

# Welcome to Louisburg Sports Zone!



Leave it to a children's movie to solve all of life's problems – well, at least my problems anyway.

It was a movie that led me to create the Louisburg Sports Zone website and start my own action photo business to coincide with it.

Before I get to that, let me take you back to seven years ago when I arrived in a small quaint town called Louisburg. It was a town I was familiar with as I grew up in Paola, but I never envisioned myself coming back to Miami County to raise a family.

Coming out of college, my goal was to make it big one day by getting a job at a large, daily newspaper and become a beat writer for a college team or professional team. I knew with hard work and practice that I could get there one day.

Well, two kids later and my priorities quickly changed – for the better. After stops at newspapers in Leavenworth and Atchison, my wife Jennifer and I wanted to move closer to family and when a newspaper job in the county opened up, I was offered the job and took it.

After I was hired, my family and I bought a house in Louisburg and decided to make this our home. The place where we were going to raise our two kids, that eventually became three several years later, was a place we fell in love with.

Louisburg was our home, and at the same time, covering Louisburg athletics became my responsibility and one I didn't take lightly. Living in the same town I worked in was a first for me.

I got the chance to get to know the community and they got the chance to know me through my articles. I was lucky enough to cover Louisburg High School's first state football championship in 2010 and several other state title runs in other sports.

Getting a chance to know the kids, coaches and parents was something I will never forget. Unfortunately, all that ended for me a month ago when I was let go from my responsibility of writing about Louisburg sports.

I honestly didn't know what to do. It was my life for seven years and then all of a sudden I was going to have to find something else to do, something I probably wasn't going to like.

Trying to figure things out, I remember watching an animated movie called Big Hero 6 with my kids. It talked about when a problem arises, and you can't figure out a solution, try looking at it from a different angle.

So, ladies and gentleman, Louisburg Sports Zone is my different angle.

This site gives me the opportunity and privilege to write about athletic achievements in the area and continue doing what I love to do. It is a free service that I provide to you and one I hope you appreciate.

Hopefully, down the road, not too far, businesses in the area will want to advertise here so that this can grow into something even bigger. For those who want to buy photos from events I cover, they can visit [louisburgsportszone.smugmug.com](http://louisburgsportszone.smugmug.com) and search through what

I hope becomes several galleries.

I plan on covering athletic events at Louisburg High School and Louisburg Middle School, along with elementary-age activities. This page is going to be updated on a regular basis to give you the most up-to-date sports news and you won't have to wait 5 days or even a week to read about it.

Oh, and did I mention...IT IS FREE!!

I just want to say a big "Thank you" to my family for all the support and encouragement they have given me. I want to thank all the members of community who reached out to me on Twitter, Facebook or just picked up the phone during what was a difficult time in my life.

Also, I want to give a big shout out to Mr. Kenneth Sweeney, a senior at Louisburg High School who helped design this site for me and was there to answer all my weird questions. I appreciate everything and all the hard work you put into it.

When I moved here seven years ago, I figured I was never going to make it "big." I couldn't have been more wrong. I have definitely hit it big and this community is the reason why.

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## **Wrestlers place seven at Baldwin**



BALDWIN CITY – The Baldwin Invitational Wrestling Tournament features a gauntlet of state-ranked teams and wrestlers from across the state.

Louisburg seemed to handle that task just fine Saturday as the Wildcat wrestling team placed seven in the top seven to come away with their best finish in several seasons. Although Louisburg placed 10th in the team standings with 110 points, the Wildcats more than made their mark.

“This was our best performance at Baldwin since we started going there,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “I was there as an assistant coach when (Baldwin coach) Kit Harris began the tournament 14 years ago. It was a tough tournament then, and it’s only gotten tougher as the years have passed. We got 10th out of 17, but the range from 10th to fifth place in the team score was about 18 points.

“Any given match could have made a big difference had the outcome gone the other way. I’m pretty proud of how we stepped out there and wrestled. Several coaches whom I’ve known for years were pretty complementary about how the guys looked.”

The Wildcats had three wrestlers who were one win away from competing in the championship round. Senior Brenton Wrigley (195 pounds), sophomore Mason Koechner (220) and junior Anders Vance (285) each finished third.

Vance (22-6) was also honored with the Gorriarian Award, which was given to the wrestler in the tournament with the most pins in the least amount of time. Vance, who was 4-1 on the day, had four pins and two of them were under a minute. He seems to

be responding well after being sidelined with a concussion earlier in the year.

His only loss came to eventual champion Kasey Feyh from Wamego, who pinned Vance in the second period. A big victory for Vance came in the second round when he pinned De Soto's Caleb McQuality in overtime.

"Anders is having a pretty good run this season," Bovaird said. "The only major setback was the concussion that caused him to have to sit out two tournaments. I think he's back in the saddle and ready to go, however. He's been such a hard worker in the practice room.

"I've never had a wrestler win that award at a tournament before, so it feels pretty good knowing that we had a very dominant athlete. Anders just didn't match up with the Wamego kid, who's been ranked high at state all year. That kid had a long reach, and he was pretty mobile and fast, too. I think that with some work over the next two weeks, our coaching staff can get Anders ready for that kind of match. When it comes down to it, Anders is pretty fast and mobile, too."



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Louisburg junior Anders Vance works for a pin Saturday during the Baldwin Invitational Tournament.

Vance finished third overall  
at 285 pounds.

In the semifinals of 195 pounds, Wrigley matched up with Baldwin's Jake Katzer in one of the better matches of the day. Wrigley took Katzer, who is ranked No. 4 in the state, to two overtimes before falling in a 7-4 decision and handed Wrigley just his sixth loss of the year.

Wrigley (25-6) didn't let the loss get him down as he responded with a pin of Royal Valley's Jacob Box and then beat Wamego's Shawn Burns in a 4-2 decision for third place.

"We were all pretty disappointed with that loss, but it's great that Brenton is hanging with a kid like that," Bovaird said. "Two weeks ago, Brenton had a 5-3 win over the No. 5 ranked kid from Independence, and now he's going the full distance with another kid who's been ranked all year. Brenton is having some smart matches, and his confidence level is right where it needs to be. He believes that he belongs on the mat with these guys. I see no doubt in his eyes when he goes out to wrestle."

Koechner also left the mat at Baldwin with plenty of positives himself. He became the first Wildcat to reach 30 wins, not only this season, but the first Louisburg wrestler to reach that mark since Austin Hood and Austin Caskey did that in 2012.

The Louisburg sophomore pinned his way to victory in his first matches of the day before getting pinned himself in the semifinals against Smoky Valley's Jarod DeMott. DeMott, who is ranked No. 6 in Class 4A, pinned Koechner in the third period.

Koechner came back to win a 7-5 decision over Baldwin's Gunther Wehrman and then beat Abilene's Blaise Lehman in a 6-4 decision to finish third.

"His semifinals match was a tough loss against a strong kid,"

Bovaird said. "By the end of the match, you could see that both kids had been giving it everything they've got. That kid was a senior with just one loss, and Mason is a sophomore with a handful of losses, but also some pretty high-quality wins. I'm excited to see what Mason is going to do with this season, as well as the rest of his career as a Wildcat wrestler."

Nathan Keegan also had a strong outing for the Wildcats at 113 pounds as he finished fifth. Keegan won a 4-2 decision over Baldwin's T.J. Hopper in the fifth-place match and went 3-2 on the day.

Senior Zach Knox (132) and junior Bradley Trageser (285) both finished in sixth place, while freshman Ryan Adams (138) came in seventh.

The Wildcats, which have been plagued by injuries most of the season, now get a little chance to rest up as they get a week off before traveling to Eudora on Feb. 13 and 14 for the Frontier League Dual Tournament.

"We definitely need some time to recover," Bovaird said. "The month of January is always tough on a team, and this season has been one of the most trying stretches. We've lost kids to concussions, a car accident, appendicitis, broken ribs, torn knee ligaments and fractured vertebrae. Plus, it seems like the overall health has been a struggle this season – especially with all the little bugs that have been going around. We just need some time to relax, get refocused, and begin the long haul toward the end of the season."