can’t help but look back with pride on everything the program has accomplished. It hasn’t been that long since we spent two



seasons without any state qualifiers. 2013 and 2014 were very humbling experiences for me as a coach, and I'm so proud of how those two seasons served as motivators for the wrestlers in the Louisburg community."

Three of those qualifiers— Adams, Raetzel and Koechner — all wrestled for a regional title. However, all three came up short in their quest for a regional crown and each finished second.

Koechner, the No. 1 ranked heavyweight in Class 4A, squared off with No. 2 Seth Stroble of Independence. To get to that match, Koechner pinned Columbus' Chance Meyer in 39 seconds in the quarterfinals and then pinned Prairie View's Dylan Frederick in 40 seconds in the semifinals.

The wins set up the showdown with Stroble in what was a tight match all the way to end. Tied at 1-all with 20 seconds left in the third period, Koechner tried for a takedown and slipped, which allowed Stroble to get on top for the 2-point takedown and then added two more back points in the 6-1 loss.

"I thought Mason was in good position a lot of the match," Bovaird said. "He was the aggressor, and we knew going into that match that Stroble could be dangerous. When Mason got an underhook in neutral, Stroble liked to lock hands and try to crack down on Mason's elbow. When Mason stepped in for a power step, Stroble was looking to step on his foot and trip him.

"It came down to the last twenty seconds. Stroble hit a bad shot, Mason countered and got too eager on the go-behind. That late in a heavyweight match, both boys are sweaty, and Mason slipped off. It's better to lose that match here than at state."



**Louisburg's Mason Koechner battles Independence's Seth Stroble during the 285-pound regional final match.**

It was just Koechner's second loss of the season and he is 38-2 heading into the state tournament this weekend. It will be his third straight state appearance, and despite the setback, the Louisburg senior was happy with the way the team performed.

"It is awesome and to get eight guys to state is great," Koechner said. "That ties the most we have ever gotten. We have a good team this year and I am glad to see all those guys go.

"I definitely didn't wrestle my best this weekend. I felt a little gassed during my finals match and I just didn't feel like myself. (Stoble) was hard to move around. I was getting my shots set up, but I wasn't finishing. I couldn't finish anything. At the end I tried to force some things and I

shouldn't have tried to force it. Hopefully I can have a good week of practice this week and get back to state ready to go."

At 195 pounds, Raetzel opened the tournament with two consecutive pins on Friday and then defeated Anderson County's Dominic Sutton in a 9-4 decision in the semifinals to earn a spot in the finals.

Raetzel, a senior, squared off with Frontenac's Nathan Kauffman in the finals Saturday, but lost in a 13-5 major decision.

"I have one more week to refine what I need to do," Raetzel said. "I think I wrestled pretty well this weekend. The guy in my finals match was pretty tough, and it was definitely a struggle. It was a disappointing match and I feel like there were some missed opportunities for shots and some reversals, but I will learn from it. I am excited for state."



**Junior Ryan Adams finished second at 138 pounds and will**

**make his second state appearance.**

Adams also had a great start at 138 pounds Friday as he pinned Frontenac's Kaleb Kroenke in 14 seconds and then defeated Prairie View's Tre Kline in an 11-6 decision to reach the finals.

The Louisburg junior, who qualified for state as a freshman, lost in a 15-0 technical fall to Burlington's Brett Bober in the finals.

"I thought we did awesome as a team," Adams said. "I think we worked really hard this year to get to the point where we are at. The whole team has done well. We have busted our butts in the practice room and worked hard. We definitely deserved it.

"I thought I wrestled pretty well in my first three matches, but I definitely didn't show up and wrestle my last match. I just have to keep grinding and getting better."

The round where the Wildcats excelled the most was in the consolation semifinals – or better known at the "blood round." The winner of each match earned a spot in the state tournament.

Louisburg had seven wrestlers in the blood round and five came away with a win.

Hendrix opened things up with a pin in 13 seconds to earn his second consecutive state appearance. Keegan earned a third straight tournament appearance with a 3-0 decision over Prairie View's Brayden Dame.

Allen qualified for his first state tournament as he won a 10-4 decision over Paola's Noah Bowden. Meyer did the same, as he will be making his first appearance in Salina thanks to a pin of Independence's Ryan Bruce.

Moore won the battle with Osawatomie's Cody Hazlett in his

consolation semifinal match in a 12-7 decision to earn his first state bid.

Tucker Batten (132) and Ben Hupp (182) were each close in their semifinal matches, but Batten lost a 3-0 decision to Prairie View's Maeson Kehl in dramatic fashion, while Hupp lost a 12-9 decision to Anderson County's Kyle Lamb.

"The pattern has usually been one of heartache and disappointment in the blood round, but this season is where things have really turned around," Bovaird said. "It's been exciting and rewarding seeing these guys continue to step up this season. The team has shown a ton of maturity and determination as they progress through their wrestling careers. Four of our seven seniors are heading to state, and we'll have four returners on the squad next season.

"The exciting thing is that with the two matches we lost in the blood round, they were both within our reach to win. It hurt when Ben Hupp fell short at 182. He wanted to go to state, and he chased that goal with everything he had, including a quarterfinal round upset of the No. 2 seed. At 132, Tucker was trailing by three and had a cradle locked up – in fact, he was in the process of turning his opponent when the referee stopped the match and called a stalemate. That was tough to see his season end like that."



**Louisburg coaches (from left) Andy Wright, Bobby Bovaird and Brandon Ott get into Dylan Meyer's 145-pound consolation semifinal match in which he earned a pin and qualified for state.**

The finals and consolation finals round didn't go as well as the Wildcats had hoped as they finished with just one win in their seven matches. That lone win came from Allen at 126 pounds as he finished in third place with a 3-1 decision over Columbus' Nate Thomas.

Hendrix, Keegan, Meyer and Moore each took fourth place, but all eight Wildcats are ready for what lies ahead.

"The boys are excited to be going to state, but one perennial challenge that a coach faces is keeping them focused on state," Bovaird said. "Qualifying for state is an awesome deal – one to be proud of, for sure – but we don't want to start celebrating until we've finished our business this season."

“The record books aren’t closed yet, and we still have a chance to get out to Salina and make our mark this season. That finals round was a little brutal for us, losing all but one match. The thing is, we’ve got this week to reset and refocus, and with the group we’ve got going to state, I think we can do just that.”



Junior Kyle Allen finished third at 126 pounds.



Sophomore Austin Moore finished fourth at 170 pounds.



Senior Dylan Meyer was fourth at 145 pounds.



Senior Nathan Keegan finished fourth at 120 pounds.



Thad Hendrix took fourth at 106 pounds.

## Louisburg Regional Wrestling Results

106 – Thad Hendrix (30-10) placed 4th and scored 9.00 team points.

Quarterfinal – Thad Hendrix (Louisburg) 30-10 won by decision over Gavin Daniels (Chanute) 9-17 (Dec 8-7)

Semifinal – Gabe Eades (Independence) 27-7 won by major decision over Thad Hendrix (Louisburg) 30-10 (MD 15-1)

Cons. Semi – Thad Hendrix (Louisburg) 30-10 won by fall over Johnathon Williams (Burlington) 17-21 (Fall 0:23)

3rd Place Match – Jacob Hollman (Osawatomie) 23-10 won in sudden victory – 1 over Thad Hendrix (Louisburg) 30-10 (SV-1 11-6)

**120 – Nathan Keegan (20-7) placed 4th and scored 9.00 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 – Nathan Keegan (Louisburg) 20-7 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Nathan Keegan (Louisburg) 20-7 won in sudden victory – 1 over Kyle Montojo (Fort Scott) 14-12 (SV-1 3-1)

Semifinal – Evan Totty (Burlington) 32-7 won by major decision over Nathan Keegan (Louisburg) 20-7 (MD 12-2)

Cons. Semi – Nathan Keegan (Louisburg) 20-7 won by decision over Brayden Dame (La Cygne-Prairie View) 21-14 (Dec 3-0)

3rd Place Match – Brady McDonald (Chanute) 27-13 won by fall over Nathan Keegan (Louisburg) 20-7 (Fall 2:34)

**126 – Kyle Allen (25-11) placed 3rd and scored 10.00 team points.**

Quarterfinal – Kyle Allen (Louisburg) 25-11 won by decision over Nate Thomas (Columbus) 8-16 (Dec 3-0)

Semifinal – Logan McDonald (Chanute) 19-11 won by fall over Kyle Allen (Louisburg) 25-11 (Fall 5:17)

Cons. Semi – Kyle Allen (Louisburg) 25-11 won by decision over Noah Bowden (Paola) 20-13 (Dec 10-4)

3rd Place Match – Kyle Allen (Louisburg) 25-11 won by decision over Nate Thomas (Columbus) 8-16 (Dec 3-1)

**132 – Tucker Batten (22-10) place is unknown and scored 5.00 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 – Tucker Batten (Louisburg) 22-10 received a bye () (Bye)



Quarterfinal – Tucker Batten (Louisburg) 22-10 won by major decision over Caleb Cline (Paola) 13-12 (MD 8-0)

Semifinal – Mason Jameson (Frontenac) 21-12 won by decision over Tucker Batten (Louisburg) 22-10 (Dec 10-5)

Cons. Semi – Maeson Kehl (La Cygne-Prairie View) 3-3 won by decision over Tucker Batten (Louisburg) 22-10 (Dec 3-0)

**138 – Ryan Adams (22-7) placed 2nd and scored 18.00 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 – Ryan Adams (Louisburg) 22-7 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Ryan Adams (Louisburg) 22-7 won by fall over Kaleb Kroenke (Frontenac) 3-5 (Fall 0:14)

Semifinal – Ryan Adams (Louisburg) 22-7 won by decision over Tre Kline (La Cygne-Prairie View) 26-15 (Dec 11-6)

1st Place Match – Brett Bober (Burlington) 39-8 won by tech fall over Ryan Adams (Louisburg) 22-7 (TF-1.5 4:49 (15-0))

**145 – Dylan Meyer (22-18) placed 4th and scored 12.00 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 – Dylan Meyer (Louisburg) 22-18 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Dylan Meyer (Louisburg) 22-18 won by major decision over Anthony Keaton (Parsons) 20-12 (MD 9-1)

Semifinal – Colby Johnson (Burlington) 37-0 won by fall over Dylan Meyer (Louisburg) 22-18 (Fall 1:35)

Cons. Semi – Dylan Meyer (Louisburg) 22-18 won by fall over Ryan Bruce (Independence) 21-16 (Fall 4:26)

3rd Place Match – Gavin Cullor (La Cygne-Prairie View) 15-7 won by decision over Dylan Meyer (Louisburg) 22-18 (Dec 6-0)

**152 – Alec Maler (4-14) place is unknown and scored 0.00 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 – Jordan Ishimura (Frontenac) 28-7 won by fall over Alec Maler (Louisburg) 4-14 (Fall 1:37)

Cons. Round 1 – Tyler Metcalf (Parsons) 19-18 won by fall over Alec Maler (Louisburg) 4-14 (Fall 1:28)

**160 – Blue Caplinger (22-17) place is unknown and scored 3.00 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 – Blue Caplinger (Louisburg) 22-17 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal – John Diediker (Osawatomie) 19-7 won by decision over Blue Caplinger (Louisburg) 22-17 (Dec 8-3)

Cons. Round 2 – Blue Caplinger (Louisburg) 22-17 won by fall over Logan Hall (Fort Scott) 0-6 (Fall 1:52)

Cons. Round 3 – Dalton Duke (Garnett-Anderson County) 21-14 won by decision over Blue Caplinger (Louisburg) 22-17 (Dec 2-1)

**170 – Austin Moore (32-9) placed 4th and scored 11.00 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 – Austin Moore (Louisburg) 32-9 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Austin Moore (Louisburg) 32-9 won by fall over Tavon Blazek (Iola) 23-12 (Fall 1:18)

Semifinal – Andrew Mays (Frontenac) 17-7 won by fall over Austin Moore (Louisburg) 32-9 (Fall 5:52)

Cons. Semi – Austin Moore (Louisburg) 32-9 won by decision over Cody Hazlett (Osawatomie) 22-9 (Dec 12-7)

3rd Place Match – Ridge Smith (Columbus) 24-8 won by decision over Austin Moore (Louisburg) 32-9 (Dec 6-4)

**182 – Ben Hupp (22-18) place is unknown and scored 5.00 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 – Ben Hupp (Louisburg) 22-18 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Ben Hupp (Louisburg) 22-18 won by major decision over Quiency Jones (Altamont-Labette County) 25-7 (MD 17-4)

Semifinal – Jesse Henry (La Cygne-Prairie View) 28-12 won by fall over Ben Hupp (Louisburg) 22-18 (Fall 4:09)

Cons. Semi – Kyle Lamb (Garnett-Anderson County) 32-7 won by decision over Ben Hupp (Louisburg) 22-18 (Dec 12-9)

**195 – Austin Raetzel (30-11) placed 2nd and scored 20.00 team**

**points.**

Champ. Round 1 – Austin Raetzel (Louisburg) 30-11 won by fall over Sam Chamber (La Cygne-Prairie View) 13-20 (Fall 1:49)

Quarterfinal – Austin Raetzel (Louisburg) 30-11 won by fall over Gary Lower (Iola) 6-13 (Fall 0:34)

Semifinal – Austin Raetzel (Louisburg) 30-11 won by decision over Dominic Sutton (Garnett-Anderson County) 29-9 (Dec 9-4)

1st Place Match – Nathan Kaufman (Frontenac) 29-8 won by major decision over Austin Raetzel (Louisburg) 30-11 (MD 13-5)

**220 – Terry Allen (11-19) place is unknown and scored 1.00 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 – Terry Allen (Louisburg) 11-19 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Jake Miller (Paola) 11-0 won by fall over Terry Allen (Louisburg) 11-19 (Fall 0:22)

Cons. Round 2 – Terry Allen (Louisburg) 11-19 won by decision over Rich Garris (Independence) 8-11 (Dec 3-0)

Cons. Round 3 – Ben Daniels (Fort Scott) 12-12 won by fall over Terry Allen (Louisburg) 11-19 (Fall 3:37)

**285 – Mason Koechner (38-2) placed 2nd and scored 20.00 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 – Mason Koechner (Louisburg) 38-2 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Mason Koechner (Louisburg) 38-2 won by fall over Chance Meyer (Columbus) 4-16 (Fall 0:39)

Semifinal – Mason Koechner (Louisburg) 38-2 won by fall over Dylan Frederick (La Cygne-Prairie View) 22-16 (Fall 0:40)

1st Place Match – Seth Stroble (Independence) 36-1 won by decision over Mason Koechner (Louisburg) 38-2 (Dec 6-1)

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# BACK-TO-BACK: Wildcats repeat as league champs



The Louisburg High School wrestling team gathers on the award stand to pose with the Frontier League championship trophy as the Wildcats won their second-straight league crown Saturday at De Soto High School.

DE SOTO – In the week leading up to the Frontier League Dual Tournament, the Louisburg High School wrestling team already had its back up against the wall in a quest to win a second straight league title.

The Wildcats found out they were going to be open two extra weight classes. Louisburg has been open at 113 pounds most of the season, but found out it would be without wrestlers at 138 and 145 pounds.

If Louisburg was going to win another league crown, several Wildcats were going to have to put the team before themselves.

They did just that.

Thanks to the selflessness of a few, the entire team gathered on the award stand following Saturday's tournament and held the league championship trophy for the second consecutive year. The Wildcats went 6-0 in the dual tournament, including key victories over Spring Hill and Paola to pull through.

Louisburg also had 10 wrestlers finish in the top four, while

two won league titles themselves. Senior Mason Koechner won the 285-pound class, while sophomore Blue Caplinger won the title at 152 pounds.

In the process, the Wildcats also recorded the most dual wins in program history as they finished the year with a 20-1 record.

“Going into this season, I wasn’t sure if we deserved the No. 1 preseason ranking for the Frontier League,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Just being realistic and not downplaying our guys, I recognized that the teams in our league are pretty salty and there’s talent all over. Each school had a couple league champs, which is awesome for our sport and our league. It came to overall depth and strength of wrestlers.

“The league champ would be a team that was solid up and down the line-up. I’ve never seen our league tournament so full. This time of year, it seems like a couple teams are really hurting for numbers, but this season we had some really competitive duals and forfeits weren’t as big a factor as they have been in the past. At the end of the day Saturday, I don’t think I could have been any prouder than I was of how the Wildcats came together and pulled off the championship.”



**Senior Owen Staver moved up from the junior varsity level to finish third at 160 pounds Saturday at the Frontier League Tournament.**

Several different wrestlers made the move to help the Wildcats. Collin Hamilton moved up from junior varsity to wrestle at 138 pounds, while senior Dylan Meyer took the 145 spot.

Caplinger, who had wrestled at 160 pounds all season, cut weight earlier in the week to move down to 152. Senior Owen Staver spent most of the year on junior varsity at 170 pounds, but also cut weight to move down to the 160.

“I kind of not regret not cutting down earlier in the season, but this turned out well,” Caplinger said, “I knew it would be tough, but I knew I could do it and it really worked out.”

It turned out to be beneficial for everyone as Caplinger won

the individual league crown, going 6-0 with six pins, and Staver finished third with a 4-2 record.

“They really stepped up and made sacrifices for the team,” Bovaird said. “Both Blue and Owen had been well within their current weight classes, and the drop to the next lowest weight class for this tournament wasn’t a stretch at all. They just had two days to do it, and it was for a two-day tournament. That meant they would have to make weight not only Friday morning, but also Friday evening – and we had a bye in round two. But they did it. They made the drop, and it paid off big time for the team.

“A week ago, Owen was looking at the end of his season, finishing with a dramatic overtime win to take first place at the Blue Valley JV tournament. Then last Tuesday, he and Blue decided to make the drop for the team. It’s just so exciting for Owen to be able to end on top like that. Collin bumped up to fill in at 138, and he definitely contributed to the team effort. There was the De Soto match where he was losing by a major decision and hit a hip toss and nearly pinned his opponent. Then there was the Spring Hill match where we needed everyone to stay off their backs and not get pinned. Against a tougher, heavier opponent, Collin was able to fight off his back and save the team points.”

Several Wildcats were just one win away from winning an individual league title themselves.

Junior Thad Hendrix (106), senior Nathan Keegan (120), junior Kyle Allen (126), Meyer, sophomore Austin Moore (170) and senior Austin Raetzel (195) each finished second. Senior Ben Hupp finished fourth at 182 pounds.



**Sophomore Blue Caplinger won the 152-pound title for the Wildcats with six pins in the two-day tournament.**

Koechner, who is ranked No. 1 in Class 4A at 285 pounds, had a big day to lead the Wildcats as he went 6-0 win five pins, including one over No. 6-ranked Sam Christy of Spring Hill.

“It is awesome to have a team filled with a great group of guys, come together and it was great to win another league title,” Koechner said. “We had a lot of guys that made a lot of sacrifices to really help us win this. You had guys like Owen and Blue, and if those guys wouldn’t have cut and went down a weight class, I am not sure what would have happened. We had a lot of close duals, and if those guys don’t make sacrifices then I don’t think that we win the league title.



They put the team before themselves.”

The Wildcats opened the tournament with a 45-21 win over Ottawa on Friday and then ended the night with a big 45-31 win over Spring Hill. Louisburg took that 2-0 record into Saturday where they followed that up with a 60-20 win over Baldwin and 54-29 victory over De Solo.

Then came the dual with Paola, in which the Panthers provided the Wildcats with a stiff test and jumped out to an early lead after Louisburg junior Tucker Batten had to leave with an injury and gave the Panthers six points.

Paola took an early 24-9 lead, but the middleweights came through for Louisburg as Meyer and Caplinger each earned a pin, while Staver won by major decision. Moore provided the Wildcats with another pin to help Louisburg to a 31-24 lead.



**Louisburg senior Mason Koechner won the 285-pound league crown Saturday at De Soto High School.**

The Panthers won by pin at 182 pound and cut the Wildcat lead to one, which set up a pivotal match at 195 pounds between Raetzel and Paola's Mikey Stribling. The winner would give their team a leg up on the dual – and possibly the league title.

Raetzel came out focused as he dominated Stribling from the start and earned a second period pin to give the Wildcats a seven-point lead. The Wildcats eventually won the dual 43-36 and then secured the league title with a 64-13 win over Eudora.

“The kid I lost to went three rounds with the Paola kid, so that was a little nerve-racking going in to that,” Raetzel said. “I just kept doing what coach told me to do and I was able to get the win.

“Bovaird has really put into our heads that enough isn’t enough and there is always a little bit more that you can do. The team charisma has really been up and we are always taking those extra steps and it paid off.”



**Senior Austin Raetzel tries to roll Paola’s Mikey Stribling on his back Saturday during the Wildcats’ dual with Paola. Raetzel won by pin in the second period.**

Louisburg has now reached a key point in its season. The Wildcats will travel to Frontenac on Friday and Saturday for the Class 4A regional tournament.

The top four in each weight class will earn a trip to the state tournament in Salina the following weekend.

“I am really excited,” Koechner said. “The season is coming to

an end and we are looking to finish strong. Hopefully we can take a lot of other guys to state as well. We took five last year and hoping we can get eight this year. You never know, we will just see how it goes.”

Bovaird knows his team can accomplish a lot of positives going into the final two weeks of the season.

“This is an exciting time for all of us,” he said. “The guys have the right mindset. After this weekend, there’s excitement and enthusiasm all around, and I can’t wait to see how it translates into the practice room. It’s been a season to remember, but I keep telling the team that we have unfinished business. Never rest on your laurels, but keep on working to succeed down the road. Let the successes we’ve already experienced create enthusiasm and excitement, not pressure.

“They need to keep doing what they’re doing, wrestle their hardest and fight through to the very end, and when the dust settles, we’ll continue to accomplish great things.”

## **2017 FRONTIER LEAGUE DUAL TOURNAMENT**

1st Place – Louisburg

2nd Place – Spring Hill

3rd Place – Paola

4th Place – Ottawa

5th Place – Baldwin

6th Place – Eudora

7th Place – Desoto

### **Round 1**

Spring Hill defeated Desoto 49-24.

Paola defeated Baldwin 49-17.

Louisburg defeated Ottawa 45-21.

### **Round 2**

Paola defeated Desoto 52-24.

Ottawa defeated Baldwin 36-34.  
Spring Hill defeated Eudora 63-12.

### **Round 3**

Ottawa defeated Desoto 39-39.  
Baldwin defeated Eudora 48-36.  
Louisburg defeated Spring Hill 45-31.

### **Round 4**

Eudora defeated Desoto 45-36.  
Louisburg defeated Baldwin 60-20.  
Paola defeated Ottawa 38-24.

### **Round 5**

Louisburg defeated Desoto 54-29.  
Paola defeated Eudora 42-34.  
Spring Hill defeated Ottawa 41-29.

### **Round 6**

Louisburg defeated Paola 43-36.  
Spring Hill defeated Baldwin 47-20.  
Ottawa defeated Eudora 59-21.

### **Round 7**

Desoto defeated Baldwin 46-31.  
Louisburg defeated Eudora 64-13.  
Spring Hill defeated Paola 34-33.

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## **Wildcat wrestling racks up more dual wins**



**Louisburg junior Tucker Batten works for a pin against a Doniphan West opponent Friday at Louisburg High School. The Wildcats defeated Doniphan West and Harmon to improve their record to 14-1 on the season.**

It may not totally replace two lost tournaments, but Friday's duals with Doniphan West and Harmon were just what the Louisburg High School wrestling team wanted.

The Wildcats had no problems in the 69-3 victory over Doniphan West and 69-9 win over Harmon at Louisburg High School. The duals gave the Wildcat wrestlers some mat time and extra matches that were lost from canceled tournaments earlier in the year.

The wins also pushed the Wildcats' dual record to 14-1 on the season, the second-most victories since the program started during the 1969-70 season.

"It has been a phenomenal season so far," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "I'd hoped to get more teams involved for Friday night's event. As it was, the only takers right off the bat were Ottawa, Lawrence, Doniphan West and Harmon. We'd just recently seen both Lawrence and Ottawa, but we didn't want to turn them away, so we worked out a rotation where we each got two duals for the night. Our guys looked good against Doniphan West and Harmon. Both are young teams, but I was glad how most of the team approached the duals. They wrestled tough and smart."

Against Doniphan West, junior Thad Hendrix opened the dual at 106 pounds with a 6-5 decision to get the Wildcats started. Nathan Keegan (120), Kyle Allen (126), Tucker Batten (132) and Ryan Adams (138) followed with pins.

After a pair of forfeits from Doniphan West, Austin Moore (170), Ben Hupp (195) and Mason Koechner (285) recorded pins

of their own to complete the victory.

The Wildcats once again started strong, this time against Harmon. Hendrix opened the dual with a pin and Keegan followed up with a pin of his own. Allen recorded a 9-2 decision for a win at 126, while Batten and Alec Maler (145) added a pin to give Louisburg a 33-0 lead.

Blue Caplinger (160) and Hupp recorded pins to go along with a slew of forfeits to secure the team's second win of the night.

Earlier in the week, Louisburg traveled to Lawrence High School for a dual on Feb. 1 and left with a 42-30 win over the Class 6A program.

The Wildcats found themselves down early when Hendrix was pinned in the 113-pound match, but Keegan won by forfeit to tie it up and Allen responded to win 8-6 in overtime. The lead changed hands a couple different times, but the Wildcats crept back in it after Adams won a wild 18-17 decision at 138 pounds.



**Louisburg junior Kyle Allen picks up the leg of an opponent and drives him backward Friday in a 126-pound match.**

Senior Dylan Meyer won by pin at 152 pounds and Caplinger did the same at 160 to put the Wildcats in front 24-18. Lawrence responded with a pair of pins to go up six, but Hupp and Austin Raetzel (220) each won by pin to take the lead back and Koechner won by forfeit to seal the win.

The season gets much more difficult for the Wildcats coming up as they will compete in postseason tournaments the next three weeks.

Louisburg gets it started Friday when it travels to the Frontier League Dual Tournament at De Soto High School, which



will also run into Saturday. The Wildcats won the league crown last season for the first time in 19 years and hope to do the same this time around.

“I’m excited for the first step of the ‘Championship Series,’ with the Frontier League Duals,” Bovaird said. “Only one of our league schools is in our regional, so it’s good that we’re not having to wrestle all these teams one week and then turning around and having to wrestle them again the next week. We’ll have a chance to defend our league title and continue to come together as a team before heading into regionals.”

The Wildcats will travel to Frontenac on Feb. 17 and 18 for the Class 4A regional tournament. If all goes well there, several could wrestle in the Class 4A state tournament in Salina on Feb. 24 and 25.

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## **Koechner leads Wildcats with heavyweight title**



Louisburg senior Mason Koechner works for a pin during the Baldwin Invitational Tournament on Saturday at Baldwin High School. Koechner won the 285-pound title with a 4-0 record on the day.

BALDWIN CITY – It didn't matter where his opponents were ranked, Mason Koechner treated them all the same – he threw them to the mat and handed them a loss.

Koechner, the No. 2 ranked heavyweight in Class 4A, rolled through two ranked opponents on his way to the 285-pound championship Saturday at the Baldwin Invitational. The Louisburg High School senior was one of eight wrestlers to finish in the top eight in what was a difficult tournament.

The Wildcats had their best finish at the tournament in recent history as they finished seventh in the team standings with 115 points. The Baldwin Invitational featured three ranked teams in Class 4A, along with several state-ranked individuals.

“The Baldwin Invitational has become one of the toughest tournaments in the state in many ways,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Coach (Kit) Harris of Baldwin designed it to be a Class 4A showcase leading up to regionals and state. Each year, he adds some of the toughest 4A schools he can find. This year they added Buhler and Clay Center. Last year they added Burlington. There are state-ranked wrestlers in each weight, and some of the finals are definitely sneak previews of the state championships.

“Each year we go there, we do better. Our seventh place finish there this year is the highest we've ever finished in the six years we've been going to it. Throw in the fact that our starting 138 was out with the flu and our 132 defaulted to 6th place with a broken nose, we could have done even better. That's what's been exciting about this year. We haven't truly been at full strength, and without our full squad, we're having some great weekends.”

Koechner improved his record to 27-1 on the season as he pinned Eudora's Tristen Brecheisen and Basehor-Linwood's Victor Bejarano in a combined 1 minute and 44 seconds. He then

squared off with Holton's Kyler Tannahill in the semifinals, who was ranked in the all-class rankings at 285, and Koechner pinned him in a minute.

The Louisburg senior faced off with Santa Fe Trail's Jake Hastings for the second time in a week and again Koechner came out on top. He defeated the No. 5 heavyweight in Class 4A by a 5-0 decision after winning by a 6-1 decision the week earlier.

"I see Mason moving forward each week with more and more confidence," Bovaird said. "This weekend he saw a Holton kid who was in the all-class rankings and then he had a rematch with Hastings of Santa Fe Trail. Both of those matches were great for Mason. He showed a lot of great positioning on his feet in that match, and he was dominant on top through the second and third periods."



**Junior Thad Hendrix tries to put an opponent on his back Saturday in Baldwin.**

Junior Thad Hendrix also found his way to the medal stand as he finished third at 106 pounds. Hendrix went 3-1 on the day and improved his record to 21-6 on the year.

Hendrix opened up with a pin of Osawatomie's Amanda Newcomb and then advanced to the semifinals against Santa Fe Trail's Aaron Buterakos, where he lost an 8-4 decision.

He bounced back with a pin of Tonganoxie's Caleb Allen to advance to the third place match and then pinned Osawatomie's Jacob Hollman in 22 seconds to take third. His victory against Hollman avenged a loss from earlier in the season.

"Thad had three rematches this weekend," Bovaird said. "He'd lost to the Santa Fe Trail kid at Parsons. It was a close match until that kid got on top. He's just a strong top wrestler. This time around, it still didn't end up good for Thad. He got caught on bottom and gave up some crucial back points. The Tonganoxie kid is just a scrappy wrestler who doesn't quit moving. He gave Thad fits at the Louisburg meet, but this time around, Thad kept a slow tempo and wrestled the match at his own pace.

"In the consolation finals, he got to see the Osawatomie kid again – the same kid who had beaten him 11-10 in the first match of the year. Thad had been cutting weight at that point, and you could tell when he ran out of gas. In the rematch, it was a totally different story."

Senior Nathan Keegan (120 pounds), junior Kyle Allen (126), sophomore Austin Moore (170) and senior Austin Raetzel each came in fifth, just one spot shy of reaching the medal stand.

Junior Tucker Batten (132) had to default to sixth place with a broken nose and sophomore Blue Caplinger (160) also took sixth. Senior Ben Hupp (182) finished in eighth.

Each wrestler picked up big victories that will benefit them later in the season.

“Lots of guys came up with crucial wins against regional opponents this weekend,” Bovaird said. “What that means down the road is that when we get to the regional seeding meeting, we’ll be able to have criteria over some key opponents and that will help us get higher seeds in the brackets.

“Thad got a key revenge win against Osawatomie, and Kyle got two wins against a Burlington opponent who is a pretty solid wrestler. Blue got a key win against Burlington, and Austin Moore got a big win against his Osawatomie opponent.”

Due to the fact the Wildcats have had two tournaments canceled this season due to weather, they were able to add an event to their schedule. Louisburg will host Doniphan West, Harmon, Lawrence and Ottawa in a dual format Friday.

The Wildcats will open the duals against Doniphan West at 5 p.m., will take a break and then dual Harmon in the third round.

Today, the Wildcats travel to Lawrence for a dual with Lawrence High School.

“I’m feeling pretty good about how everyone is doing,” Bovaird said. “We just need to stay healthy. We have three non-league duals coming up against Lawrence, Doniphan West, and JC Harmon, and then we have the Frontier League Duals. Paola is the only league school in our regional, too, so we’ve set the tone for how we’ll match up at regionals.”

## **BIT TEAM SCORES**

1. Clay Center 186.5, 2. Santa Fe Trail 176.0, 3. Basehor Linwood 159.5, 4. Burlington 131.0, 5. Tonganoxie 128.0, 6. Holton 124.5, 7. Louisburg 115.0, 8. Buhler 112.0, 9. Goodland 102.0, 10. Prairie View 94.0, 11. Spring Hill 90.5, 12. Smoky Valley 80.0, 13. De Soto 73.0,

14. Baldwin 56.0, 15. Osawatomie 35.0, 16. Wamego 19.0,  
17. Eudora 17.0, 18. Rock Creek 6.0

## LOUISBURG RESULTS

106 – Thad Hendrix (21-6) placed 3rd and scored 20.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Thad Hendrix (Louisburg) 21-6 received a bye  
( ) (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Thad Hendrix (Louisburg) 21-6 won by fall over  
Amanda Newcomb (Osawatomie) 7-6 (Fall 0:41)

Semifinal – Aaron Buterakos (Santa Fe Trail) 18-3 won by  
decision over Thad Hendrix (Louisburg) 21-6 (Dec 8-4)

Cons. Round 3 – Thad Hendrix (Louisburg) 21-6 won by fall over  
Caleb Allen (Tonganoxie) 10-10 (Fall 2:14)

3rd Place Match – Thad Hendrix (Louisburg) 21-6 won by fall  
over Jacob Hollman (Osawatomie) 14-8 (Fall 0:22)

120 – Nathan Keegan (10-4) placed 5th and scored 13.00 team  
points.

Champ. Round 1 – Nathan Keegan (Louisburg) 10-4 received a bye  
( ) (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Nathan Keegan (Louisburg) 10-4 won by fall over  
Parker Johnson (Spring Hill) 5-17 (Fall 0:36)

Semifinal – Kasey Stramel (Goodland) 22-10 won by decision  
over Nathan Keegan (Louisburg) 10-4 (Dec 2-1)

Cons. Round 3 – Kolby Roush (Holton) 12-8 won by fall over  
Nathan Keegan (Louisburg) 10-4 (Fall 3:31)

5th Place Match – Nathan Keegan (Louisburg) 10-4 won by fall  
over Gus Buterakos (Santa Fe Trail) 3-7 (Fall 1:53)

126 – Kyle Allen (14-9) placed 5th and scored 9.00 team  
points.

Champ. Round 1 – Kyle Allen (Louisburg) 14-9 received a bye  
( ) (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Kyle Allen (Louisburg) 14-9 won by decision

over T.T. Totty (Burlington) 21-8 (Dec 5-3)

Semifinal – Tate Withington (Goodland) 29-0 won by fall over Kyle Allen (Louisburg) 14-9 (Fall 0:33)

Cons. Round 3 – Ty Judd (Basehor-Linwood) 16-15 won by fall over Kyle Allen (Louisburg) 14-9 (Fall 0:56)

5th Place Match – Kyle Allen (Louisburg) 14-9 won by decision over T.T. Totty (Burlington) 21-8 (Dec 2-0)

132 – Tucker Batten (16-9) placed 6th and scored 6.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Tucker Batten (Louisburg) 16-9 won by decision over Jimmy Mauch (Smoky Valley) 2-5 (Dec 8-4)

Quarterfinal – Cael Johnson (Burlington) 28-4 won by decision over Tucker Batten (Louisburg) 16-9 (Dec 5-0)

Cons. Round 2 – Tucker Batten (Louisburg) 16-9 won by decision over Trajan McCormick (Spring Hill) 18-13 (Dec 11-6)

Cons. Round 3 – Korbin Riedel (Tonganoxie) 25-4 won by injury default over Tucker Batten (Louisburg) 16-9 (Inj. 0:00)

5th Place Match – Reed Knitter (Clay Center) 17-12 won by injury default over Tucker Batten (Louisburg) 16-9 (Inj. 0:00)

138 – Dillon Keegan (3-8) place is unknown and scored 0.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Adler Pierson (Wamego) 19-11 won by major decision over Dillon Keegan (Louisburg) 3-8 (MD 18-4)

Cons. Round 1 – Wyatt Dickie (Spring Hill) 7-14 won by fall over Dillon Keegan (Louisburg) 3-8 (Fall 5:00)

145 – Dylan Meyer (13-14) place is unknown and scored 3.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Christian Norton (Spring Hill) 22-10 won by decision over Dylan Meyer (Louisburg) 13-14 (Dec 11-6)

Cons. Round 1 – Dylan Meyer (Louisburg) 13-14 won by fall over Michael Lynn (De Soto) 9-17 (Fall 4:58)

Cons. Round 2 – Cameron Osborne (Clay Center) 11-12 won by fall over Dylan Meyer (Louisburg) 13-14 (Fall 3:50)

152 – Alec Maler (2-11) place is unknown and scored 0.00 team

points.

Champ. Round 1 – Colton Rice (Prairie View) 14-10 won by fall over Alec Maler (Louisburg) 2-11 (Fall 1:17)

Cons. Round 1 – Alec Maler (Louisburg) 2-11 received a bye ( ) (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 – Keaton Rudolph (Goodland) 14-9 won by decision over Alec Maler (Louisburg) 2-11 (Dec 3-2)

160 – Blue Caplinger (13-14) placed 6th and scored 10.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Blue Caplinger (Louisburg) 13-14 won by fall over Josh Willcutt (Basehor-Linwood) 18-16 (Fall 0:49)

Quarterfinal – Hunter Mullin (Clay Center) 26-1 won by major decision over Blue Caplinger (Louisburg) 13-14 (MD 17-4)

Cons. Round 2 – Blue Caplinger (Louisburg) 13-14 won by fall over Nik Alfors (Burlington) 22-11 (Fall 4:13)

Cons. Round 3 – Trey Isenhower (Prairie View) 26-5 won by decision over Blue Caplinger (Louisburg) 13-14 (Dec 10-5)

5th Place Match – Scott Harman (Baldwin) 19-11 won by tech fall over Blue Caplinger (Louisburg) 13-14 (TF-1.5 0:00 (16-1))

170 – Austin Moore (23-5) placed 5th and scored 10.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Austin Moore (Louisburg) 23-5 won by decision over Jake Wynn (Clay Center) 8-11 (Dec 7-0)

Quarterfinal – Nate Panagakis (De Soto) 33-4 won by fall over Austin Moore (Louisburg) 23-5 (Fall 4:32)

Cons. Round 2 – Austin Moore (Louisburg) 23-5 won by decision over Devin Duncan (Tonganoxie) 21-6 (Dec 9-6)

Cons. Round 3 – TJ Williams (Basehor-Linwood) 10-6 won by fall over Austin Moore (Louisburg) 23-5 (Fall 2:04)

5th Place Match – Austin Moore (Louisburg) 23-5 won by fall over Cody Hazlett (Osawatomie) 13-6 (Fall 2:47)

182 – Owen Staver (5-5) place is unknown.

Champ. Round 1 – Dylan Voigts (Baldwin) 19-10 won by decision over Owen Staver (Louisburg) 5-5 (Dec 8-2)



Cons. Round 1 – Owen Staver (Louisburg) 5-5 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 – Owen Staver (Louisburg) 5-5 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 3 – Ben Hupp (Louisburg) 15-13 won by decision over Owen Staver (Louisburg) 5-5 (Dec 6-4)

182 – Ben Hupp (15-13) placed 8th and scored 6.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Ben Hupp (Louisburg) 15-13 won by fall over Hunter Parish (Basehor-Linwood) 1-8 (Fall 3:08)

Quarterfinal – Beck Elliott (Smoky Valley) 20-4 won by fall over Ben Hupp (Louisburg) 15-13 (Fall 5:35)

Cons. Round 2 – Zach Norton (Spring Hill) 7-4 won by major decision over Ben Hupp (Louisburg) 15-13 (MD 12-3)

Cons. Round 3 – Ben Hupp (Louisburg) 15-13 won by decision over Owen Staver (Louisburg) 5-5 (Dec 6-4)

7th Place Match – Dylan Voigts (Baldwin) 19-10 won by decision over Ben Hupp (Louisburg) 15-13 (Dec 6-2)

195 – Austin Raetzel (19-9) placed 5th and scored 10.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Austin Raetzel (Louisburg) 19-9 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal – Cameron Gray (Goodland) 23-7 won by fall over Austin Raetzel (Louisburg) 19-9 (Fall 5:28)

Cons. Round 2 – Austin Raetzel (Louisburg) 19-9 won by fall over Kolton McCrary (Tonganoxie) 6-20 (Fall 0:52)

Cons. Round 3 – Allan Wampler (Smoky Valley) 16-8 won by fall over Austin Raetzel (Louisburg) 19-9 (Fall 3:15)

5th Place Match – Austin Raetzel (Louisburg) 19-9 won by fall over Connor Searcy (Tonganoxie) 6-6 (Fall 4:03)

220 – Terry Allen (8-13) place is unknown and scored 0.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Thomas Garcia (Basehor-Linwood) 21-14 won by fall over Terry Allen (Louisburg) 8-13 (Fall 0:47)

Cons. Round 1 – Jacob Miller (Tonganoxie) 4-14 won by decision over Terry Allen (Louisburg) 8-13 (Dec 9-2)

285 – Mason Koechner (27-1) placed 1st and scored 28.00 team points.

Champ. Round 1 – Mason Koechner (Louisburg) 27-1 won by fall over Tristen Brecheisen (Eudora) 1-10 (Fall 0:29)

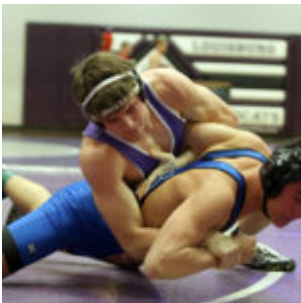
Quarterfinal – Mason Koechner (Louisburg) 27-1 won by fall over Victor Bejarano (Basehor-Linwood) 19-13 (Fall 1:15)

Semifinal – Mason Koechner (Louisburg) 27-1 won by fall over Kyler Tannahill (Holton) 23-5 (Fall 1:00)

1st Place Match – Mason Koechner (Louisburg) 27-1 won by decision over Jake Hastings (Santa Fe Trail) 26-2 (Dec 5-0)

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## **Wildcats take first at Parsons Duals**



Louisburg sophomore Austin Moore tries to roll his opponent during at 170-pound match earlier this season. Moore was one of seven wrestlers who were undefeated Friday in Parsons as the Wildcats took first place.

PARSONS – Last season, the Louisburg High School wrestling team left the Parsons Duals one victory short of a championship.

Even this year, the Wildcats have finished runner-up in all three tournaments they have competed in and have been looking

to bring home that top honor for quite some time.

Louisburg was able to do that Friday.

The Wildcats traveled to the Parsons Duals and left with their first team championship of the season and had to beat some tough competition along the way. Louisburg upended No. 6-ranked Santa Fe Trail 45-28 in the championship dual.

“This team championship has been a long time coming this season,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “We’ve been so close this season, taking second at Fort Scott, Eudora, and our home tournament, and I’m confident that we could have placed high as a team at the two tournaments that were canceled.

“It’s a great feeling winning a tournament like this. We came out strong, wrestled tough matches, got some more individual wins for the guys, and perhaps the best is we extended our dual win streak to nine matches.”

Louisburg improved its dual record to 10-1 on the season, and along with its win against Santa Fe Trail, defeated Labette County 66-18, a team of unattached wrestlers 75-0, and Lebanon, Mo., 48-18.

The Wildcats also had seven wrestlers go undefeated. Nathan Keegan (120 pounds), Tucker Batten (132), Ryan Adams (138), Austin Moore (170), Austin Raetzel (195) and Mason Koechner (285) all finished with four wins, while Adams, Moore and Raetzel had four pins each.

Senior Owen Staver wrestled unattached at 170 pounds and was 3-0 with three pins.

Junior Thad Hendrix (106), sophomore Blue Caplinger (160) and senior Dylan Meyer (145/152) each had just one loss, which came in the Santa Fe Trail dual. Junior Kyle Allen (126) also finished 3-1 on the day.

Seniors Ben Hupp (182) and Terry Allen (220) each finished the day 2-2 and Alec Maler (145/152) was 1-3.

“Thad, Blue and Dylan lost tough matches against Santa Fe Trail, but earlier in the evening they all looked pretty dominant,” Bovaird said. “Kyle was looking great at 126, going 3-1 with two pins. His one loss was a rough one – losing 11-10 in the final seconds. He fought off his back twice and came back strong, but it was a late escape and some scoring confusion by the official that cost him the match.”

Santa Fe Trail proved to be a tough dual for the Wildcats, but they won all the key matches – and the ones they lost didn’t give up extra points.

The highlight of the dual came in the heavyweight match between Koechner and Santa Fe Trail’s Jake Hastings. Koechner entered the match ranked No. 2 in 4A and Hastings was No. 4.

It was a quality match as the two went into overtime, but Koechner dominated the extra period to win by a 6-1 decision.

“I wasn’t sure how we would match up with Santa Fe Trail,” Bovaird said. “I knew they’ve been ranked in the top-10 all season, but my experience with them is that they’ve always been a very tough team. This goes back when I was in school competing against them as a wrestler up through the last 17 years I’ve been coaching. They are strong competitors who don’t give up and their coaching staff is top-notch.

“This season, they will have several individuals place high at state. Head-to-head in a dual, we matched up pretty well with them. We won the matches we needed to win, and against their tough kids, we held on and didn’t give up bonus points.”

The win also helped Koechner move his way toward the top of the Wildcat record books as he recorded his 113<sup>th</sup> career win and puts him in the No. 3 position all-time. He is six wins behind Tim Dozier for second and he is also up to 98 career

pins.

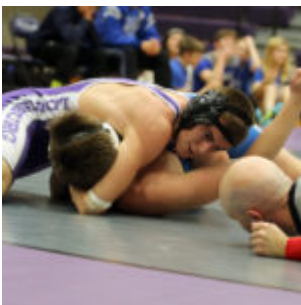
With his four wins, Keegan also moved his way up the career wins list as he is now 18<sup>th</sup> all-time with 72.

“This weekend was a great outing for Mason,” Bovaird said. “His last match of the day was a solid 6-1 overtime victory over the No. 4 wrestler in the state and a kid who has placed third and sixth at state the last two years.”

Louisburg returns to action Thursday when it travels to Ottawa as it tries for its 10<sup>th</sup> straight dual victory. The Wildcats will also compete in the Baldwin Invitational on Saturday.

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## **Wildcats pull off win on senior night**



Louisburg senior Ben Hupp waits for the referee to call a pin during Wednesday’s senior night dual against Gardner-Edgerton at Louisburg High School. Hupp pinned his opponent at 182 pounds and the Wildcats won the dual 45-30.

When Austin Raetzel put his Gardner-Edgerton opponent on his back, the Louisburg bench jumped up with excitement.

With a pin, Raetzel had a chance to secure a dual win against the Blazers on Wednesday during senior night. The 195-pound Louisburg senior didn't quite get the pin, but the victory was good enough.

Raetzel picked up a win during his final home match in an 8-3 decision and cinched the 45-30 win for the Wildcats and moved the team's dual record to 6-1 on the season.

"I loved the way things worked out Wednesday night," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "Not only was it a great feeling to beat Gardner, but to do so with our home crowd was pretty nice. Gardner-Edgerton is a 6A school that's had some tremendous growth and successes over the years. I was pretty proud of the guys for stepping up and winning some clutch matches."

Bovaird also had a chance to watch five of his seven seniors win their final home match in their Louisburg careers. Mason Koechner (285 pounds), Dylan Meyer (152), Ben Hupp (182) and Raetzel all won, while Owen Staver (170) won two junior varsity matches prior to the dual.

Nathan Keegan (120) ran up against the Class 6A third-place finisher from a year ago in Drake Taysom for a 9-2 loss, while Terry Allen (220) had a hard-fought match but was later pinned.

"The class of 2017 was the first group I got to help coach when I took on the LMS job five years ago, and over the last four years of high school, they've grown so much as individuals and as teammates," Bovaird said. "Two of these guys – Mason Koechner and Nathan Keegan – were a part of the team that broke the streak of LHS sitting out at state, and then last year they broke our streak of not having state placers.

"Koechner had a dominant state tournament to take third place and Keegan peaked at the right time and showed us how good he can be to take sixth place. Throw in kids like Owen Staver,

Austin Raetzel, Ben Hupp, Terry Allen and Dylan Meyer, and you've got a special group of guys right there. They're hard-working kids who are pretty decent people. There's never a dull moment around them."

Junior Thad Hendrix opened the dual with a pin to put the Wildcats on top early, but the Wildcats were open at 113 and the loss at 120 pounds put Louisburg in an early deficit.



**Louisburg seniors (front row, from left) Nathan Keegan, Owen Staver, Dylan Meyer; (back row) Mason Koechner, Austin Raetzel, Ben Hupp and Terry Allen.**

At 126 pounds, junior Kyle Allen gave the Wildcats the lead back with a pin, but Gardner responded with a pin at 132. Louisburg's Ryan Adams (138) and Dylan Meyer (145) each won by pin to give Louisburg 24-15 at an important time in the match.

Alec Maler (152) was pinned and Blue Caplinger (160) lost a 6-1 decision as Gardner rallied to tie the match.

The Wildcats turned the tide in their next three matches as Austin Moore (170) and Hupp recorded back-to-back pins for a 36-24 lead, before Raetzel clinched the match with his win by

decision.

“That series of wins was pretty nice to see,” Bovaird said. “Austin Moore has really stepped up this season. He went from a pretty good freshman last year to being a confident, solid force this year. Ben Hupp and Austin Raetzel are also really embracing the confidence of being a year older this season. All three of them have been very dedicated in the weight room, and that physicality has translated great onto the wrestling mat.

“All three of them did some wrestling over the summer, too, and they’re very coachable kids. Hupp and Moore gave us 12 points, but Raetzel’s win was a big swing. His opponent was pretty strong, and Austin nearly got the pin in the first period. The good thing was that he held on to the lead and wrestled smart the rest of the match to pull out the win.”

At 285 pounds, Koechner, the No. 2 ranked heavyweight in Class 4A ended the dual on a solid note with a pin in the first period.

Louisburg has had its challenges so far this season, but so far the biggest opponent for the Wildcats has been Mother Nature. Due to a forecast for an ice storm, the Wildcats’ tournament in Topeka on Saturday was cancelled, which was the second cancellation this season.

Before the holiday break, inclement weather forced the Wildcats to stay home due to the cancellation of the Randy Starcher Invitational in Tonganoxie.

“The cancellations have been pretty disappointing for us,” Bovaird said. “I think we could have brought home some team hardware from both Tonganoxie and Topeka, and our varsity guys could have each gotten 7-10 more matches under their belts. I also had some JV kids lined up to compete unattached at those meets, so they lost out on some invaluable varsity mat time.



“Ultimately, though, the threat of ice is nothing to scoff at. Snow is one thing, but ice is another. Totally unpredictable, and the schools played it safe. We’re working to set up at least one make-up competition in early February to try to recoup some matches. I’ve got three or four kids who are sitting right below .500 with their records right now, and I was hoping those tournaments would have given them a good swing to get above .500. I’d like to have our guys with at least 30 matches going into regionals.”

Louisburg returns to action Friday when it travels to Parsons for a dual.