

Wildcats hope to end state medal drought



Louisburg senior Anders Vance is one of five state qualifiers for the Wildcat wrestling team. The five Wildcats will begin their quest for a state medal tomorrow morning at the Salina Bicentennial Center.

It has been four years since anyone from the Louisburg wrestling team has returned from the state tournament with a medal.

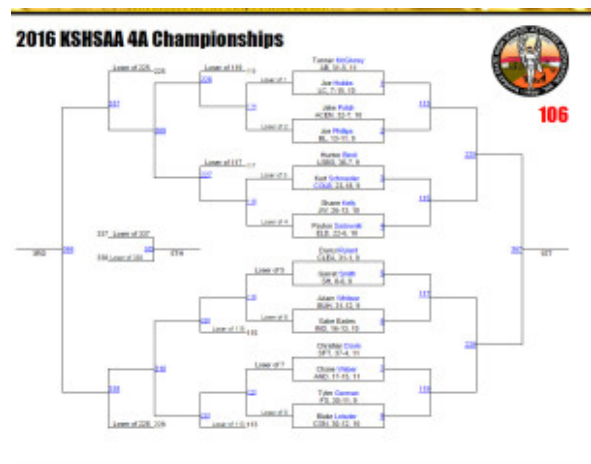
The Wildcats are not only hoping to break that skid this weekend at the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in Salina, but they are betting on bringing home more than just one. It would be the first state medal since Austin Hood's state championship in 2012.

"Several of our weight classes could work out pretty well for us," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "There has been a feeling of excitement in the practice room. It's not over-confidence or cockiness; it's excitement about what we could accomplish. KSHSAA (Kansas State High School Activities Association) does a random assignment when it comes to building the state brackets, and there's a formula that they apply once all the regional results are in. In several of our brackets, I really like how they panned out. I don't want to

jinx us, but it's going to be an exciting weekend."

There is a lot of excitement among the five Wildcat state qualifiers, which includes junior Mason Koechner (39-5), who is currently ranked No. 2 in Class 4A at 220 pounds.

Louisburg also has plenty of chances for a medal. Freshman Hunter Bindi (38-7) won the 106-pound regional last week in Columbus and has emerged as a favorite to stand on the medal podium in his first year at the high school level.



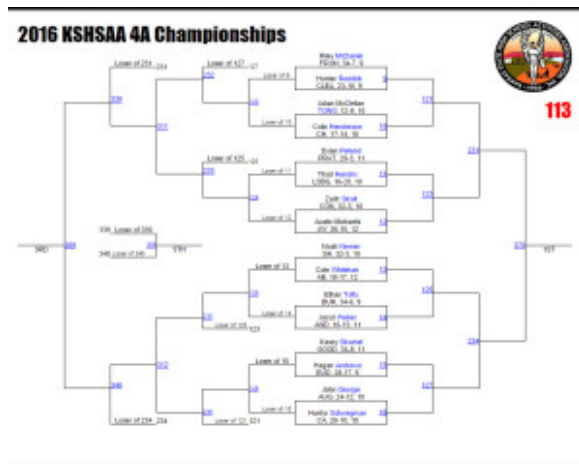
Hunter Bindi – 106 pound bracket

Junior Nathan Keegan (27-10) finished runner-up at the regional tournament at 120 pounds, while senior Anders Vance (43-8) came in third at 285 after recording three pins. Sophomore Thad Hendrix (16-20) will make his first appearance at state at 113 pounds.

Bovaird, along with assistant coaches Robert Ebenstein and Andy Wright, and a few varsity wrestlers, have been working with the five state qualifiers all week trying to prepare them for what lies ahead.

"Our guys are pretty excited for this weekend," Bovaird said. "We've got the potential to bring home some medals. You never know what's going to happen at state, but I've got a good

feeling about this group. Coach Ebenstein, Coach Wright, and I have been floating around the room quite a bit working specifically with our qualifiers on strategies and game plans to win matches.

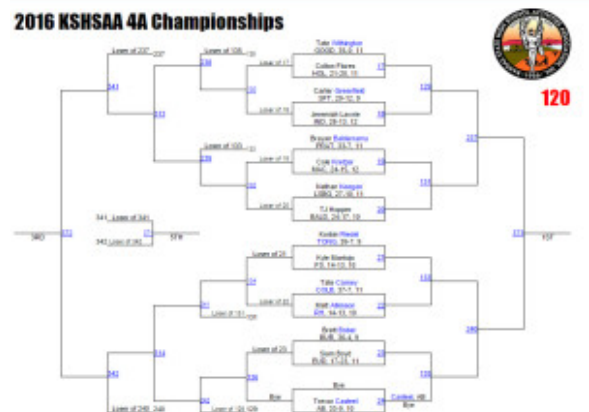


Thad Hendrix – 113-pound bracket

“At this point in the year, if you want to win a match at state, you’ve got to score points. We need to remind these kids that they need to focus on doing what they know how to do to score points. Sometimes kids forget the simple things like that; they focus on things beyond their control. Our job as coaches is to remind them of what has worked for them all year and to make sure they know how to get out there on the mat and make it happen.”

Bindi will open the tournament against Colby’s Kurt Schroeder (23-18), and should he advance, he will face off with one of two sophomores in Jefferson West’s Shane Kelly (26-13) or El Dorado’s Payton Sadowski (22-6)

“I am excited about it,” Bindi said. “Winning regional allowed me to get a good seed at state. My goal is to be one of the top two kids in the state, so we will see what happens.”



Nathan Keegan – 120 pound bracket

As for Hendrix, since he placed fourth at regionals, will meet a champion from a different regional in the first round. Hendrix will square off with Pratt junior Dylan Pelland (29-3) to open the tournament.

“I am looking forward to it and showing people what I can do,” Hendrix said. “I know this will be my first time going, but I am going to do my best and see what happens.”



Mason Koechner – 220 pound bracket

Keegan is making his second consecutive trip to the state tournament, along with Koechner and Vance. Keegan, who will face a familiar foe in Baldwin sophomore T.J. Hopper (24-17) in the first round, is ready for a quest at a state medal.

Keegan would face either Pratt's Brayan Balderramma (33-7) or McPherson's Cole Kretzer (24-15) in the quarterfinals if he advanced.

"I think going to state last year will help me this time around because I know what to expect a little more," Keegan said. "I am excited about it and hopefully I can go down there and get a medal."

Koechner has served as the Wildcats' top-ranked wrestler most of the season as he has climbed the ranking at 220 pounds slowly throughout the season. He will get his state tournament going against Hays' Trey VanPelt (26-18) and would meet El Dorado's Cameron Hunt (32-7) or De Soto's Lawson Marshall (16-17) in the quarterfinals if he advances.



Anders Vance – 285 pound bracket

"I think last year I was just happy to go to state for the first time, but this year I am ready to go win some matches," Koechner said. "My goal is to at least get in the top four if not better. I am looking forward to it."

Of the five wrestlers, Vance might face the toughest road to a medal. Vance will meet Towanda Circle's Austin King (24-1) in the first round. King is ranked No. 4 at 285 pounds.

Vance fell to King last year at the state tournament by a 4-0 decision but is ready to show others he is capable of making a run.

“I am looking forward to the chance of beating some people who have beaten me in the past,” Vance said. “There are a lot of good wrestlers there, and it is the state tournament, so there are supposed to be, but I am looking forward to the challenge. It will be fun.”

The action begins at 10 a.m. Friday at the Salina Bicentennial Center and will continue into Saturday.

Wildcats send five to state; Bindi wins title



The Louisburg High School wrestling team qualified five for the state tournament Saturday at Columbus High School. The state qualifiers (from left) are Thad Hendrix, Mason Koechner, Nathan Keegan, Hunter Bindi and Anders Vance.

COLUMBUS – “Win or go home” was the prevalent motto going around the Class 4A regional tournament at Columbus High School.

Louisburg didn’t want to see its season come to an end, so it did a lot of winning instead.

The Wildcats qualified five wrestlers for the state tournament following Saturday’s regional and they also had three place in the top two.

Freshman Hunter Bindi (106 pounds), junior Nathan Keegan (120) and junior Mason Koechner (220) each advanced to the regional finals match Friday and secured their spots early. Bindi went on to win a regional crown, while Keegan and Koechner each came in runner-up.

Senior Anders Vance (285) and sophomore Thad Hendrix (113) each had to do some work in the back side of their brackets, but finished third and fourth, respectively. All five wrestlers will make the trip to Salina on Friday for the Class 4A state tournament.

In all, the Wildcats had six wrestlers reach the ‘blood round,’ which determines who will make the state tournament in the back side of the bracket. Louisburg finished sixth in the team standings with 111.5 points.

“We were hoping for more (qualifiers), but we had some tough match-ups in the blood round,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “It’s definitely a good step for us. I loved the feeling Friday night of having three guys in the finals, and I really liked our chances on the backside with several guys. We finished sixth as a team this year with 111.5 points, but we were fourth last year with 106 points. That’s more points being scored this year, which definitely says something about our growth.

“I’m really proud that we were only seven points out of third

place. We had lots of first-round byes, which would have been possible team points we could have scored. If a couple things had been different, brackets drawn differently, it could have made the difference. Regardless, we did pretty well with an outstanding group of guys, and I'm nothing but proud of how we wrestled this weekend."



Hunter Bindi won the 106-pound regional title following a 14-11 decision Saturday in Columbus.

It marks the second year in a row for Vance, Koechner and Keegan to earn a trip to state, while Bindi and Hendrix will go for the first time. The Wildcats also matched the number of state qualifiers from a year ago.

"We did pretty good," Vance said. "We got six guys to the blood round, which is the most we have gotten in a long time. I am excited about who we were able to qualify, but I wish we

could have gotten more. Guys wrestled as hard as they could, but that doesn't always mean that it works out like you hope it does."

The youngest Wildcat wrestler provided the team with the most success as Bindi worked his way through the 106-pound bracket to win a regional title as a freshman.

Bindi (38-7) pinned Labette County's Joe Hobbs in 47 seconds in the quarterfinals and then defeated Independence's Gabe Eades by a 14-0 major decision in the semifinals. He faced off with Fort Scott's Tyler Gorman in the finals and outlasted Gorman for a high-scoring 14-11 decision.

"It is exciting," Bindi said of the regional title. "I thought I wrestled pretty sloppy and my feet were glued to the mat at times. He probably shouldn't have taken me down that many times, but it turned out ok. Now I can get a good seed at state."

Koechner's finals match at 220 pounds turned out to be against a familiar opponent. The Louisburg junior, who is ranked No. 2 in the state, faced No. 3 Jake Miller from Paola and the two had split the two previous meetings.



Louisburg junior Mason Koechner battles Paola's Jake Miller during the 220-pound regional finals match Saturday. Koechner finished second overall.

Miller got the best of Koechner (39-5) this time around as he lost a 3-0 decision. It was a scoreless match into the third period until Miller got a point for an escape. With time ticking away, Koechner shot in on Miller, but Miller got a takedown in the final seconds.

"We are both state-ranked opponents and earlier in the year he got me by a couple points, then at league I got it together and I pinned him," Koechner said. "It was really frustrating for me to have him beat me by a couple points again, when I know I am capable of winning the match. He is a tough opponent and I just didn't wrestle my best."

It was a unique regional for Koechner, who didn't have to wrestle a match until the semifinals. It was there he met Chanute's Gage Clark, who is also ranked No. 5 in the state.

In his first match of the tournament, Koechner went to overtime with Clark, but earned the pin in the extra period.

“Mason’s bracket got a little messed up when a non-seeded kid scratched before the start of the tournament,” Bovaird said. “According to KSHSAA rules, if a non-seeded wrestler scratches, they don’t redraw the bracket. Mason ended up getting two byes into the semifinals while his opponent had two matches to get warmed up for that match. It was a tough kid, and it was also the same kid that Mason beat last year in the blood round to go to state, so there was more at stake than just the match itself.”

Like Koechner, Keegan also had an exciting semifinal match to earn a spot in the finals.



Junior Nathan Keegan made his way to the regional title match at 120 pounds Saturday and finished runner-up to qualify for

state.

After pinning Chanute's Brent See in the quarterfinals, Keegan (27-10) went up against Independence's Jeremiah Lawrie and literally held on for a 1-0 decision. After Keegan earned an escape earlier in the match, he held Lawrie to the mat and rode him out for the final seconds.

"I saw there was eight seconds left on the clock and I did not want to go into overtime," Keegan said. "So I just ran and held him down as long as I could."

Keegan met Burlington's Brett Bober in the finals match at 120 pounds, but came up short in a 6-2 decision.

"Nathan has been more focused these last two weeks than I've ever seen him," Bovaird said. "I am really excited for what he can do at state this week. That semifinal win showed he can ride a kid out, and it showed that he's limber and agile on his feet. Those skills are key for winning matches at state and hopefully winning a state medal."

As for Vance (43-8), he faced a tough bracket of his own as he had two state ranked opponents in his path to win another regional title. After winning a year ago, Vance came up short in his semifinals match against Independence's Seth Stroble, who is ranked No. 4 in the state.



Senior Anders Vance takes down his opponent during his 'blood round' match Saturday in Columbus. Vance finished third overall at 285 pounds.

Stroble caught Vance with a tight overhook on his elbow and eventually pinned Vance in the second period.

"He caught me off-guard with a different move and I wasn't expecting it," Vance said. "I thought if that wouldn't have happened then the match would have gone a little differently."

Other than that loss, Vance had a strong tournament. The Lousiburg senior picked up three wins, all by pin.

In his blood round match, Vance pinned Burlington's T.J. Lang in 51 seconds and then pinned Iola's Colton Toney in 29 seconds in the third-place match.

"He bounced back with a vengeance with those two pins," Bovaird said.

As for Hendrix (16-20), he spent all night Friday and Saturday morning thinking about his match in the blood round. After his loss Friday, he went right to the blood round after receiving a bye.

It didn't seem to affect him too much as he pinned Fort Scott's Daevin Caldwell in 38 seconds to qualify for state.



Sophomore Thad Hendrix pins Fort Scott's Daevin Caldwell on Saturday in Columbus. With the win, Hendrix earned a bid to state.

"This is great," Hendrix said. "I was really, really nervous (Friday) night and (Saturday) morning because I knew that match would be an important one for me. I was glad I was able to go out and show everyone what I could do."

Hendrix was later pinned in his third place match, but Bovaird liked what he saw out of his sophomore.

"Thad qualifying for state was awesome," Bovaird said. "He was

in the right place at the right time with his weight class. Consider the fact that Thad naturally weighs less than Hunter Bindi, and he's giving up tons of weight every match. He's competing with stronger kids and when it came down to it, he had to win one key match against the No. 4 seed. Thad was incredibly focused and went after it. He wanted that win badly, and he definitely gave it everything he's got."

As much as the joy as the Wildcats had following the tournament, they also knew they had to say goodbye to some of their wrestlers as their season came to end – including two seniors.

Chris Turner and Zach Jones wrestled their final matches for Louisburg. Turner, who wrestles at 138 pounds, was pinned in the third round of consolation and Jones lost a 7-0 decision in the blood round.

"The blood round is always hard for me as a coach," Bovaird said. "It's one of my favorite rounds of wrestling all year, but it also hurts the most. This year, I had two seniors see their seasons ended early. Chris got caught on his back in the consolation quarterfinals and with less than a second left in the first period, the ref called the pin. There's nothing you can do about it, but Chris knew it wasn't a pin, and I had a clear view to see that his back was up. It's just one of those times when a referee makes a call that leaves everyone shaking their heads.

"It's tough for a senior to lose his last match, but even more so when it's a kid who's improved so much like Chris has done and when it's a questionable call like that. Zach Jones went 3-2 this weekend. He left it all on the mat, that's for sure. I saw some excitement in his eyes after those wins and I was so proud of him. He just ran into a tough kid and couldn't score the points he needed to score to win."

Freshman Austin Moore (160) won a pair of matches, while

sophomore Kyle Allen (126) and junior Ben Hupp (170) also won a match.

Wildcats win first league title in 19 years



The Louisburg wrestling team gathers around the Frontier League championship trophy following Saturday's league title victory at Spring Hill High School. It was the Wildcats' first league title in 19 years.

SPRING HILL – The last time Louisburg won a Frontier League wrestling title, none of the current Wildcat wrestlers were even born yet.

It has been nearly two decades since the Wildcats were last crowned league champions. Louisburg can't say that anymore.

For the first time in 19 years, Louisburg captured the Frontier League crown with a 6-0 dual record over the two-day tournament that ended Saturday at Spring Hill High School.

"It is awesome. It just shows how much the team has grown and how much better we have gotten," senior Anders Vance said. "It

was great to see how everyone stepped up because every point matters. Not getting pinned is a big deal and trying to get pins is a big deal too.”

It has been a gradual process for the Wildcats, who under head coach Bobby Bovaird, have made strides in the league standings. Bovaird, who is in his fifth year, remembered how tough it was to field a full team, much less contend for a title.



Senior Chris Turner works for a pin during a 138-pound match Saturday in Spring Hill.

“My first year at Louisburg we took seven wrestlers to compete in a dual tournament,” Bovaird said. “Statistically speaking, we were supposed to take last. Our numbers worked out just right against Eudora that we had several double forfeits and we matched up just right with them head-to-head, and we were able to win one dual. We took sixth as a team that year. Last year, we had a chance to take second, but dropped a tough one to Paola. This year was our year to come through on top.”

The Wildcats did come out on top, and it wasn’t even close.

Louisburg breezed through the rest of the league with a full roster. The Wildcats routed Eudora (66-13) and De Soto (69-10)

on the first day and then returned Saturday with victories over Baldwin (56-18), Spring Hill (49-21), Paola (78-6) and Ottawa (39-25).

The Wildcats' six victories was also noteworthy as they now have a 17-3 dual record on the season, which is the most dual wins in program history.

"It is awesome after 19 years to finally get a win here at league," junior Mason Koechner said. "We have been working hard all year and we have really come together this year as a team.



Junior Nathan Keegan finished as a league champion at 120 pounds

"We had guys from every grade level come out here and win matches for us to win this title. There is a lot of good competition here in the Frontier League."

The dominance continued individually as well. Louisburg finished the tournament with four league champions and the Wildcats had a wrestler finish in the top four of every weight class.

Freshman Hunter Bindi (106 pounds), junior Nathan Keegan (120), Koechner (220) and Vance (285) all ended the day as

league champions.

Senior Chris Turner (138), freshman Blue Caplinger (145) and freshman Austin Moore (160) finished as league runner-up. Sophomore Kyle Allen (126), senior Zach Jones (152), senior Dillin Roberts (170) and junior Austin Raetzel (195) took third, while sophomore Thad Hendrix (113), sophomore Tucker Batten (132) and junior Jacob Felder (182) took fourth.



Luisburg High School wrestling team poses with their Frontier League Championship trophy following Saturday's tournament at Spring Hill High

However, the tournament wasn't without some adversity. Before it even started, junior Ben Hupp, who normally wrestles at 170

pounds, was out sick with the flu and Bovaird called on Roberts to fill his spot from the junior varsity roster.

Also, Lyndon Smith was unavailable at 195 pounds due to a prior obligation and Bovaird put Raetzel in to fill his spot. It all turned out OK as both wrestlers provided the team with big wins.

“We wrestled tough,” Bovaird said. “Ben got hit with the flu Friday morning so I called Dillin at the last minute to come weigh in and wrestle up a weight. Lyndon had a prior obligation so Austin stepped up and gave up 13 pounds to fill that gap. Both Roberts and Raetzel were 4-2 and took 3rd in their respective weight classes.



Mason Koechner pins his opponent from Spring Hill on Saturday.

“I’m especially proud of the unity, the teamwork, the enthusiasm, and the confidence our guys wrestled with this weekend, and I’m excited for next weekend. The assistant coaches (Robert Ebenstein and Andy Wright) have been doing a phenomenal job helping plan and run practice, and we’re going to be working more in-depth with individuals to help them peak the right way.”

Vance took a big step forward in the heavyweight class as he

avenged a loss from earlier in the season to Spring Hill's Sam Christy. Vance, who had two quick pins earlier Saturday, faced off with Christy and won a 3-2 decision to win the league crown

Koechner also made up for a loss earlier in the season. The Louisburg junior, who is ranked No. 4 in Class 4A, met Paola's Jake Miller, the No. 3-ranked wrestler.

Koechner lost a 3-2 decision to Miller in the first tournament of the season in December, but responded with a pin of Miller in the second period and followed that up with a 1-0 decision over Ottawa's Brent Hornbuckle in his final match.



Hunter Bindi had two pins during the league tournament, including this one against Spring Hill.

As for Bindi and Keegan, they had a little easier path. Bindi wrestled in two matches and won both by pin. Keegan went 4-0 over the tournament as he picked up three first period pins and a 5-0 decision over Baldwin's Ricky Norval.

"I would have liked to see Hunter and Nathan get more competition, but all-in-all, they wrestled well and scored the points we needed them to score," Bovaird said. "Both of them are sitting in good positions for their regional brackets.

Anders' win over Christy was a nice revenge win, and when he came off the mat he had a surge of confidence because he figured out a key element in his wrestling technique and was able to successfully apply it against a tough opponent.



Louisburg senior Anders Vance picks up Spring Hill's Sam Christy by the leg for a takedown Saturday.

"Mason's win was also a revenge win. He just dominated kids on top this weekend, the Miller match included. Anders' win was a lot about pride and confidence, and it may have significance with regional seeding, but Mason's definitely helps him at regionals with his seeding."

Louisburg will now use this week to prepare for its most important tournament of the season. The Wildcats will travel to Columbus to compete in the regional tournament beginning Friday.

The top four in each weight class will qualify for state and the Wildcats hope they can send even more than their five qualifiers from a year ago.

“It’s a fun time of the year, especially if the kids have the right mindset,” Bovaird said. “With our varsity group, I think that everyone really pulled together in pursuit of the team title. I think that magic is still with us, and we’re ready to peak at regionals and state. Too often, teams hit this point in the season and kids are ready for it to be over. With a surge like the one we got at league, I think we’re ready to make an impact at regionals.”



Hunter Bindi,
106, Champion



Thad Hendrix,
113, 4th



Nathan Keegan,
120, Champion



Kyle Allen, 126,
3rd



Tucker Batten,
132, 4th



Chris Turner,
138, 2nd



Blue Caplinger,
145, second



Zach Jones, 152,
3rd



Austin Moore,
160, second



Dillin Roberts,
170, third



Jacob Felder,
182, fourth



Austin Raetzel,
195, 3rd



Mason Koechner,
220, Champion



Anders Vance,
285, Champion

RESULTS AND NOTES FROM LEAGUE TOURNEY

106 – Hunter Bindi, 6-0, 2 pins, CHAMPION

113 – Thad Hendrix, 3-3, 4th place

120 – Nathan Keegan, 6-0, 3 pins, CHAMPION
126 – Kyle Allen, 4-2, 1 pin, 3rd place
132 – Tucker Batten, 3-3, 2 pins, 4th place
138 – Chris Turner, 5-1, 3 pins, 2nd place
145 – Blue Caplinger, 5-1, 2 pins, 2nd place
152 – Zach Jones, 3-3, 2 pins, 3rd place
160 – Austin Moore, 5-1, 3 pins, 1 tech fall, 2nd place
170 – Dillin Roberts, 4-2, 3 pins, 3rd place
182 – Jacob Felder, 3-3, 4th place
195 – Austin Raetzel, 4-2, 2 pins, 3rd place
220 – Mason Koechner, 6-0, 4 pins, CHAMPION
285 – Anders Vance, 6-0, 2 pins, CHAMPION

- Anders Vance moves into 7th on the all-time career wins with 88 wins
- Mason Koechner moves into 11th on all-time career wins with 84 wins
- Vance has 40 season wins, which ties Austin Hood with the most season wins
- Koechner has 32 pins this season, 1 shy of the team record he set last season
- Hunter Bindi joins the 30-win club with a record of 35-7 heading into regionals
- 10 Wildcats currently have winning records: Bindi, Nathan Keegan, Blue Caplinger, Austin Moore, Dillin Roberts, Jacob Felder, Austin Moore, Lyndon Smith, Koechner, and Vance

Wildcat wrestlers rally for

win in front of alumni



Louisburg junior Lyndon Smith works for a pin as he puts his opponent on his back during the 195-pound match Wednesday against Lawrence High School. The Wildcats won the dual 42-35 and did so in front of several alumni.

As wrestlers from Wildcat past looked on during Wednesday's dual against Lawrence, they were treated to a good showing from the current Louisburg wrestling team.

After approximately 25 LHS wrestling alumni were honored halfway through the varsity dual, the current Wildcats wanted to make sure to leave a lasting memory for those in attendance. Louisburg did that as it rallied from 14 points down to defeat Lawrence 42-35 in its final home appearance of the season.

The Wildcats got a strong performance from their upper weights as they won four of the last five matches to get the win. The victory also boosts Louisburg's dual record to 11-3 on the season.

"I'm pretty happy with that," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "I love how the team is starting to figure things out when it comes to dual competitions. I'm also especially happy with the fact that we were able to put together a solid performance in front of the alumni. I wanted our team to be

able to show them that Louisburg wrestling is as tough as ever.”

Louisburg certainly did that as it got some crucial pins when it needed it the most. Lawrence had two open weights to start the dual, which gave Louisburg an early 12-point lead, but the Lions went on to win five consecutive matches and took a 26-12 advantage.

Wildcat senior Zach Jones stopped the bleeding at 152 pounds as he won by pin to cut the deficit to eight points. Lawrence won by decision at 160 pounds to push the lead back to 11, but the Wildcats responded in a big way.

At 170 pounds, junior Ben Hupp rallied to win by pin in the second period and cut the Lawrence lead to five. They were six big points for Louisburg as Lawrence would win by pin at 182 pounds and it allowed the Wildcats to remain close going into the final three matches.

Junior Lyndon Smith came through for Louisburg as he won by pin at 195 pounds and again cut the Lion lead to five.

“Those were two key wins for us,” Bovaird said of Hupp and Smith. “Ben was a little thrown off by the fact that his opponent was visually impaired. He’d never wrestled a kid with visual impairment before, so the rule requiring him to make contact at all times made him have to adjust his style at the last minute.

“Lyndon did great. He didn’t let the pressure get to him and he just went out and did his thing.”

Fellow junior Mason Koechner gave the Wildcats the lead for good as he won by pin at 220 points, and since Lawrence was open at the heavyweight spot, Koechner sealed the win for Louisburg.

It was perfect ending for the Wildcats as they saw several

familiar faces return to watch the program. Following the 145-pound match, Bovaird had the alumni come onto the mat to be recognized in front of the home crowd, including the program's first head coach – Don Meek.



The LHS wrestling program's first head coach, Don Meek, steps forward to be recognized in front of the crowd Wednesday at LHS.



Alumni (from left) are Dan Cook, Duane Scott, Dereck Kerr, Sonny Ewalt Sr., Jamie Watrous



From left: Tom Dozier, Tom York, Don Meek, Matthew Golladay



From left; Greg Hink, Mike Hink, Rick Elliott, Kerry Anglin, Kaelee Allen, Chris Kelly



From left: Jimmy Allen, John Martin, Bruce Caldwell, Fletch Kelly, Brenton Wrigley, Shea Cox

Those who returned for the event were Don Meek, coach and founder; Dee Graham, coach; Rodney Kasitz, coach; Sonny Ewalt

Sr., wrestler and coach, 1971; Duane Scott, wrestler, 1972; Pat York, cheerleader, 1972; Tom York, wrestler and coach, 1973; Fletch Kelly, wrestler, 1975; Dan Cook, wrestler, 1977; Chris Kelly, state qualifier, 1979; Rick Elliott, wrestler, 1982; Tom Dozier, state finalist, 1985; Jimmy Allen, wrestler, 1990; Bruce Caldwell, wrestler, 1990; Mike Hink, 3-time state qualifier, 1990; John Martin, wrestler, 1990; Matt Golladay, wrestler, 1993; Kerry Anglin, wrestler, 1994; Jamie Watrous, manager, 1997; Shawn Crossley, 3-time state qualifier, 1998; Dereck Kerr, 4-time state qualifier, 2000; Brock Elliott, wrestler, 2010; Kaelee Allen, wrestler, 2014; Shea Cox, wrestler, 2015 and Brenton Wrigley, state qualifier, 2015.

Bovaird was happy with the turnout and he is hoping for even bigger showings in the future.

“I didn’t get confirmation about the Lawrence dual until the middle of January, and that only gave me three weeks to get the word out,” Bovaird said. “Almost all the alumni who made it out are from the Louisburg area, but I’ve heard from alumni all over and they wished they could make it. Mark Eggleston lives in Ireland, Terry Scott lives in Nebraska, and David Dysart lives in Arizona, and those are just three of the guys I heard from.

“We had lots of wrestlers, four former coaches, managers and cheerleaders who were so excited to be there. Plus, lots of them brought their families, many of whom were LHS alumni. Next year, we know for sure that we have two home duals, so the plan is to get this organized better and get it on the calendar so we can draw in some folks from further away. I’d like to keep this a tradition for many years to come. This is the 47th year of LHS wrestling, and I’d like to build up to a big event for the 50th anniversary in a few years.”

Although he is excited for what future events can hold, Bovaird is still focused on this season as the postseason nears. It begins this Friday for the Frontier League Dual

Tournament at Spring Hill High School.

The two-day tournament begins at 4 p.m. on Friday and will start up again at 10 a.m. on Saturday.

Koechner leads Wildcats at Baldwin



Louisburg junior Mason Koechner locks his opponent up as he tries to get some back points, and eventually a pin, Saturday during the Baldwin Invitational. Koechner won the 220-pound weight class and was also the recipient of the Gorrarian Award.

BALDWIN CITY – Ever since the Louisburg wrestling team entered the Baldwin Invitational Tournament, the Wildcats have been slowly working their way up the team standings.

On Saturday, Louisburg had its highest finish ever at what is a competitive 16-team tournament. The Wildcats finished eighth overall with 126.5 points, but they were just a few points away from cracking the top five.

In all, the Wildcats had three wrestlers finish in the top

three and one – Mason Koechner – which finished at the top of his weight class. Freshman Hunter Bindi came in second and senior Anders Vance was third.

“We’ve consistently improved in our performance at this meet,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “This is our highest finish since we added the Baldwin Invitational to our schedule. Prairie View and Burlington were just ahead of us, tied for sixth with 127.5 points. Smoky Valley was 5th with 130.5 points. Holton, the 2013 and 2014 state champions, was ninth with 104 points.

“We had a major point scorer, Nathan Keegan, sitting out this tournament, too. Although we theoretically could have done even better, I’m still pretty proud of how well we competed.”

That included Koechner, who pinned his way to the top spot at 220 pounds. The Louisburg junior was 4-0 on the day with four pins, including one of Santa Fe Trail’s Trent Moore in the third period of the championship match. Koechner is currently ranked No. 3 at 220 pounds in Class 4A.



Freshman Hunter Bindi works for a pin Saturday during the Baldwin Invitational.

For his performance, Koechner (31-4) was also presented with the Gorrarian Award, which is given to the wrestler with the

most pins in the least amount of time. This was the second year in a row a Louisburg wrestler has earned the honor, with Vance winning it a year ago.

“Mason had a pretty solid tournament,” Bovaird said. “He had four pins with a total mat time of just over 14 minutes. He is becoming pretty dominant this season, especially when he is on top.”

The Wildcats almost had another champion as Bindi (29-7) nearly pulled off the upset of the tournament. Bindi, who wrestles at 106 pounds, had two quick first period pins that set up a match with Santa Fe Trail junior Christian Davis in the championship round.

Davis, who is the No. 1 ranked wrestler in Class 4A, got all he wanted from the Louisburg freshman. Bindi reversed Davis to his back and got two back points to cut the lead to one, and nearly got a third back point to tie the match, but Davis got off his back before the five-count.

“Hunter’s finals match was definitely an exciting one,” Bovaird said. “The kid he wrestled is tough and experienced. You don’t find many juniors at the 106 pound weight class. Hunter held his own with him. That match could have gone our way on another day. Hunter is a competitor and I think he is going to surprise some people this month at regionals and state.”

Vance also competed in a couple tight matches himself. The Louisburg heavyweight went 4-1 on the day to finish third and nearly made it to the finals match.

Vance, who won his first two matches, went up against Goodland’s Luis Ledesma in the semifinals and eventually went to overtime before Ledesma won a 4-1 decision.

The Louisburg senior didn’t get much time to rest as he went up against Santa Fe Trail’s Gabe Forrest in the consolation

round. Vance had to go to extra periods again, but he outlasted Forrest in two overtimes for a 4-3 decision.

For third place, Vance defeated Wamego's Tylar Patrick for a 4-0 decision to improve his record to 33-7 on the season.

"I think it was great that Anders got so much mat time this weekend," Bovaird said. "He only had one pin, which normally might concern me since he's been so dominant. However, at the state level, heavyweight matches often go the distance and into overtime. Anders needs to be pushed at this point in the season so that he's used to these tight matches. We want him to be calm and clear-headed going into overtime and tie-breakers. In those matches, the wrestler with the coolest head seems to prevail.

"Even though Anders took a tough loss in the semis, he bounced back really well. A weekend like this one has done a lot to prepare him mentally for the big matches coming up soon."



Sophomore Tucker Batten flattens his opponent as he waits for a pin to be called Saturday in Baldwin.

Several other Wildcats got plenty of mat time as well.

Junior Lyndon Smith (195) finished sixth overall, while

sophomore Kyle Allen (120) and senior Bradley Trageser (285) each came in seventh. Allen had three wins on the day, with all three coming by major decision. Trageser also had three wins, including two by pin.

Sophomore Thad Hendrix (113), freshman Blue Caplinger (145) and junior Ben Hupp (170) finished eighth.

Louisburg returns to the mat Wednesday for its final home dual of the season. The Wildcats host Lawrence High School for a 6:30 p.m. start.

It will also be a homecoming of sorts as the program will recognize Louisburg wrestling alumni during the varsity dual along with an alumni social at 5:30 p.m.

Senior night special: Wildcats tame Cyclones



Louisburg senior Zach Jones locks arms with an opponent in the 152-pound match during Thursday's senior night dual against Ottawa. Jones recorded a 9-0 major decision and the Wildcats defeated Ottawa 41-33.

Louisburg couldn't have asked for a better ending on senior night as the Wildcat wrestling team took down Ottawa for a 41-33 dual win Thursday at Louisburg High School.

The way the Wildcats did it made it all the more special.

Louisburg got big victories from seniors and underclassmen alike in a dual that wasn't decided until the final match. It was the culmination of a special evening that honored eight seniors and managers.

Anders Vance, Dillin Roberts, Chris Turner, Bradley Trageser, Zach Jones and Jimmy Dolan, along with managers Paige Shaffer and Alyssa Ellifrits, were honored before the start of the varsity dual with their parents.

"This is a great senior class to work with," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "I've had a chance to coach them all four years and I'm so proud of how they've grown. These guys have been a major part of the program foundation we've all been working so hard to build. They've committed time in the off-season, they've been dependable leaders during the season, and they've made huge contributions to our season's success already."



Louisburg seniors that were recognized Thursday are (from left) manager Paige Shaffer, Chris Turner, Bradley Trageser, Dillin

Roberts, Jimmy Dolan, Zach Jones, Anders Vance and manager Alyssa Ellifrits.

That success continued Thursday as the Wildcats improved their dual record to 10-3 on the season and they did it with contributions from up and down their lineup.

Ottawa was open at 106 pounds, so Louisburg freshman Hunter Bindi moved up to 113 pounds and scored a 12-1 major decision to give the Wildcats a few extra points and an early 10-0 lead.

After an open spot by each team, and a Cyclone pin at 126 pounds, Louisburg held a slim 16-12 advantage going into Turner's match at 138 pounds. The Wildcat senior provided a lot of excitement for the fans he was in a back-and-forth match with Ottawa's Dalton Welsh.

Turner found himself on his back many times during the match, only to put Welsh on his back on several occasions. The scoring was so fast and furious that the official had to stop the match to sort out all the scoring.

In the end, Turner lost a 15-13 decision, but it was a key point in the dual for Turner not to let Welsh get the Cyclones more points with a pin.

"Chris lost a wild high-scoring decision, and the thing about that match is that he could have thrown in the towel and let himself get pinned several times," Bovaird said. "He kept fighting the whole time."

Next up, a pair of freshmen and a senior gave the Wildcats some breathing room.

Louisburg freshman Blue Caplinger won an 8-6 decision over Driestin Aho at 145 pounds, while Jones got the extra takedown at 152 points to score a 9-0 major decision. Freshman Austin

Moore then responded with a 16 second pin of Tucker Mace at 160 to give Louisburg a 29-15 lead.

Ottawa made a comeback as they recorded three straight pins over Ben Hupp (170), Jacob Felder (182) and Lyndon Smith (195) to give it a 33-29 advantage. However, the Wildcats had the strength of their lineup waiting in the wings.



Freshman Hunter Bindi puts an Ottawa opponent on his back during the 113-pound match Thursday.

Junior Mason Koechner, who is currently ranked No. 3 in Class 4A at 220 pounds, reversed Ottawa's Brent Hornbuckle and put him on his back for a second period pin to give Louisburg a 35-33 advantage.

Ironically, it was a senior that sealed the win for the Wildcats.

Vance, the team's heavyweight, made quick work of Ottawa's Chander Adamson for the 23 second pin and dual victory.

"The guys wrestled pretty well last night," Bovaird said. "There were a couple of matches I wasn't feeling too great about, but looking back, I saw lots of positives from them.

"Ben not only got the first takedown on his opponent – a pretty tough kid – he also locked up a cradle and put him on

his back. The last time Ben wrestled that kid, he'd been dominated and lost a major decision. Hunter bumped up to get us more team points at 113, Blue held on for a tough decision at 145, and Zach went the extra mile at 152 to get a major decision instead of just a regular decision. We also got solid pins from Austin, Mason and Anders. It was a great team effort by all the guys."

Louisburg also scored a 24-21 victory in the junior varsity competition.

Tanner Belcher recorded a pin at 120 pounds to get Louisburg off to a good start and Jaylen Boileau won a 7-0 decision at 145 pounds. Brandon Cooper (152) and Garrett Caldwell (182) picked up pins while senior Dillin Roberts (170) won a 10-5 decision.

The Wildcats don't have much of a break as they travel to the Baldwin Invitational on Saturday, but then return to action next week for their final home appearance.

Louisburg will host Lawrence High at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday. Prior to the dual, the team will recognize Louisburg wrestling alumni for the team' wrestling homecoming event.

Wildcats wrestle tough at Parsons Duals



PARSONS – It was Friday night and the Louisburg wrestling team found itself in a different situation than most weeks.

Instead of competing in a usual Saturday tournament setting, the Wildcats traveled to Parsons to participate in a tournament that saw them compete in five duals in one night. It made for an exhausting ride home, but it was well worth it.

Louisburg finished second overall at the Parsons Duals as they took a 4-0 record into the championship match against Lebanon, Mo., before eventually falling 42-29.

This was the third consecutive season for the Wildcats to compete at Parsons and Louisburg head coach Bobby Bovaird could tell a big change out of his group.

“Ultimately, we had a great night of wrestling at Parsons,” Bovaird said. “We gave Lebanon a much better dual this year than in the past, winning 6 of 14 matches. Last year, the score was 63-15 and we only won three matches. We lost by points instead of pins. It shows we’re stepping up and being more competitive than we’ve done in the past.”

The Wildcats asserted themselves early as they defeated the Lebanon junior varsity to open the dual tournament with a 43-27 victory. Louisburg went on to roll Labette County (74-3) and Parsons (56-15) before rallying for a big victory (37-29) over Wichita West.

Louisburg had four wrestlers go undefeated on the evening. Freshman Hunter Bindi (106), senior Zach Jones (152), junior Lyndon Smith (195) and junior Mason Koechner (220) were all perfect.

Bindi recorded five wins with two pins and a major decision. Smith and Koechner each had five wins as well with four and three pins, respectively. Jones was a 3-0 with a pin and a major decision.

Junior Nathan Keegan (120), junior Jacob Felder (182) and senior Anders Vance (285) each finished with a 4-1 record to lead the Wildcats. Keegan had four pins, Vance had a pair of pins and Felder had a technical fall and a major decision.

“The last two years, we’ve gone up against some teams that had multiple open weight classes, so a lot of our wins had been forfeits,” Bovaird said. “This year, every team we faced – with the exception of Parsons – had nearly full line-ups. That means our victories were earned.

“Lyndon, Hunter, and Mason each had a forfeit, but the rest were legit matches. It’s a huge confidence booster for them. Zach had a pretty good day, splitting time with Connor Green at 152, and Jacob got in some great mat time. This point in the season, we just want a lot of matches for the boys.”

As for Vance, it marked the third week in a row he had to go up against Parsons’ Keenan Dodd, who is ranked No. 2 in Class 4A. The first two times Vance and Dodd squared off, he was able to pin Vance, but this time the Louisburg senior was a tougher out as he lost a 5-3 decision.

“It’s tough to beat a kid 2-3 times in a season,” Bovaird said. “We’ll see the Parsons kid again. A major lesson Anders learned is that the third period is crucial in a match against a kid like that. We saw some weaknesses and I think come regionals, Anders will be ready to get the win against him.”

Maybe the most competitive match of the night came against Wichita West as Louisburg found itself down 24-9 early in the dual before the Wildcats starting chipping away. Junior Conner Green won by decision at 152 pounds and Wichita West was open at 160 pounds to make it just a 24-18 deficit for Louisburg.

Wichita West picked up a pin at 170 pounds to extend its lead to 12, but Felder won by major decision at 182 pounds and Smith got a big pin at 195 pounds to make it just a two-point match. Koechner won a tough 3-1 decision at 220 pounds to give the Wildcats a 31-30 lead.

The match would come down to Vance and Wichita West heavyweight Zane McPherson and Vance pulled out the victory for his team. Vance won by pin in a high-intensity match that eventually cost Wichita West a team point for unsportsmanlike conduct.

“In a dual like the Wichita West one, it came down to the heavyweight match, but everyone had a hand in getting us the dual win,” Bovaird said. “Nathan Keegan and Blue Caplinger had key matches. Wichita West is full of tough kids who know how to pin. I told the guys that if we wanted to win that dual, we had to keep the scores close and stay off our backs. Those two wrestled very tough against good opponents.

“Bindi, Jones and Koechner won clutch matches, too. Throughout the dual, we won some key bonus points – Felder got a major decision instead of a regular decision, and we picked up pins from Kyle Allen, Smith and Vance. It was a competitive dual, and I was pretty proud of the guys for how they did. They carried themselves like winners and young men, and they didn’t lose their heads and do anything to cost us valuable team points.”

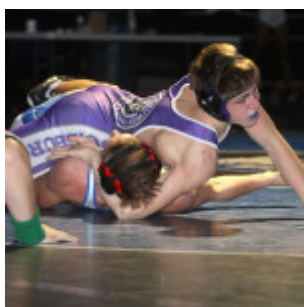
Against Lebanon in the final dual, Bindi got Louisburg off to a good start with a 12-3 major decision and Keegan followed with a first period pin to put Louisburg up 10-4. However, Lebanon rattled off four wins in a row to take a 24-10 lead.

Jones responded to win by decision at 152 pounds, but Lebanon recorded three straight pins to go up 42-13 and all but seal the win. Following the match, the Wildcats now have a 9-3 dual record on the season.

Louisburg will hit the mats two times this week as it hosts Ottawa for a dual Thursday, which is the Wildcats' senior night. Matches are set to begin at 5:30 p.m.

The Wildcats will travel to the Baldwin Invitational on Saturday as they get back into tournament action. Matches are set to begin at 9 a.m.

Wildcats win first team title in six years



Louisburg freshman Austin Moore pins an opponent during the Wildcats' dual with Gardner-Edgerton on Wednesday. Moore was one of five individual champions to come out of the Topeka High Invitational on Saturday. In the process, the Wildcats won their first team title in six years.

TOPEKA – For the first time in six years, the Louisburg High School wrestling team returned home as champions.

The Wildcats ventured to the Topeka High Invitational on Saturday and left with their first team title since the 2009-10 season. Louisburg racked up 204.5 points and blew away

the 10-team field.

Topeka High was runner-up with 139 points and Highland Park was third with 112.

“Going to a meet like Topeka allows for so many of our guys to have success,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “This was a huge team effort – bringing home our first team title in six years was phenomenal. I don’t care about the level of the tournament. For these guys, they’ve never experienced that. They’ve never been to the top of the mountain, so having them work together to do that was a major step forward for the program.

“Every Louisburg wrestler scored team points or blocked other teams from scoring. We had three junior varsity wrestlers compete unattached, and one of them placed in the top three. We had four freshmen place in the top four, with two of them winning titles. Three sophomores and six juniors also wrestled. We’re still young, and that bodes very well for the future.”

Along with the team title, five Wildcat individuals also found their way to the top of the medal stands. Freshman Hunter Bindi (106 pounds), sophomore Tucker Batten (132), freshman Austin Moore (160), junior Austin Raetzel (182) and junior Mason Koechner (220) all won their respective weight classes.



Louisburg sophomore Tucker Batten won the 132-pound

bracket Saturday at the Topeka High Invitational.

In all, Louisburg had 14 of its 17 wrestlers place in the top four.

Bindi (20-5), who was close to getting that first place medal a couple different times this season, put together a strong performance as he went 4-0 with a pair of pins. He also earned a technical fall and defeated Topeka High's JP Gallegos in a 4-1 decision to complete his undefeated day.

As for Batten (11-10), he picked the perfect time to not only win his first varsity tournament of the season, he also got his first medal of the year. He defeated Council Grove's Chase Corgill by a 13-3 major decision to open the tournament and then defeated Holton's Lawson Henry by a 5-1 decision to reach the championship match.

In the first-place match, Batten held off Topeka's Conner Champney in a 4-2 decision to finish his best day as a Wildcat.

Moore (15-9) also earned his first varsity medal of the season as he breezed through the 160-pound class with pair of pins to start and then defeated Highland Park's Myles Dean by an 8-4 decision in the title match.

At 182 pounds, Raetzel (12-6) pinned his way to win his first varsity tournament with a 3-0 record on the day, while Koechner (21-4) did the same in the 220-pound bracket.

"I think it's huge for two freshmen and a sophomore to win a varsity championship," Bovaird said. "Bindi has been close in previous tournaments, but this was Moore's first varsity medal and Batten's first medal of this season. For all three, it was a huge morale booster. Hunter has consistently proven himself one of the toughest freshmen 106 pounders in the area. Moore is the type of kid who is going to make some waves later in

the season. Batten has been in a tough weight class all season, and one major thing he needed now was a surge in confidence. The way he wrestled this weekend, I think he got just what he needed.

“Raetzel has had some success already this season, and this was a great boost for him, too. Come regionals, I think he’ll be in a good position. Koechner is getting some good mat time. I don’t see him getting complacent in his matches; instead, I see him trying new things. He’s always working on getting himself into better positions and using better techniques.”

Junior Lyndon Smith also made his way to the championship match at 195 pounds, but was pinned by Gardner-Edgerton’s Tristen Martin. Before then, Smith recorded three pins of his own to improve his record to 7-5 on the season.

Senior heavyweight Anders Vance also advanced to the first-place match with pins of Holton’s Clay Baumgartner and Washington’s Isaiah Vigil. Vance (23-5) was later pinned by Parsons’ Keenan Dodd to finish runner-up.

Sophomore Thad Hendrix (113 pounds), junior Nathan Keegan (120), senior Chris Turner (138), freshman Blue Caplinger (145) and senior Dillin Roberts (160) came in third overall. Freshman Brandon Cooper (152) and junior Conner Green (170) finished fourth.

The tournament was also a big victory for Bovaird, who is a Topeka native.

“It was a proud moment for me because Topeka is my hometown and I had coached there for eight years before coming to Louisburg,” Bovaird said. “The Topeka West and Highland Park coaches were coaching back when I was in high school, and the Topeka High coach is a good friend of mine and a long-time high school rival. He and I battled back and forth on the mat all through high school. There’s still a lot of Topeka wrestling families at that tournament, and I was just really

proud to bring our Louisburg Wildcats there and win the title.”

Louisburg is now about halfway through its season as it will prepare for the Parsons Duals on Friday and then the Baldwin Invitational on Jan. 30. On Jan. 28, the Wildcats host Ottawa for dual, which is also senior night.

“There’s always the risk of the guys becoming complacent, of thinking they can coast once they reach a peak in their season,” Bovaird said. “What they need to learn is that there’s a time to go 100 percent and there’s a time when the body and mind need to recover. There’s a huge difference between recovering and coasting.

“We’ve got a lot of tough tournaments still ahead of us: the Parsons duals, which will give us five tough matches; the Baldwin Invitational, which boasts some of the top 4A schools in the state; and the Frontier League Tournament, which will be 6 matches in two days, and our league is consistently loaded with some of the top individuals in the state.”

LOUISBURG FALLS IN GARDNER DUAL

Louisburg traveled to Gardner-Edgerton High School on Wednesday for a midweek dual with the Blazers, but the Wildcats came up short in a 47-21 loss.

After losing the first two matches, Louisburg junior Nathan Keegan (120 pounds) got the Wildcats on the board as he earned a win by a 4-2 decision. Following two more losses, senior Chris Turner (138) picked up a pin.

Freshman Austin Moore won by pin at 160 to keep the Wildcats close, but Louisburg lost its next five matches. Senior heavyweight Anders Vance ended the dual on a good note for

Louisburg as he recorded a third-period pin.

Koechner, Bindi take second at Wildcat Classic



Louisburg junior Mason Koechner pins his opponent during a 220-pound match Saturday at the Louisburg Wildcat Classic. Koechner finished second at 220 pounds and the Wildcats finished seventh overall at their home tournament.

Mason Koechner was one victory away from winning the championship at 220 pounds at his home tournament.

The only wrestler standing in his way was a familiar opponent.

Koechner squared off with Baldwin's Jake Katzer during the championship match Saturday at the Louisburg Wildcat Classic. Katzer was ranked No. 1 in Class 4A at 220 pounds, but Koechner has wrestled him well several times in the past.

Saturday was no exception and Koechner took Katzer to the final seconds, before falling in a 2-1 decision to finish second overall. Koechner looked to have two points on a takedown late in the first period but was called out of

bounds.

It was a scoreless match into the third period when Katzer got two points on a reversal. Koechner scored a point late on an escape, but couldn't get the takedown he needed.

Koechner (18-4) put together a strong tournament as he was 4-1 on the day with four pins and has since moved up to No. 3 in the Class 4A rankings.

"He competed with that Baldwin kid," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "Seeing him lose 2-1 was tough. The match was definitely winnable, but that's where Mason has grown quite a bit from last year to this year. He's getting into those tight matches, keeping them close, and putting himself in a position where he can win a clinch match.

"Mason is coming along pretty well this season. He's working on improving his repertoire of moves – what he's comfortable hitting in a good match, moves that are effective and work well on good kids."

Koechner's teammate Hunter Bindi also found his way to the finals, but like Koechner, ran up against a top-ranked wrestler. Bindi, a freshman, faced off with Olathe South's Jace Koelzer in the 106 pound championship match and fell 17-1. Koelzer is the No. 1 wrestler in Class 6A.



Freshman Hunter Bindi works

for a pin at 106 pounds during the Wildcat Classic on Saturday. Bindi finished second overall.

Bindi (16-5) still had a big day for Louisburg as he picked up three victories and all three were by pin, including a 12-second pin of Blue Valley West's Josh Goldstein to start the tournament. He also pinned Leavenworth's Spencer Janson in 55 seconds.

With his performance, Bindi is now ranked No. 6 in the latest Class 4A rankings.

"That Olathe kid was an All-American last summer in Fargo," Bovaird said. "We knew it would be a tough match. Hunter has been growing quite a bit. He's figuring out what works at the high school level. Having seen quite a bit of success at the youth level, he's learning to adjust his style. Each week we see areas of improvement. He's getting more serious in the practice room, and it's paying off on the mat."

As the team standings go, Louisburg finished seventh overall with 119 points in the 12-team tournament. Rockhurst, out of Kansas City, Mo., finished first with 197.5 points and Pittsburg was second with 191.

"It's great hosting a meet, especially one that's grown into a pretty competitive tournament," Bovaird said. "We had the No. 1 ranked team in 4A (Baldwin) and the No. 5 team in 5A (Pittsburg), along with lots of ranked wrestlers. Our finals were pretty exciting to watch with some top-level wrestling."

"I love having the chance to showcase our facility and where our wrestling program is at with its development. I wish we would have had a better showing individually, but considering the caliber of wrestling, I'm pretty pleased with our performances."



Freshman Austin Moore works for some back points during the fifth-place match at 160 pounds.

Junior Nathan Keegan also found the medal stand in what was a tough 120-pound bracket that featured two state-ranked wrestlers and two state qualifiers. Despite that Keegan (11-7), a returning state qualifier himself, finished fourth overall with a pair of wins, including a pair of pins to start the tournament.

The Wildcats also had several wrestlers who just missed out on a medal. Senior Anders Vance (285), freshman Austin Moore (160) and Thad Hendrix (113) all came in fifth.

Vance, who currently has a 21-4 record, was in a competitive bracket himself that featured four opponents who were ranked in either Kansas or Missouri. Vance picked up two victories to start the day with a pair of pins, but was pinned himself in the next two rounds by the eventual champion, Vincent Spalitto of Rockhurst, and runner-up Keenan Dodd of Parsons.

Vance won the fifth-place match as he pinned Leavenworth's Jordan Cogdill in 2 minutes and 46 seconds.

"Anders got stuck in a tough bracket, that's for sure," Bovaird said. "It was probably the toughest weight of the tournament. It pinpointed some areas we need to focus on. He'll see the Parsons kid again, and he'll see wrestlers with

styles similar to the Missouri kids, too.

“Nathan’s bracket was also pretty tough. He got after it for the most part. A couple brief lapses in some matches kept him from getting his arm raised.”

Moore, a freshman, got off to a rough start losing his first two matches, but he responded in a big way. The 160-pounder won his last three matches.



Thad Hendrix tries to throw his opponent from Wyandotte on Saturday during the 113-pound match.

Moore (11-9) pinned Pittsburg’s Keyth Waltrip in 2:22 and then followed that up with a 5-2 decision over Leavenworth’s Drew Sachen. In the fifth-place match, Moore found himself in a battle with Tonganoxie’s Cody Knight and escaped with a 6-5 decision.

As for Hendrix, he defeated Wyandotte’s Janvier Irakoze by pin in 3:41 in the fifth-place match. Hendrix (5-7) also defeated Irakoze earlier in the day by a 15-10 decision.

Others wrestling for the Wildcats were Kyle Allen (126 pounds), sixth; Lyndon Smith (195), sixth; Tucker Batten

(132), seventh; Blue Caplinger (145), seventh; Ben Hupp (170), seventh; Bradley Trageser (285), seventh; Chris Turner (138), eighth; Dillin Roberts (160), eighth; Austin Raetzel (182), eighth; Zach Jones (152), ninth; Jacob Felder (182), ninth; Owen Staver (170), 10th; Garrett Caldwell (182), 14th.

Top 10 stories of 2015



Here are the Louisburg Sports Zone Top 10 Stories of the Year. In each brief explanation of the story, there will be a link to the full story of when the event actually happened. Thanks again for a successful 2015 and I am already looking forward to 2016.



Hogan Welch (left) and Wyatt Reece each qualified for state in their respective sports.

10. Welch and Reece qualify for state

LHS students Hogan Welch and Wyatt Reece each put together strong seasons in their respective sports.

In May, Welch qualified for the Class 4A state golf tournament after he shot an 85 at the Osawatomie Golf Course to become one of five individual qualifiers for state. It was the first time Welch had qualified for the state tournament and would shoot a 79 a week later in McPherson to finish 40th overall.

As for Reece, he qualified for the state cross country meet for the first time in his career in October. The Louisburg sophomore came in 13th overall and was also one of five individual qualifiers. A week later Reece traveled to Wamego to compete at the state meet and ran a 18:43 to come in 71st.



Louisburg's Jimmy Dolan (left) and Mya Diacono each suffered major head injuries from an accident just days

apart. The Louisburg community rallied together to help the two families.

9. Accidents bring Louisburg community together

Jimmy Dolan and Mya Diacono live in the same community but were worlds apart from each other.

Jimmy, a junior at Louisburg High School, loves to wrestle, hang out with friends and live the life of a teenager.

It was a far cry from 9-year-old Mya who loves soccer, horses and spending time with her fourth-grade friends at Broadmoor Elementary. In a town of less than 5,000 people, the two had never met.

Two tragic accidents changed all of that.

On Jan. 12, Jimmy lost control of his vehicle while driving to school and suffered a major brain injury. Just 42 days later, Mya was involved in an automobile accident just outside the Louisburg city limits that left her with the same severe brain trauma.

That was when the Louisburg community came together to help the two families cope with a burden no family should have to bear. Since then, both Jimmy and Mya are on the road to recovery thanks to the help of a lot of people.



Louisburg Soccer Club president Karin Olson (second from left), Louisburg High School junior Maddie McDaniel (middle) and fundraising organizer DIana Moore (right) receive the WIN for KC Sprint Teamwork Award on Feb. 13 in Kansas City, Mo.

8. Girls soccer raises funds to start program, wins award

A fundraising committee made a big push to make sure there was a girls soccer program at Louisburg High School.

The committee raised \$39,000 in almost a year's time to fund the program for three years. Thanks to all the hard work, the group was also recognized by the WIN for KC organization. The Lady Cats' soccer season will kickoff in late March.



Louisburg graduates Kody Cook (left) and Garrett Griffin are each winding down their careers with their respective Division I football programs.

7. Griffin, Cook wrap up college careers

Louisburg High School graduates Kody Cook and Garrett Griffin have lived the lives a lot of football fans could only hope for.

Both are wrapping up their Division I collegiate football careers and are doing it with a lot of success. Cook is living his dream with the Kansas State football team as he has made contributions at both the wide receiver and quarterback positions to help the Wildcats to the Liberty Bowl.

Griffin, on the other hand, battled through an injury-plagued senior season to help Air Force reach the Armed Forces Bowl and made several big plays at the tight end spot.



Louisburg quarterback Austin Terry was one of several players responsible for the Wildcats' turnaround this season.

6. Wildcat football has big turnaround

After finishing with just three wins a year ago, the Louisburg High School football team put together a strong season in 2015 as they finished with seven wins.

Those seven victories put the Wildcats within a game of Paola for the Frontier League title and Louisburg also earned a spot in the regional playoffs before falling to Basehor-Linwood in a tight contest.



The Louisburg High School soccer team captured its first regional crown since 2010 after a 2-0 win over Coffeyville.

5. Louisburg soccer wins regional crown

Through much of the regular season, the Louisburg High School soccer team didn't have much to cheer about.

The Wildcats had just four wins during the regular season, but they seemed to find the right chemistry in the postseason. Louisburg rattled off three consecutive wins in the postseason, including a 2-0 victory over Coffeyville-Field Kindley in the regional championship.

It was the Wildcats' first regional title since 2010 and their sixth in the last 10 years.



Anders Vance won a regional title in the 285-pound weight class last February as he was one of five Wildcats to earn state bids.

4. Louisburg wrestling qualifies five for state

The Louisburg wrestling team hadn't been a part of the state tournament since 2012 – that is before last season.

The Wildcats put together a breakout season as they qualified five for the state tournament, while Anders Vance won the regional crown at 285 pounds. Brenton Wrigley (195 pounds), Mason Koechner (220), Nathan Keegan (113) and Ryan Adams (138) all made the trip to Salina for the Class 4A state tourney.



Jeff Lohse (left) and Ben York each stepped away from their head coaching posts in 2015.

3. Long-time coaches resign from post

Jeff Lohse and Ben York had been fixtures in their respective sports for Louisburg High School, but both decided to call it quits this year.

Lohse, who spent the last 17 years as the head coach for the LHS baseball team, stepped down from his spot in May, citing personal reasons. Lohse led the Wildcats to two state tournament appearances.

York, who was the head coach when the boys soccer program started, also cited personal reasons for leaving the Wildcat soccer program after 13 years. York helped the Wildcats to six regional titles in the last 10 years.



Connor McMullen won the state title in the discus back in May and became Louisburg's first track state champion since 2011.

2. McMullen wins state title in discus, Dennis medals in hurdles

Louisburg High School senior Connor McMullen finally got the state title in the discus he had been searching for.

McMullen recorded a throw of 173 feet, 1 inch on his final attempt to win the Class 4A state discus title in Wichita back in May. He would also medal eighth in the javelin with a toss of 164-02.

Fellow senior Sean Dennis also garnered a state medal as he took fourth in the 110-meter hurdles. The boys and girls team combined sent a total of 11 athletes to the state meet.



The Louisburg High School volleyball team finished third overall in 2015 after making it to state for the fifth time in the last six seasons.

1. Lady Cat volleyball takes third at state

The Louisburg High School volleyball team has made a habit of making the trip to Salina in recent years and this season was no exception.

This time, however, the Lady Cats finished with a victory.

After ending their season with a runner-up performance and two fourth-place finishes at state the last three years, Louisburg won its final match of the season in 2015 as it defeated Tonganoxie in the third-place match.

The Lady Cats qualified for the state tournament for the fifth time in the last six years.