

Top 10 Louisburg Sports Stories of 2024



It was a successful, and eventful, year for Louisburg High School athletics and for those who are connected to the Wildcat program.

This past year created a lot of school history for LHS and a few programs made their way to state competition.

Below are the top stories from 2024, along with a brief explanation of each. Included in the writeup is the link to the actual story from the event.

When putting the list together, I took a lot of things into account – whether it was team vs. individual, popularity of the sport, historical achievements and the interest it drew on the web site.

This year was a blast to cover and I am looking forward to seeing what 2025 will bring. Thank you to everyone for their support and can't wait for it all to begin again.



Jordan Roquemore was hired as the new head coach of the Louisburg girls soccer program after serving four years as an assistant.

10. Coaching Changes: Willer steps down from LHS volleyball, Roquemore takes over girls soccer

Louisburg volleyball and girls soccer saw some big changes in their respective programs.

Over the summer, Jordan Roquemore was hired as the head coach

for the Wildcat girls soccer program after spending several years as an assistant.

He became the third head coach in the history of Louisburg girls soccer. He replaced former coach Ben York, who coached the Wildcats the last two seasons.

“I feel tremendously honored to take over as head coach,” Roquemore said. “It’s an amazing opportunity to take over an exceptional program with a great group of athletes, supportive parents and invested community members. I don’t take the responsibility lightly, but I am also really excited.”



Louisburg volleyball coach Leanna Willer is stepping down from her post after serving as head coach for the last four seasons.

On the volleyball side, head coach Leanna Willer submitted her resignation in early December.

Willer has spent eight seasons with the Wildcat program,

including the last four as head coach. She accepted a new position as head coach at Olathe East.

“This decision is bittersweet, but deep down I know that this is the best decision for me and my life,” Willer said in an email to parents. “The team will move on, and I feel lucky that I could play a small part in the long-standing traditions of the program. To the alumni and class of 2024, I thank you for your commitment to this team and to this program, and for making my time at Louisburg unforgettable. To our younger players, I am sorry for not seeing your journeys all the way through, but please know that you have my unwavering support and I cannot wait to see what you all can accomplish with the time you have left as Louisburg Wildcats.”



Louisburg junior Sabra Brueggen swims the backstroke during the prelims of the Class 5-1A state meet in Lenexa.

9. Brueggen wins state swim medal

For the third straight season, Sabra Brueggen left the Class 5-1A state swim meet with some hardware.

The Louisburg junior showed why she is among the state's best as she earned a fourth place medal in the 200-yard individual medley – her first ever state medal in that event – Saturday at the Shawnee Mission Aquatic Center.

The 2-day meet provided a lot of ups, and some downs, for the Louisburg swim program, but for Brueggen it was nice to return to the medal stand.

“I was very happy and content with my 200 IM swims last weekend,” Brueggen said. “Not only did I set a new personal best time, but I also walked away with fourth place in an event that is not one of my primaries.”

Janie Harth, Ella Bockelman and Cadence Weichert also joined Brueggen at the state meet as they qualified for the consolation finals in the 200 medley relay 400 freestyle relay.



8. Dixon achieves pro volleyball dream

It was setting up to be an epic finish to Anna Dixon's collegiate volleyball career.

Dixon, as a graduate transfer, made the move to the University of Florida for her final season and quickly made an impact on the Gators' roster.

Despite have to learn a new position due to an injury on the team, Dixon seemed to flourish. She helped the Gators out to a quick start and everything was going according to plan.

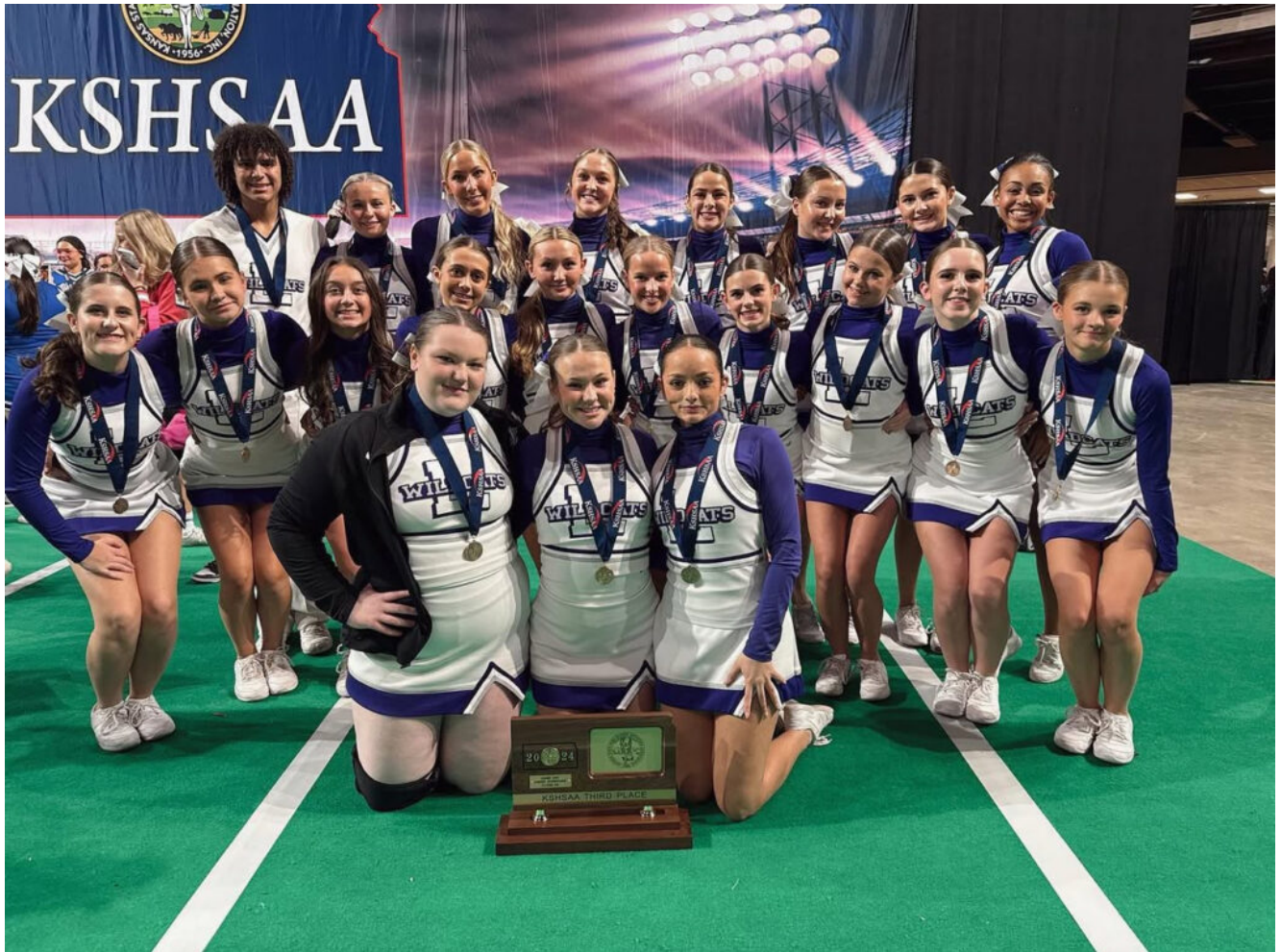
Then, the unthinkable happened.

Dixon suffered a season-ending elbow injury that put a premature end to her collegiate career. It was a devastating blow.

However, instead of sulking, Dixon worked that much harder to get back to the court and achieve her ultimate goal – playing professional volleyball.

All that hard work finally came to fruition back in July when Dixon, a 2019 Louisburg High School graduate, signed with the Atlanta Vibe, which is a part of the Pro Volleyball Federation.

“I am super excited to compete at the highest level, but also to be able to do that here in the US,” Dixon said. “It has been a dream of mine to be able to play professionally, in front of club girls who are in the same shoes that I was in many years ago. I am excited to give them the opportunity to have something to look forward to and work toward. Blessed for the opportunity and ready to get to work.”



Members of the Louisburg cheer team are: (Front row) Anna Brizendine, Addison Vargo, Reece Jones; (middle row) Leia Ward, Lilly Burnett, Taryn Osborn, Elle Keating, Brooklyn Roney, Harper Boyle, Kelsey Shelton, Kim Powls, Gretchen Reitz, Kinsley Rayne; (back row) Will Leach, Kayleigh Ramsey (Laney Stohs, Reece Younggren, Reese Anderson, Greta Gatzka, Addison Bishop, Maggie Wanjigi

7. Cheer takes third at state

TOPEKA – The Louisburg High School cheerleading squad is no stranger to the finals of the Class 4A Game Day competition.

Heading into the Nov. 23 showcase in Topeka, the Wildcats have made the final round in each of the last five seasons. Louisburg had no problem making it a sixth straight, and for the fifth time in six years, they came home with a state plaque.

Louisburg finished third in the state competition as it edged out Baldwin for the top three spot in Class 4A.

“Bringing home another trophy from the Game Day Cheer competition was a testament to our team’s hard work, dedication, and growth throughout the season,” Louisburg cheer coach Breanna Kostroske said. “It means so much to us because it reflects their skill, their heart, and spirit—three things we emphasize daily. For our athletes, it symbolizes their resilience and the countless hours they’ve spent perfecting their routines.

“As coaches, we are incredibly proud of their overall performance. They left it all on the floor, and while there is always room for improvement, they gave a performance that showcased their teamwork, precision, and energy.”



Louisburg junior Ashton Moore took fourth overall at 190

pounds at the Class 4A state wrestling tournament in February.

6. Moore medals at state wrestling

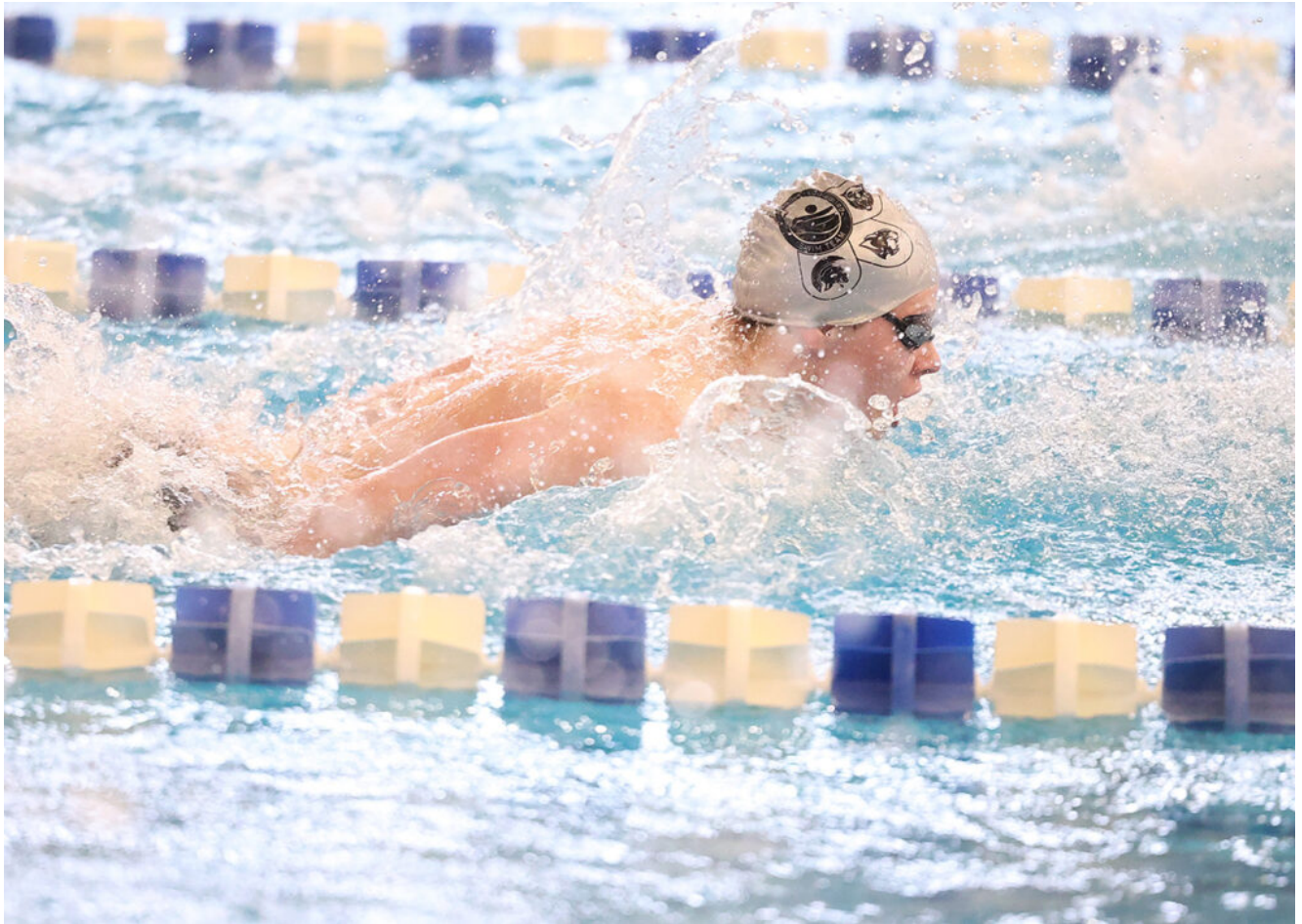
SALINA – Louisburg has been no stranger to the medal stand at the Class 4A state wrestling tournament and it was the case again back in February in Salina.

Louisburg junior Ashton Moore reached the semifinals at 190 pounds on the first day to secure himself a medal, and then finished fourth overall on the tournament's final day.

Moore had several close matches throughout the 3-day tournament at the Tony's Pizza Events Center and was challenged each day.

"I thought I wrestled some of my best matches of the season and it felt great to have it pay off with a medal," Moore said. "It felt amazing to win those first two matches and know I was guaranteed my medal. Those wins really helped me gain a lot of confidence going forward in the tournament."

Five other Wildcats made the trip to state, but faced some tough matchups. Juniors Canaan Clayton (113 pounds), Will Showalter (120), Logan Henry (132), Jay McCaskill (157) and senior Traden Noll (150) each finished 0-2 on the first day.



Louisburg sophomore Colin Brown earned medals in the 100 butterfly and 100 backstroke during the Class 5-1A state meet in Topeka.

5. Wildcat boys swim makes history earning 5 medals at state

TOPEKA – The Louisburg boys swim program is still relatively new compared to other teams around the state, but the Wildcats made its presence felt back in February at the Class 5-1A state meet in Topeka.

Louisburg had its best postseason finish in its young history as the Wildcats finished eighth overall in the team standings with 104 points thanks in part to just four swimmers.

Two of those athletes – Colin Brown and Andrew Jamison – each brought home individual medals. Brown, Jamison, Colton Prettyman and Noah Sharp also medaled in the 200-yard medley

relay.

Brown hit the pool strong as the Wildcat sophomore medaled fourth in the 100-yard butterfly and later finished fifth in the 100 backstroke with personal best times.

Jamison, another sophomore, earned two medals of his own. He finished fifth in the 200 individual medley and later took sixth in the 100 breaststroke.

Prettyman reached the consolation finals in the 50 freestyle and took 13th overall with a personal best time.



Louisburg senior Myles Vohs makes a leaping catch in the fourth quarter of Friday's game against Bishop Miede.

4. Wildcat football nearly pulls upset of Miego as successful season comes to early close

The mountain of playing Bishop Miego is always a tough one for public schools to climb, especially when it comes to football.

Miego, which has won seven state titles in the last 10 years, has never lost to a non-private school in the playoffs during that decade long of dominance.

Louisburg wanted to be the first team to hand it that loss as the No. 2 seed Wildcats hosted the No. 15 Stags in the first round of the Class 4A state playoffs.

The Wildcats were so close to that mountaintop, but came up just short as they fell to Miego, 21-14, to end their season with a 7-2 record.

Louisburg was behind 14 points, only to rally and tie the game at halftime. The Wildcats had one final drive to try and tie it again late, but a Miego interception dashed the Wildcats' hopes of an upset.

"In this moment, the only word I can come up right now is proud," Louisburg coach Drew Harding said. "I am so proud of the team. Our biggest emphasis was we had to start fast and we didn't. They got out to a 14-0 lead, and most times when you play teams like Miego that can snowball and get out of hand quick. Those guys just battled and were able to tie it up at halftime. Then for us to continue to fight and have a chance to tie it at the end – proud is all I can say about them."

The Wildcats ended their season with back-to-back losses after they won their first seven games of the season. They were in line to win their third straight league title, but lost a close game the week before to Spring Hill that also bumped

them off their No. 1 seed line, forcing a matchup with Miego in the first round.

Miego's streak of state titles came to an end later in the season as the Stags fell to Andover Central in the state championship game.



(Photo courtesy of Minna Meyer)

The Louisburg girls soccer team hoists the regional championship plaque following their 2-0 win against Maranatha Academy.

3. Wildcat girls soccer wins regional championship

For the last two seasons, the Louisburg girls soccer team has seen heartbreak in the Class 4-1A regional championship.

Losses to Topeka-Hayden and Bishop Miego have prevented the Wildcats from that regional title, with their last coming in

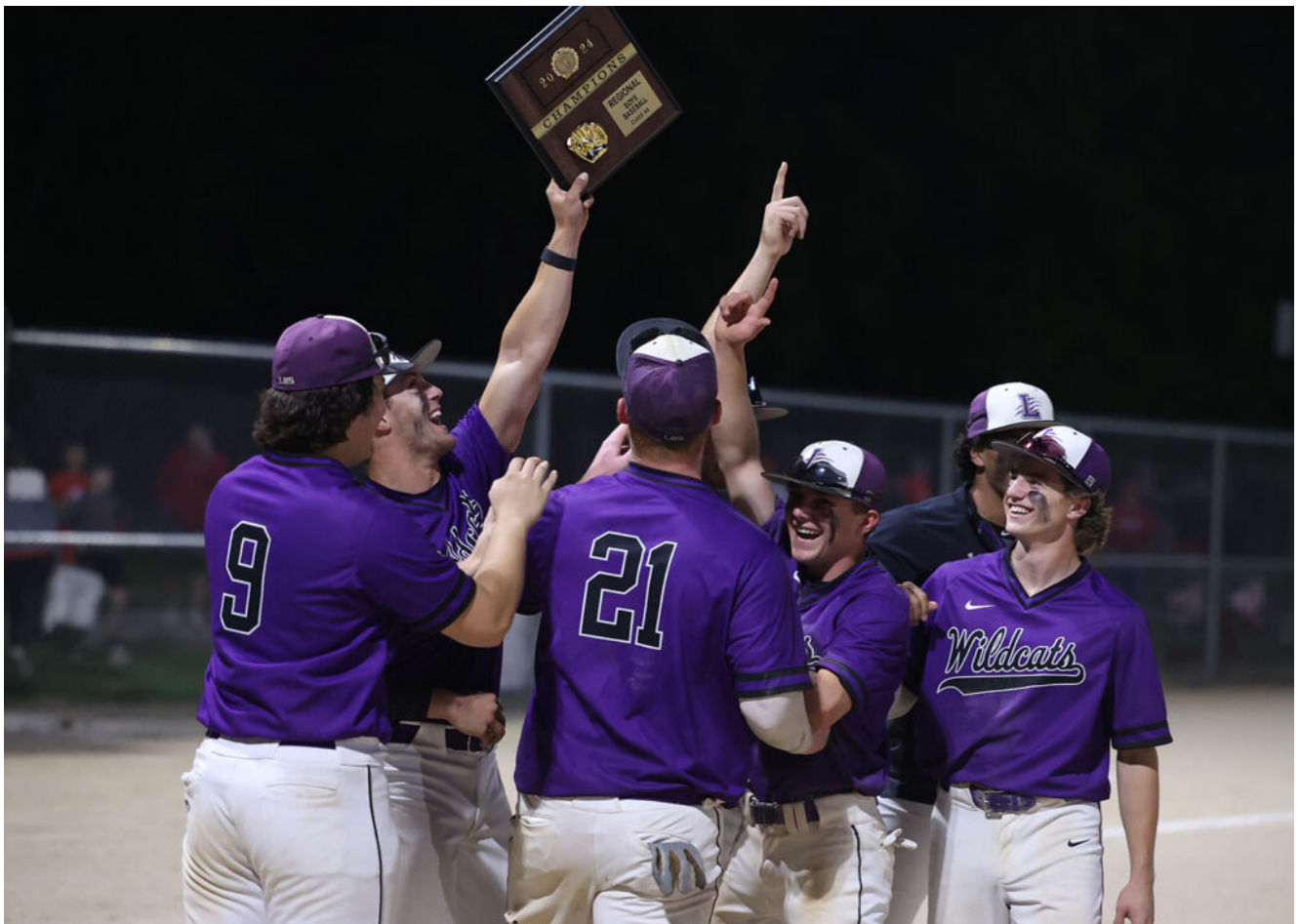
2021.

It is elusive no more.

The No. 1 seed Wildcats shutout No. 8 Maranatha Academy, 2-0, to win the Class 4-1A regional title at Wildcat Stadium. It was a dominating effort from start to finish as the Wildcats improved their record to 13-4-1 on the season.

"This was a preseason goal of ours," Louisburg coach Ben York said. "We fell short last year and we wanted to do as much as we could in the regular season to control our own destiny. The girls put a lot of work in and were focused to get to this game and get a win. They definitely earned this one and it was good to see them enjoy it."

Louisburg faced a tough matchup in the state quarterfinals as the Wildcats lost to Bishop Miege at home, 7-0.



Louisburg senior Declan Battle hoists the regional championship trophy following the Wildcats' 10-3 win over

Wamego in Class 4A regional championship game.

2. Wildcat baseball earns first regional title in 15 years

The current members of the Louisburg baseball team couldn't remember the last time the Wildcats made the state tournament even if they tried.

That's because they were just wee toddlers the last time the Wildcats earned a spot a state – 2009 to be exact.

These players are going to have a hard time forgetting this one.

For the first time in 15 years, Louisburg is headed back to the state tournament after the Wildcats put together a convincing 10-3 victory over Wamego in the Class 4A regional championship back in May at Lewis-Young Park.

The Wildcats also defeated Parsons, 8-0, in the regional semifinal to put together what was a dominating performance from top to bottom.

"This is just amazing," Louisburg coach Kade Larson said. "To see how much work these guys have put in, then to come out and get the job done, it is pretty surreal. We had a bunch of guys step up and do exactly what they needed to do. They played great defense, pitched great and everyone in the dug out was into the game. It was a great win.

"It has been awhile and it has been a long time coming. We have had some great teams and this team finally pushed through and got it done."

In the state tournament, the Wildcats had to battle rival Paola in the first round, but lost in a pitcher's dual to the Panthers, 3-0.



Louisburg senior Maddy Carpenter-Ross celebrates after clearing 12 feet at the Class 4A state meet in Wichita. That clearance gave Carpenter-Ross her second straight state championship in the event.

1. Wildcat sweep pole vault state titles, medal 8 at state

WICHITA — Cooper Wingfield and Maddy Carpenter-Ross found their way atop the medal stand last May at the Class 4A state track meet.

All season, Carpenter-Ross had her eyes set on a second straight state title in the pole vault and she dominated her competition.

Going into the Class 4A state meet at Wichita State, Carpenter-Ross won every competition going away and was ready to do the same against some of the state's best.

This time, however, it was much harder.

To get this state title, Carpenter-Ross was going to have to have to set a new personal best and break her own school record in the process.

She did it and accomplished that feat on her first try.

With two competitors left at 12 feet, Carpenter-Ross cleared it on her first try as did Holton's Piper Robinson. Both competitors missed at 12-6, and since they were tied, they decided the winner based on misses at 11-6, where the Louisburg senior got it on her first try.

"It is pretty awesome," Carpenter-Ross said. "I worked really hard for that and I am so relieved right now. It was a little stressful, but I was in that competitive mindset and I was so happy that I PR'd. Everyone was setting personal records, so I was just like 'My turn.'"



Louisburg junior Cooper Wingfield pumps his fist after

clearing 15 feet in the pole vault at the Class 4A state meet in Wichita. He captured his first state title in the event.

Wingfield, who was the state runner-up last season, entered the competition at 14 feet. He missed the first two attempts on his opening height, and another miss would not only prevent him from a state title, but a spot on the medal stand.

On the third attempt, the Louisburg junior cleared it with ease and eventually cleared 15 feet on his first attempt, which was the winning height.

“I was really nervous there on that last attempt (at 14 feet),” Wingfield said. “All I needed was a good jump to get in the zone and from there I knew I could jump pretty high. The competition was a lot harder this time around than it was last year. I knew I had to make everything on my first attempt and once I had one good jump, I knew I could do it.”

It had already been a special season in the pole vault for Wingfield, as he earned a league and regional title, and broke the school record.

Other state medalists were Gavin Lohse (third, long jump), Jaymes Melton (seventh, shot put), Ben O’Bryan (seventh, discus), Suzanna Dansel (seventh 100 dash) and Jacob Brown (eighth, pole vault). The girls 4×100 team of Dansel, Kendall Crossley, Emma Vohs and Addi Mallett medaled sixth.

McCaskill leads Wildcats in challenging Tonganoxie

ourney



Louisburg senior Jay McCaskill won the 165-pound weight class at the Randy Starcher Invitational at Tonganoxie High School.

TONGANOXIE – The Louisburg boys wrestling team faced its toughest competition to date as the Wildcats traveled to the Randy Starcher Invitational on Dec. 21 in Tonganoxie.

The tournament featured a pair of state-ranked teams in Tonganoxie and St. Thomas Aquinas, along with traditionally good teams in Frontenac, Lansing and Savannah (Mo.). With all that came several state-ranked wrestlers, and the Wildcats were more than tested.

Louisburg battled its way through its final tournament of 2024 as the Wildcats sent six wrestlers to the podium as each of them had a top four finish, including senior Jay McCaskill, who won the 165-pound title.

In all, the Wildcats finished sixth in the team standings out of 10 teams with 130 points. Tonganoxie won the tournament title with 202 points, as it edged out runner-up Savannah by one.

“Tonganoxie definitely upped the ante with how tough their tournament is,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “The guys definitely stepped up to the challenge. That’s our motto this year – Carpe Diem, or ‘seize the day.’ We’ve been talking about it in the sense that our goal is to be able to rise up to any challenge or obstacle in our way. Tournaments like what Tongie puts on is a great measuring stick to help us learn and refocus.”



Louisburg senior Canaan Clayton puts an opponent on his back on Dec. 21 in Tonganoxie.

McCaskill led the charge for Louisburg as he rolled through the 165-pound bracket with ease. He finished the day with a 5-0 record and improved his season record to 11-0.

The Louisburg senior also never had to work outside the first period as all five of his victories were by pin in under two minutes. That included a pin of Savannah's Kaiden Phillips in the championship match in just 1 minute and 3 seconds.

"Jay is in an incredible groove right now," Bovaird said. "He started off fighting an illness that kept him off the mats the first week, but since the December Duals, he's been a pinning machine. At Tonganoxie, he had his sights on getting the gold medal, and he did it in a dominant fashion."

The five other Wildcats who reached the podium each finished fourth overall. Seniors Canaan Clayton (120 pounds), Mika McKitrick (132), sophomore Bryce Thompson (157), along with seniors Brayden Yoder (190) and Miles Meek (285) all earned a medal.

McKitrick was 3-2 on the day with a pair of pins, while Clayton, Thompson and Yoder each recorded a pair of wins and Meek was 1-3.



Louisburg senior Miles Meek gets some back points during the team's tournament in Tonganoxie. Meek finished fourth at 285 pounds.

Wildcat senior Ashton Moore had a tough weight class at 215 pounds that featured two state-ranked wrestlers and he took fifth overall.

Moore, who is currently ranked No. 3 in Class 4A, lost to Savannah's Cooper Burnside, who was a state runner-up last season and Junction City's Chris Coy, who was a state placer at Class 6A. On the day, Moore finished with a 4-2 record.

Junior Vance Hahn also took fifth at 175 pounds as he won his final three matches on the day, all by pin.

So far, Bovaird has liked what he has seen from his group as the 2024 season has come to a close.

"It was great seeing the team step up and scrap with some outstanding competition," Bovaird said. "We spend a lot of

time talking about mindset, and before the tournament, the topic was being disciplined and competing with purpose. The first part of our competition season is mostly duals, so it was nice to go into the break with the guys having a chance to bring home some medals.”

Wildcats get road dual win over Olathe West

Louisburg hit the road on Dec. 19 as the Wildcats traveled to Olathe West for its final dual before the holiday break and won 43-34.

Louisburg’s Myke McKitrick recorded a big pin for the Wildcats at 126 pounds, while Brayden Yoder won by decision over a state qualifier at 190 pounds in two pivotal matches.

“The Olathe West dual is always a tough, but friendly competition,” coach Bovaird said. “I like their program and how their coach runs things, and we can always count on it being a battle.

Levi Cotter (106), Logan Henry (138), Bryce Thompson (157), Vance Hahn (175) and Ashton Moore (215) also earned wins for the Wildcats.

Collins, DeWeese medal to lead Wildcat girls at

Atchison County



Louisburg's Maliya Collins (left) and Brooklyn DeWeese earned medals on Dec. 21 at the ACCHS Invitational in Effingham.

EFFINGHAM – The Louisburg girls wrestling team ventured into tournament action on Dec. 21 in Effingham and a couple of the Wildcat wrestlers left with some hardware.

Louisburg's Maliya Collins and Brooklyn DeWeese came away with medals and a top three finish in their respective weight classes at the ACCHS Invitational. As a team, the Wildcats also wrestled strong as they finished sixth out of 18 teams with 50.5 points.

"Overall the girls had a great performance," Louisburg coach Heather Eslinger said. "For many of our freshmen, this tournament helped boost confidence as they proved to themselves that they can perform at the varsity level. For our

newer wrestlers who may not be at the varsity level yet, this tournament gave them just that more experience and time on the mat to learn. Each and every girl battled through wins and losses, never giving up.”

Collins had a big day in the 140-pound bracket. The Louisburg sophomore advanced to the championship match with a pair of wins.

She opened with a 33 second pin of Washburn Rural’s Ayla Ross and then won by technical fall over Sabetha’s Naomi Pearson in the semifinals. Collins then faced Jefferson West’s Taryn Taylor and was pinned in 53 seconds to finish second overall.

DeWeese also had a strong performance at 120 pounds as she went 3-1 on the day and took third overall.

She opened with a pin of Washburn Rural’s Makenzie Cowhick, but lost a tough 14-9 decision in the semifinals to Jayhawk-Linn’s Alayna McCarty. DeWeese would bounce back with a pin in the consolation semifinals and then pinned Rock Creek’s Claire Steeves in the third place match.

“I was thrilled that Maliya and Brooklyn medaled,” Eslinger said. “Both girls are extremely competitive and are their own worst critics. They are much harder on themselves than I am. I think that medaling helps them to understand that wrestling isn’t about each match, but about growth over time, and how we learn, improve and perform over the span of the entire season.”

Emma Duckworth nearly became the Wildcats’ third medalist on the day, but fell just short at 125 pounds as she finished fourth.

Duckworth opened with a pin in her first match, but fell by pin to Washburn Rural’s Gabby Collins in the semis. Duckworth responded with a pin in the consolation semifinals, but lost to Rock Creek’s Ali Wilcoxson in the third place match.

Evelyn Rue (130), Alina Wojciechowski (135), Leola Eslinger (145) and Nora Smith (170) also competed for the Wildcats.

It has been a good start to the season for the Wildcats as they have had three competitions to start the year.

“I think the girls are going into the break on a positive note,” coach Eslinger said. “This is a well-earned and needed break. Most of the team is bruised and battered, as all the wrestlers are, but being young they are learning that this physical feeling is part of wrestling. Break will give them some rest and recovery time to prepare for the next seven weeks.”

Week 3 Athlete of the Week: Jay McCaskill



Here is the Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Week for week three of the winter sports season, sponsored by Dr. Laura's Orthodontics.

JAY MCCASKILL, SENIOR, WRESTLING

Louisburg senior Jay McCaskill is off to a good start to his wrestling season. McCaskill was perfect in 2024 and that included a first place finish last Saturday. McCaskill won the 165-pound title at the Randy Starcher Invitational at Tonganoxie High School as he recorded a 5-0 record and all wins were by pin. All of those pins came in the first period.

On Dec. 20, McCaskill also earned a victory by pin in the Wildcats' dual win over Olathe West. On the season, McCaskill has posted an 11-0 record, which includes a December Duals victory earlier this month and a spot on the All-Tournament Team.

The athlete of the week award is announced every Wednesday morning during the winter season and the winner is selected by

Louisburg Sports Zone with the help of nominations from coaches.

Previous winners:

Week 1: Gavin Lohse

Week 2: Colin Brown

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**Louisburg rolls to December
Duals title with five
straight wins**



Louisburg senior Jay McCaskill gets one of five pins on the night Thursday at home during the December Duals Tournament.

After a rough season opener that saw several Louisburg wrestlers out with an injury or illness, the Wildcats responded in a big way in their home debut.

Louisburg ran roughshod over the competition Thursday in the December Duals as the Wildcats posted a 5-0 record. They earned wins over Shawnee Mission North (75-6), Harmon (72-6), Prairie View (57-24), Baldwin (57-21) and Independence (56-24).

Seven Wildcats also finished with a perfect day as Levi Cotter (106 pounds), Canaan Clayton (120), Mika McKitrick (132), Bryce Thompson (157), Jay McCaskill (165), Brayden Yoder (190) and Ashton Moore (215) all posted a 5-0 record and earned All-Tournament Team honors in the process.

"It was incredible to see the team respond with such determination and energy," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "Going 5-0 against some quality teams like Baldwin, Prairie View and Independence was a great thing for our program. Seeing the guys do so well was a great reminder of how resilient this group is. They've been through a lot over the years, and to see them back on the mat as a team was really special."

McCaskill and Yoder led the way for Louisburg as all five of their wins came by pin as they put together a dominating performance, while Clayton recorded four pins and had one forfeit.

McKitrick also finished the day with four pins, all coming under 40 seconds, and also had a 17-1 technical fall. Thompson had three pins, win by forfeit and earned an 8-4 decision over Independence's Arian Roe.



Louisburg senior Mika McKitrick gets a pin Thursday at home

during the December Duals.

As for Moore, the No. 3 ranked wrestler at 215 pounds, he had a little tougher road. Moore recorded three pins, had a technical fall, but his toughest match came against Prairie View's Parker Schwarz.

Schwarz is currently ranked No. 3 at 195 pounds and the two squared off in what was a low-scoring, tight match. Moore eventually won 4-2 by ultimate tiebreaker in what was one of the more thrilling matches on the night.

"Early in the season, it's tough to win close matches," Bovaird said. "Conditioning and fitness plays a huge role, as well as mental toughness. We had two guys win ultimate tiebreaker matches – Ashton Moore and Greysen Dixon – which was a great example to the younger guys in the program. Overall, we had 56 wins as a team, with 41 pins, 2 technical falls, and 1 major decision. I'm very proud of that sort of performance."

Junior Vance Hahn finished 4-1 at 175 pounds with a pair of pins and a major decision. Senior Logan Henry and sophomore Spencer Mattison combined for a 4-1 record at 138 pounds. Henry suffered an injury in his lone loss, and Mattison came in to fill for the final two matches.

Parker Showalter (113), Myke McKittrick (126), Greysen Dixon (144) and Miles Meek (285) also had a winning day. Dixon had a 2-1 performance, while the other three finished with a 3-2 record. Freshman Bo Ballard was 2-3 at 150 pounds.

"I'd say that the most special part of Thursday night was the team spirit that we showed," Bovaird said. "The way the guys cheered for every match of every dual, made it seem like we were battling for a state championship. Each of our wrestlers played his role, battled for bonus points in the duals, supported one another, and made adjustments when needed. We had some fantastic moments that showed our grit. Having seven wrestlers go 5-0 and make the All-Tournament Team was a really

special way to end the night. Nearly everyone finished the tournament with a winning record.”

Bovaird also knows, that while it is early, he liked what he saw from his team and their ability to bounce back from a tough season opener.



Louisburg sophomore Bryce Thompson picks up an opponent Thursday during the December Duals at Louisburg High School.

“Going undefeated in a tournament like this was no small feat, and it really speaks to the team’s character and work ethic,” he said. “Last year, we won two close duals against Baldwin and Independence, but this year the guys left no doubt with their performance on the mat. They stepped up in every dual, adapting to different challenges and staying focused.

“It also shows their growth—both as individuals and as a team. Dual tournaments like this one will test your team depth,

stamina, and mental toughness. I couldn't be prouder of how they handled it. We were nearly at full strength, but then lost our varsity 138 to a concussion. Luckily we had depth with our lineup to be able to bring in our backup wrestler, Spencer Mattison, who went 2-0 with two pins for us."

Louisburg will try and keep that positive momentum going Thursday when it travels to Olathe West for a dual. The Wildcats will complete the 2024 part of their schedule Saturday when they travel to the Randy Starcher Memorial Tournament in Tonganoxie.

Louisburg girls wrestling finds positives in season opening meet



The Louisburg girls wrestling team finished 13th out of 23 teams last Friday at the Wild West Classic at Olathe West High School.

OLATHE WEST – The Louisburg girls wrestling team has 10 athletes on the team this season and eight of those are new to the high school level.

Many of those Wildcats got their first taste of varsity action last Friday at the Wild West Classic at Olathe West High School. There were 23 teams that competed and the Wildcats were able to find some success.

Louisburg finished 13th in the team standings with 121 points, while Shawnee Heights was first at 321. Kearney (Mo.) was second with 286.5 points.

“We are starting off with a really young team,” Louisburg girls coach Heather Eslinger said. “We have three sophomores with only two returning from last year and eight freshmen.

Some of the freshmen have experience, but most of the others are a little bit less experienced with two or three of them just starting wrestling this year for the first time.

“With that being said, Olathe West was kind of a big eye opener and probably a bit intimidating way to start our season. There were some really tough teams there in Olathe North, RayPec and Kearney. They all had some really strong veteran wrestlers, but I have to say that all of our girls went out aggressively in each match.”

Sophomore Leola Eslinger and freshman Brooklyn DeWeese both led the way for Louisburg as they each earned a sixth place finish at 3-2 on the day.

Eslinger, who wrestled at 145 pounds, opened her tournament with a pin before falling by pin the next round. She responded with a 12-1 major decision over Ray-Pec’s Kinsley Larimer.

In the consolation bracket, Eslinger pinned Chanute’s Willow Vaughn to reach the fifth place match, where she was pinned by Kearney’s Isabella Wenzel.

As for DeWeese, the Wildcat 120-pounder began the tournament with two straight pins before losing by pin to Shawnee Mission South’s Stella Segura. In the consolation bracket, DeWeese earned a pin over Nemaha Central’s Alexis Bebe, before losing by pin the fifth place match to Audrey Hinkly of Shawnee Heights.

“Brooklyn had a great night with three pins,” coach Eslinger said. “She’s still a little green in certain areas, but once she gets her opponent on the mat she is relentless until she gets a pin.

“Leola did very well attacking and taking advantage of scoring opportunities. She had a tough match where she had split her lip and we had some uncomfortable blood time on the side lines. She took it like a champ and went back as aggressive as

ever and won with a major decision.”

Freshman Emma Duckworth also finished with a 3-2 day and took ninth overall at 125 pounds with three pins.

Sophomore Allison Martin recorded her first pin as she was 2-3 on the day at 135 pounds. Maliya Collins also registered two wins, both by fall, to go 2-3 at 140 pounds.

Evelyn Rue (1-4) and Bella Pickman (0-4) also wrestled for Louisburg at 130 and 110 pounds, respectively.

Louisburg is back in action on Dec. 19 when it travels to Olathe West for a mixer. Matches are set to begin at 4:30 p.m.

“I think it’s taken a while for the girls to figure out where they fit in the wrestling room as a team within a team so to speak, but I feel like we made huge strides Friday coming together and supporting one another and learning our role as girls supporting girls in a room full of boys,” coach Eslinger said.

Wildcats battle through injuries, illness to take fourth at Fort Scott



Louisburg senior Greysen Dixon picks up an opponent Friday during the Fort Scott Dual Tournament.

FORT SCOTT – The Louisburg wrestling team has been practicing the last month in hopes of getting out to a strong start to its season.

Unfortunately for the Wildcats, injuries and illness hampered those plans Friday for the Fort Scott Dual Tournament. Louisburg was missing several starters in the competition, but the good news, there were several wrestlers to take their place.

Louisburg finished fourth overall with a 2-3 record on the day with wins over Anderson County and Jayhawk-Linn as the Wildcats were still able to field a full lineup despite the absences.

“There have been years when we had key wrestlers out with injuries or illness, and we didn’t have many options to filling those gaps,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “This

year, though, we've got depth that we haven't had before. Not only were we able to fill all 14 weight classes, but we filled them with wrestlers who have experience."

The Wildcats defeated Anderson County, 78-6, and Jayhawk-Linn, 48-35. Louisburg opened the day with a loss to Blue Valley Southwest (54-24) and fell to Atchison County Community (49-29) and Fort Scott (48-36).

Sophomore Levi Cotter proved to be one of the bright spots for the Wildcats. The 106-pound wrestler finished the day with a 5-0 record, which included three first period pins.

Senior Canaan Clayton finished with a 3-1 day at 120 pounds, while fellow senior Mika McKitrick was 4-1 at 132 pounds with a pair of pins. Senior Miles Meek (215 pounds) also ended the day with a 4-1 record.



Louisburg senior Canaan Clayton tries to turn an opponent Friday at the Fort Scott Dual Tournament.

Parker Showalter (113 pounds), Spencer Mattison (138), Bryce Thompson (157) and Brody Pemberton (165) were each 3-2 on the day. Brayden Yoder (190) and Myke McKittrick (126) were both 2-3.

Keegan Rogers (120), Greysen Dixon (144), Vance Hahn (175) and Owen Ebenstein (285) each had a victory. Freshman Bo Ballard (150) was 0-5.

“At this point in the season, I know records don’t mean much,” Bovaird said. “We had great showings from Greysen, Bryce, Vance and Brayden. They all had tough weights, but they were absolute warriors throughout the tournament. Myke filled in at 126 and Brody filled in at 165, and I couldn’t be more proud of them. Bo made his first varsity appearance at 150, and he had a bracket with a bunch of experienced kids. He was fearless the entire time, giving it his best shot and never backing down from a tough match.”

Along with a new season comes some new rules and that is in the scoring department. Starting this season, high school wrestlers will be inbounds with only one point of contact of either wrestler inside or on the boundary line.

Previously, wrestlers were considered to be inbounds if a total of two supporting points of either wrestler were inside or on the boundary line. The two supporting points could be two supporting points of one wrestler or one supporting point of each wrestler inside or on the boundary line.

In addition, points awarded for a near-fall have been revised. Two points will be awarded when near-fall criteria are held for two seconds, three points for three seconds, four points for four seconds and five points if the defensive wrestler is injured, indicates an injury or bleeding occurs after the four-point near-fall has been earned.

In another change, opportunities to earn more points will also be available when executing a takedown. Beginning next season,

wrestlers will be awarded three match points instead of two when securing a takedown.

“The new scoring rules are going to take some getting used to, but I think I like it,” Bovaird said. “I mean, you get one takedown and then some back points, and you could potentially be up 7-0 in no time. That’s almost halfway to a tech fall. The out-of-bounds rules are now so much easier to apply and interpret, which was very refreshing to see.”

Louisburg will look to get some of their wrestlers back Thursday when they host several schools for the December Duals Tournament. Matches begin at 4:30 p.m.

Numbers, expectations are high for Louisburg wrestling programs



Louisburg senior Ashton Moore is one of five returning state qualifiers for the Wildcat wrestling team this season. Moore finished fourth at state a year ago.

It was a successful finish for the Louisburg wrestling team last season as it ended with six state qualifiers and a state medalist.

The good news for the Wildcats is most of those qualifiers are back to make another run at it for the 2024-25 season. Plus, there are a lot more that want to join them.

There are currently 55 out for the boys team, which is a big jump from a year ago. Louisburg's girls program also saw a big leap as it currently now has 10 members, which is up from two last season.

"We've got a unique problem this year, and that's a lack of space," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "I knew we'd be

returning a lot of wrestlers from last season, but I didn't know until the week before the season started that we'd have so many. Right now, we're at 65 with our numbers, so we're having to be creative with how we use our space. The team is working hard, and they're ready to get after it this season."

On the boys side, the Wildcats do return their lone state medalist from a season ago. Senior Ashton Moore will make a run at back-to-back trips to the state podium.

After finishing fourth at regionals, Moore put together a strong state tournament as he reached the semifinals, before falling in the third place match at 190 pounds. This season, Moore will be bumping up to 215 and is currently ranked No. 3 in the state.

"I think Ashton is going to be an absolute dynamo this season," Bovaird said. "He's got a hunger to put a state championship to his name. He's got great energy on the mat, incredible strength, and a tireless nature."



Louisburg senior Canaan Clayton is one of five returning state qualifiers for the Wildcat wrestling team.

Moore is one of 12 Wildcat seniors who will lead the way for Louisburg. The other four returning state qualifiers are also seniors in Canaan Clayton (120), Will Showalter (126), Logan Henry (138) and Jay McCaskill (165).

Other seniors Mika McKitrick (132), Greysen Dixon (144), Brayden Yoder (190), Miles Meek (285) and Xander Lucas (285) will all play big roles for the Wildcats this season.

“The trick is staying healthy, of course,” Bovaird said. “The majority of this senior class has been wrestling since a very young age, and now they’re reaching a great deal of success as upperclassmen. I think we can give some of the ranked teams a run for their money this year – Tonganoxie, Paola, and Santa Fe Trail, to name a few. We’ll turn some heads this year, thanks to the guts, experience, and work ethic of these seniors.”

Sophomores Levi Cotter (106), Bryce Thompson (157) and junior Vance Hahn (175) also bring back varsity experience from a year ago. Freshmen Parker Showalter (113) and Bo Ballard (150) will also see varsity time this year.

“On the boys side, we have a very experienced group,” Bovaird said. “In fact, our returning varsity wrestlers earned 261 wins last season. Not only do we have those five returning state qualifiers, but we have a bunch of returning guys who were right there last season, making a run at state. Guys like Levi, Mika, Bryce, Vance, Brayden and Xander are bringing a lot of experience with them, and they’re poised to have great seasons.”



Sophomore Leola Eslinger is one of two returning varsity wrestlers on the girls side.

As for the girls, the Wildcats return their lone two wrestlers from a year ago in Allison Martin (135) and Leola Eslinger (155) and will be joined by eight others.

Ashlyn Spradling (105), Bella Pickman (110), Brooklyn DeWeese (120), Emma Duckworth (125), Brianna Caraway/Evelyn Rue (130), Maliya Collins (145) and Nora Smith (170) will all see varsity time this season.

“I knew we had Leola and Allison coming back from last year, and I knew that we’d have girls like Brianna, Brooklyn, Emma, Bella, and Ashlyn move up from the middle school and Wildcat Wrestling Club programs,” Bovaird said. “The other three decided to give it a try, and I couldn’t be happier with how hard they’re working. All of them have great attitudes and a growth mindset. Leola and Allison got some great experience, and we have a bunch of freshmen who have been wrestling with our club for a while. It’s going to be a phenomenal year for our girls program.”

Collins excited to join Benedictine wrestling program



Louisburg's J'Lee Collins is ready to make new strides with the Benedictine College wrestling program.

As a freshman in high school, J'Lee Collins started to grow to fond of the sport of wrestling, but it certainly started out as a rocky relationship.

Collins missed his freshman season due to a knee injury, but for the next three years he got all he could out of the sport.

The hard work and determination on the mat earned him a spot on a college roster. Collins signed with Benedictine College earlier this year and will join the Raven wrestling program.

"I have wanted to wrestle in college since my freshman year of high school, although I never thought it would happen," Collins said. "To make it official in front of my friends and family was very exciting. It almost felt like I was proving myself to be an athlete who was capable at competing and the

next level.”

Collins, who was a state qualifier this past season, was offered a spot with the Benedictine program and the school just seemed to fit not only what he wanted athletically – but academically as well.

“Benedictine just seemed like a very nice school,” Collin said. The team seemed to be like a family and everyone I talked to was a good person. One of the key factors besides the people for me was the campus. I absolutely love the campus and how it is so scenic.”



Louisburg's J'Lee Collins signed his letter of intent to join the Benedictine College wrestling program. Seated next to J'Lee are his parents Justin and Missy Collins. Standing (from left) is Louisburg wrestling head coach Bobby Bovaird, J'Lee's siblings Jacinda, Justin and Maliya Collins, along with Louisburg assistants Shane Miller and Shawn Crossley.

As for what he hopes to achieve when he arrives at

Benedictine, he knows he will have to work hard – just like he did almost four years ago as a freshman in high school.

“The coaches at Benedictine are kind and funny people,” Collins said. “I’ve spent a lot of my summer getting to know coach (Gregory) Barner and many of my upperclassmen. They were all very nice to me and seemed to be going the extra mile. I see myself wrestling JV or unattached this season, although if I have to redshirt I wouldn’t be upset because I could build my skill and be a better wrestler for the following season.”

Collins had a special senior season that ended with a berth in his first state tournament. He finished his Wildcat career with 60 wins.

He also is No. 4 in program history with 148 career takedowns, No. 13 with career nearfall-3 (29), No. 11 in career nearfall-2 (23), No. 12 with career reversals (40), No. 10 with career match points (561), No. 3 with season takedowns (69), and No. 10 with season match points (243). He led the team this year with the most tech falls (1) and the most decisions (5).

“My time with the Louisburg wrestling team was amazing,” Collins said. “I will definitely miss the coaches and teammates. Throughout my three years of wrestling in high school, and two years in middle school, I began to love the sport. It eventually became my favorite and I decided to walk away from track and football to practice my wrestling and help me become a better wrestler. Louisburg definitely helped build my love for the sport.”

KSHSAA approves several postseason changes



KANSAS STATE HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATION PRESS RELEASE

TOPEKA – Changes to postseason formats and championship sites for basketball, football, wrestling and track and field highlight actions approved at the June 12-13 KSHSAA Executive Board Meeting. The postseason formats are set by the KSHSAA Executive Board each year.

Basketball – Beginning in March of 2026, the state basketball tournaments will be moving to four total sites. Four facilities will play host to the seven classifications, 14 championships. By honoring the KSHSAA membership voted in the fall of 2023 to qualify eight boys teams and eight girls teams involved at the final site, modifications to the daily schedule will be developed. The schedule and other event details, including classification designations for each site and venue selection will be determined and announced following the 2024-25 basketball season.

Another basketball postseason change effective with the

2024-25 season will come at the 3A, 2A, 1A DI and 1A DII classifications. Each class will be divided into four regions and then seeded into two sub-states within the region: Substate A: 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, 16; Substate B: 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15. The winner of each substate will advance to the state basketball tournament. Further format details and dates will be sent to member schools.

Football – As announced in January, the state football championships will be moving to three sites with three games being played at each site. The executive board approved the following sites and schedule for 2024:

Emporia State University:

Class 6A = Friday, November 29 at 2:00pm

Class 4A = Saturday, November 30 at 1:00pm

Class 5A = Saturday, November 30 at 7:00pm

Hutchinson Community College:

Class 2A = Friday, November 29 at 6:00pm

Class 3A = Saturday, November 30 at 12:00pm

Class 1A = Saturday, November 30 at 5:00pm

Kiowa County High School, Greensburg:

Class 8-player DII = Saturday, November 30 at 11:00am

Class 6-Player = Saturday, November 30 at 3:00pm

Class 8-Player DI = Saturday, November 30 at 7:00pm

Wrestling – Girl's wrestling will now include four classes to mirror the boy's classification designations. The addition of another class for girl's wrestling necessitates the addition of another championship site. 6A, 5A, 4A and 3-1A will each

have their own site to determine a champion. 3-1A state wrestling will be in Hays and 4A will be in Salina. Park City Arena and one other facility to be named later will house either 6A or 5A. State sites and regional dates will be determined at the September KSHSAA Executive Board meeting. The state wrestling tournament will take place February 28 – March 1, 2025.

Track and Field – Qualification for the state meet was adjusted to now be the top 3 plus the next four best regional performance in each event.

Two committees will be formed to gather input from membership school leaders. One to discuss the details behind the implementation of Esports prior to the possible adoption as a KSHSAA sanctioned activity. The second committee will review the KSHSAA calendar to consider possible alternatives to dates of postseason activities.