

# Wildcats take fifth at strong Eudora meet



Louisburg High School junior Mason Koechner works for a pin during a 220-pound match Saturday at the Eudora Tournament of Champions. Koechner finished third at 220 pounds and the Wildcats finished fifth overall as a team.

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EUDORA – Every time Bobby Bovaird has taken his Louisburg High School wrestling team to the Eudora Tournament of Champions, the Wildcats tend to get a little better.

This year was no exception.

The Wildcats recorded their best team finish at Eudora in the program's history as they finished fifth overall with 182 points. Rossville won the tournament with 287 points and Maize South was second with 221.

Louisburg also brought its most wrestlers ever to the tournament as it just had one open weight class and several of those found their way to the medal stand. The Wildcats medaled eight over the two-day tournament that began on Friday and finished up Saturday.

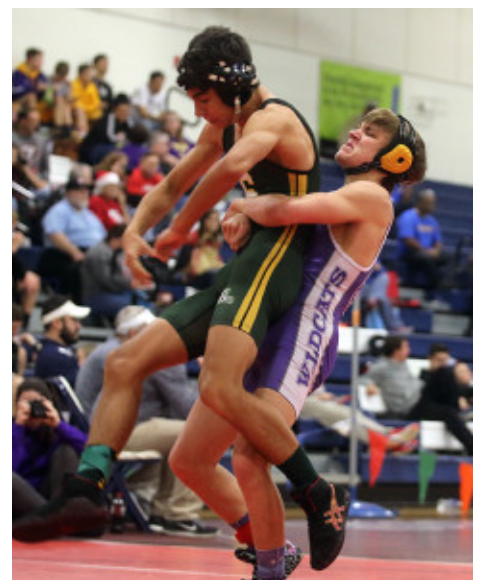
"I thought we did pretty well last year when we took sixth and that was the highest Louisburg had finished since Eudora went to the 2-day, 24-team format," Bovaird said. "This year, I was

very pleased with our team effort and had our highest finish ever.

“This year we were open at 195, but we were able to fill the rest of the lineup. Everyone scored points and contributed to our placing, even if they didn’t win a match. That’s what I like about a tournament like this one. It encourages and rewards teams who have full rosters. Four years ago, we brought seven wrestlers to this meet; only a few were ready for it. This year, we brought 17 wrestlers.”

Freshman Hunter Bindi (106 pounds), junior Mason Koechner (220) and senior Anders Vance (285) all found themselves a win away from reaching the championship match. Unfortunately, all three had tough losses in the semifinals.

However, all three wrestlers battled back to finish third overall to lead the Wildcats individually.



**Junior Nathan Keegan lifts an opponent during a 120-pound match Saturday at the Eudora Tournament of Champions.**

Vance matched up against Spring Hill's Sam Christy in the semifinals and lost a 2-1 decision in the ultimate tie breaker, but rebounded to pin Lansing's Khalil Austin in the second period of the third-place match to finish his tournament with an 8-1 record.

As for Koechner, he ran up against Rossville's Kale Devoren in the semifinals and lost a 5-1 decision. But Koechner responded with back-to-back wins, including a pin of De Soto's Lawson Marshall in the third-place match to end his run with a 5-1 record.

Bindi also had a big day for Louisburg as he rattled off four straight victories before meeting up with Buhler's Adam Whitson in the semifinals. Whitson won by a 13-5 major decision, but Bindi bounced back to win by major decision over Fort Scott's Tyler Gorman and then defeated Wellsville's Ryan Ware by an 8-3 decision in the third-place match.

Shortly before his semifinal match, Bindi watched as his brother, David Bindi, suffered a concussion during his 126-pound match. David was unconscious for a few seconds and was taken to a hospital to run tests. Other than the concussion, David should be OK, according to Bovaird.

"Hunter's semifinals loss was shortly after his brother's injury happened," Bovaird said. "That had to have taken his mind off his game. We were all pretty shaken up by it.

"Anders got caught in double-overtime, which is frustrating. Mason came up against a tough, physical kid from Rossville who had a wrestling style that Mason struggled with. We've got a lot to learn, but I'm glad to be so competitive in these tough matches this early in the season."

Juniors Nathan Keegan (120), Ben Hupp (170) and senior Bradley Trageser (285) each finished fifth overall and ended their tournament on a win.

Keegan defeated Fort Scott's Mannie Gonzales by a 3-1 decision in the fifth place match and ended the tournament with a 4-3 record. Hupp also won some big matches at 170 pounds, including a pin of Maize South's Koy Willms to ensure himself of at least a fifth-place spot.

Trageser won four matches on the day, including pins of Ottawa's Chandler Adamson and De Soto's Jalen Christianson.

Senior Dillin Roberts (160) and junior Connor Green (170) each finished sixth overall, while David Bindi was eighth at 126 pounds. Roberts, Hupp and Trageser all wrestled unattached for the Wildcats as they already had wrestlers in their respective weight class, but all three came up big.

"We had three unattached wrestlers place in the top six," Bovaird said. "They didn't score any points for us, but they still blocked other teams from scoring. It's great that we have that kind of depth. All three of those unattached kids had several pins, too. Those would have been nice team points."

Louisburg will have one more tournament before the Wildcats depart for the holiday break. The Wildcats travel to Tonganoxie on Saturday for the Randy Starcher Memorial Tournament.

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## **Louisburg brings home hardware from Fort Scott**



**Louisburg's Ben Hupp works to get some back points during his 170-pound match in Osawatomie on Thursday. The Wildcats defeated Osawatomie 53-18 in their season opener and then finished second overall Saturday at the Fort Scott Dual Tournament.**

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FORT SCOTT – For the first time since 2009, the Louisburg High School wrestling team brought home some hardware from the Fort Scott Dual Tournament.

Despite a rough start against Blue Valley Southwest, the Wildcats rattled off four consecutive wins to finish second overall and record their highest finish at the tournament in six years. After their season opening dual win against Osawatomie on Thursday, the Wildcats are now 5-1 to start the season.

“I was happy to have the team get second place, and it’s nice bringing home some team hardware,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “I just wish we could have been a little more competitive with Blue Valley Southwest. That dual was not a pleasant one. It’s a great thing to start the season with a solid dual victory and then a solid team performance at the tournament.”

Senior heavyweight Anders Vance led the Wildcats with a 5-0 mark on the day and three others finished with just one loss. Freshman Hunter Bindi (106 pounds), junior Kyle Allen (120) and junior Austin Raetzel (182) each had 4-1 marks, while

Bindi and Raetzel recorded three pins each.

“Anders is doing great,” Bovaird said. “I love his work ethic and his desire to improve. He’s always asking questions and looking for ways to get better on the mat. I just wish he’d had more challenges last weekend.

“Hunter is a solid freshman, and I think he’s going to have a pretty good season. He’s got lots of experience, and he’s got a competitive attitude. I thought Kyle filled in on varsity for Nathan Keegan at the last minute, and his one loss was the first match of the day, and it looked like he ran out of gas. Austin is filling in at 182 and he also did a nice job.”



**Louisburg’s Alec Maler works for a pin during the 138-pound match during Thursday’s season opening dual in Osawatomie.**

Louisburg opened tournament action against Blue Valley Southwest and struggled from the start. The Wildcats fell 56-18 and didn’t get their first victory until Raetzel pinned a Timberwolves opponent at 182 pounds.

“Talk about a wake-up call,” Bovaird said. “We just didn’t match up with them well at all. From the very start of the dual, they were getting us at every turn. We didn’t win a

match until Raetzel got his first pin of the day. They were open at 220 and 285, so that was really our only head-to-head win.

"I didn't like the feeling I got from that dual; we didn't seem ready and we looked too timid and rusty. It is best to get that out of the way early and we can use that dual as a great diagnostic for the season."

The Wildcats bounced back well as it came away with a 48-21 victory over Fort Scott and a 60-15 win over Anderson County. Louisburg didn't have much of a problem in its 51-16 win over Shawnee Mission West and would also defeat rival Paola 62-9.

Louisburg also had seven wrestlers finish the day with winning records. David Bindi (126), Tucker Batten (132), Blue Caplinger (145), Austin Moore (160), Ben Hupp (170) and Lyndon Smith (195) all left Fort Scott with three wins each.

Zach Jones (152) and Chris Turner (138) also ended their day with a pair of victories.

"I knew we'd have some depth this season, and I'm very proud of the guys who stepped in to fill our line-up," Bovaird said. "I'm especially proud of the competitiveness I saw come out of several kids."

The Wildcats return to the mat Friday and Saturday when they compete in the Eudora Tournament of Champions. Matches are set to begin at 1:30 p.m. on Friday and continue into Saturday.

### **Louisburg rolls Osawatomie in opener**

Louisburg hit the road to start its season Thursday when it traveled to Osawatomie for a dual and it became evident early that the Wildcats wouldn't have much of a problem.

The Wildcats won the first four matches by either pin or

forfeit to take a 24-point lead and they never looked back in a 53-18 victory over the Trojans.

Thad Hendrix (106), Hunter Bindi (113), Nathan Keegan (120) and David Bindi (126) all won their first matches before the Wildcats lost four out of the next five.

"We had some guys who probably weren't in the condition that they needed to be in, but it is the start of the season and it is hard to tell at this point where you need to be," Bovaird said. "You just have to go out there and compete, figure out how out of shape you are and work with it."

"We have a good handful of guys on our team that are just all heart. They have an incredible work ethic and very strong wrestlers. If they are down by a few points in the third period, I am not really concerned because they are like the Royals were – you can never count them out."

A couple of those guys were freshman Austin Moore and junior Ben Hupp.

Moore, who wrestled at 160 pounds, found himself in the middle of a back-and-forth match with Osawatomie's John Diediker as Moore recorded several escapes to keep himself in the match. Moore came up just short in the 11-9 loss, but his attitude carried over into the next match with Hupp.

Hupp was also down to Nathan Hodges at 170 pounds, but he recorded a takedown and got some back points to win the 13-9 match and got the Wildcats back on the winning track.

Louisburg won the next two by forfeit before Mason Koechner won by an 8-3 decision at 220 pounds and heavyweight Anders Vance pinned Osawatomie's Tim Duncan in 37 seconds to end the dual.

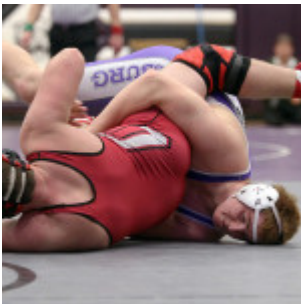
Kyle Allen (126), Bria Jensen (132), Dustyn Rizzo (220) and Bradley Trageser (285) also won junior varsity matches for the



Wildcats and all their victories came by pin.

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# Wildcat wrestlers ready for big season



Louisburg junior Mason Koechner, who is ranked No. 4 in the Class 4A preseason rankings at 220 pounds, is one of four returning state qualifiers for the Wildcats this season. The Wildcats return several experienced wrestlers from a season ago.

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It was a season to remember for the Louisburg High School wrestling team a year ago.

Last February, the Wildcats took a big step forward in their program as they qualified five wrestlers for the state tournament. The good news for Louisburg, four of those state qualifiers are returning this season and are bringing an experienced group with them.

“Up and down the lineup, we’re looking strong,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “I have lots of guys with varsity experience, and there are several weights that are going to be

battles to see who will wrestle varsity each week. I think we'll have some depth with our lineup – the kind of depth we haven't had in a long time.

“Last year, we earned three tournament plaques, but we have yet to come out on top with a team title. This year, I think we're in good position to bring home a team championship.”

Three of the returning state qualifiers were named as captains for the upcoming season. Senior Anders Vance, along with juniors Mason Koechner and Nathan Keegan will be looked to lead the squad, along with senior Dillin Roberts.

Koechner is looking to build off his state bid a year ago and the wrestling coaches across the state think he can do it. He is currently No. 4 in Class 4A at 220 pounds in the preseason rankings put out by the Kansas Wrestling Coaches Association.

Vance, the team's heavyweight, also cracked the preseason rankings at No. 6 in the state. Keegan (120 pounds), along with another state qualifier in sophomore Ryan Adams (145), will also have a shot to crack those state rankings at some point this season.



**Senior Anders Vance hopes to make a return trip to state this season. Vance is the No. 6 ranked wrestler in the heavyweight division in**

## **Class 4A.**

"We'll see how things go the rest of the season," Bovaird said. "I like what I see from these guys. I think that when it comes to pressure, they're going to be harder on themselves than anyone else will be."

There will be plenty of competition for a lot of weight classes this season, and the final varsity lineup will be decided tonight during the team's annual scrimmage as some of those classes will have wrestle-offs.

At 106 pounds, sophomore Thad Hendrix is currently competing with freshman Hunter Bindi, while Kyle Allen is battling it out with Keegan at 120 pounds. David Bindi and Tucker Batten will wrestle at 126 and 132 pounds, respectively.

Junior Dylan Meyer and freshman Brandon Cooper are battling for the 138 pound spot. Adams currently holds the top spot at 145 pounds, but senior Chris Turner, sophomore Jackson Owens and freshman Blue Caplinger are competing there as well.

Zach Jones, Roberts and freshman Austin Moore are battling at 160 pounds, while juniors Ben Hupp, Owen Staver and Connor Green are vying for the slot at 170 pounds.

Juniors Austin Raetzel and Jacob Felder will slot in at 182 pounds and junior Lyndon Smith will wrestle at 195 pounds. Senior Bradley Trageser will compete with Koechner at 220.

Bovaird likes the mix of experienced wrestlers and newcomers he has this season.

"We have some very athletic freshmen coming in this season," Bovaird said. "Hunter Bindi was a 2-time kids state champion, and he's placed in the top 6 at kids state several times, too. Austin Moore missed placing at kids state last year by one match, and Blue Caplinger also has experience at the state level. Tucker Batten and Lyndon Smith were each one match from

qualifying for high school state last year.”

The Wildcats also have a little different look on their coaching staff as well. Robert Ebenstein returns for his fourth season with the program, while Louisburg also welcomes Andy Wright as a new assistant. Wright was previously the head coach at Wellsville for six years.

So far there has been no change in the practice room, but Bovaird likes what he has seen so far and is excited for the season to get underway.

“Our guys have a great deal of confidence that I haven’t seen since I got here,” Bovaird said. “Last year’s successes have definitely enabled us to get started much more strongly. I think that the last few years, there’s been hope and enthusiasm to start the year – guys working their tails off because they hope they can earn a trip to state. This year, there’s more than that. There’s a confidence – a firm belief – that we can build from last year’s successes rather than just starting over and hoping for the best when February hits.”

The Wildcats begin their journey for what they hope is a successful season Thursday when they travel to Osawatomie for a dual. Matches are set to begin at 6 p.m.

On Saturday, Louisburg will then travel to Fort Scott for its first tournament of the season.

## **2015-16 LOUISBURG HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING SCHEDULE**

Dec. 3	at
Osawatomie	6
p.m.	

Dec. 5	at Fort Scott Dual
Tournament	9 a.m.

Dec. 11 Tournament	at Eudora 1:30 p.m.
Dec. 12 Tournament	at Eudora 9 a.m.
Dec. 19 Invitational	at Tonganoxie 9 a.m.
Jan. 9 LHS)	Wildcat Classic (at 9 a.m.
Jan. 16 Invitational	at Topeka High 9 a.m.
Jan. 22 Parsons 3:30 p.m.	at
Jan. 30 Invitational	at Baldwin 9 a.m.
Feb. 12 Hill)	Frontier League (at Spring 4 p.m.
Feb. 13 Hill)	Frontier League (at Spring 10 a.m.

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## Opinion: Rough patch leads to new beginning



I am just going to come right out and say it, "I'm scared."

Yeah, it is an unusual way to start out an opinion piece, but there is no two ways around it – I am petrified. But believe it or not, it is what keeps me going.

We have all had at least one point in our existence where our lives changed for better or worse. I have had more than a few of those in my life, but the latest one came on Jan. 9.

It started out like all the other Fridays over the last seven years. I reported to work, spent a few hours in the office getting ready for what was a busy weekend of prep coverage ahead. It was the first action after Christmas break and I was ready to get back into the swing of things.

That never took place.

My bosses came into my office early that afternoon to inform me I was being let go. The job of covering Louisburg athletics was no longer mine. I packed up my things, turned in my key, went home, punched the wall a couple times and cried.

I was scared.

After all the tears came the questions. How was I going to support my family? What am I going to do for a job? The list went on and on and I couldn't come up with many answers.

As it turned out, one of the worst experiences of my life turned into one of the best.

Thanks to a lot of prayers, and support from family and friends, I decided to start Louisburg Sports Zone. Yep, that's

right, I went from being unemployed to starting my own business for the first time in my life.

Not exactly the best way to alleviate fears.

However, when I kicked off the site just a month later, I was overwhelmed with the amount of support from students at Louisburg High School, employees throughout the district, parents and several others who offered encouragement and supported my new venture.

I finished the last half of the winter season and all of the spring doing what I took for granted the previous seven years. I got the chance to cover Louisburg athletics again.

You know, this whole starting your own business thing might not have been a bad idea after all. I would have never had the courage to go out on my own had I not been pushed in that direction.

Fast forward to the present and I am still alive and kicking, ready to start my eighth season of roaming the Wildcat sidelines with camera in hand, waiting to tell that next story.

This fall brings a lot of story lines to the Wildcat programs. The football team is looking to improve off its 3-win season a year ago and find its way back to the playoffs with a veteran group returning.

Volleyball is primed and ready to make its fourth consecutive state tournament this year after placing in the top four in the last three years. The Lady Cats return five seniors that have a lot of state experience and that bodes well for another trip to Salina.

The Wildcat soccer team returns an experienced group from a year ago as they try to crack the top of the Frontier League standings. The cross country team also has several returning

runners who will try and qualify for the state meet.

There is a lot to be excited about when it comes to Louisburg sports, but for me personally, I am just fortunate enough to still be a part of it in a small way.

I take a lot of pride in what I do and I hope that it shows when you read stories or look at pictures on this site. I started this business knowing that I will never be rich, but it gives me an opportunity to continue to do what I love.

Thanks to all those who have supported me and for the more than 23,000 views on the site in the last six months. I have said it before, but I am extremely blessed to live in a community that supports each other through good times and bad.

Every day I am fortunate enough to be able to go to work and support my family doing what I know how to do. That is all I have ever wanted, so thank you Louisburg for allowing me to do it.

I am still scared, though.

It is that fear that drives me to do the best I can in what I do in my job and in life. I don't want what happened on that day in January to happen again and I will do everything to make sure it doesn't.

Right now I am living the good life. I have the opportunity to work for myself, support my family and do what I enjoy. I can't ask for any more.

I am living the American dream.

I just don't want to wake up.

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# Knox signs to wrestle at Kansas Wesleyan



Louisburg High School graduate Zach Knox (middle) signed his letter of intent on June 30 to wrestle at Kansas Wesleyan University. Sitting next to Zach is LHS head coach Bobby Bovaird (left) and Zach's mother, Shani Knox. Standing is Kansas Wesleyan head coach Jimmy May.

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Zach Knox used hard work and relentlessness to propel him from the best junior varsity wrestler to team captain during his four years with the Louisburg High School wrestling program.

Knox plans on using those same two tools to further his wrestling and academic careers.

The 2015 LHS graduate signed his letter of intent on June 30 to wrestle at Kansas Wesleyan University, an NAIA school out of Salina. Knox signed his letter in front of his mother, Shani Knox, teammates, his high school coach Bobby Bovaird and new college coach Jimmy May.

"I am just very excited to have this opportunity," Knox said. "It was back and forth for me at first. I felt like wrestling in college, but at the same time I knew cutting weight all the time would take a lot out of me. In the final decision, I felt wrestling in college would be the best opportunity for me, not

only in wrestling, but with my studies and staying on course to what I want to be.”

Knox finished his Wildcat career with a 75-58 record and wrestled on the varsity level his final two seasons after being named the Louisburg JV Wrestler of the Year in 2012 and then earned the Workhorse Award in 2013 in his first year on varsity.

He finished with a 21-14 record his senior season and did work in the classroom as well. He was named to the honorable mention all-academic team by the Kansas Wrestling Coaches Association.

“From the very first time I stepped into the Louisburg High School practice room as a coach, he was there,” Bovaird said. “He started wrestling as a freshman and he was the only person in the class of 2015 that wrestled all four years for me. I am really excited for him to be able to move on to the next level.”

Knox will join a Kansas Wesleyan program that is in its infant stages. It is a new program that is led by coach May and won’t begin actual competition until the 2016-17 season.

The year of practice time will allow Knox to work on his conditioning and get used to going up against other collegiate athletes before Kansas Wesleyan’s first season. Joining a new program also reminds Knox of something close to home.

“It does bring some excitement to say I will be a part of the original wrestling program down there and it will seem a little bit like Louisburg when I first started with the program,” Knox said. “When coach Bovaird showed up, the program was kind of down but showed signs of coming back alive. I want to be a part of great college wrestling program too.

“The campus when I first got there was amazing. It is a small

school, but the atmosphere was great and it just seemed like the right fit for me. I am very excited to work with coach May. He has been through a lot of kids and I know he will coach me the way that needs to be coached and make me a better human being.”

Kansas Wesleyan isn’t the first program May has started. He was first wrestling head coach at Baker University and helped build the program into a national power. In just his third year at Baker, May led the Wildcats to a No. 9 spot in the national rankings and had four all-Americans.

Although May is excited to have Knox on board, the Kansas Wesleyan coach knows wrestling is just a stepping stone to a brighter future.

“I coached high school wrestling for 32 years and it was the best years of my life,” May said. “I was able to reach out to young men and become an influence in their lives. Now I am doing it at a little different level, but it is still the same thing and I look forward to working with Zach.

“I would like to congratulate Zach on what he has accomplished. One of the landmarks in life is graduating high school and the next one to graduate college. That is my No. 1 goal, which is to get him through school. If there is nothing else that happens in his life, whether it is related to wrestling or anything else, getting that degree is the most important thing.”

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## **Wrestlers take on heavy**

# lifting at camp



Louisburg High School senior Bradley Trageser flips a large tire during the Wildcats' wrestling team camp last week at Louisburg High School. The Wildcat wrestlers spent a day going through a strongman workout.

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Coming off its best season in years, the Louisburg wrestling team isn't one to rest on its laurels.

So when the Wildcats got together for their annual team camp last week, they had the mindset to get smarter on the mat, but also to get bigger, faster and stronger. To do that, head coach Bobby Bovaird decided to use one of his camp days to get off the mat and go outside for some unique conditioning.

Bovaird called on friend Corey Scott, a personal trainer in the Kansas City area, to work with his wrestling team through a strongman workout. Whether it was flipping large tires, lifting atlas stones or working on the ropes, all of the wrestlers saw a different way of conditioning.

"It turns out that his strongman lifts are similar in nature to what Coach (Kyle) Littrell has been implementing for the football preseason weights. They're awesome lifts – atlas stones, prowler machines, ropes, tire flipping – that break up the monotony of lifting in the weight room," Bovaird said. "They're total body lifts that are perfect for wrestlers

because that's what we do in our sport. So many lifts that the guys do in the weight room are for their 'vanity muscles,' as Corey calls them.

"Corey's lifts are ones that make you a stronger athlete all-around. I think the kids enjoyed the fact that we got outside and did something new. I like some of these lifts enough that I'd like to look into making some purchases so that we can add them into our regular training regimen."

Of course, the Wildcats couldn't spend their entire week of camp flipping tires or lifting large stones – they needed to get better on the mat. Bovaird had good numbers for his advanced camp that met four days last week as 31 signed up and 27 more attended the beginner's camp.



**Nathan Keegan throws a tire over his head last week during a strongman workout.**

After qualifying five for the state tournament last season, Bovaird wanted to use a different method on working with his high school wrestlers – one that will help his wrestlers remember what they learn at camp and be able to transition that into the first day of practice in November.

He introduced the wrestlers to Strobel Drilling, which was

named for former Lehigh University wrestlers coach Greg Strobel.

“Last summer I’d seen some videos of his and I liked how he layered his instruction in different levels,” Bovaird said. “I took notes and modified it to a system I plan to use much more frequently next season. I introduce a technique or maneuver, then I allow the kids to get more hands-on with it. There are three levels of application. First, the wrestlers focus on the fine details of a move – the left hand goes here, the right foot steps there, shoulder pressure in this spot, etc. Then, level two involves application where there’s more movement based on the technique or there’s some slight competition between the wrestler and his partner. Level three involves controlled live wrestling where the move is applied and both wrestlers find themselves in match situations.

“Without daily application of these moves, the wrestlers will forget them quickly, so my main goal was to introduce them to my philosophy; to give them a preview of how things will go next season.”

The Wildcats still have a busy summer ahead as they will depart for Valentine, Neb., next week for the Outdoor Challenge Camp for the second straight year. The camp features clinicians from college coaches along with team building activities.

Bovaird also said he has had several wrestlers interested in participating in the Sunflower State Games in Topeka on July 11, while sophomore, and returning state qualifier Ryan Adams is pondering a trip to Dallas to compete for Team Kansas in a big dual tournament later this month.

Adams has also been wrestling in a summer league in Topeka where he went 13-1 and made the all-tournament team for the Top City Summer Wrestling League.

There is excitement within the Louisburg team after its

success a year ago. The Wildcats return four of their five state qualifiers and they hope for even more next season as the numbers in the program continue to rise.

However, the road back to state begins with summer workouts.

“There’s definitely more enthusiasm from the group,” Bovaird said. “During the summer months, I understand that their minds are elsewhere – the pool, football, baseball, summer jobs, etc. – but I’m pretty happy with the variety of kids who’ve been coming in during open mat sessions. I have a small number of kids who wrestle year-round, which is to be expected considering the limitations of not having a practice facility dedicated to the wrestling program.

“I’m looking into more options to set up off-season wrestling opportunities within Louisburg so that these numbers grow. There’s a saying in the wrestling community, ‘Summer wrestlers make winter champions.’ If you look at our guys who had the most success last season, they all did their fair share of summer wrestling.”

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## Summer camp information

Summer camps at Louisburg High School aren’t too far away and here is some information if you are interested in signing up.

### FOOTBALL

LHS football coach Kyle Littrell is holding his team camp on June 15 through 19 on the team’s practice field just outside the high school. The cost for the high school camp is \$45 and includes insurance, a T-shirt and shorts.

Littrell will also conduct a middle school and elementary school camp. The seventh and eighth-grade camp will run from 10 a.m. to noon on June 15 through 18 and will cost \$35. There will also be an elementary camp from 8:30 to 10 a.m. on June 15-17 for grades 3-6 and will cost \$25. Both camp fees include a T-shirts.

For more information, contact Littrell at 837-1720 or [littrellk@usd416.org](mailto:littrellk@usd416.org).

### **BOYS BASKETBALL**

Head boys basketball coach Jason Nelson is conducting his team camp from 2 to 4:30 p.m. on June 8 through 12 in the LHS gymnasium. The cost for the high school camp is \$50 and includes a T-shirt.

Nelson will also hold a junior high and elementary school camp as well. The session for sixth through eighth-grade will run from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on June 8 through 11 and the cost is \$45. The third through fifth-grade camp will run from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. on June 8 through 10 and is \$40. Both camps include a T-shirt.

All three camps will have a heavy emphasis on fundamentals. The due date to sign up is May 23. For more information, contact Nelson at (913) 963-8421 or [nelsonj@usd416.org](mailto:nelsonj@usd416.org).

### **VOLLEYBALL**

LHS head volleyball coach Jessica Compliment will hold camps from fifth-grade on up through high school this July.

On July 13 through 17, Compliment will conduct the high school camp from 1 to 4 p.m. and the cost is \$45. The seventh and eighth-grade camp will run from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on



July 13 through 16 and costs \$35. The fifth and sixth-grade session will go from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. on July 13 through 15 and costs \$30.

Deadline to sign-up for the camps is May 15 and all costs include a camp T-shirt. For more information, contact Compliment at (785) 766-3758 or [complimentj@usd416.org](mailto:complimentj@usd416.org).

## **WRESTLING**

LHS head wrestling coach Bobby Bovaird will conduct a beginners and advanced camp on June 22 through June 25 in the LHS gymnasium

The beginners camp is for novice and youth wrestlers and will run from 5 to 7 p.m. each day. The minimum age is 6-years-old. Children who will be in kindergarten or first grade must have adult supervision.

The advanced camp will run from 7 to 9:15 p.m. for high school, middle school and experienced youth wrestlers. The cost for both camps is \$35 and includes a T-shirt. Deadline to register is June 1.

For more information, contact Bovaird at (913) 424-0999 or [bovairdr@usd416.org](mailto:bovairdr@usd416.org)

## **GIRLS SOCCER**

The LHS girls soccer program will prepare for its inaugural season this summer. Head coach Kyle Conley is holding a high school camp from 10 a.m. to noon on June 15 through 19 along with assistant coach Michael Pickman.

The cost for the camp is \$40, which includes a T-shirt. Campers will need to bring shin-guards and a water bottle.

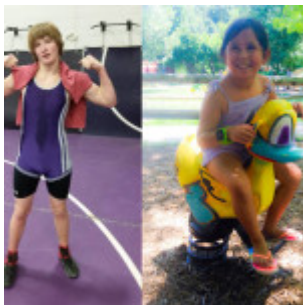
Deadline to sign-up is May 15. For more information contact Conley at [conleyk@usd416.org](mailto:conleyk@usd416.org).

## **BOYS SOCCER**

Head coach Ben York will be conducting his high school team camp on July 13 through 17. The cost for the camp is \$50. For more information, contact York at [benyork13@gmail.com](mailto:benyork13@gmail.com).

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# **Community rallies together for Jimmy and Mya**



Jimmy Dolan (left) and Mya Diacono suffered traumatic brain injuries just a month apart due to automobile accidents. It is their stories that have brought the Louisburg community closer together.

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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.

Both were rushed to hospitals with life-threatening conditions. Their lives, and the lives of their families, were turned upside down in an instant.

The two families were told the same thing – no brain injury is the same. There was no telling when they would wake up, breathe on their own or what their lives would be like.

The two kids who had never met each other were laying in beds at Children's Mercy Hospital 10 rooms apart – their families holding out hope that one day they would walk out of the hospital.

So, this is the story of Jimmy and Mya – a story of a tragic meeting, a long road to recovery and a community that came together to help two families when they needed it the most.

### **Jimmy's accident**

It was a Monday morning and Maureen Dolan had already started her work day at Vintage Park. The roads were slick that morning and she was a little concerned about her son Jimmy.

Maureen wanted to catch him before he left for school so she tried to call him. There was no answer.

"I just wanted to tell him to be careful," she said.

It was shortly after, a co-worker came in and told Maureen about an accident on old Metcalf Road. She swung her head toward the clock with a brief sense of relief.

Maureen knew Jimmy should have already been at school and that it couldn't have been him. It had to be someone else.

Then her phone rang – Jimmy was hurt.

Jimmy lost control of his vehicle near the intersection of 295<sup>th</sup> and Metcalf and slid off the road. The driver's side collided with a tree and left him unconscious and fighting for his life.

Workers from the Panhandle Eastern Pipe Line Co. heard the accident and were the first on the scene. Jimmy's truck had caught on fire and workers helped put it out while attending to Jimmy.

Moments later, USD 416 superintendent Dr. Brian Biermann was on his way to drop off his kids at school when he came upon the accident. At that time only a fire truck and the workers from the gas plant were on the scene.

"They weren't letting people through and I heard more sirens coming," Dr. Biermann said. "I could see a truck down in the little ravine but I didn't know who it was, but I did know it was about the time kids are going to school.

"I got out of the car and told my boys to stay put. As I walked down I could hear the people saying 'Stay with us, stay with us.' I knew it wasn't good."

Still not knowing who the victim was, Dr. Biermann asked the sheriff officers on the scene to run the plate hoping it wasn't one of his students. It was Jimmy Dolan.

Maureen arrived at the scene a few minutes later after a call

from Dr. Biermann in time to see her son on a stretcher preparing to be Life Flighted.

“I was told when I got there that they didn’t think he was going to make it,” she reflected.

Jimmy was loaded onto the helicopter and transported to Research Medical Center in Kansas City, Mo., where his fight for survival began.

### **Jimmy the Fighter**

Louisburg High School’s Bobby Bovaird had seen Jimmy’s fight and determination up close on the wrestling mat and in life.

Just two days earlier, Bovaird, the Wildcat coach, had just watched Jimmy put his best wrestling performance on display at the Louisburg Invitational. He finished fourth at 182 pounds despite losing a tough overtime match.

“He came off the mat, frustrated and angry, and he threw his headgear for the first time I’d ever seen him do that,” Bovaird said. “He was upset, and I knew that on that following Monday, we’d have a lot to work on. He wanted to work on it – he wanted to improve. He was driven and perhaps the most driven kid on the team.”

Jimmy was willing to do whatever it took to get better at the sport he loved. He didn’t have a lot of money to participate in offseason camps or trips with the Wildcat team.

That didn’t stop him. He picked up odd jobs here and there, including mowing his coach’s lawn to help pay for those camps, including a team trip to Nebraska this past summer.

But when LHS principal Dave Tappan came into Bovaird’s room that Jan. 12 morning to tell him the news of Jimmy’s accident, Bovaird’s heart sank.



**Jimmy Dolan had one of his best wrestling performances just two days before his accident.**

"The news floored me," he said. "I couldn't believe it, even after I heard Life Flight. I can't describe the feeling, hearing the sound of a helicopter flying overhead, seeing it out the window as it raced through the air, knowing that it was carrying someone you knew."

Jimmy arrived at Research and doctors immediately began treating him for his physical injuries and he was put on a ventilator. After several tests, it was found that he suffered from a brain shear injury, or more specifically, a diffuse axonal injury.

"The trauma doctor that first saw him said that he had just suffered a severe concussion, he wouldn't be able to wrestle for the rest of the year but that he would be fine," Maureen said.

"Then when we got into ICU, the neurologist came in and told us something different after running some tests said there was a shear injury on the brain. His injury was basically the all-over brain injury, it wasn't just on the frontal lobe. His

injury went all the way down to his brain stem.”

Doctors told Maureen that Jimmy’s outlook wasn’t good.

“When he first got there, the doctors weren’t sure if he was going to pull through or not,” Maureen said. “His brain started to swell and the fluid starting building up. They said if he does pull through they didn’t know if he would be able to walk or talk again.

“At first they told us that we should expect to be in ICU for six months because his coma could last that long. I told them, ‘I don’t think so. You don’t know Jimmy Dolan. He is not going to lay around for six months.’”

And he didn’t.

### **Road to Recovery**

For almost a month, Jimmy was in a coma, and there wasn’t much progress early on. On Jan. 30, he was moved from Research to Children’s Mercy Hospital for continued treatment.

It was a lot of waiting and praying for Maureen and the rest of Jimmy’s friends and family – including his wrestling family. In the days following the accident, the waiting room was filled with wrestling parents, teammates and coaches to provide support.

Bovaird made several trips to the hospital looking for signs that Jimmy was going to be OK. He, along with Maureen and Jimmy’s friends, would sit as his side and talk to him as he rested on the ventilator.

One day, he got the sign he was looking for – a pretty noticeable one.

“His buddies would tease him about giving him a rainbow-

colored mohawk, and we thought there was some response from him,” Bovaird said. “Maybe it was wishful thinking, or maybe it was there. I joined in with the teasing, talking about his favorite song being something by Taylor Swift. At that point, I was pretty sure I saw the middle finger of his right hand come up.

“Sure enough, his arm raised slightly and the finger extended. If there ever was a time that I would give a kid a free pass on something like that, this was it. Besides, it was a sign I think we all needed, me especially. Jimmy was there. His personality was still there and he was fighting to get back out.”



**Jimmy currently gets rehab several days a week at Children's Mercy Hospital**

As the days wore on, Jimmy continued to make progress. Then on Feb. 11, almost a month after his accident, Jimmy officially awoke from his coma and began to talk.



It was then his recovery started to speed up. Jimmy underwent therapy and his road to recovery was well on its way. He would take his first steps with a walker and eventually use it without the therapist's help.

"He is definitely making steady progress," Maureen said. "I asked him the next day after he woke up what his name was and where he was at and he told me. He just started improving by leaps and bounds.

"The brain reroutes itself and that is why he is able to start talking and walking again. The doctors say it could take time, even years for it get better, but no one really knows how long."

It is a journey Jimmy and Maureen are ready for, thanks in part to the Louisburg community.

### **Pin the Problem Jimmy**

The Dolans experienced many ups and downs through the near month of uncertainty with Jimmy's condition.

However, the one constant was the community of Louisburg – more specifically – the Wildcat wrestling family. From the day Jimmy was admitted to the hospital, Louisburg took over the Research waiting room on a daily basis.

Parents and students alike came by to support Maureen in her time of need, and Jimmy's friends made daily trips to visit their ailing comrade.

"It meant a lot to me," Jimmy said. "It felt really good to see them and have them come visit me. "

Jimmy was in the hospital 67 days between Research and Children's Mercy and during that time parents came to relieve Maureen and offered to stay by Jimmy's side so she could spend

some time with her second-grade daughter Jenny.

It certainly didn't stop there.



**One of Jimmy's best friends Joseph Hannah was one of several Louisburg residents to make countless trips to visit Jimmy**

"I couldn't tell you how many people came up to see Jimmy because there was just so many," Maureen said. "It was amazing. They brought gift cards, they brought support, they brought prayer...they brought so much and it was so wonderful.

"The wrestling family is very tight. They brought lunch and dinner every day for a long time. Louisburg is definitely the best place to live."

Joseph Hannah, one of Jimmy's best friends, and his parents Mark and Courtney Hannah, ordered purple rubber bracelets with

'Pin the Problem' written on them. Bovaird created a Facebook page to update everyone on his condition and the team wore Pin the Problem stickers on their head gear toward the end of the season.

The Louisburg Wrestling Club ordered Pin the Problem t-shirts and sold them during the regional tournament in February to raise money for the Dolans. The Louisburg American Legion held a 50/50 raffle to benefit, in which the winner donated most of her winnings back to Jimmy.

Louisburg Ford and LHS Cat-Backers donated the proceeds from their 3-point shot contest, and shortly after the accident, the administration and faculty collected money for the Dolans.

Even the employees at Maureen's work, Vintage Park, donated their PTO time so that she is able to stay with her family. Dr. Biermann also ordered the bus pick up her daughter Jenny for school, even though she was staying near Drexel, Mo., as buses are not supposed to cross state lines to pick up students.

All the support has meant the world to the Dolans as Jimmy has been able to focus on rehabbing and trying to get back to that normal life he had before that morning in January.

To this day, Jimmy doesn't remember what happened that fateful day.

"It was just shocking, to hear," Jimmy said. 'It's scary just trying to think about it and I am glad that I don't remember it.

"I look at life like it's a big deal now. I am just trying to take things step by step and that is the most important thing right now."

Jimmy currently has therapy four days a week at Children's Mercy and is staying at the Ronald McDonald house until he is

able to move on to outpatient rehabilitation closer to home.

"I have been making a lot of progress, especially with walking," Jimmy said. "It has been going really good. I even took 900 steps without the walker the other day."

He is also hitting the books as the school has been sending him work to do in hopes he can stay on course to graduate next year.

"We met with them to see what we can do to make sure Jimmy still graduates on time," Dr. Biermann said. "That is what Jimmy wants, that is what we want and his mom definitely wants that. I fully expect him to walk across that stage without his walker and get his diploma. He is doing some work up there with some education things and the plan is to transition him back a couple Fridays here later this month or early May."

"To where I saw Jimmy from the truck, from his stay at Research to now has just been unbelievable. God is good."

On Mar. 24, Jimmy reunited with his wrestling family during the team's banquet. For the first time since the accident, he walked through the halls of Louisburg High School.

"It was difficult to keep my composure when I saw Jimmy walking down the hallway when he came to the banquet," Bovaird said. "To hear him talking was one thing, but to see him walking – using only the walker for assistance – here in his own school was something that was just amazing to see."

Even though doctors gave Jimmy little hope in the beginning, he overcame the odds. Now Jimmy is the one giving hope – hope to a family that is in desperate need of it.

### **Mya's tragic day**

The afternoon of Feb. 24 was just like many others. Kids rushed out of Broadmoor Elementary as another day of school was done and little Mya Diacono caught a ride with family friend Jill Crane and her two daughters.

As the Cranes ventured on Kansas Highway 68 just outside the Louisburg city limits, Jill slowed to make the turn into Mya's home. Tragedy struck as a semi failed to slow down and hit her vehicle from behind.

Emergency vehicles rushed to the scene and Jill and her two daughters were taken to Miami County Medical Center. Unfortunately, Mya's injuries were more serious.

Mya suffered severe head trauma and had to be Life Flighted to Children's Mercy. The injuries left her in a coma and she had to be put on a ventilator.

Doctors informed Mya's parents, Spencer and Amber Gardner, that there is no way to know when she would wake up and what her life would be like if she did.



**Mya Diacono**

The Gardners had a feeling of hopelessness and the waiting was getting tiresome like it would for any parent in that situation. However, just 10 rooms away from Mya's, laid a little bit of hope.

First Baptist Church pastor Dan Rhodes came by Children's Mercy, recognized Spencer and asked about Mya. Then he told Spencer, "I have someone for you to meet."

Rhodes took the Gardners to see Jimmy Dolan. By that time, Jimmy was on his way to recovery. He was talking and started to regain some movement.

Although it was a bit of shock to both Amber and Spencer, hope started to come back.

"When I first saw him they were lifting him up out of bed and

putting him in his wheelchair because he told them he had to go to the bathroom and they were all excited,” Spencer said. “That is when it hit me like a ton of bricks – this is going to be our future.

“But if you are going to compare our 9-year-old daughter to something, why not compare her to the strength of a wrestler. Jimmy told people when he woke up that he was going to walk again and he has done really well. It is good for us to see someone succeeding that has been through this and come out the other side.”

Amber and Spencer continued to monitor Jimmy’s progress and became friends with Maureen. The three stayed at the Ronald McDonald House when they weren’t by their child’s side.

“Jimmy’s mom is so strong and it is nice to have someone there come by and say that (Mya) is doing great and she is going down the right path and that it is only going to get better,” Spencer said.

### **Support for Mya**

Four years ago, Mya was a kindergartner in Overland Park but Amber and Spencer had talked about moving to a smaller town to raise their children.

Spencer, who is a Louisburg High School graduate, grew up in Louisburg and wanted to bring his children up in the same type of environment.

“It was a great community for me to grow up in,” he said. “I went to a school where I knew everyone in my class. I got to wrestle and play golf and I wasn’t good at either of them. I couldn’t have asked for a better place to grow up.

“I left for a while and I always had this idea that I wanted my kids to grow up in the same small town. I didn’t expect to

come back and have the same closeness I had when I was a kid. The sense of community is still very much alive and well here.”

Amber, on the other hand, wasn’t quite as sure. She didn’t want Mya to have to start over again and make new friends.

As it turned out, that really wasn’t a problem for Mya.

“I worried that it was a small town and that she might not be accepted and I had all these what ifs,” Amber said. “But she has come here and made so many friends. I wouldn’t change our decision for anything because it has been great for Mya and our family.”

Amber and Spencer found out just how good the town was at one of the most disheartening times of their life. As they were struggling to cope with Mya’s condition, Amber got a visit from a complete stranger – Jenny Diederich.

She approached Amber about doing a fundraiser for Mya and the gesture caught her a little off-guard.





me was a big part of the Kids Helping Kids fundraiser to help Mya family

“(Jenny) didn’t even know us and said I am going to do this for you guys,” “I mean, who does this? We were just blown away with what she did.”

Diederich put on the Kids Helping Kids fundraiser at Louisburg High School that featured a bubble soccer game and a custom cake auction. Several community members donated cakes and Bubble Soccer Kansas brought inflatables as faculty and staff from Broadmoor Elementary took on each other.

Steve Hamilton with Chris Cakes fed the crowd while LHS band director John Cisetti brought his LHS Jazz Band to play at the event. The fundraiser was to help benefit not only Mya, but the Crane family as well.

As Amber arrived at the high school, she couldn't believe her eyes.

"I expected maybe 50 people and I was grateful for that," Amber said "When we pulled up to park, just seeing all the cars and then walking in the door and seeing a line of people....I just started to cry. There are good people in this world and I am just overwhelmed with all the support."

It got even more emotional later in the evening when Jill Crane, one of Amber's best friends, donated her half of the money to Mya. However, that isn't a gift Amber is going to accept just yet.

"Jill is my good friend and her daughter is Mya's best friend," Amber said. "She doesn't feel worthy because her daughters weren't injured critically. It is hard on everyone though. We are still arguing about that. Money is not going to change it. They still had injuries too."

The night was something the Gardner's needed. They saw everyone who cared for Mya and it lifted their spirits, even if it was for a few hours.

### **Jimmy and Mya**

As the days wore on, Jimmy made good on his promise to his family and he learned to walk with the assistance of a walker.

Jimmy's recovery was moving along at a rapid rate, but Mya's wasn't moving along quite as fast. There was signs of progress, however.

Mya's physical injuries have healed and she is no longer on the ventilator – a big obstacle for her recovery.

"I work for the railroad, so I was gone for a little bit, but the improvements she has made have been more dramatic for me because I wasn't there every day," Spencer said. "We have our milestones and our big thing was we wanted to breathe on her own and she is passed that. We are in the rehab stages now and she is using a lot more muscles than she was before."

Mya even gave her mom a glimpse of her old self.



**Mya and her mom Amber Gardner**

"She smiled for the first time late one night," Amber said. "I didn't realize she could hear me because I was making jokes about our family and a little smile came out and you could hear a little chuckle. I was like 'Did anyone just see that?'"

“Her body is healed and now we are just focusing on the brain. She went from no head control to some head control and that is one of our milestones. We know she has a long way to go. She is not eating on her own, she isn’t walking but she is on full assist. From the beginning to right now we feel like we have seen a lot of progress.”

The Gardners also saw progress wandering the halls of Children’s Mercy as Jimmy would make visits to Mya’s room, checking in on her.

“He comes by to see Mya every so often and they have even gone to therapy together,” Amber said. “He even made a card for her one time and dropped it by. It was really neat to see that.”

Jimmy was eventually released from Children’s Mercy and moved into the Ronald McDonald House with his mom, while still doing therapy. It is there Jimmy still stays in touch with the Gardners.

“You form a connection,” Amber said. “I sat with him with our boys a few days ago and he has improved so much. When I first saw him he wasn’t eating on his own and now he is eating fried chicken. That is amazing.”

Every time the Gardners look at Jimmy they see a hope – a hope that one day Mya will be the one roaming the hospital hallways, eating on her own and talking with them again.

They are patiently waiting for their precious “Baby Cakes” to wake up.

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# LHS wrestling hands out postseason honors



**Brenton Wrigley shakes hands with head coach Bobby Bovaird upon receiving the Wrestler of the Year award Tuesday during the team's postseason banquet at Louisburg High School.**

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Their season might have ended on the state wrestling mats in Salina, but members of the Louisburg wrestling team got a chance to reflect on what was a positive season for the Wildcats.

During Tuesday's end of the season banquet, coach Bobby Bovaird talked about a season in which the Wildcats ended a two-year drought and qualified five for the state tournament. Brenton Wrigley, Anders Vance, Mason Koechner, Ryan Adams and Nathan Keegan all made their first trip to state.

The Wildcats also had four wrestlers who had won at least 30 matches and six program records fell. As a team, Louisburg finished in the top three at five tournaments and had a 12-5 dual record.

"The last few years have been humbling," Bovaird said during the banquet. "But I knew that with patience, dedication and hard work we would be able to bring Louisburg back to the point where we are a competitive program. And here we are."





**The Louisburg High School wrestling team gathers together for one final picture after their postseason banquet Tuesday.**

Two Wildcats also were recognized for their work in the classroom. Seniors Wrigley and Zach Knox were each awarded honorable mention Academic All-State by the Kansas Wrestling Coaches Association.

Wrigley, who finished with a 35-9 record and a state qualifying bid at 195 pounds, took the highest honor as he was named Louisburg's Wrestler of the Year. The coaches also gave out 22 letters and several other honors.

The awards given out are:

### **Varsity letterwinners**

Seniors: Zach Knox, Nephi Rodriguez, Billy Rose and Brenton Wrigley

Juniors: Jordan Crowder, Jimmy Dolan, Zach Jones, Dillin Roberts, Bradley Trageser, Chris Turner and Anders Vance

Sophomores: David Bindi, Connor Green, Ben Hupp, Nathan Keegan, Mason Koechner, Dylan Meyer and Lyndon Smith

Freshman: Ryan Adams, Kyle Allen, Tucker Batten and Thad Hendrix

### **Team awards**

Wrestler of the Year: Brenton Wrigley

Wildcat of the Year: Nathan Keegan

Workhorse Award: Anders Vance

Newcomer of the Year: Ryan Adams

JV Wrestler of the Year: Bradley Trageser

Highest team GPA: Austin Raetzel

### **30-match winners**

Nathan Keegan (30-19), Ryan Adams (37-12), Brenton Wrigley (35-9) and Mason Koechner (39-14)

### **Records**

Zach Knox: Career Nearfall-2 (28); Career Reversals (38); Career Escapes (77)

Ryan Adams: Season Nearfall-2 (19); Season Reversals (25)

Mason Koechner: Season Pins (33)

### **Tri-County Spotlight**

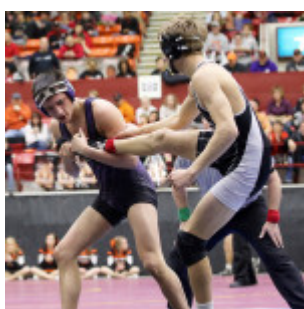
First team: Nathan Keegan (113 pounds); Ryan Adams (138); Mason Koechner (220); Anders Vance (285)

Second team: Brenton Wrigley (195)

Honorable mention: Zach Knox (132)

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## Wildcats come up short of medals



Louisburg freshman Ryan Adams battles Frontenac's Brandon Miekus during a 138-pound match Saturday at the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in Salina. Adams went 2-2 on the day and finished a win short of a medal.

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SALINA — As a freshman, Ryan Adams set a pretty high goal for himself.

Adams wanted to be a four-time state medalist and eventually a state champion for the Wildcats. One of those dreams is still alive, while the other was dashed Saturday during the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships.

The Louisburg 138-pounder came up one win short of a medal when he was pinned by Holton's Tyler Price in the first period of the consolation quarterfinals. Adams finished the tournament at 2-2.



"We talked about what it means that he fell short of one of his goals," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "I told him that falling short of one goal should make him all that much more motivated to pursue the other goals. Now that he can't be a 4-time placer, he's got more motivation to pursue his goal of being a state champion. He's a talented kid."

Adams wasn't the only Wildcat to end his season with a loss. Anders Vance (285), Mason Koechner (220), Brenton Wrigley (195) and Nathan Keegan (113) also came up short of a state medal at the Salina Bicentennial Center.

All four wrestlers ended their state runs with a 1-2 record, and even though they didn't reach the medal stand, winning a state tournament match meant something to them and their coach.

"It was such an exciting weekend," Bovaird said. "I'm so proud of the fact that not only did five wrestlers make it to state, but all five went down there to compete for a medal. They all gave 100 percent in their matches. Each guy won at least one match. Technically, that put each of them in the top-12 of their weight classes. However, I had a sinking feeling in my stomach after it was all over.

"The last two years, I'd felt so low after not qualifying anyone for state. That was a solid blow to my ego as a coach. This year, I was pretty happy to take five kids to state, and I was so proud that they all won at least one match at state. When it was done, it hit me that this was the first time as a competitor or coach that I'd been at the state tournament and left without a state placer. I didn't like that feeling, and I'm disappointed. The good thing is that I have reason to be disappointed. The boys are such great kids to be around, and they're very talented and hard-working. I'm not disappointed in them – I'm disappointed for them. I know they can do great things, and I just wanted the best for them. Next season will be something different. I love how these guys are feeling

motivated already, and I'm feeling that motivation, too."

Adams opened his state tournament run Friday against Wamego's Dalton Carley, an eventual state medalist. Carley, who beat Adams earlier in the year, had a little more difficult time as he eventually beat Adams by a 4-2 decision.

Later on in the day, Adams beat Tonganoxie's Garrett Martin by an 8-0 major decision after losing to Martin earlier in the year. He then followed it up with another revenge win Saturday when he pinned Frontenac's Brandon Miekus, who he lost two in the final seconds of the regional semifinals.

Adams finished the year with a 37-12 record, many of which came thanks to wrestlers who made it far in the state tournament.

"When we were watching the 138-pound state semifinals, we figured out that with the four wrestlers on the mat, they accounted for 8 of his 12 losses, including three to Baldwin's Thomas Lisher, who was the eventual state champion," Bovaird said. "Even though Ryan fell short of his goal, he definitely gave it everything he had. With all the time he dedicates to wrestling in the offseason, he's definitely on the right track to be our next state champion, and because he's a great team member, I expect his passion to rub off on his teammates."



**Louisburg heavyweight Anders Vance works for position on Towanda-Circle's Austin King on Saturday at the state tournament in Salina. Vance finished his season with a 27-9 record**

The tournament got off to a rough and controversial start for Vance, who lost his opening round match to Ulysses' Austin Ochoa in a 7-6 decision in overtime. The match was tied at 6-all but Vance had Ochoa in a headlock, but it slipped and was called for an illegal hold, giving Ochoa a point and the match.

Vance rebounded to pin Jefferson West's Michael Majors in the first period Friday before falling to Towanda Circle's Austin King by decision in his first match Saturday.

"I wasn't happy with how the officials called his first match Friday, but then again I've always told the team to do everything they can to keep the match result out of the hands

of the officials,” Bovaird said. “Anders had a much better second match, but in his third, I think that he just hit an obstacle he couldn’t overcome. His opponent, a kid from Circle, had been a state qualifier the year before, and I think that experience gave him an advantage over Anders. Next year, however, Anders is going to be able to take his experience from this season, plus his confidence, and use it to push him through any obstacle in the way as he tries to win state.”



**Louisburg senior Brenton Wrigley ties to hold down Rock Creek’s Colton Hill on Saturday in Salina. Wrigley lost the match by a 4-2 decision and ended his Wildcat career with a 35-9 record.**

Wrigley, a senior, was able to get his first ever state victory when he opened the tournament Friday with a 7-3 victory in overtime over Hugoton’s Noel Camacho. In the



quarterfinals, Wrigley fell in a close 7-4 decision to Chapman's Jacob Stoneberger, before falling again in the consolation round Saturday by a 4-2 decision to Rock Creek's Colton Hill.

The loss ended his season and Wildcat career with a 35-9 record.

"It was definitely bittersweet," Bovaird said. "He's been such a strong leader for the team. His sophomore and junior seasons, he had some setbacks with minor injuries and he couldn't build up the confidence that he should have had. This year, after having a great week at the Nebraska Outdoor Challenge Camp and a solid football season, he walked onto the mat with all sorts of confidence. He won three tournaments (Tonganoxie, Topeka, and League), had 35 wins, and beat state-ranked kids throughout the season. I'm very proud of his growth, although I wish the season had ended differently."



Louisburg's Nathan Keegan stops at shot from Chanute's Gage Leedy during a 113-pound match Saturday at the state

tournament in Salina. Keegan ended his season with a 30-19 record

Keegan and Koechner both sophomores, also picked up their first state victories. Both wrestlers lost their first match, before rebounding to win their next.

Keegan, after losing to Tonganoxie Patterson Starcher in overtime Friday, came back with a pin of Clearwater's Jake Thomas in the consolation round. He was eventually pinned by Chanute's Gage Leedy in the third round of his next match.



**Sophomore Mason Koechner battles Smoky Valley's Jarod DeMott Saturday in Salina. Koechner was 1-2 at the state tournament at 220 pounds and finished the year with a team-high 39 wins.**

As for Koechner, he fell to Colby's Austin Hart, the eventual

state champion in the first round. He responded with a pin of Holton's Nathan Shields in his next match Friday.

On Saturday, however, Koechner's season came to an end when he fell 10-4 to fourth-place finisher Jarod DeMott from Smoky Valley.

"We made the trip to state, and simply qualifying wasn't good enough for the guys who went," Bovaird said. "They wanted to win matches and bring home medals. Next year, we're not just gunning to send people to state; we're gunning to bring home medals and to get Louisburg to the top of Kansas Class 4A."