

# **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 Alfers (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 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.

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## **Louisburg finishes runner-up at Wildcat Classic**



**Louisburg junior Thad Hendrix won the 106-pound title during the Wildcat Classic on Saturday at Louisburg High School. Hendrix recorded five pins on the day as the Wildcats had eight wrestlers place in the top four.**

It had been almost a month since the Louisburg wrestling team hit the mats for any kind of competition.

Due to a postponement of their final tournament before the

holiday break, the Wildcats have spent the last 3-plus weeks stuck in the practice room – working against each other.

Needless to say Louisburg was happy to see different competition Saturday and it showed. The Wildcats had a chance to compete in the Wildcat Classic – their home tournament – and put on a show in front of their home fans.

The Wildcats finished second in the team standings and had eight wrestlers finish in the top four. Louisburg recorded 186.5 points to get the runner-up trophy and finished just behind champion Tonganoxie, which finished with 205 points.

“I was telling the guys how in the program’s second season in existence, then head coach Don Meek started the Louisburg Invitational,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “It’s a tournament with a strong history, and as far as I can tell, our second place finish was the highest finish we’ve had since 1998 when the team won the tournament. Fifth place is the highest we’ve finished since I got here. I was very proud of the team’s performance Saturday. It’s our third team trophy this season, and we’re just now nearing the halfway point of the season.”

Several Wildcats found their way to the medal stand when it was all said and done, but one stood higher than that rest.

Junior Thad Hendrix responded with a big performance as he won the 106-pound title with a 5-0 record on the day and all five wins were by pin. Hendrix pinned Baldwin’s Benton Flory in just six seconds in the championship match to improve his record to 13-4 on the year.

“I’m stoked for Thad’s successes this season,” Bovaird said. “For two years, he’s had to wrestle against heavier kids – he was a light 106-pounder his freshman year and last year he bumped up to fill our 113 weight class – but now he’s the big man at 106. He’s got confidence and aggression. Even in his finals match, he never let the fact that it was the finals

deter him. He got aggressive and went out there to score a 6-second pin to secure the championship."

Teammates Nathan Keegan (120 pounds) and Mason Koechner (285) also made their way to the championship match, but both suffered their first loss of the season and each took second overall.



**Austin Raetzel finished third at 195 pounds Saturday in Louisburg.**

Koechner, the No. 2 ranked heavyweight in Class 4A, squared off with Pittsburg's Kayne Hutchinson – the No. 1 heavyweight in Class 5A, defending state champion and an all-American. The Louisburg senior took a 3-2 lead early in the match on a reversal, but gave up a pair of takedowns as the match went on.

Earlier in the day, Koechner earned a bye and had three pins to improve his record to 17-1 on the season.

"Mason's only had two matches go into the third period this season," BovaIRD said. "That's difficult for kids because when they finally get to the third period against a tough opponent, they're not used to the feeling of exhaustion that you only feel when you're that far into a match.

"Mason handled his match pretty well. I don't think conditioning was a major problem; he was just up against a very tough opponent. Mason was able to get a reversal on him, despite giving up two takedowns. That's going to be a major focus for Mason this season – being strong on his feet."

Keegan saw his first action of the season Saturday and started off strong with four straight wins, including three pins and a major decision. The returning state qualifier advanced to the championship at 120 pounds, but came up short against Tonganoxie's Aidan McClellan in a 10-2 major decision.

"Nathan looked strong in his first four matches," BovaIRD said. "In his finals match, I thought he was a little on the conservative side. It's like he was wrestling not to lose, instead of wrestling to win. I'd rather our guys take chances and learn from them now so they're more confident as we get closer to the end of the season. Regardless, it's great having him back on the mat. He's a strong wrestler and is poised to have a pretty good senior season."

Louisburg had five other wrestlers that found their way to the medal stand. Junior Tucker Batten (132), sophomore Austin Moore (170), senior Austin Raetzel (195) each finished third, while junior Ryan Adams (138) and senior Ben Hupp (182) each finished fourth.



**Senior Ben Hupp finished fourth overall at 182 pounds at the Wildcat Classic.**

Batten overcame adversity in his third place match as he went up against Baldwin's T.J. Hopper, a returning state qualifier. Just seconds into the match, Batten suffered a broken nose, but he battled through it and he recorded a takedown late in the third period to get the 2-1 decision.

"Tucker showed a lot of guts by finishing the match the way he did," Bovaird said. "I know how painful a broken nose can be, and he was as tough handling it as I've seen any kid be with a broken nose. That late takedown in his third place match against a state qualifier was a huge step for him. It showed that he can win those tight matches and it showed that he's going to be a competitor this season."

Moore also had a big day as he earned a couple pins before falling to eventual champion – and an all-American – in Prairie View's Joey Ewalt. He responded with an 11-6 decision over Blue Valley West's Aaron Davis in the third-place match.

Raetzel recorded a pair of pins to start the day at 195 pounds, but after two losses, pinned Blue Valley West's Logan Caldwell in 55 seconds to take third.

Adams, who started the season at 145 pounds, moved down to the 138-pound weight class and started the tournament with three wins, including two pins and a technical fall. He later lost his third-place match to Leavenworth's Joey Hancock by an 8-4 decision.

Hupp also had a good day as he won three of his first four matches, all by pin, before losing a 14-7 decision to Pittsburg's Christian Hyde in the third-place match.

Tucker showed a lot of guts by finishing the match the way he did. I know how painful a broken nose can be, and he was as tough handling it as I've seen any kid be with a broken nose. That late takedown in his 3rd place match against a state qualifier was a huge step for him. It showed that he can win those tight matches and it showed that he's going to be a competitor this season.



**Sophomore Blue Caplinger records one of his two pins on the day during his 160-pound match.**

Blue Caplinger (160), Garrett Caldwell (182) and Terry Allen (220) each finished fifth overall, while senior Owen Staver (170) was sixth. Dylan Meyer (8<sup>th</sup>) and Alec Maler (11<sup>th</sup>) also wrestled for the Wildcats.

After three straight losses to start the day, Caplinger ended the day strong as he trailed by nine points in his consolation bracket match, but rallied to pin Baldwin's Scott Harman in the third period.

In the fifth-place match, Caplinger also found himself down five points to Blue Valley West's Drew Anderson, but responded with another third-period pin to avenge a loss early in the tournament.

"I ended up giving our weekly 'Wildcat Award' to Blue for his last two wins," Bovaird said. "He had some tough competition this weekend, starting the day 0-3. In his last two matches, he showed a ton of courage and determination by coming back to pin his opponents."

After being without competition for weeks, the Wildcats have a busy few days ahead of them. Louisburg will host senior night at 6 p.m. today for a dual with Gardner-Edgerton.

The Wildcats will follow that up Saturday when they travel to the Topeka Invitational.

"Normally, when we hit the mats in January, it's a rough start to the new year," Bovaird said. "We've been off the mats for a while, guys are heavier, conditioning is low, and we have to learn the hard way that there's a lot of work to do. Saturday, though, I thought the guys were pretty tough. There's still some conditioning we need to do, but for the most part, we didn't lose matches because we ran out of gas. I'm feeling pretty encouraged about that fact."

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## Top 10 stories of 2016



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 2016 and I am already looking forward

to 2017.

## **10. LHS golf qualifies three for the state tournament**



**Hogan Welch (left), Ty Martin (middle) and T.J. Svoboda all earned a spot in the Class 4A state golf tournament in May.**

Three Louisburg High School golfers put together a strong performance in less-than-ideal weather conditions during the Class 4A regional tournament in May.

Hogan Welch, T.J. Svoboda and Ty Martin all three earned qualifying scores to earn a spot in the Class 4A state tournament in the rain at Dub's Dread Golf Course. At the state tournament, Welch led the way as he shot an 84 to finish 34th overall in his second consecutive state tournament.

## **9. Tappan, Conklin win state debate crown**



**Carson Tappan (left) and Curran Conklin (right) pose for a picture with their state championship debate trophy with coach Brian Weilert.**

After 11 rounds and 17 hours of debate over two days, Carson Tappan and Curran Conklin didn't have a lot more left to give.

But all that hard work paid off for the Louisburg High School duo.

During the Class 4A 2-speaker state debate tournament at Independence High School, Tappan and Conklin were awarded their first state championship after finishing with an 11-0 record.

They weren't the only Louisburg team to come home with some hardware.

Sophomores Isabelle Holtzen and Grayson Anderson found

themselves among the final four teams as well. Despite a close split-decision loss in the semifinals, Holtzen and Anderson finished third to win their first state trophy.

## **8. Three Wildcats win regional track titles, qualify 11 events for state**



**Chloe Renner (left), T.J. Dover (middle) and Isabelle Holtzen won regional titles in their respective events in May at the regional meet in Chanute.**

Louisburg High School students Isabelle Holtzen, Chloe Renner and T.J. Dover were among several members of the Wildcat track teams to have big performances at the Class 4A regional meet in May at Chanute High School.

Holtzen won a regional crown in the pole vault, while Renner won the triple jump to lead the Lady Cats as they qualified for six events total. Louisburg sent all three relay teams that consisted of Kaitlyn Gaza, Mikayla Quinn, Megan Lemke, Reilly Alexander, Jordon Leach, Hanna Becker, Lauren Becker, Shaylor Whitham, Liz Hildreth and Holtzen. Sophie McMullen also earned a spot in the discus.

Dover captured a regional crown in the discus as he recorded a personal best throw of more than 150 feet. He was one of five

events to go to the state meet. Teammate Jarod Woodward also qualified in the shot put, while Chris Williams did the same in the 400 dash.

Brandon Cooper, Quinn Rigney, Ben Minster, along with Williams, helped the 4x100 relay team earn a spot, while Wyatt Reece, Ben Hupp, Tanner Belcher and Michael Minster also qualified in the 4x800 relay.

## **7. FFA wins three state titles, shines at national competition**



**Members of the LHS FFA chapter won three state titles in May and later traveled to nationals in October and brought home several honors.**

After three Louisburg High School FFA teams won state titles in their respective career development events in May at the state competition, those same students performed well at the nationals.

Louisburg sent three teams to the 89<sup>th</sup> Annual National FFA

Convention in Indianapolis and all three were among the top in their respective Career Development Events (CDE). Each team received a gold emblem, while 11 of the 12 members who attended received individual gold emblems as well.

Paige Buffington, Wyatt Reece, Georgia Wilde, Justin Sievert, Hattie Harris, Hallie Hutsell, Faith Seuferling, Mariah Wrigley, Madelynn Yalowitz, Bryn O'Meara, Morgan Strumillo and Lexie Reece all came away with honors from nationals.

## **6. Cross country sends three to state, Moore captures medal**



**Freshman Trinity Moore became the first female runner in Louisburg history to capture a state cross country medal.**

Louisburg High School freshman Trinity Moore didn't look like a first-year varsity runner at the Class 4A state cross country meet as she finished 19<sup>th</sup> overall with a time of 20 minutes and 54 seconds – just 10 seconds off her personal best time. That finish was good enough to earn a state medal and became the first female runner in Louisburg history to do so.

Moore joined juniors Wyatt Reece and Tim Smith as all three runners competed in the state meet in Wamego in October. Reece and Smith finished 48th and 68th, respectively, just a week after finishing in the top five at the regional meet.

## **5. Koechner, Keegan earn medals as Wildcat wrestling puts five to state**



**Louisburg's Mason Koechner was one of two medalists for the Wildcats at the Class 4A state wrestling tournament in February. Koechner finished third at 220 pounds and teammate Nathan Keegan was sixth at 120 pounds.**

For the first time since 2011, a member of the Louisburg High School wrestling team left the Class 4A state tournament with a medal – in fact – two of them did.

Mason Koechner and Nathan Keegan finished in the top six of their respective weight classes at state meet in Salina. Koechner took third overall at 220 pounds, while Keegan came in sixth at 120 pounds.

Along with the two state medalists, the Wildcats also sent three other wrestlers to state. Anders Vance (285 pounds), Thad Hendrix (113) and Hunter Bindu (106) competed for

Louisburg as it qualified five for state for the second consecutive season.

## 4. Griffin signs with New Orleans Saints



Michael C. Hebert New Orleans Saints

**Photo courtesy of the New Orleans Saints**  
Louisburg native, and Air Force Academy graduate, Garrett Griffin, was signed to the New Orleans Saints practice squad

in August.

In early June, Garrett Griffin received his diploma from the Air Force Academy and shook hands with the President of the United States.

That event alone is enough to top most people's list of accomplishments. Four days later, Griffin fulfilled a life-long dream.

Following his graduation from the Air Force, Griffin was signed by the New Orleans Saints and his dream of playing professional football became a reality. The Louisburg native competed in the Saints training camp and later earned a spot on the team's practice squad, where he currently resides.

### **3. Wildcat football rallies around coach, ends playoff drought**



The Louisburg High School football team celebrates its

**regional championship and its first playoff win in four years.**

The season didn't get off to the start members of the Louisburg High School football team were hoping for. The Wildcats dealt with the departure of head coach Kyle Littrell before the season, but instead of letting it define their season, it made them stronger.

Louisburg rallied behind its former coach and the Wildcats won their first playoff game in four years after they defeated Independence in November to win a regional title. The Wildcats lost to eventual state champion Bishop Miege in the sectional round of the playoffs and ended their season with an 8-3 record.

## **2. Girls soccer team wins regional crown during inaugural season**



**The Louisburg girls soccer team celebrates its regional championship in the Wildcats' inaugural season.**

As the final buzzer sounded, members of the Louisburg girls soccer team rushed to each other in the middle of the field at the Wildcat Sports Complex. It was a sense of euphoria.

The Wildcats had every reason to be excited.

Louisburg – a program that has been in existence for all of two months – won its first regional title in program history in May after it ousted Basehor-Linwood in a 3-1 victory during the regional championship game. The win put the Wildcats in the state quarterfinals, where their season came to an end with 3-1 loss to De Soto and finished up with a 14-4-1 record on season.

# 1. Boys soccer advances to state final four



The Louisburg High School boys soccer team made history this past season as the Wildcats earned their first state quarterfinal victory and a spot in the Class 4A final four.

The state quarterfinal round had been nothing but heartbreak for the Louisburg High School boys soccer team.

In their previous six appearances, the Wildcats have seen their season come to an end and those players were left only to dream what playing in the state final four would be like.

There was no imagining this time around.

Louisburg got a goal in the 75<sup>th</sup> minute from senior Herman Knipp to give the Wildcats a 1-0 victory over Trinity Academy

in the state quarterfinals in Louisburg. The Wildcats moved on to the Class 4A state final four in Topeka in November, where they took fourth – the best finish in program history.

The Wildcats (14-6-2) finished their season with losses to eventual state champion Bishop Miege and Andover Central, but doubled their number of wins from the prior year.

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## **Koechner wins title, Wildcats second at Eudora**



**Louisburg senior Mason Koechner finished in first place in the 285-pound bracket Saturday at the Eudora Tournament of Champions. Koechner was 8-0 on the day with eight pins on the way to the title.**

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EUDORA – When Mason Koechner walked onto the mat, almost everyone on the Louisburg side knew what was going to happen next.

Most of the time it only took a minute or two. Koechner rolled his opponent to his back. The referee blew his whistle and slapped the mat.

Pin.

Koechner did that eight times over the two-day Eudora Tournament of Champions last weekend and came out on top as he won the heavyweight title with an 8-0 record. He improved his overall record to 14-0 this season with 12 pins.

On Friday, Koechner cemented himself as one of the best wrestlers in Wildcat history as he became the sixth wrestler ever in the program to earn 100 wins in his career. He joins past wrestlers Tim Dozier, Sonny Ewalt, Chad Roberts, Bryce Hood and Austin Hood for the honor.

“Mason is off to a great run so far,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Mason grew from a 195-pound freshman into the 220-pound weight class the last two years. He’s gotten taller and after a full summer of lifting, he’s filled out his weight class pretty well.

“He’s the first Wildcat wrestler to reach 100 career wins since I got here. I’ve been in his corner quite a bit these last four years, but you really have to credit him for all the hard work he’s put in, and you have to credit his parents, Scott and Beth, for instilling that mentality in him and being so supportive of his athletics over the years.”

Koechner wasn’t the only bright spot on the weekend – in fact – the whole team was. Louisburg had its highest finish ever at the Eudora Tournament of Champions as the Wildcats finished second overall with 243 points. Emporia won the tournament with 257.5 points.

Louisburg, which held team lead and several points throughout the tournament, also had 11 wrestlers place in top eight and five finished in the top four.

“It was definitely exciting from the very beginning,” Bovaird said. “Because we fielded a full squad, with the exception of an open at 113, it helped us earn points right off the bat. Only one or two other teams had full rosters. I saw from the early rounds that we were doing well, getting lots of pins

here and there, but I didn't think we'd be able to compete with Emporia or Tonganoxie once we got into the championship bracket of the tournament. I was very pleased, and the great part about it was the fact that throughout the tournament, the kids kept commenting about where we were at in the team standings. They were getting into the competition and the team title race, and I think that helped their individual performances.

"We've got a lot of wrestlers who have come up through the kids wrestling ranks, but the thing they haven't been a part of until they get to high school is the team component of the sport of wrestling. These guys have learned how to operate as a team, to care about one another, and to step up and do their part for the team. In other sports, they can disappear with the masses, but in wrestling, it's plain and apparent. Our guys came together just right this weekend."



**Sophomore Austin Moore, 170 pounds, finished fourth overall with a 4-2 record in Eudora.**

Junior Thad Hendrix found himself in the 106-pound championship match and went on to finish second. Junior Kyle Allen (126 pounds), sophomore Austin Moore (170) and senior Ben Hupp (182) each came in fourth to help lead the Wildcats throughout the weekend.

Senior Austin Raetzel (195) finished fifth overall in his weight class, while junior Tucker Batten (132), junior Ryan Adams (145) and senior Dylan Meyer (152) took sixth. Sophomore Blue Caplinger (160) and Garrett Caldwell (182) came in seventh.

It all started with Koechner as he breezed his way to the championship match. Koechner, the No. 2 ranked wrestler at 285 in Class 4A, matched up against No. 4 Sam Christy from Spring Hill.

The championship match was a battle until Koechner was able to put Christy on his back late in the third period.

“Mason’s discipline, conditioning and instinct kicked in at the right time and he was able to catch Christy,” Bovaird said. “Sam is an athletic heavyweight, too, but I like Mason’s style up against him.”

Hendrix improved his record to 10-4 on the season as he earned a spot in the bracket with a pair of pins and a major decision Friday. On Saturday, Hendrix defeated Effingham’s Austin Hager by a 4-1 decision, before falling to Wellsville’s Ryan Ware in the championship match, 15-3.

Moore won his first four matches of the tournament at 170 pounds before he went up against Holcomb’s Chance Rodriguez, the No. 3 ranked wrestler in 4A. Rodriguez defeated Moore 11-3, but the Louisburg sophomore bounced back to earn a spot in the third-place match after he pinned Lansing’s James

Schafer, but lost to Shawnee Mission East's William Schmidt, 9-2, to take fourth.

Both Hupp and Allen overcame losses on the first day to find their way to the third-place match.

Allen made his way into the 126-pound bracket and won his first match with a pin of Wellsville's Ethan Ewing, a state qualifier in Class 3A from last season. After losing in the semifinals, Allen defeated Efmfingham's Karl Scholz in a 6-2 decision before losing to Spring Hill's Noah Nemer in the third-place match.

As for Hupp, he lost his quarterfinal match to start Saturday, but responded to pin Caldwell and Shawnee Mission South's Caleb Cossairt to advance to the third-place match. Hupp fell to St. Mary's Matthew Cruickshank in a first period pin to take fourth.



**Louisburg junior Tucker Batten took sixth overall at 132 pounds during the Eudora Tournament of Champions on Friday and Saturday.**

"Those guys all had some exciting matches, and they each stepped up at the right times," Bovaird said. "Thad wrestled with more confidence than I've ever seen him have. His mindset was just like last season at regionals in the match to qualify for state – except more focused, more intense. Even in the finals, against a tough Wellsville kid who placed at state last year, he was competitive.

"Austin has been a warrior, and being a year older, he's much more confident and he's much stronger. That's a young man who doesn't make excuses, who battles regardless. Ben is our "comeback kid," the kind of wrestler who is dangerous up until the final whistle. He lost a tough match Friday night because of a couple mistakes and a constant bloody nose that had to be treated four to five times, but when he had a rematch with the same kid later in the tournament, he came out looking for revenge.

"Kyle Allen has been one of the most coachable kids I've worked with here. He's constantly asking for tips and suggestions, and he is very willing to try new techniques and adjustments. I can ask him to modify a technique he's been using throughout the years he's wrestled, and instead of fighting a change to new techniques, he embraces it and gives it a whirl. That mentality has opened up matches for him and especially at Eudora, allowed him to catch and pin a state qualifier."

The Wildcats did have a few bumps in the road as Batten and Adams had to default out of their fifth-place match. Batten suffered a head injury in his final match, while Adams reinjured his elbow.

Even with some bumps and bruises, Louisburg is gearing up for

its final tournament before the holidays as it travels to Tonganoxie on Saturday for the Randy Starcher Invitational.

"I love the fact that on the way home from the tournament Saturday night, I was thinking about how things could have worked out differently in our favor," Bovaird said. "I was disappointed we didn't get the team title. It was only three years ago that we just had one kid in the top 8. Now we're in the hunt for the title. We have a lot of work to do ahead of us, but I'm definitely excited about our prospects for this season.

"I don't know what to expect this weekend going into the Christmas break. We've got finals, we're banged up, and we're fighting through the bug season. I do know that whomever we put on the mat at Tonganoxie is going to step up and perform."

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## **Wildcats finish runner-up at Fort Scott tourney**



**The Louisburg wrestling team finished second at the Fort Scott Duals Tournament on Saturday at Fort Scott High School. Members of the team (from left) are Tucker Batten, Blue Caplinger, Kyle Allen, Dylan Meyer, Terry Allen, Mason Koechner, Ryan Adams, Thad Hendrix, Austin Raetzel, Harrison Laney, Tanner Belcher, Ben Hupp and Austin Moore.**

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FORT SCOTT – It may have been the first tournament of the season, but the Louisburg High School wrestling team looked like it was in midseason form at times.

The Wildcats competed in the Fort Scott Duals Tournament on Saturday and came away with the runner-up trophy after rolling to four victories. After losing to Class 5A state-ranked Blue Valley Southwest to open the day, Louisburg won its next four matches by an average of 42 points.

Louisburg defeated Fort Scott (60-24), Shawnee Mission West (69-9), Anderson County (51-26) and Paola (63-18) after losing to Blue Valley Southwest (46-21) to finish in second place overall.

“I think it was definitely a nice way to start off the season,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Going 4-1 at Fort Scott was a good confidence booster for our guys.”

The tournament brought out a lot of positives for the Wildcats, which included perfect performances from senior Mason Koechner, junior Ryan Adams and sophomore Austin Moore.

Adams, who is the No. 4 ranked wrestler in Class 4A, got a big win against Blue Valley Southwest’s Matt Stack, who is ranked No. 5 in Class 5A. Adams went into overtime before pulling out a 3-1 decision in his first match of the day. He finished the day 5-0 with two pins to go along with the overtime win.

Koechner, who is currently the No. 2 ranked heavyweight in Class 4A, had an easy day with three pins to go undefeated. Moore also had a big day at 170 pounds as he wrestled five matches, with four of those coming by pin.

“Ryan’s first match against the (Stack) was a great test for him,” Bovaird said. “It went to the wire with Ryan winning in overtime. Between the Osawatomie dual and Fort Scott, Mason

had two forfeits and four pins. He's only been on the mat a little over three minutes in total. I think he's going to have some dominant wins up at 285 this season.

"Austin had four pins and one tech fall, outscoring his opponents 28-0. That's pretty good for a sophomore. With his strength, speed and coachability, I can see him having one heck of a season this year."

Junior Tucker Batten (132 pounds), senior Ben Hupp (182) and senior Austin Raetzel also had strong performances as all three wrestlers picked up four wins on the day. Hupp and Raetzel each tallied three pins, while Batten had a pair of pins.

"Tucker's only loss was 4-0 to a Southwest kid," Bovaird said. "Ben was beating his Anderson County opponent 8-5 when he got caught and pinned. That kid had beaten Ben out at regionals last year in the match to go to state. I've seen a lot of confidence and technique improvements in him already.

"Austin is a tough kid to wrestle. He stronger than he looks, and he looks pretty strong. He's stubborn to move and he's been working on some areas in the off-season that are already showing with his wrestling this season."



**Senior Dylan Meyer pulls an Osawatomie wrestler to the mat for a takedown Thursday in Louisburg.**

Five other Louisburg wrestlers had winning records on the day. Junior Thad Hendrix (106), junior Kyle Allen (126), sophomore Tanner Belcher (138), sophomore Blue Caplinger (160) and senior Terry Allen (220) ended the tournament 3-2.

The Wildcats' lone loss came against one of the tougher teams they will see all season. Blue Valley Southwest is currently ranked seventh in Class 5A, but Louisburg bounced back nicely for the runner-up finish.

"Blue Valley Southwest is definitely the real deal this season," Bovaird said. "They're ranked in Class 5A, and they have 6-7 kids ranked in the top six at state. Four matches we lost were by decisions – Kyle Allen lost 5-3, Tucker Batten

lost 4-0, Dylan Meyer lost 10-4, and Blue Caplinger lost 3-1 in overtime. We were open at 120, also, with no back-up there.

“Considering things, I was feeling positive about the dual, but I also want to be able to get out there against a team like that and compete head-to-head. I want it to come down to the wire. That’s when we know for sure that we’re making progress. Right now, I have a good feeling about where we’re going as a program, but I’m still looking for concrete proof to affirm that.”

Louisburg will get another tough test starting Friday when it competes in the Eudora Tournament of Champions. The tournament begins at 1:30 p.m. and will continue through Saturday.

### **LOUISBURG WINS OPENER AGAINST OSAWATOMIE**

Louisburg would have liked to wrestle a few more matches, but the Wildcats put together a solid performance in their debut Thursday against Osawatomie.

The Wildcats defeated the Trojans 57-18 in their first dual of the season at Louisburg High School. Osawatomie was open at several weight classes and the Wildcats wrestled just eight varsity matches.

Thad Hendrix opened things up at 106 pounds and lost a tough 9-8 decision in a back-and-forth match. At 138 pounds, Tanner Belcher picked up a 7-3 decision and Dylan Meyer followed that up with a pin at 152 pounds.

Blue Caplinger lost a close 9-6 decision at 160 and Ben Hupp was pinned at 182. The Wildcats finished the day strong as they got pins from Terry Allen (220) and Mason Koechner (285).

Not only did the Wildcats celebrate a win, they also welcomed back several former Louisburg wrestlers as they hosted an alumni reunion. Close to 30 alumni were on hand to watch the

Wildcats.

"I love the idea of having an alumni reunion every year, and I've gotten so much positive feedback from our alumni," Bovaird said. "We have some guys talking about getting it planned out even earlier next year – send out letters several months in advance, doing a dinner for the alumni and their families, etc. It's pretty exciting, too. I have a limited amount of artifacts from throughout the years (pictures, newspaper clippings, etc.), and I'd love to have more stuff to set out for the guys to look at and reminisce."

"I loved having the season start off so well – we had a great crowd considering it was a single dual, the student body presence was pretty fantastic, the drum line played before the meet and between matches, and we were able to recognize the alumni who could make it. There were some competitive matches against Osawatomie, too, at both JV and varsity. That's always a positive for the team and our program."

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## **Louisburg wrestling primed for big season**



**Louisburg senior Mason Koechner will move up to the heavyweight division this season after finishing third at 220 pounds at the state tournament last season. Koechner is one of**

**three returning state qualifiers from last year.**

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It would be easy for a team to rest on its laurels after it had one of the best seasons in program history.

The Louisburg High School wrestling team qualified five for the Class 4A state tournament, had a state medalist for the first time in four years and won a Frontier League title for the first time in 19 years.

Louisburg took a lot of pride with what it accomplished, but the Wildcats are even more excited for the possibilities this season.

They return three state qualifiers and two state medalists from a season ago, and will boast another full varsity lineup this season that has hopes to contend for another league crown.

"No one should be putting pressure on themselves," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "They should be excited about the potential for the season. That excitement should motivate them to work smarter and fight harder to break through to the next level."

Seniors Mason Koechner and Nathan Keegan, along with junior Thad Hendrix, will lead the Wildcats for the upcoming season as all three are returning state qualifiers.

Koechner, who wrestled at 220 pounds and finished third at state last season, will make up the move up to the heavyweight class this year. The Louisburg senior racked up 44 wins a season ago and Bovaird believes he is primed for another run in the state tournament.

"Mason has been hitting the weights and packing on some more muscle since last season," Bovaird said. "He's up to a solid 270 right now and feels pretty comfortable at 285. I think

he's got the bulk and strength to hang with the best heavyweights in the state, and he's got the agility and experience to beat them."

Keegan is another returning state medalist for the Wildcats as he finished sixth at 120 pounds last year with a 30-13 mark. Thad Hendrix, who qualified for state at 113 pounds a season, will wrestle at 106 this season after Hunter Bindi – a state qualifier last season – transferred to a different school.

"Thad has experience and maturity working for him this year," Bovaird said. "Last year he found his stride, but was an underclassman giving up 6-8 pounds to his opponents. This year, he's an upperclassman fitting right into his weight class. He's more confident and he's stronger.

"Nathan is stronger than ever. He's already certified at 120, and making weight shouldn't be a concern. He's not cutting, so he can focus on taking his moves and making them even more deadly than they already are. For both guys, having a steady focus should help them improve even more on last season's successes."



**Junior Thad Hendrix will compete in the 106 pound spot for the Wildcats this season after qualifying for state at 113 pounds last season.**

Louisburg also returns an experienced wrestler who didn't even factor into the Wildcats' success a season ago. Ryan Adams, who qualified for state as a freshman, had to sit out his sophomore season with an arm injury.

Now a junior, Adams hopes to take a big step forward after he

was one win away from a state medal his freshman campaign. He will wrestle at 145 pounds for the Wildcats.

"Ryan is back in stride, almost like nothing happened last year," Bovaird said. "He couldn't wait to get back on the mat once his elbow healed. He did more off-season wrestling than anyone else on the team, and it definitely shows with his practice on the mat. It's been a readjustment getting back into serious wrestling shape, but he's got the strength to do it. I'm excited for him to have an awesome season."

They may not have state experience, but the Wildcats return several wrestlers from the 2015-16 season with a lot of varsity mat time.

Going into the season, juniors Kyle Allen (126 pounds) and Tucker Batten (132) will provide some stability as will sophomores Blue Caplinger (160) and Austin Moore (170). Junior Alec Maler (138) along with seniors Dylan Meyer (152), Ben Hupp (182), Austin Raetzel (195) and Terry Allen (220) will also play big roles for the Wildcats.



**Senior Nathan Keegan hopes to build off his 30-win and sixth-place finish at state last season.**

“Up and down the line, we have some very strong wrestlers,” Bovaird said. “There are 2-3 weight classes where we’ve got some bubble groups as 132, 138 and 170 are pretty deep. Kyle will be a tough kid, as will Tucker Batten. Both of them have had substantial mat time at the varsity level the last two years. Blue and Austin both had winning records last year as freshmen, and both of them are a lot stronger this year. Ben and Garrett Caldwell both did some camps last summer and are ready to do some damage this season, too. Austin will be very strong at 195 – he’s intimidating to look at and he’s got the confidence of being a senior.

“Dylan is back with the program, and with his sheer strength, athleticism, and flexibility at 152, he’ll be looking forward

to a great season. Terry is stepping up at varsity at 220. He's been a very dependable member of the team the last three years, and I'm excited for him to have a shot at varsity now."

The Wildcats will also feature a new addition to their coaching staff as Brandon Ott has come on to serve as an assistant coach along with Andy Wright. Ott graduated from Ottawa High School in 2011 where he was a league champion and went on to wrestle for Ottawa University for two years.

"While losing good kids to graduation is always tough to deal with, it's so encouraging that here we are with a pretty solid line-up this year," Bovaird said. "We have had some depth in the past few years – good young kids getting invaluable varsity experience. The right things are happening for Louisburg wrestling. There's a working system that's bringing solid kids to the high school program. Our coaching staff is able to take them to the next level.

"Andy has been a head coach before and while at Wellsville, he was able to work with some great athletes. Brandon has been a part of a good young collegiate program, and his college wrestling experience is helping us hone our drill series even more. I spent a good part of the summer and fall researching new drills and techniques, watching videos, and talking with coaches of successful programs. I think we're in a good spot with Louisburg wrestling."

Louisburg will kickoff its season Thursday when it hosts Osawatomie for a dual. Matches are set to begin at 6 p.m., and it will also be an alumni reunion as all former Wildcats wrestlers have been invited to return to watch the current group.

The Wildcats will compete in their first tournament Saturday for the Fort Scott Dual Tournament.