

# 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 tie-breaker 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.

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## 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.



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# 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 McKitrick (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.

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# 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.”

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## **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.”

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# 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.

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## **2024 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year Finalists**

## 2024 MALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR



## MALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

***Louisburg seniors Declan Battle and Caden Caplinger, along with junior Ashton Moore, are the three finalists for the 2024 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year award.***

For the seventh consecutive year, Louisburg Sports Zone will be handing out an Athlete of the Year honor to a male and female athlete at Louisburg High School. I wanted the opportunity to recognize those who exemplify what it means to be an "athlete."

Although I am giving out the award, I wanted the process to be subjective, so I asked the head coaches at LHS to help me out. I asked each coach to send me nominations of who they thought exemplified the Athlete of the Year honor. Then they voted for their top 3 male and female athletes and I tabulated the results and determined the winner. The winner will be announced in the coming days.

Below are the three finalists for the Male Athlete of the Year award in alphabetical order by last name.





## **DECLAN BATTLE – SENIOR – FOOTBALL, BASEBALL**

Declan was a three year starting quarterback for the Wildcats and this year became the school's leading passer and fifth on the list for leading rusher as a team captain. Battle guided the Wildcats to their second straight Frontier League title and an undefeated league record.

Declan was a 1st team All-Frontier League quarterback and defensive back. He was an all-state pick from multiple media outlets and was a finalist for the Frank Fontana Award, which is given annually to the best all-around small school player in Class 1-4 on the Kansas and Missouri sides of the metro.

In 10 games for the Wildcats, Battle completed 105 passes for

1,364 yards and had 16 touchdowns to just two interceptions. He also did a lot of damage on the ground with 1,009 yards rushing and 16 more touchdowns. As a defensive back, Battle finished with 36 tackles and also had an interception for a touchdown. He will join the Washburn University football team next season.

On the baseball diamond, Battle helped the Wildcats to its first league title since 2002 and first regional championship since 2009. He led the team in triples, stolen bases and runs scored that earned him first team all league and first team all state outfield. He was also the team's best reliever earning multiple saves on the mound.

Battle was atop the Wildcat lineup all season and set the tone in several games. He finished with a .378 average to go along with 34 hits, five doubles, three triples, a home run and had 23 RBIs.

He also led the team with 41 runs scored, which is a school record and also had a team-high 15 stolen bases. He also holds three individual career team records for runs scored (102), triples (8) and stolen bases (47).



## **CADEN CAPLINGER — SENIOR — FOOTBALL, TRACK**

Caden was a team captain for the Wildcat football team this past season and was a big piece of back-to-back Frontier League championship teams. Caplinger was an all-league selection on both sides of the ball, as a wide receiver and defensive back. He also holds the most career receptions in Louisburg football history.

Caplinger was named to the All-Frontier League second team at wide receiver and defensive back. He led the Wildcats with 33 catches, 510 yards receiving and four touchdowns. On defense, he finished with 41 tackles, 1.5 sacks, six pass breakups and an interception.



On the track, Caplinger is a two-time pole vault champion and a state medalist in the 4×100 relay. He was set to try for a third straight, but suffered a knee injury that ended his season. Caplinger won the season opening meet at the Ottawa Invitational, before having to sit out with the injury. He will be joining the Washburn University track team next season.



## **ASHTON MOORE – JUNIOR – FOOTBALL, WRESTLING, TRACK**

Ashton put together a memorable football season for the Wildcats. Moore was one of the leaders of the Wildcat defense this past season. As a first-team All-Frontier League player on both sides of the ball, he posted a team-high 125 tackles,



including eight for a loss. He also had four forced fumbles and two sacks. He was named a finalist for the Bobby Bell Award, which is given annually to the best Class 1-4 offensive lineman/defensive lineman or linebacker in the KC metro area.

Moore was also the team's starting running back and made things difficult on opposing defenses. He carried the load for the Wildcats as he carried the ball 151 times for 1,110 yards and had 15 touchdowns. He also finished with 292 yards receiving and three more scores to earn first team honors.

On the wrestling mat, Moore was a state medalist as he took fourth at 190 pounds after making it to the state semifinals with an injured knee. He finished the season with 38 wins. He leads the program in the following categories: Career takedowns (117), career nearfall-3 (34), career escapes (57), career team points (510), season takedowns (51), season team points (229), and season pins (27). He led the team this year with most wins (38), most nearfall-2 (8), and the fastest pin (7 seconds).

Moore was also a returning state qualifier for the Louisburg 4×100-meter relay, but saw his track season come to an early end due to an injury.

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## **Moore battles way to fourth place finish at state**



***Louisburg junior Ashton Moore finished fourth Saturday at the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships in Salina.***

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

Louisburg junior Ashton Moore reached the semifinals at 190 pounds on Friday to secure himself a medal, and then finished fourth overall on Saturday.

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.”

Moore opened tournament action Thursday with a pair of matches. In the opening round, Moore pinned Fort Scott’s Ryder Newton late in the second period to move on to the quarterfinals.

It was there where Moore battled Mulvane’s Noah West and recorded a third period pin to move onto the semifinals. He also secured himself a state medal in the process.

“Ashton was on a mission last week at state,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “He won his first two matches against a regional champion and a regional runner-up to make the semifinals. Both of those wins were by pin against a couple of pretty tough wrestlers.”

That set up a match against Baldwin’s Jack Harvey in the semifinals, who was the eventual state runner-up. Moore lost a 9-1 major decision, and had to work through the consolation side of the bracket on Saturday.

He found a familiar opponent waiting in Colton Brusven. The Tonganoxie senior had defeated Moore in a couple close matches throughout the season, including at regionals. This time, Moore got the upper-hand on the No. 3-ranked wrestler as he recorded a 5-2 decision.

“Beating Brusven was probably one of my favorite parts of the season,” Moore said. “We’ve had several close matches I felt like I could have won, so to come out on top in our final match was an amazing feeling.”

That victory put Moore in the third place match against Andale’s Isaiah Wilson. Moore was down 2-1 in the third period, but then got a 2-point near fall.

Wilson got the escape to tie the match, and with 20 seconds left, Moore got caught in a scramble and the official awarded

Wilson a 2-point takedown. Moore got the escape, but lost a tough 5-4 decision to finish fourth overall.

"I don't think it should have been called a takedown, since no control was established, but it is what it is," Bovaird said. "Ashton finished that match on the attack and gave it everything he had."

Moore ended his season with a 38-9 record and his first state medal.

"I was very proud to take fourth, but not satisfied with it," Moore said. "I'm grateful to have one more opportunity and hopefully I can use it to move my way up the podium."

With that, the Wildcats have had at least one state semifinalist in each of the past six years – a streak that was started by Ashton's older brother, Austin, in 2019. It is also the ninth straight season Louisburg has had at least one state placer.

"That's the longest streak in our program's history," Bovaird said. "The future looks very bright to as we hope to continue this streak for a long time."

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 Thursday.

"We definitely had some pretty challenging first-round draws," Bovaird said. "Will and Jay both lost to the eventual state champions in their brackets, Logan lost to the eventual runner-up, Canaan lost to the eventual third place finisher, and Traden lost to the eventual sixth place finisher. That's a tough way to start out the state tournament. On the backside, we also had some tough match-ups. I think a lot of them were matches we could have competed in, and I do believe that we wrestled hard in every match. Traden battled through sickness

the entire tournament, but he finished up his career as a 30-match winner and a state qualifier.

“Canaan has essentially been off the mat the last two years since he entered high school and couldn’t do kids club anymore, but he’s fallen right back in stride, almost as if he’d taken no time off at all. Logan is making huge strides each year, considering he lost his whole freshman season due to a broken leg, and Will is gaining more and more experience each season. He’s a competitive kid and a very hard-working athlete. Jay has had a great deal of kids club experience and success, and the great thing about his potential is that earlier in the season, he beat two of the state placers in his bracket, both of whom are seniors. We’re losing one senior state qualifier, but the other five state qualifiers are coming back next year, and we’ll have several guys back that will also challenge for a place at state in 2025.”

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## Wildcat wrestling sends six to state





***Louisburg junior Will Showalter is picked up by assistant coach Shawn Crossley after he qualified for state Saturday at the Class 4A regional in Tonganoxie.***

TONGANOXIE – The Class 4A regional wrestling tournament in Tonganoxie had its fair share of challenges for Louisburg, but several wrestlers were able to continue their season for another week.

The Wildcats qualified six for state during Saturday's tournament and all of them finished in either third or fourth place against some difficult competition.

Canaan Clayton (113 pounds), Will Showalter (120), Logan Henry (132), Traden Noll (150), Jay McCaskill (157) and Ashton Moore (190) will wrestle for a state medal this week in Salina.

As a team, the Wildcats finished sixth in the team standings with 97 points.

"It was so exciting to see these guys get out there and check off one of their season goals," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "Taking six is a pretty decent number, especially when you look at how the teams ahead of us did: Tonganoxie qualified 10, Santa Fe Trail qualified 9, Baldwin qualified 7 and Holton and Silver Lake qualified 5."



***Louisburg junior Ashton Moore took fourth overall at 190 pounds.***

Moore and McCaskill are returning state qualifiers for the Wildcats and had a challenging bracket as both wrestlers finished fourth overall.

Moore, who was ranked No. 5 in Class 4A coming into the tournament, had two other state-ranked wrestlers in his bracket and he met one of them in the semifinals.

After a quick first period pin in his quarterfinal match, Moore squared off with Tonganoxie's Colton Brusven in the semifinals. Brusven, who is No. 3 in the state, narrowly defeated Moore by a 6-4 decision in overtime.

Moore followed it up with a seven second pin of Silver Lake's Blaise Hill to secure a trip to state. Moore then lost a tough 3-2 decision to Ottawa's Sam Clevenger in the third place

match.



***Louisburg junior Jay McCaskill tries to get some back points during his 157-pound match at Tonganoxie.***

As for McCaskill, he won his first two matches of the day by first period pins, but then went up against Ottawa's Dalton Evans in the semifinals and lost 9-4.

McCaskill secured a state berth with a 7-0 decision over Santa Fe Trail's Luke Greenfield, before falling 11-7 to Bishop Miege's Graham Hawks in the third place match.

"Ashton has been taking things easy since the Baldwin tournament when he tweaked his knee, and he's been easing back into full-fledged competition mode," Bovaird said. "He lost to the Tonganoxie kid in overtime, which was a great match. He's got a little bit of rust to knock off, but I'm really excited to see how he does in his state bracket.

"Jay also had some great matches last weekend. He's at a point



in the season where he's going out there and wrestling hard. He's not being overly conservative and holding back; he's taking risks, he's not afraid of losing or making mistake, and that will make him very dangerous at the state tournament."



***Louisburg junior Canaan Clayton finished third overall at 113 pounds.***

The other four Wildcat qualifiers will make their first trip to state as all of them recorded big wins at Tonganoxie.

Clayton shook off a semifinal loss to win back-to-back matches at 113 pounds and punched his ticket to state. He pinned Silver Lake's Preston Stafford in the consolation semis and then won a 4-0 decision over Baldwin's Asher Englert in the third place match.

Henry also ended his regional tournament with victory and did so while battling an illness. He wrestled six matches on the day and finished 4-2.



***Louisburg junior Logan Henry tries to put an opponent to his back during his 132-pound match Saturday in Tonganoxie.***

After a semifinal loss to Baldwin's Gunnar Reichard, Henry rattled off three straight wins, including a pin of Eudora's Newt Schreiner in the consolation semifinals to earn a state berth. He then followed it up with a pin of Silver Lake's Zach Rodenbaugh to take third.

Noll also had his fair share of tough matches at 150 pounds. He opened with a pin of Bishop Miege's Jacob Drone in the quarterfinals, but lost a tough 3-2 decision in overtime of the semifinals to Santa Fe Trail's Chayse Jeanneret.

Noll would bounce back to earn a spot at state with a 3-0 decision over Baldwin's Max Harvey in the blood round. He was then pinned by Silver Lake's Trent Harris in the third place match.

Showalter, a junior captain for the Wildcats, had a busy day with five matches. He opened with a loss in the semifinals to



Baldwin's Jayden Wastage, but then recorded back-to-back pins to reach the consolation semifinals.



***Louisburg senior Traden Noll earned a state bid Saturday in Tonganoxie.***

It was there where Showalter earned a hard-fought 6-5 decision over Eudora's Dane Baumgartner. The Louisburg 120-pounder then lost to Santa Fe Trail's Bryce Combes in the third place match.

"What an exciting weekend for those guys," Bovaird said. "Canaan has wrestled with our club team since the beginning, and it was awesome news to hear that KSHSAA would be allowing homeschool kids compete for their high school programs. He's such a hard worker, very respectful, and a fantastic addition to the program. Logan showed how much of a warrior he is by stepping on the mat battling a little sickness this weekend. He was leading his quarterfinals opponent 17-8 when the fatigue got to him. Logan then rattled off four straight wins

to finish third.

“Traden has been aiming for a trip to the state tournament for a long time. He’s put in so much work with the sport of wrestling over the years, and I’m so proud to see his hard work pay off. Will was in one of those brackets where certain things had to work out just right, and at the end of the day, Will stepped up and did what he needed to do in order to get to state. “

As celebratory as the regional was, it was also the end of the road for some Wildcats – including seniors J’Lee Collins (126) and Elias Pugh (175) – who saw their high school careers come to an end with a 1-2 tournament performance.

“While it was awesome to see those six wrestlers be able to qualify for state, it was also pretty heart-breaking for the other eight wrestlers,” Bovaird said. “Two of them are seniors who have given us great leadership all season. A lot of tears were shed by the wrestlers, their families and the coaches. The thing is, with J’Lee, he hasn’t finished his journey with the sport of wrestling, as he’ll be wrestling for Benedictine next year. Elias has had at least one junior college program asking about him. Our other six wrestlers that didn’t qualify are all underclassmen with at least one more year left with the program.”

The state tournament will feature a 3-day format this season due to having both the Class 3-2-1A boys and 4-1A girls tournaments in Salina as well. Action will begin at 9 a.m. on Thursday with the first round, followed by the championship quarterfinals and the first round of consolation.

There will be more consolation action on Friday, followed by place matches and the championship on Saturday.

“It’s going to be an interesting experience,” Bovaird said. “This is the first time that state has been stretched out over three days. That’s three weigh-ins the guys will have to make.

They're doing three rounds Thursday, three on Friday, and then the consolation semis and medal matches Saturday. It's exciting, though, because we'll also be able to see the girls 4-1A state tournament and the 3-2-1A boys state tournament. We've never been able to watch those."

## 106

Levi Cotter (21-20) place is unknown and scored 0.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Bryce Cormier (Silver Lake) 31-9 won by major decision over Levi Cotter (Louisburg) 21-20 (MD 10-0)
- Cons. Round 1 – Levi Cotter (Louisburg) 21-20 received a bye ( ) (Bye)
- Cons. Semi – Caul Johns (Ottawa) 23-17 won by major decision over Levi Cotter (Louisburg) 21-20 (MD 8-0)

## 113

Canaan Clayton (24-16) placed 3rd and scored 10.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Canaan Clayton (Louisburg) 24-16 received a bye ( ) (Bye)
- Semifinal – Brodie Starcher (Tonganoxie) 19-12 won by major decision over Canaan Clayton (Louisburg) 24-16 (MD 10-0)
- Cons. Semi – Canaan Clayton (Louisburg) 24-16 won by fall over Preston Stafford (Silver Lake) 12-21 (Fall 0:26)
- 3rd Place Match – Canaan Clayton (Louisburg) 24-16 won by decision over Asher Englert (Baldwin) 12-12 (Dec 4-0)

## 120

Will Showalter (18-24) placed 4th and scored 11.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Will Showalter (Louisburg) 18-24 received a bye ( ) (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Jayden Westgate (Baldwin) 27-5 won by fall over Will Showalter (Louisburg) 18-24 (Fall 2:40)
- Cons. Round 2 – Will Showalter (Louisburg) 18-24 won by fall over Kaden Wuellner (Meriden-Jefferson West) 1-20 (Fall 1:59)
- Cons. Round 3 – Will Showalter (Louisburg) 18-24 won by fall over Carson Cunningham (Ottawa) 3-18 (Fall 2:11)
- Cons. Semi – Will Showalter (Louisburg) 18-24 won by decision over Dane Baumgartner (Eudora) 2-3 (Dec 6-5)
- 3rd Place Match – Bryce Combes (Santa Fe Trail) 24-9 won by fall over Will Showalter (Louisburg) 18-24 (Fall 2:32)

## 126

J`Lee Collins (24-17) place is unknown and scored 3.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – J`Lee Collins (Louisburg) 24-17 received a bye ( ) (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Cole Mader (Ottawa) 22-17 won by fall over J`Lee Collins (Louisburg) 24-17 (Fall 2:54)
- Cons. Round 2 – J`Lee Collins (Louisburg) 24-17 won by fall over Bennett Jackson (Shawnee Mission-Bishop Miege) 7-26 (Fall 1:19)
- Cons. Round 3 – Garrett Homles (Silver Lake) 32-11 won by decision over J`Lee Collins (Louisburg) 24-17 (Dec 4-2)



## 132

Logan Henry (25-14) placed 3rd and scored 21.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Logan Henry (Louisburg) 25-14 won by fall over Payton Teel (Hiawatha) 5-19 (Fall 1:26)
- Quarterfinal – Gunnar Reichard (Baldwin) 14-20 won by fall over Logan Henry (Louisburg) 25-14 (Fall 4:19)
- Cons. Round 2 – Logan Henry (Louisburg) 25-14 won by fall over Yanni Jimenz (Topeka-Hayden) 7-17 (Fall 2:25)
- Cons. Round 3 – Logan Henry (Louisburg) 25-14 won by major decision over Cesar Sandoval (Holton) 15-19 (MD 15-5)
- Cons. Semi – Logan Henry (Louisburg) 25-14 won by fall over Newt Schreiner (Eudora) 19-19 (Fall 2:10)
- 3rd Place Match – Logan Henry (Louisburg) 25-14 won by fall over Zach Rodenbaugh (Silver Lake) 17-10 (Fall 0:55)

## 138

Mika McKitrick (18-23) place is unknown and scored 4.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Mika McKitrick (Louisburg) 18-23 received a bye ( ) (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Dax Duffett (Tonganoxie) 19-10 won by fall over Mika McKitrick (Louisburg) 18-23 (Fall 1:07)
- Cons. Round 2 – Mika McKitrick (Louisburg) 18-23 received a bye ( ) (Bye)
- Cons. Round 3 – Mika McKitrick (Louisburg) 18-23 won by fall over Parker Gillen (Silver Lake) 24-17 (Fall 2:01)
- Cons. Semi – Ethan Williams (Baldwin) 28-8 won by fall over Mika McKitrick (Louisburg) 18-23 (Fall 3:52)

## 144

Blake Oliphant (6-20) place is unknown and scored 0.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Blake Oliphant (Louisburg) 6-20 received a bye () (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Cale Hein (Holton) 40-5 won by fall over Blake Oliphant (Louisburg) 6-20 (Fall 2:00)
- Cons. Round 2 – Blake Oliphant (Louisburg) 6-20 received a bye () (Bye)
- Cons. Round 3 – Grady Sumrall (Ottawa) 14-22 won by decision over Blake Oliphant (Louisburg) 6-20 (Dec 8-2)

## 150

Traden Noll (30-14) placed 4th and scored 11.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Traden Noll (Louisburg) 30-14 received a bye () (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Traden Noll (Louisburg) 30-14 won by fall over Jacob Drone (Shawnee Mission-Bishop Miege) 20-21 (Fall 3:27)
- Semifinal – Chayse Jeanneret (Santa Fe Trail) 25-10 won in tie breaker – 1 over Traden Noll (Louisburg) 30-14 (TB-1 3-2)
- Cons. Semi – Traden Noll (Louisburg) 30-14 won by decision over Max Harvey (Baldwin) 21-18 (Dec 3-0)
- 3rd Place Match – Trent Harris (Silver Lake) 31-15 won by fall over Traden Noll (Louisburg) 30-14 (Fall 0:27)

## 157

Jay McCaskill (34-14) placed 4th and scored 13.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Jay McCaskill (Louisburg) 34-14 won by fall over Maddex Doherty (Wellsville) 12-25 (Fall 0:29)
- Quarterfinal – Jay McCaskill (Louisburg) 34-14 won by fall over Andrew Keithley (Holton) 21-17 (Fall 0:26)
- Semifinal – Dalton Evans (Ottawa) 32-12 won by decision over Jay McCaskill (Louisburg) 34-14 (Dec 9-4)
- Cons. Semi – Jay McCaskill (Louisburg) 34-14 won by decision over Luke Greenfield (Santa Fe Trail) 18-9 (Dec 7-0)
- 3rd Place Match – Graham Hawks (Shawnee Mission-Bishop Miege) 33-8 won by decision over Jay McCaskill (Louisburg) 34-14 (Dec 11-7)

## 165

Bryce Thompson (18-14) place is unknown and scored 4.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Bryce Thompson (Louisburg) 18-14 received a bye ( ) (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Dylan Williams (Baldwin) 24-11 won by fall over Bryce Thompson (Louisburg) 18-14 (Fall 4:31)
- Cons. Round 2 – Bryce Thompson (Louisburg) 18-14 received a bye ( ) (Bye)
- Cons. Round 3 – Bryce Thompson (Louisburg) 18-14 won by fall over Malakie Laws (Perry-Lecompton) 14-22 (Fall 1:38)
- Cons. Semi – Jude Krentz (Topeka-Hayden) 27-3 won by fall over Bryce Thompson (Louisburg) 18-14 (Fall 4:42)

## 175

Elias Pugh (21-17) place is unknown and scored 2.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Keldyn Cox (Baldwin) 12-17 won by fall over Elias Pugh (Louisburg) 21-17 (Fall 1:07)
- Cons. Round 1 – Elias Pugh (Louisburg) 21-17 received a bye () (Bye)
- Cons. Round 2 – Elias Pugh (Louisburg) 21-17 won by decision over Chris McClendon (Wellsville) 8-7 (Dec 9-8)
- Cons. Round 3 – Kayden Clelland (Silver Lake) 17-15 won by decision over Elias Pugh (Louisburg) 21-17 (Dec 5-4)

## 190

Ashton Moore (35-7) placed 4th and scored 11.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Ashton Moore (Louisburg) 35-7 won by fall over Coltin Wade (Perry-Lecompton) 1-8 (Fall 1:04)
- Semifinal – Colton Brusven (Tonganoxie) 22-6 won in sudden victory – 1 over Ashton Moore (Louisburg) 35-7 (SV-1 6-4)
- Cons. Semi – Ashton Moore (Louisburg) 35-7 won by fall over Blaise Hill (Silver Lake) 3-22 (Fall 0:07)
- 3rd Place Match – Sam Clevenger (Ottawa) 28-15 won by decision over Ashton Moore (Louisburg) 35-7 (Dec 3-2)

## 215

Brayden Yoder (25-18) place is unknown and scored 4.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Brayden Yoder (Louisburg) 25-18 received a bye () (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Carter Wilmarth (Wellsville) 29-4 won by fall over Brayden Yoder (Louisburg) 25-18 (Fall 3:45)
- Cons. Round 2 – Brayden Yoder (Louisburg) 25-18 received a bye () (Bye)
- Cons. Round 3 – Brayden Yoder (Louisburg) 25-18 won by

fall over Rickey Lowery (Perry-Lecompton) 13-24 (Fall 0:58)

- Cons. Semi – Conner Murry (Baldwin) 21-10 won by fall over Brayden Yoder (Louisburg) 25-18 (Fall 2:23)

## 285

Xander Lucas (12-23) place is unknown and scored 3.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Xander Lucas (Louisburg) 12-23 received a bye ( ) (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Alex Strother (Santa Fe Trail) 26-7 won by fall over Xander Lucas (Louisburg) 12-23 (Fall 1:01)
- Cons. Round 2 – Xander Lucas (Louisburg) 12-23 won by fall over Ean Winsor (Holton) 5-17 (Fall 2:21)
- Cons. Round 3 – Jacob McConnell (Wellsville) 16-18 won by fall over Xander Lucas (Louisburg) 12-23 (Fall 0:38)

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# Louisburg girls wrestling season comes to close at regionals





***Louisburg freshman Leola Eslinger works for a pin Saturday during the Class 4-1A regional wrestling tournament at Columbus High School.***

COLUMBUS – It was a small, but mighty version of the Louisburg girls wrestling team in 2024, and the Lady Cats had their fair share of ups and downs.

Still, they put their best foot forward last Saturday at the Class 4-1A regional tournament at Columbus High School. Louisburg nearly had its first ever state qualifier on the girls side.

Freshman Leola Eslinger finished one victory shy of a state bid with a loss in the consolation semifinals and ended her day with a 3-2 record.

Another freshman, Allison Martin, ended her season with an 0-2 record at 130 pounds.

Eslinger, who wrestled at 145 pounds, opened the tournament with a pin of Labette County's Alexis Spencer. In the quarterfinals, Eslinger was pinned by Independence's Caille Anne Fairbank in the second period.

That started Eslinger's journey in the back side of the bracket as she went on to pin Jayhawk-Linn's Abigail Stone and

Erie's Madi Cope.

Then in the consolation semifinals, she battled Columbus' Madelyn Garcia, but was pinned and ended her season with a 28-9 record. Of those 28 wins, 27 came by pin.

As for Martin, she was pinned by Frontenac's Ariana Ortega to being the tournament and then lost a tough 2-1 decision to Girard's Bailey Glaser to end her season.

"A ton of great things came out of our girls season this year," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "Both of our girls are freshmen – Allison is a first-year wrestler and earned four varsity wins along the way, and Leola brought a great deal of experience into her first year with us. Allison's last match was a 2-1 decision, and she was pushing her opponent the entire match. Had there been a little more experience and perhaps a little more time, she might have gotten the win there.

"In Leola's final match in the blood round, she got the first takedown against a senior and returning state qualifier. She locked up a cradle and looked like she was going to pull off the upset, but one little mistake and her opponent capitalized on it. Next year will be an awesome step up from this year, as we should have a bunch more girls coming up from the middle school who have been very active with our kids club. Big things are in store for our girls wrestling program, that's for sure."