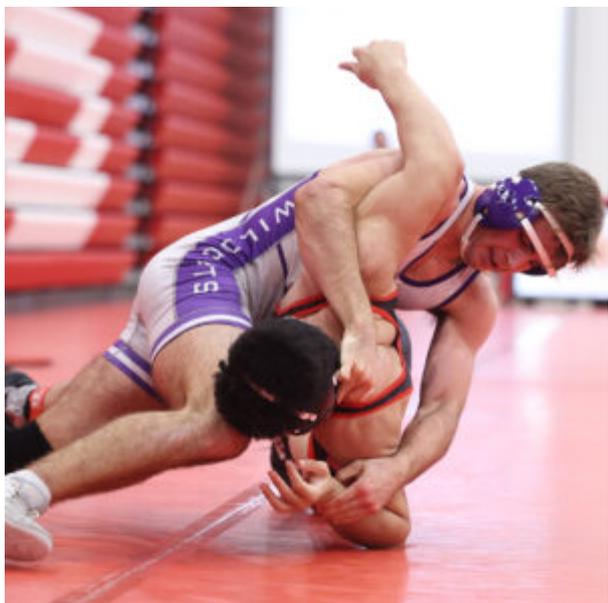


Wildcats medal six at Tonganoxie in final action before holidays



Louisburg junior Ashton Moore works for a pin during his 190-pound match Saturday at Tonganoxie. Moore finished second at the Randy Starcher Invitational.

TONGANOXIE – Louisburg ventured outside of the dual format for the first time this season Saturday at the Randy Starcher Invitational in Tonganoxie.

The Wildcats more than held their own as they earned six medals on the day and finished sixth in the team standings. It was a positive way to end 2023 for Louisburg as it went up against some tough competition.

“All-in-all, I think we performed pretty well as a team,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “We were up against some pretty solid competition – Tonganoxie is ranked third in 4A, Savannah is ranked fifth in Missouri 2A and Independence is ranked fourth in 4A. Lansing and Frontenac are also pretty tough teams. If they don’t end up ranked at some point, I’d be surprised.”

Louisburg racked up 142.5 points to finish sixth in the team standings. Tonganoxie won their home tournament with 285 points and Savannah (Mo.) was second with 211.

A pair of Wildcats also found themselves in the championship match of their respective weight classes. Juniors Jay McCaskill (157 pounds) and Ashton Moore (190) both made their way to the title match, but finished runner-up.

McCaskill (11-4) had six matches on the day, but wrestled strong throughout the tournament. He recorded four straight pins, and then registered a 10-4 decision over Lansing's Aidan Lessard in the semifinals.

In the championship, McCaskill lost a tough 6-4 decision to Savannah's Nic Scheib, who he had pinned earlier in the tournament.



Louisburg junior Jay McCaskill gets a pin during his 157-pound match Saturday in Tonganoxie.

As for Moore, he recorded two pins and a major decision before going up against Junction City's Griffin Bohanan, who is state placer in Class 6A. Moore got the best of him in a 6-4 decision to advance to the championship.

Moore squared off with Tonganoxie's Colton Brusven in the championship, but lost a 10-6 decision in a match that was tied going into the third period.

"Both of those guys gave it everything they've got," Bovaird said. "Jay ended up losing to a kid he'd pinned earlier in the tournament, but that finals match was his sixth match of the day. He nearly had that kid pinned again in the third period though.

"Ashton had a win over a Junction City wrestler who placed third in 6A state last year, and then he went toe-to-toe with a Tonganoxie kid who's already a 2-time state placer. Ashton had the kid on the ropes, too. A simple moment of hesitation allowed his opponent an angle at his shot to get the winning points. That's a match that I'm sure the Tongie kid doesn't want to have again."

Senior J'Lee Collins finished third at 126 pounds. After losing his first match of the day, Collins responded to win three matches in a row – all by pin – including a first period victory over Tonganoxie's Jack Wensel in the third place match.

Junior Canaan Clayton (113 pounds), junior Mika McKitrick (138) and senior Traden Noll (152) each finished fourth.

The Wildcats had a full lineup Saturday, and then some, as they had several unattached wrestlers as well that some important mat time.



Louisburg junior Canaan Clayton finished fourth at 113 pounds Saturday in Tonganoxie.

“J’Lee found himself in a tough match in the first round, and he ended up losing by pin to a kid that we’ll see several more times this season,” Bovaird said. “Canaan won his first medal for us and Traden had a great return to the program with a fourth place medal. Mika showed that he’s a working machine by taking fourth at 138. He only started wrestling a few years ago, and he’s made huge strides and has become an excellent leader.

“Also, we were able to take five unattached wrestlers and get them some varsity mat time, which I always find is huge. It helps us prepare for what’s coming down the road. Kids who aren’t quite varsity level just yet get some experience, plus they get the chance to win some matches and block other teams from scoring points. We had a bunch of our guys take some losses this weekend, but in the bigger scheme of things, we’re learning a ton of things that can’t be taught in the practice

room.”

Louisburg will return to action on Jan. 6 when the Wildcats host their home invitational.

106

Levi Cotter (8-6) placed 6th and scored 8.0 team points.

- Round 2 – Mason Gibbons (Independence HS) 12-0 won by fall over Levi Cotter (Louisburg HS) 8-6 (Fall 3:22)
- Round 3 – Lawson Francis (Savannah) 14-4 won by fall over Levi Cotter (Louisburg HS) 8-6 (Fall 3:02)
- Round 4 – Levi Cotter (Louisburg HS) 8-6 won by fall over Tyler Prager (Oskaloosa HS) 0-8 (Fall 0:22)
- Round 5 – Levi Cotter (Louisburg HS) 8-6 won by fall over Gabe Campbell (Eudora HS) 2-8 (Fall 3:09)
- 5th Place Match – Beau Underwood (Tonganoxie HS) 3-6 won by fall over Levi Cotter (Louisburg HS) 8-6 (Fall 4:22)

113

Canaan Clayton (11-3) placed 4th and scored 16.0 team points.

- Round 2 – Canaan Clayton (Louisburg HS) 11-3 won by fall over Loreda Escobar (Kansas City-JC Harmon HS) 0-5 (Fall 0:32)
- Round 3 – Canaan Clayton (Louisburg HS) 11-3 won by fall over David Scurto (Oskaloosa HS) 2-9 (Fall 0:37)
- Quarterfinal – Canaan Clayton (Louisburg HS) 11-3 won by fall over Colton Minick (Independence HS) 9-4 (Fall 0:31)
- Semifinal – Kyle Sloan (Frontenac HS) 7-4 won by fall over Canaan Clayton (Louisburg HS) 11-3 (Fall 3:52)
- 3rd Place Match – Brodie Starcher (Tonganoxie HS) 4-1 won by decision over Canaan Clayton (Louisburg HS) 11-3

(Dec 8-5)

120

Will Showalter (6-7) placed 9th and scored 0.0 team points.

- Round 1 – Jordan Bauswell (Tonganoxie HS) 6-5 won by major decision over Will Showalter (Louisburg HS) 6-7 (MD 9-1)
- Round 2 – Kelvin Velasquez (Savannah) 3-6 won by decision over Will Showalter (Louisburg HS) 6-7 (Dec 12-8)
- Round 3 – Zane Aikin (Frontenac HS) 8-5 won by decision over Will Showalter (Louisburg HS) 6-7 (Dec 10-3)
- Round 5 – Sawyer Jorgensen (Lansing HS) 14-0 won by fall over Will Showalter (Louisburg HS) 6-7 (Fall 1:37)
- 9th Place Match – Will Showalter (Louisburg HS) 6-7 received a bye () (Bye)

126

J`Lee Collins (8-4) placed 3rd and scored 19.0 team points.

- Round 1 – J`Lee Collins (Louisburg HS) 8-4 received a bye () (Bye)
- Round 2 – Clayton Crookham (Tonganoxie HS) 6-4 won by fall over J`Lee Collins (Louisburg HS) 8-4 (Fall 3:47)
- Round 4 – J`Lee Collins (Louisburg HS) 8-4 won by fall over Caleb Waldroff (Savannah) 0-8 (Fall 0:46)
- Round 5 – J`Lee Collins (Louisburg HS) 8-4 won by fall over Jacob Garner (Lansing HS) 8-6 (Fall 1:03)
- 3rd Place Match – J`Lee Collins (Louisburg HS) 8-4 won by fall over Jack Wensel (Tonganoxie HS) 3-2 (Fall 1:43)

132

Logan Henry (8-3) placed 6th and scored 8.0 team points.

- Round 1 – Logan Henry (Louisburg HS) 8-3 won by fall over Joseph Malec (Tonganoxie HS) 0-5 (Fall 0:52)
- Round 2 – Blake Riedel (Tonganoxie HS) 6-3 won by fall over Logan Henry (Louisburg HS) 8-3 (Fall 2:33)
- Round 4 – Logan Henry (Louisburg HS) 8-3 won by fall over William King (Oskaloosa HS) 1-9 (Fall 0:43)
- Round 5 – Brady Sloan (Frontenac HS) 11-3 won by fall over Logan Henry (Louisburg HS) 8-3 (Fall 4:30)
- 5th Place Match – Bryson Jeffers (Savannah) 4-3 won by fall over Logan Henry (Louisburg HS) 8-3 (Fall 3:09)

132

Freddy Moreau (1-4) placed 9th.

- Round 1 – Riley Dilka (Lansing HS) 14-1 won by fall over Freddy Moreau (Louisburg HS) 1-4 (Fall 3:22)
- Round 2 – Hawken Andrews (Eudora HS) 11-5 won by fall over Freddy Moreau (Louisburg HS) 1-4 (Fall 3:45)
- Round 3 – Jonathan Fairbank (Independence HS) 4-7 won by fall over Freddy Moreau (Louisburg HS) 1-4 (Fall 5:31)
- Round 4 – Bryson Jeffers (Savannah) 4-3 won by fall over Freddy Moreau (Louisburg HS) 1-4 (Fall 4:24)
- 9th Place Match – Freddy Moreau (Louisburg HS) 1-4 won by fall over Joseph Malec (Tonganoxie HS) 0-5 (Fall 1:18)

138

Blake Oliphant (3-2) placed 5th.

- Round 1 – Gavin Henderson (Frontenac HS) 5-8 won by decision over Blake Oliphant (Louisburg HS) 3-2 (Dec 11-4)
- Round 2 – Blake Oliphant (Louisburg HS) 3-2 won by fall over Junior Reyes (Kansas City-JC Harmon HS) 5-5 (Fall 2:12)
- Quarterfinal – Kohen Wright (Independence HS) 9-0 won by fall over Blake Oliphant (Louisburg HS) 3-2 (Fall 1:37)
- Cons. Round 1 – Blake Oliphant (Louisburg HS) 3-2 won by fall over Cristian Colop (Kansas City-JC Harmon HS) 4-6 (Fall 1:41)
- 5th Place Match – Blake Oliphant (Louisburg HS) 3-2 won by decision over Newt Schreiner (Eudora HS) 9-7 (Dec 4-1)

138

Mika McKitrick (7-6) placed 4th and scored 14.5 team points.

- Round 1 – Mika McKitrick (Louisburg HS) 7-6 won by fall over Owen Leffert (Tonganoxie HS) 2-3 (Fall 1:42)
- Round 3 – Mika McKitrick (Louisburg HS) 7-6 won by decision over Newt Schreiner (Eudora HS) 9-7 (Dec 6-3)
- Quarterfinal – Mika McKitrick (Louisburg HS) 7-6 won by fall over Cristian Colop (Kansas City-JC Harmon HS) 4-6 (Fall 1:30)
- Semifinal – Kohen Wright (Independence HS) 9-0 won by tech fall over Mika McKitrick (Louisburg HS) 7-6 (TF-1.5 1:38 (21-4))
- 3rd Place Match – Dax Duffett (Tonganoxie HS) 3-2 won by fall over Mika McKitrick (Louisburg HS) 7-6 (Fall 0:58)

144

Greysen Dixon (1-6) placed 10th and scored 0.0 team points.

- Round 2 – Braeden Moore (Tonganoxie HS) 10-1 won by fall over Greysen Dixon (Louisburg HS) 1-6 (Fall 1:05)
- Round 3 – Damian Davis (Junction City HS) 7-8 won by decision over Greysen Dixon (Louisburg HS) 1-6 (Dec 8-3)
- Round 4 – Ethan Jones (Frontenac HS) 3-2 won by decision over Greysen Dixon (Louisburg HS) 1-6 (Dec 8-1)
- Round 5 – Otto Nevins (Lansing HS) 5-5 won by fall over Greysen Dixon (Louisburg HS) 1-6 (Fall 2:34)
- 9th Place Match – Kingston Dishman (Tonganoxie HS) 1-4 won by major decision over Greysen Dixon (Louisburg HS) 1-6 (MD 13-3)

150

Colin Robinson (2-4) placed 7th.

- Round 1 – Lincoln LaFave (Savannah) 12-5 won by fall over Colin Robinson (Louisburg HS) 2-4 (Fall 1:07)
- Round 2 – Saxton Renfro (Independence HS) 11-1 won by fall over Colin Robinson (Louisburg HS) 2-4 (Fall 1:16)
- Round 3 – Colin Robinson (Louisburg HS) 2-4 won by fall over Brycon Speer (Eudora HS) 6-10 (Fall 1:24)
- Round 4 – Angel Cordova (Frontenac HS) 8-6 won by major decision over Colin Robinson (Louisburg HS) 2-4 (MD 11-2)
- 7th Place Match – Colin Robinson (Louisburg HS) 2-4 won by fall over Binod Bhjuel (Kansas City-JC Harmon HS) 3-8 (Fall 2:35)

150

Traden Noll (9-5) placed 4th and scored 16.0 team points.

- Round 2 – Noah Bailey (Tonganoxie HS) 9-1 won by fall over Traden Noll (Louisburg HS) 9-5 (Fall 1:23)
- Round 3 – Traden Noll (Louisburg HS) 9-5 won by fall over Dylan Todd (Junction City HS) 9-6 (Fall 5:19)
- Round 4 – Traden Noll (Louisburg HS) 9-5 won by fall over Jackson Sigrist (Savannah) 0-6 (Fall 1:06)
- Round 5 – Traden Noll (Louisburg HS) 9-5 won by fall over Binod Bhjuel (Kansas City-JC Harmon HS) 3-8 (Fall 1:32)
- 3rd Place Match – Lincoln LaFave (Savannah) 12-5 won by major decision over Traden Noll (Louisburg HS) 9-5 (MD 12-0)

157

Jay McCaskill (11-4) placed 2nd and scored 24.5 team points.

- Round 1 – Jay McCaskill (Louisburg HS) 11-4 won by fall over Aaron Lopez (Kansas City-JC Harmon HS) 1-10 (Fall 0:25)
- Round 2 – Jay McCaskill (Louisburg HS) 11-4 won by fall over Preston Warbritton (Oskaloosa HS) 7-7 (Fall 0:36)
- Round 3 – Jay McCaskill (Louisburg HS) 11-4 won by fall over Nic Scheib (Savannah) 16-5 (Fall 4:25)
- Quarterfinal – Jay McCaskill (Louisburg HS) 11-4 won by fall over Chris Ortiz (Kansas City-JC Harmon HS) 4-8 (Fall 1:25)
- Semifinal – Jay McCaskill (Louisburg HS) 11-4 won by decision over Aidan Lessard (Lansing HS) 10-6 (Dec 10-4)
- 1st Place Match – Nic Scheib (Savannah) 16-5 won by decision over Jay McCaskill (Louisburg HS) 11-4 (Dec

6-4)

165

Bryce Thompson (7-4) placed 7th and scored 4.0 team points.

- Round 2 – Brady Martin (Tonganoxie HS) 11-1 won by fall over Bryce Thompson (Louisburg HS) 7-4 (Fall 1:41)
- Round 3 – Josh Brookshire (Junction City HS) 13-2 won by fall over Bryce Thompson (Louisburg HS) 7-4 (Fall 4:30)
- Round 4 – Robert Ragland (Savannah) 6-9 won by fall over Bryce Thompson (Louisburg HS) 7-4 (Fall 2:53)
- Round 5 – Bryce Thompson (Louisburg HS) 7-4 won by fall over Gabriel Hernandez (Kansas City-JC Harmon HS) 4-7 (Fall 4:42)
- 7th Place Match – Bryce Thompson (Louisburg HS) 7-4 won by fall over Vance Hahn (Louisburg HS) 3-5 (Fall 0:48)

165

Vance Hahn (3-5) placed 8th.

- Round 1 – Wyatt Frazier (Frontenac HS) 10-4 won by fall over Vance Hahn (Louisburg HS) 3-5 (Fall 1:46)
- Round 2 – Braedon Speer (Eudora HS) 7-3 won by fall over Vance Hahn (Louisburg HS) 3-5 (Fall 1:55)
- Round 3 – Vance Hahn (Louisburg HS) 3-5 won by fall over Jan Sagaro (Kansas City-JC Harmon HS) 2-6 (Fall 3:12)
- Round 4 – LaMarcus Allen (Independence HS) 7-4 won by fall over Vance Hahn (Louisburg HS) 3-5 (Fall 3:02)
- 7th Place Match – Bryce Thompson (Louisburg HS) 7-4 won by fall over Vance Hahn (Louisburg HS) 3-5 (Fall 0:48)

175

Elias Pugh (7-7) placed 9th and scored 2.0 team points.

- Round 2 – Cooper Bogenhagen (Junction City HS) 11-3 won by decision over Elias Pugh (Louisburg HS) 7-7 (Dec 8-2)
- Round 3 – Dominic Ricciardi (Frontenac HS) 12-1 won by major decision over Elias Pugh (Louisburg HS) 7-7 (MD 19-5)
- Round 4 – Cael Dye (Tonganoxie HS) 3-2 won by decision over Elias Pugh (Louisburg HS) 7-7 (Dec 9-5)
- Round 5 – Thomas Messersmith (Tonganoxie HS) 5-6 won by fall over Elias Pugh (Louisburg HS) 7-7 (Fall 0:52)
- 9th Place Match – Elias Pugh (Louisburg HS) 7-7 won by fall over Ethan Riley (Tonganoxie HS) 0-5 (Fall 0:42)

190

Ashton Moore (11-3) placed 2nd and scored 21.5 team points.

- Round 1 – Ashton Moore (Louisburg HS) 11-3 won by fall over Alonzo Burke (Frontenac HS) 8-6 (Fall 1:48)
- Round 2 – Ashton Moore (Louisburg HS) 11-3 won by major decision over Elijah Townsend (Lansing HS) 2-3 (MD 15-1)
- Round 3 – Ashton Moore (Louisburg HS) 11-3 won by fall over Reilly Neis (Eudora HS) 9-7 (Fall 1:48)
- Round 5 – Ashton Moore (Louisburg HS) 11-3 won by decision over Griffin Bohanan (Junction City HS) 11-4 (Dec 6-4)
- 1st Place Match – Colton Brusven (Tonganoxie HS) 7-0 won by decision over Ashton Moore (Louisburg HS) 11-3 (Dec 10-6)

215

Brayden Yoder (8-6) placed 6th and scored 8.0 team points.

- Round 2 – Cooper Burnsidess (Savannah) 15-2 won by fall over Brayden Yoder (Louisburg HS) 8-6 (Fall 3:50)
- Round 3 – Chris Coy (Junction City HS) 10-5 won by decision over Brayden Yoder (Louisburg HS) 8-6 (Dec 7-2)
- Round 4 – Brayden Yoder (Louisburg HS) 8-6 won by fall over Miles Meek (Louisburg HS) 2-3 (Fall 1:13)
- Round 5 – Brayden Yoder (Louisburg HS) 8-6 won by fall over Brayden Folsom (Tonganoxie HS) 0-4 (Fall 1:37)
- 5th Place Match – Jacob Garriss (Independence HS) 4-4 won by fall over Brayden Yoder (Louisburg HS) 8-6 (Fall 1:45)

215

Miles Meek (2-3) placed 7th.

- Round 1 – Cooper Burnsidess (Savannah) 15-2 won by fall over Miles Meek (Louisburg HS) 2-3 (Fall 0:47)
- Round 2 – Chris Coy (Junction City HS) 10-5 won by decision over Miles Meek (Louisburg HS) 2-3 (Dec 1-0)
- Round 3 – Miles Meek (Louisburg HS) 2-3 won by fall over Brayden Folsom (Tonganoxie HS) 0-4 (Fall 2:34)
- Round 4 – Brayden Yoder (Louisburg HS) 8-6 won by fall over Miles Meek (Louisburg HS) 2-3 (Fall 1:13)
- 7th Place Match – Miles Meek (Louisburg HS) 2-3 won by fall over Noah Carlson (Tonganoxie HS) 0-4 (Fall 0:46)

285

Xander Lucas (4-9) placed 7th and scored 2.0 team points.

- Round 2 – Julian Bush (Kansas City-JC Harmon HS) 7-4 won by fall over Xander Lucas (Louisburg HS) 4-9 (Fall 3:31)
- Round 3 – Trystan Chadwick (Savannah) 10-6 won by fall over Xander Lucas (Louisburg HS) 4-9 (Fall 3:27)
- Round 4 – Xander Lucas (Louisburg HS) 4-9 received a bye
() (Bye)
- Round 5 – Jaxon Dominic (Tonganoxie HS) 3-1 won by fall over Xander Lucas (Louisburg HS) 4-9 (Fall 2:50)
- 7th Place Match – Xander Lucas (Louisburg HS) 4-9 won by fall over Daron Cheadle (Kansas City-JC Harmon HS) 0-6 (Fall 1:03)

Wildcats down Olathe West in home opener

Louisburg continued its strong dual run Thursday when it hosted Olathe West in its home opener.

The Wildcats split with the Owls, but earned those extra points to pull out the 39-33 victory and improved their dual record to 9-1 on the season.

“We didn’t wrestle our best, but I think it has a lot to do with several factors,” Bovaird said. “First, it’s the middle of our finals week, and I know that there were a lot of guys on the team who were worried about doing their best to end the semester on a high note academically. Also, it was our last week to certify at our weights we wanted to go for regionals, so there were a number of guys who were working to get down to weight and stay hydrated at the same time. We had some gutsy matches where we showed a lot of fortitude.”

Louisburg jumped out to an early lead and held on for the 6-point win despite losing its final four matches of the night.

Traden Noll, Jay McCaskill, Bryce Thompson, Elias Pugh, Ashton Moore, Brayden Yoder and Levi Cotter each earned victories for

the Wildcats.

Noll held on for a 6-5 decision, while Pugh found himself down 10-0 before earning a pin as both matches proved pivotal in the final score. Yoder also earned a first round pin over a returning 6A state qualifier.

Wildcat wrestling goes undefeated to win December Duals



Louisburg junior Mika McKitrick works for a pin Friday during a match in the December Duals at Baldwin. McKitrick was one of six Wildcats named to the All-Tournament Team.

BALDWIN CITY – Louisburg has lived well in the dual format so far in the young season and that continued Friday in Baldwin.

The Wildcats finished with a 4-0 record and won the December Duals as they pulled out a couple close wins in the process.

Louisburg earned victories over Prairie View, Baldwin, Independence and Burlington as the Wildcats earned top honors.

“We went in there and had two very gutsy wins – one against Baldwin and one against Independence,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “Earlier this year, Baldwin was ranked in the top 10 at state, and Independence is currently ranked fourth in 4A. We’ve got depth and experience on our varsity roster, and the guys are starting to see how that pays off.”

That depth also showed as the Wildcats earned six spots on the December Duals All-Tournament Team.

Logan Henry (132 pounds, 4-0 record), Mika McKitrick (138, 3-1), Jay McCaskill (157, 3-1), Bryce Thompson (165, 3-1), Elias Pugh (175, 3-1) and Ashton Moore (190, 3-1) were all named to the All-Tournament Team.



Louisburg junior Ashton Moore went 3-1 at 190 pounds Friday in Baldwin.

The Wildcats opened the tournament with a 75-6 victory over Prairie View and then found themselves in a close contest against Baldwin. In that match, Louisburg did the work in the lower and middle weights as the Wildcats built the lead and

held on for a 40-33 win, despite losing the final three matches.

“We’ve talked about bonus points – winning by a major decision instead of just a regular decision, fighting off your back to avoid a pin, etc,” Bovaird said. “The mindset has to be that no one outworks us and we never give up.”

Louisburg found itself in another close matchup against Independence as the Wildcats had to rally from an early deficit.

The Wildcats got three straight pins from Thompson, Pugh and Moore. Then Brayden Yoder pulled out a big 3-2 decision at 215 pounds to help secure the win.

Louisburg ended the night with a 72-9 victory over Burlington to secure the tournament title.



Louisburg junior Logan Henry went 4-0 and recorded four pins at 132 pounds Friday in the December Duals.

A lot of Wildcats found success in Baldwin, but Henry was the lone Wildcat with a 4-0 record and all were by pin at 132 pounds.

Canaan Clayton (113 pounds), Will Showalter (120), J'Lee Collins (126), McKitrick (138), Traden Noll (150), McCaskill, Thompson, Pugh, Moore and Yoder (215) all finished with a 3-1 record on the night.

A pair of Louisburg girls also saw their first action of the season at the Saturday edition of the December Duals. Freshman Leola Eslinger went 3-0 at 145 pounds and freshman Allison Martin lost her lone match at 125 pounds.

"Both girls competed really well, and I'm excited to see how they continue to improve each week," Bovaird said. "We're working to add more and more competition opportunities for them this season to get them ready for regionals in February."

After a runner-up finish at Fort Scott the week before, the Wildcats will try and continue that momentum this week as they host Olathe West in a dual Thursday before traveling to Tonganoxie on Saturday for their final tournament of 2023.

Wildcats finish runner-up in season opener at Fort Scott



The Louisburg wrestling team finished second at the Fort Scott Dual Tournament last Friday as it posted a 4-1 record on the day.

FORT SCOTT – The Louisburg wrestling team had the showing it was hoping for Friday at the Fort Scott Dual Tournament.

Louisburg won its first four duals of the event, before falling to state-ranked Atchison County in the final one to finish as the tournament runner-up.

“It’s always nice to bring home some hardware from a tournament, especially when it’s a team plaque,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “The guys wrestled tough Friday night. Our one loss was against Effingham-Atchison County, and they’re ranked No. 5 in 321A as a team. We had some very gutsy individual wins, and that helped us hold off for wins against Blue Valley Southwest and Fort Scott.”

The Wildcats cruised to a 60-22 victory over Jayhawk-Linn to start the day and then followed it up with a 78-6 win over Anderson County. The matches got a little tougher after that.

Louisburg held on for a 39-34 victory over a talented Fort Scott program and then pulled out a 36-34 dual win over Blue Valley Southwest despite losing its final four matches.

Against Atchison County, Louisburg came up short with a 51-27 loss to the Tigers and finished the day with a 4-1 record.

The Wildcats also had to face a little adversity. Senior Colin Robinson, who wrestled at 150 pounds, suffered a broken nose early on, and Bovaird had to reshuffle his lineup.

Sophomore Tyson Blancarte, junior Mike McKittrick and senior Traden Noll all bumped up a weight class to make sure the Wildcats had a full lineup. It ended up being a big part of the Wildcats' runner-up finish.

Junior Canaan Clayton led the Wildcats with a 5-0 record at 113 pounds, which included three pins. Junior Ashton Moore finished the day with a 4-1 record with three pins at 190 pounds, while freshman Levi Cotter was 4-1 with a pin at 106 pounds.

Junior Jay McCaskill found himself in a loaded weight class at 157 pounds and came out with a 3-2 record, all of his wins coming by pin. One of those pins came against Anderson County's Masten Wright, who is ranked in the top five in state.

Freshman Bryce Thompson and sophomore Vance Hahn combined for a 5-1 record at 165 pounds and each had two pins.

Senior Elias Pugh (175 pounds), junior Brayden Yoder (215) and junior Will Showalter (120) each had 3-2 marks. Senior J'Lee Collins (132), freshman Spencer Mattison (126), junior Logan Henry (132/138) and junior Xander Lucas (285) each had a pair of wins.

"We're fortunate this year to have Canaan join the team," Bovaird said. "Coach (Shawn) Crossley and I have coached Canaan since he was in elementary school, but since he's been homeschooled all that time, we've never had the chance to have him on the high school team. This year with KSHSAA's rules modifications, he's now able to be on the team, and he had a

great day.

“Levi and Ashton both went 4-1 and wrestled really tough. Jay was in a beast of a weight with 4 state-ranked wrestlers. He lost tough matches to Fort Scott and Effingham, but was able to pin a ranked kid from Anderson County.”

With all the success the Wildcats experienced at Fort Scott, Bovaird is hoping that it will bleed over into the rest of the year.

“We’re very excited for this season,” Bovaird said. “There are more experienced wrestlers wearing the purple singlets than we’ve had in a long time, and these guys are tough and hard-working. I took extras in four weights, hoping to get them some varsity time. Logan Henry and Tyson Blancarte both stepped in and had some great wins for us – Logan against BVSW and Tyson against Fort Scott.

“Vance Hahn and Bryce Thompson both split time at 165 and were a combined 5-1 on the evening. Both are pushing each other on a daily basis in the practice room. Miles Meek has been rolling with Ashton, Brayden Yoder, and Xander Lucas at practices this season, but we weren’t able to get him connected with a match unfortunately.”

The Wildcats will try and continue their winning ways this Friday when they travel to Baldwin for the December Duals. They will square off with Prairie View, Baldwin, Independence and Burlington. Matches begin at 4:30 p.m.

State qualifiers return to lead Wildcat wrestling in 23-24



Louisburg senior J'Lee Collins is one of three state qualifiers to return to lead the Louisburg wrestling team this upcoming season.

After rolling with some younger lineups the last couple of years, the Louisburg wrestling team is starting to see that experience come to light and the Wildcats are hoping for big things for the 2023-24 season.

The Wildcats return three state qualifiers from a year ago and will feature a full 14-member lineup. Out of the 14, 11 are juniors and seniors.

In all, Louisburg has 37 wrestlers out this season and head coach Bobby Bovaird has liked what he has seen so far in practice.

“We have a little less than we’ve had the last couple of seasons, but I’m still happy with the numbers we’ve got out,” Bovaird said. “The level of experience has increased from

previous years, which helps us move quicker in our progression throughout the season.

“We’ve been having some great practices. The team is staying healthy and working really hard. We have excellent attitudes from our leaders, and our newcomers are falling right in with the program.”

The Wildcats sent six wrestlers to the state tournament a season ago and three of them are coming back to lead this year’s group. Senior J’Lee Collins, and juniors Ashton Moore and Jay McCaskill, will all aim to get back there again.

Another junior, Brayden Yoder, just missed out on a state tournament bid last season and Bovaird is looking to those four to help lead the way this year.



Junior Ashton Moore will wrestle at 190 pounds for the Wildcats after earning a state bid last year at 175.

“Just watching those four guys in the practice room, it’s

awesome to see their work ethic and leadership,” Bovaird said. “It’s infectious, too. Brayden and Ashton roll with some of our bigger guys, J’Lee is pushing the lower weights, and Jay is right there in the middle weights. Ashton and J’Lee were both a match from finishing in the top 6 at state, and Jay was bouncing back from a nasty knee injury. If he’d had a full season, he would have been ready to make a very strong showing at state. Brayden, despite not making it to state, had an incredible sophomore season.”

In the lower weights, freshman Levi Cotter will open for the Wildcats at 106 pounds, while junior Canaan Clayton will take hold of the 113 pound spot.

Junior Will Showalter and Collins will wrestle at 120 and 126 pounds, respectively, and both are two of the four team captains. Sophomore Tyson Blancarte or junior Logan Henry will wrestle at 132.

Junior Mika McKitrick, another team captain, will wrestle at 138 pounds. Seniors Traden Noll and Colin Robinson will wrestle at 144 and 150 pounds, respectively, while McCaskill will stay at his 157 pound weight from last season.



Louisburg junior Jay McCaskill will wrestle at 157 pounds this year after earning a state bid a year ago.

Freshman Bryce Thompson and sophomore Vance Hahn will see time at 165 pounds and senior Elias Pugh is at 175 pounds. Moore, a team captain, will bump up to 190 pounds this season.

Yoder (215) and junior Xander Lucas (285) will be among the Wildcat heavyweights this season.

Louisburg will also add a pair of wrestlers to its girls team. Freshman Leola Eslinger (145) and Allison Martin (125) will be the lone Wildcats this season.

“We’re still getting started on the girls side, but we’re bringing in a freshman with great youth wrestling experience in Leola,” Bovaird said. “Allison, while she is new to the sport of wrestling, she’s got experience with jiu jitsu, which will help her quite a bit.”

The Wildcats will open their season Friday at the Fort Scott

Dual Tournament. It will be the first of many challenges for Louisburg as its ventures through the Frontier League and several other difficult 4A programs.

“We will have a pretty solid team, top to bottom,” Bovaird said. “We have lots of kids with varsity experience, as well as kids bringing in some great youth wrestling experience. We’re in a tough league with teams like Baldwin, Paola, Bonner Springs, Spring Hill and Tonganoxie, but I think we’ll be pretty competitive within the Frontier League, as well as in Class 4A.”

Eslinger ready to take next step at Baker University



Louisburg’s Elijah Eslinger, who is coming off back-to-back state medals at the high school level, will wrestle for the Baker University program next season.

Elijah Eslinger didn’t start wrestling till the eighth grade, but that didn’t stop him from accomplishing something great.

Eslinger went on to become a two-time state medalist for the Louisburg wrestling team, and now he is hoping to make even bigger strides at the next level.

The Louisburg graduate signed on to join the Baker University

wrestling program and will compete at the NAIA level next season.

“When I signed for Baker, it solidified my goal to continue in the sport that I love,” Eslinger said.

It has been a labor of love for Eslinger as the results didn't come right away. As the Wildcat heavyweight, he took his fair share of lumps as a freshman and sophomore.

The wins weren't always there, but Eslinger kept improving and the results started to show as a junior, where he earned a spot in the state semifinals and brought home a state medal.

Eslinger did the same thing his senior campaign as he became known as one of the top heavyweights in Class 4A.

“I'm incredibly excited for Elijah to compete at Baker for a lot of reasons,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “He started wrestling as an eighth grader and then a year later, he got thrown in with the wolves pretty much. As a freshman, he was our only wrestler at 285 lbs., and if he didn't represent us in duals, we would have been open there.

“He went from being winless as a freshman to making the state semifinals two years straight as a junior and senior. Being a Baker University alumnus, I'm excited for the opportunities for growth that he'll have at Baker. His potential truly is untapped, and I know he's going to excel in whatever he takes on.”



Louisburg senior Elijah Eslinger signed his letter of intent to join the Baker University wrestling team. Sitting with Elijah are his parents Dean and Heather Eslinger. Standing (from left) is his sister Leola, Louisburg assistant coaches Shane Miller and Shawn Crossley, Baker assistant coach, Louisburg head coach Bobby Bovaird and Elijah's brother Trace.

Eslinger enjoyed the challenge of reaching that state podium.

"I feel that I have had a fairly meteoric growth since freshman year," Eslinger said. "From no wins my freshman year, to a qualifier sophomore year, to placing both junior and senior years, I have had a great time, which helped me continue to get better."

Baker is the place where Eslinger believes he can take the next step in his wrestling journey. While on his visit, he enjoyed the coaches what the program had to offer.

At the same time, Eslinger, who will major in history, said the school itself was another big reason in his decision.

"Honestly, while the wrestling program is a great program, it was the academic focus that really won me over," he said. "Right now I'm planning on going into college with no expectations and will just see what happens."

2023 Louisburg Sports Zone Male Athlete of the Year Nominees



For the sixth 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. They will then vote for their top 3 male and female athletes and then I will tabulate the results and determine the winner. The winner will be announced in the coming days.

Below are the nominees for the Male Athlete of the Year award in alphabetical order by last name. Congrats to all those who were nominated and best of luck!



Kaven Bartlett – Senior – Wrestling and Soccer

Kaven Bartlett competed on the Louisburg wrestling and boys soccer team, but Bartlett was a fixture on the mat for the Wildcat wrestling program.

Bartlett qualified for state at 138 pounds and became a 3-time state qualifier for Louisburg and was a state medalist in 2022. He finished with a 119-45 career record and was a two-time team captain and four-year letter winner. Those 119 wins are fifth in program history and he has 158 career takedowns and 726.5 career points, which is both third in team history. He was named the 2023 LHS Wrestler of the Year.

Bartlett was also a defender on the Wildcat soccer team his past season. The Wildcats advanced to the regional championship game.



Declan Battle – Junior – Football and Baseball

Declan Battle had big seasons for both the Wildcat football and baseball programs.

Under the lights on the football field, Battle was the Wildcat starting quarterback as he led his team to an undefeated Frontier League championship. The dual-threat quarterback scored 23 total touchdowns and totaled more than 1,700 yards. That performance led him to a first-team All-Frontier League, along with all-state honors.

On the diamond, Battle was the Wildcats' starting centerfielder and leadoff hitter. He scored 32 runs on the year, which is a Wildcat program record. Battle also recorded a .429 average to go along with five doubles and three triples. He also stole 17 bases. His performance also earned him second team All-Frontier League and all-state honors.



Mason Dobbins – Senior – Football, Basketball and Track and Field

Louisburg senior Mason Dobbins was a fixture for three Wildcat programs this past season. Dobbins was the starting wide receiver on the football field, starting forward on the basketball team and a state medalist for the track program.

Dobbins stood out the most in the track and field arena. He qualified for state in four events and medaled in all four as he helped the Wildcats to a state runner-up finish this past May.

Dobbins won the state championship in the high jump, and earlier in the year, broke the school record with a jump of 6 feet, 7 inches. He was a state runner-up in the 110-meter hurdles and also took third in the 200-meter dash. He was also a part of the 4×100-meter relay that also medaled third and set a new school record earlier in the year. In all, Dobbins has won nine state medals in his Wildcat career.

On the football field, Dobbins earned first team All-Frontier

League honors at wide receiver with 25 catches, 382 yards and four touchdowns. He also earned honorable mention all-state honors.

On the basketball court, Dobbins was named to the All-Frontier League defensive team. He led the Wildcats with 7.6 rebounds a game to go along with 1.5 steals and 1 block per contest.



Cade Gassman – Senior – Soccer, Basketball and Track and Field

Cade Gassman was a starter, or key contributor, for three Wildcat programs during 2022-23 school year. Gassman was the starting midfielder and captain for the soccer team, starting guard on the basketball court and a jumper for the track and field program.

Gassman made his biggest impact on the pitch for Louisburg. As a midfielder, Gassman drew a lot of attention from the opposition as he finished with five goals and four assists on

the season to lead the Wildcats to the regional title match. In his career, he is one of the more prolific scorers in school history.

The Louisburg senior finished with 47 career goals, which is second in program history and was third in school history with 26 career assists. His 120 career points is also second in Wildcat history. He is a four-time all-state and all-Frontier League first team selection.

On the hardwood, Gassman was the starting guard for the Wildcats and he recorded 39 rebounds and had 22 assists to go along with 14 steals. On the track, Gassman was a state qualifier in the high jump for Louisburg and finished 11th overall at state.



Nathan Vincent, Senior, Football and Track and Field

Louisburg senior Nathan Vincent played big roles for both the

Wildcat football team and track and field program. Vincent was a starting lineman for the Wildcat football team and a state medalist in track.

On the football field, Vincent started on both sides of the ball as he earned all-state and all league honors. He finished with 80 tackles as a defensive end to go along with 6.5 sacks and 8.5 tackles for a loss. Vincent was a key member of the offensive line as he helped the Wildcats to more than 33 points per game. He earned first team all-league offensive league honors and second team-defense. He also recorded first team all-state honors and was selected to play in the Kansas Shrine Bowl.

Vincent was the Wildcats' top thrower for the track and field program. Vincent recorded three state medals as he helped Louisburg to a state runner-up team finish. At state, Vincent medaled third in the shot put, fifth in the discus and sixth in the javelin. In all, Vincent has won five career state medals, with three coming in the javelin.



Colyer Wingfield, Senior, Basketball, Track and Field

Louisburg senior Colyer Wingfield had a big season for both the Wildcat basketball team and track program. Wingfield was the leading scorer for the Wildcat basketball program, and was a part of two state relays in track.

Wingfield earned a lot of success on the hardwood as he was named to the All-Frontier League second team. He led the Wildcats in scoring at 17.4 points per game and pulled down nearly six rebounds a contest.

On the track, Wingfield helped the 4×100 relay and 4×400 relay to state medals as both finished third at the state meet last month. The 4×100 relay set a new school record in the process. He also did the long and triple jumps for the Wildcats.

Pfannenstiel named new LHS AD; resigns boys basketball post



Louisburg boys basketball coach Ty Pfannenstiel will take over the school's activities director role next school year. He also resigned his basketball position after coaching the

Wildcats for the last six years.

Beginning next school year, Louisburg High School activities will have a little different look to it – especially at the top.

Ty Pfannenstiel will serve as the school's new activities director and will take over for current AD, Michael Pickman, who will focus on his assistant principal duties and curriculum.

Pfannenstiel, who has been the boys basketball coach for the last six years, resigned his post to take on the activities director position. He also stepped down as an assistant football coach.

Currently the weight room instructor, Pfannenstiel will spend half his day teaching and the other half in the AD role.

All of the moves were approved during Monday's meeting of the USD 416 Board of Education.

"This is very exciting for me," Pfannenstiel said. "It's definitely going to be a change. I have been a teacher and a coach for 18 years. I still get to be a teacher half-time, and now I get to step into a new role as an administrator. It is going to be all sports and activities and I am looking forward to the new direction."

As for Pickman, he gets the opportunity to focus more on the academic side as a full-time assistant principal. He was hired as an assistant principal/ activities director in April of 2020.

"I am very excited to commit more fully to the assistant principal role as education and curriculum have always been my true passion," Pickman said. "Being able to support the teachers, students, and administrative staff by providing data, feedback, and assessing teaching and learning goals and

initiatives in the building and district aligns with that passion and the opportunity arose to allow for that. I hope to enable and promote continued growth in the various curriculums and initiatives and structures that make Louisburg a fantastic district in a supportive community.

“Ty has experience and is passionate about athletics and activities. As it is where his passion is, I have every confidence he will do a fantastic job in his new role and look forward to witnessing where he takes our programs moving forward.”

Pickman took over LHS activities at a difficult time as the school was coming back from COVID-19 and the all challenges it presented. As tough as that situation was, he appreciated the relationships he built.

“I have thoroughly enjoyed my role as activities director and was presented a fantastic growth opportunity and am grateful for being given it,” Pickman said. “I had a goal of being present for athletes and coaches and for the patrons, so I hope people saw that presence. I was blessed to have great leadership in place in our coaches and sponsors, and tried to support them best by advocating for their needs and supporting them to do their job of being great role models and passing on their passion and knowledge to students.

“Ultimately, I am most proud of our student athletes and activity participants and being part of their journey. I believe that sports are an extension of the classroom and I wanted to help ensure that character and sportsmanship were just as important and success, and I am overjoyed to have a wealth of memories where our fans, students, participants, and coaches and sponsors proved that to be true of LHS.”

While taking on the challenge of being a new administrator is one he is looking forward to, leaving his coaching roots behind was a difficult decision for Pfannenstiel.

In 2021, Pfannenstiel led the Wildcat boys basketball team to the Class 4A state championship game and finished as the state runner-up.

“That was definitely the biggest thing that was holding me back,” Pfannenstiel said. “I love basketball and the kids that I have worked with. There is a group coming up that I really enjoy coaching, and leaving that behind was one of the biggest challenges for me. Whoever takes over the program, I think it will be good transition for them because they will have a great group of kids to work with.

“Originally, I was going to be allowed to coach a sport and they didn’t want to take coaching away from me. The more I thought about it, if I want to do a good job at this, I need to focus on being the AD and that will be something that will benefit me and all the other activities.”

Pfannenstiel believes the move is a good one for the school in general as it will allow Pickman and principal Amy VanRheen to focus more on the academic side of things.

“This is something that is definitely needed,” Pfannenstiel said. “Our administrators are so busy with all the stuff they do during the school day, but they are also going to all the activities as well. Hopefully this will be a big help for Mrs. VanRheen and Mr. Pickman.”

Although he won’t official start his new position till next school year, Pfannenstiel is already starting to transition into his new role – one that is looking forward to.

“My job in the weight room and coaching has all been about sports,” he said. “That is what entices me about this job is that I am still going to be all about sports and activities. I just want to be a support for our coaches and our athletes and be advocate for our students.”

Eslinger garners second consecutive state medal



Louisburg senior Elijah Eslinger won his second straight state medal Saturday in Salina at the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships as he finished sixth at 285 pounds.

SALINA – Just like a year ago, Elijah Eslinger found himself one win away from a spot in the state championship match.

Eslinger, who has been ranked in Class 4A at different times throughout the season, has had a long road as a Wildcat heavyweight. One that included a rough freshman year, to progressively getting better.

With a spot in the semifinals last Friday at the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships already wrapped up, he had already secured his second state medal in Salina.

Still, he wanted more.

The 285-pounder opened the state tournament with a pin of Labette County's Chris Stephens and then earned an 11-4 decision over Pratt's Drake VanScoyoc.

Eslinger squared off with Coffeyville-Field Kindley's Kainen White in the semifinals, and in what was a close match throughout, came up a point short of that finals match in a

3-2 loss.

“To make the semifinals was exciting, especially since it was the closest match I had,” Eslinger said. “It was probably close to the hardest match that I had over the weekend. I feel like I could have done better looking at my matches in hindsight.”

The Louisburg senior wrestled two more matches in the consolation bracket on Saturday, but came up short. He fell in an 8-0 major decision to Rose Hill’s Miles Colvin and was pinned by Columbus’ Jake Eddington in the fifth-place match.

Eslinger wrapped up his high school career with his second straight sixth-place medal and ended his season with 40 wins. Quite an accomplishment from where he began four year ago.

“I’m so proud of Elijah and how far he’s come in the past four years,” Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. “He started wrestling in eighth grade, but that’s just a four-and-a-half week season. He got thrown out against the wolves his freshman year, wrestling 285 for us and taking quite a few lumps. His sophomore year, suddenly something clicked with him and he never really looked back.

“For the past two seasons, he’s made the state semifinals, which is an incredible accomplishment. Wrestling has opened up quite a few doors for this young man, and the great thing is that he loves the sport and he wants to continue doing it in college. With the growth he’s made in the past four years, I know he’s not even close to hitting his peak, and the next four years of his college career will be excited to watch.”



Louisburg junior J'Lee Collins earns a pin Friday during the state tournament.

The Wildcats nearly had two more wrestlers earn spots on the medal stand. Junior J'Lee Collins (126 pounds) and sophomore Ashton Moore (175) both made their way to the blood round and needed a win to secure a state medal.

Unfortunately, both Wildcats succumbed to one of the tougher rounds of the state tournament.

Collins lost his opening round match, but responded with a pin of Field Kindley's Pierce Webber in the first round of consolation and then earned a 9-3 decision over Fort Scott's Trace Metcalf.

That set up match for a medal with Abilene's Christopher McClanahan and Collins was pinned in the second period.



Louisburg sophomore Ashton Moore finished his state tournament with a 2-2 record.

As for Moore, he also lost his opening round match, but responded to win his next two. He went on to pin Chanute's Dax Axelson and then outlasted Clearwater's Jacob Finney in a 3-0 decision, before getting pinned by Clay Center's Tucker Jackson in the blood round.

"When you think about it, having two underclassmen make the blood round at state shows a couple of great things," Bovaird said. "First, we've got that experience coming back next year. Second, those guys had the drive and fire to compete and advance that far against some pretty tough competition. Both are incredible athletes and role models. Their experience at state this year will be huge with their leadership next season and beyond.

"J'Lee is just a positive-minded guy who knows how to work hard and overcome adversity. Ashton is an exemplar when it comes to the idea of hard work, and his athletic prowess is going to take him far."

The Wildcats also experienced some heartbreak as senior Kaven Bartlett fell short of his goal of earning another state

medal. At 138 pounds, Bartlett finished the state tournament with a 1-2 record.



Louisburg senior Kaven Bartlett ended his final state tournament with a 1-2 record.

Bartlett lost a close 2-1 decision to Anderson County's AJ Schaffer to open the tournament, before rallying to defeat Ulysses' Braysen Salinas in a 3-2 decision.

He then squared off with Paola's Ryan Pankov in the consolation cross-bracket and fell in a 6-0 decision.

Bartlett amassed more than 100 career wins as a Wildcat and finished his year with a 37-6 record, to go along with his state medal last season.

"The thing about Kaven is that his wrestling career is far from over," Bovaird said. "He's going to wrestle at Newman University next year, and this sport has done so much for him. He understands that, and he's grateful for all the opportunities he's had. He's helped give back to our wrestling community, not only as a competitor and leader on the mat, but also with our youth club as a coach.

“Seeing his senior year come to an end the way it did was truly heartbreaking, and I wish we could go back and have a redo at so many things. That’s the way the sport – and life – goes, unfortunately. We don’t get do-overs, and we can’t go back and fix things. We can only move forward, and I think that’s the chief lesson that Kaven has taken from his experience as a wrestler. It’s made him the young man he is today, and I firmly believe that he’s going to make a huge difference in the world.”



Louisburg senior Trace Eslinger works to hold down Prairie View’s Dayton Kline.

Senior Trace Eslinger (215) and sophomore Jay McCaskill (157) also represented the Wildcats at the state tournament, but finished with an 0-2 record.

Trace lost to the defending state champion in the first round and nearly won his first consolation match, but was outlasted by Prairie View’s Dayton Kline in a 5-4 loss.

McCaskillll was pinned by McPherson’s Cooper Reves in his first match, and in the first round of consolation, lost a close 4-2 decision to Fort Scott’s Lennox Vann.



Sophomore Jay McCaskill tries to get an opponent on his back during his 157-pound state tournament match.

“Both of those guys were able to get this far by battling through quite a bit of adversity,” Bovaird said. “Jay hurt his knee at the Blue Valley Northwest Invitational toward the end of January, and he really didn’t get much time back on the mat before regionals. That’s quite a bit of mat time lost, and he still made the regional finals.

“Trace lost two entire seasons of high school wrestling due to injuries, and even this year, he was at a disadvantage because he competed at 215 and routinely weighed in under 190. I’m so proud of Trace for making such huge strides through his career and I’m glad to see he was able to end things with a trip to state. Jay has got so much potential, and I’m excited to see what he’s able to accomplish the next two years for us.”

Week 10 Athlete of the Week: Elijah Eslinger



Here is the Louisburg Sports Zone Athlete of the Week for week 10 of the winter sports season, sponsored by Edward Jones-Craig Holtzen.

ELIJAH ESLINGER, SENIOR, WRESTLING

Louisburg senior Elijah Eslinger has been perfect the last month on the wrestling mat and that continued Saturday at the Class 4A regional tournament in Baldwin. Eslinger won the 285-pound regional title with a 3-0 record and recorded a pair of pins in the process. A week prior, Eslinger also took home the Frontier League heavyweight crown.

Eslinger, who captured a state medal last season, is looking to do so again this weekend in Salina. He is currently ranked No. 4 in the state with a 38-5 record and has recorded nine pins in the last month.

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: Adyson Ross

Week 2: Colin Brown

Week 3: Colyer Wingfield

Week 4: Kaven Bartlett

Week 5: Trace Eslinger

Week 6: Jay McCaskill

Week 7: Andrew Jamison

Week 8: Brianne Kuhlman

Week 9: Colton Prettyman



Bartlett, Eslinger win regional titles, Wildcats qualify six for state



Louisburg senior Kaven Bartlett celebrates after winning the 138-pound regional crown Saturday during the Class 4A regional tournament at Baldwin.

BALDWIN CITY – In what was their most important tournament of the season, several Louisburg wrestlers put together their best performance.

The Wildcats qualified six for state following Saturday's Class 4A regional wrestling tournament at Baldwin. The top four in each weight class earn a state bid.

Seniors Kaven Bartlett (138 pounds) and Elijah Eslinger (285) earned regional titles, while sophomore Jay McCaskill (157) finished as a regional runner-up. Junior J'Lee Collins (126) and sophomore Ashton Moore (175) took third, while senior Trace Eslinger (215) came in fourth.

Almost all them had revenge on their minds as four of them avenged a loss from earlier in the season. As a team, the Wildcats finished fifth in the regional standings with 117 points.

"I think the team was ready to go Saturday, and they wrestled beyond their potential in so many cases," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "We've taken six to state seven times in our program's history, and it's the third most we've taken.

"Quite a few of our qualifiers ended up getting revenge wins on Saturday – J'Lee against his Baldwin opponent in the first round, Kaven against his Holton opponent in the finals, Ashton against his Perry-Lecompton opponent in the blood round, and Trace against his Ottawa opponent in the blood round. The regional tournament is such a sweet time to get a revenge win."



Louisburg assistant coach Shawn Crossley and head coach Bobby Bovaird celebrate following J'Lee Collins' blood round match Saturday in Baldwin.

Bartlett's revenge win was a big one as he squared off with Holton's Cale Hein in the finals. The Louisburg senior lost to Hein less than a month ago at the Baldwin Invitational.

In the same gym as that loss, Bartlett got the regional title with a 2-1 decision that came down to the final seconds as Bartlett was able to hold Hein down on a late scramble.

"Last year I fell short of becoming a regional champ in the finals so finally getting it this year felt amazing," Bartlett said. "Last time I wrestled the Holton kid I was still recovering from my messed up hip and I wasn't 100 percent. This time around was different. I was fully healed and ready for anything he threw at me."

Elijah Eslinger dominated the heavyweight division as he earned the No. 1 seed and he showed why. Elijah pinned Santa Fe Trail's Alex Strother in 1:14 in the first round and followed it up with a 3-0 decision of Topeka-Hayden's Hunter Diederich in the semifinals.

In the finals, Elijah took care of business with a 37 second pin of Tonganoxie's Gavin Rhoads.



Louisburg senior Elijah Eslinger gets pin in his 285-pound regional championship match Saturday at Baldwin.

After finishing seventh at the Husky Invitational a month ago, Eslinger hasn't lost a match and is ready for the challenge of state.

"To me, qualifying for the state tournament is exciting and I am ready to go to Salina," Elijah said. "After I did so poorly for the BVNW tournament, I think that set a fire under me that helped me win these last tournaments. Ultimately though, I want to do better than I did last year at state."

McCaskill earned a spot in the regional championship for the first time in his career despite dealing with an injury that forced him to miss three weeks of competition prior to regionals.

The Louisburg sophomore opened with a 30 second pin of Baldwin's Brayden Hirschmann, and then earned a state bid with another 30-second pin in the semifinals against Eudora's Mason Cox.

McCaskill found himself against Tonganoxie's Gannon Sonntag in the finals, but lost a 6-0 decision. Despite the loss, McCaskill is looking forward to state.



Sophomore Jay McCaskill gets a pin in his 157-pound semifinal match Saturday to earn a state bid.

"It meant a lot to qualify especially after losing by one point in the blood round last season," McCaskill said. "I feel like I have been wrestling pretty well, especially compared to last year, but I still have a lot of room to grow and improve being only a sophomore."

Collins battled his way through the 126-pound bracket as he went 3-1 on the day to earn a state bid. He opened with a 14-5 major decision over Baldwin's Gunnar Reichard after losing to him earlier in the season, before falling 18-4 to Holton's Asher Larsen in the semifinals.

The Louisburg junior bounced back nicely with a 44 second pin of Ottawa's Colton Ray in the consolation semifinals to earn a state bid. He ended his day with an 11-8 decision over Santa Fe Trail's Blake Slavin in the third place match.



Junior J'Lee Collins gets some back points during his first round regional match Saturday at Baldwin.

"I would have to say the moment I found I won the match that had qualified me for state I was ecstatic," Collins said. "Qualifying has been my goal all season and after taking sixth at league I wasn't sure if I was gonna be able to do it."

Moore also found his way to the semifinals of 175 pounds after a late pin of Eudora's Braedon Speer in the quarterfinals. He then squared off with Wellsville's David Signs in the semifinals, where he fell by a 2-0 decision.

The Louisburg sophomore punched his ticket to state as he got a 6-3 decision over Perry-Lecompton's Christian Conklin in the blood round. Moore lost to Conklin less than a month ago at the Baldwin Invitational after he was just coming back from an injury.

Moore went on to finish third by injury default as Speer was unable to compete in the third place match.

"Qualifying for state meant a lot to me," Moore said. "Qualifying for state is a goal I have for myself every year and it felt great to be able to do it."



Sophomore Ashton Moore put together a 3-1 record to take third at 175 pounds Saturday at the regional tournament in Baldwin.

As for Trace Eslinger, his state bid was years in the making and one that saw him battle through injuries the last two years.

Now healthy, Eslinger got that chance. After a loss to Baldwin's Conner Murry in the quarterfinals, Trace battled back to record two straight pins to reach the blood round.

It was there that Trace avenged a loss and got a state bid at the same time as he recorded a 6-2 decision of Ottawa's Cooper Stone. Trace later fell to Murry again in the third place match, but that didn't let that dampen his excitement.

"Qualifying for state means a lot to me," Trace said. "It has been a goal of mine since freshman year and after losing two seasons to injuries and giving up 25 pounds I feel like I've really earned this."



Senior Trace Eslinger leaps behind his opponent to get two points Saturday during his blood round match.

Even with all the excitement, the Wildcats still left with some disappointment, especially when it came to sophomore Brayden Yoder.

The Louisburg 190-pounder battled throughout the day. After losing a 3-1 decision to open the day to the regional runner-up in Jeff West's Keaton Shelman, he held on to win a 2-1 overtime decision of Tage Skocny from Santa Fe Trail.

Yoder then pinned Royal Valley's Cyrus Harding, which set up a blood round match against Wellsville's Carter Wilmarth. Yoder found himself ahead in the third period, only to have a questionable call change all that.

The Louisburg sophomore forced overtime, before falling in a 6-5 decision.



Louisburg sophomore Brayden Yoder tries to turn his opponent Saturday during his blood round match.

“Brayden’s blood round loss was absolutely heart-breaking,” Bovaird said. “I hate to see a kid lose the way he did. There was a controversial situation where his opponent scored a reversal and in the scramble, Brayden’s hand got caught in the kid’s singlet. The referee stopped the match, and at the time, we thought Brayden would be winning 5-4 and that he would just be giving up a penalty point for grabbing the singlet. After the head official conferred with his assistant, they awarded a two-point nearfall because he had a ‘silent count’ in his head and they felt that the singlet grabbing prevented the Wellsville kid from getting back points.

“I’ve never seen that sort of call happen like this, and the frustrating thing is that the referee never once signaled nearfall – not even a 1-count. It was a scramble in which Brayden’s hand got caught. The referee waited nearly 10 seconds before stopping the match to confer with his assistant. Going back and watching the film, the hand getting caught in the singlet had nothing to do with Brayden fighting off his back. It’s just frustrating that things went down that way, but at the same time, Brayden gave it everything he had.

He went through the overtime periods like a warrior and battled it out.”

For the six Wildcats whose seasons are still alive, they will compete at the Class 4A Kansas State Wrestling Championships starting at 10 a.m. on Friday and the tournament continues through Saturday in Salina.

106

Will Showalter (14-26) place is unknown and scored 0.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Maverick Hug (Holton) 21-15 won by decision over Will Showalter (Louisburg) 14-26 (Dec 5-2)
- Cons. Round 1 – Luke Owings (Wellsville) 16-21 won by major decision over Will Showalter (Louisburg) 14-26 (MD 10-2)

113

Broden Vargo (2-17) place is unknown and scored 0.0 team points.

- Quarterfinal – Jayden Westgate (Baldwin) 29-9 won by fall over Broden Vargo (Louisburg) 2-17 (Fall 0:28)
- Cons. Round 1 – Cesar Sandoval (Holton) 15-18 won by fall over Broden Vargo (Louisburg) 2-17 (Fall 2:06)

120

Keegan Rogers (7-22) place is unknown and scored 0.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Matthew Tracy (Hoyt-Royal Valley) 21-14

won by fall over Keegan Rogers (Louisburg) 7-22 (Fall 1:37)

- Cons. Round 1 – Keegan Rogers (Louisburg) 7-22 received a bye () (Bye)
- Cons. Round 2 – Clayton Crookham (Tonganoxie) 18-18 won by fall over Keegan Rogers (Louisburg) 7-22 (Fall 1:47)

126

J`Lee Collins (22-17) placed 3rd and scored 15.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – J`Lee Collins (Louisburg) 22-17 received a bye () (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – J`Lee Collins (Louisburg) 22-17 won by major decision over Gunnar Reichard (Baldwin) 22-19 (MD 14-5)
- Semifinal – Asher Larsen (Holton) 27-10 won by major decision over J`Lee Collins (Louisburg) 22-17 (MD 18-4)
- Cons. Semi – J`Lee Collins (Louisburg) 22-17 won by fall over Colton Ray (Ottawa) 16-21 (Fall 0:44)
- 3rd Place Match – J`Lee Collins (Louisburg) 22-17 won by decision over Blake Slavin (Carbondale-Santa Fe Trail) 25-14 (Dec 11-8)

132

Mika McKitrick (13-24) place is unknown and scored 7.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Mika McKitrick (Louisburg) 13-24 won by fall over Carson Bell (Wellsville) 12-13 (Fall 1:37)
- Quarterfinal – Braeden Moore (Tonganoxie) 32-1 won by fall over Mika McKitrick (Louisburg) 13-24 (Fall 0:31)
- Cons. Round 2 – Mika McKitrick (Louisburg) 13-24 won by fall over Gavin Akin (Hoyt-Royal Valley) 16-14 (Fall

1:26)

- Cons. Round 3 – Trevor Kaub (Ottawa) 20-14 won by fall over Mika McKitrick (Louisburg) 13-24 (Fall 1:46)

138

Kaven Bartlett (36-4) placed 1st and scored 21.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Kaven Bartlett (Louisburg) 36-4 received a bye () (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Kaven Bartlett (Louisburg) 36-4 won by major decision over Ethan Williams (Baldwin) 25-18 (MD 16-5)
- Semifinal – Kaven Bartlett (Louisburg) 36-4 won by decision over Koy Randel (Wellsville) 19-19 (Dec 8-3)
- 1st Place Match – Kaven Bartlett (Louisburg) 36-4 won by decision over Cale Hein (Holton) 30-11 (Dec 4-1)

144

Colin Robinson (4-18) place is unknown and scored 0.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Alex Clobes (Eudora) 12-18 won by fall over Colin Robinson (Louisburg) 4-18 (Fall 3:59)
- Cons. Round 1 – Colin Robinson (Louisburg) 4-18 received a bye () (Bye)
- Cons. Round 2 – Bennett Minnick (Perry-Lecompton) 18-25 won by tech fall over Colin Robinson (Louisburg) 4-18 (TF-1.5 3:57 (16-1))

157

Jay McCaskill (24-7) placed 2nd and scored 20.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Jay McCaskill (Louisburg) 24-7 received a bye () (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Jay McCaskill (Louisburg) 24-7 won by fall over Brayden Hirschmann (Baldwin) 11-12 (Fall 0:30)
- Semifinal – Jay McCaskill (Louisburg) 24-7 won by fall over Mason Cox (Eudora) 22-15 (Fall 0:30)
- 1st Place Match – Gannon Sonntag (Tonganoxie) 19-10 won by decision over Jay McCaskill (Louisburg) 24-7 (Dec 6-0)

165

Vance Hahn (2-29) place is unknown and scored 0.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Vance Hahn (Louisburg) 2-29 received a bye () (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Colton Brusven (Tonganoxie) 26-9 won by fall over Vance Hahn (Louisburg) 2-29 (Fall 0:34)
- Cons. Round 2 – Vance Hahn (Louisburg) 2-29 received a bye () (Bye)
- Cons. Round 3 – John Sink (Ottawa) 18-14 won by fall over Vance Hahn (Louisburg) 2-29 (Fall 3:33)

175

Ashton Moore (18-6) placed 3rd and scored 16.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Ashton Moore (Louisburg) 18-6 received a bye () (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Ashton Moore (Louisburg) 18-6 won by fall

- over Braedon Speer (Eudora) 21-9 (Fall 5:46)
- Semifinal – David Signs (Wellsville) 32-3 won by decision over Ashton Moore (Louisburg) 18-6 (Dec 2-0)
- Cons. Semi – Ashton Moore (Louisburg) 18-6 won by decision over Christian Conklin (Perry-Lecompton) 28-9 (Dec 6-3)
- 3rd Place Match – Ashton Moore (Louisburg) 18-6 won by injury default over Braedon Speer (Eudora) 21-9 (Inj. 0:00)

190

Brayden Yoder (32-14) place is unknown and scored 4.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Brayden Yoder (Louisburg) 32-14 received a bye () (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Keaton Shelman (Meriden-Jefferson West) 21-6 won by decision over Brayden Yoder (Louisburg) 32-14 (Dec 3-1)
- Cons. Round 2 – Brayden Yoder (Louisburg) 32-14 won in tie breaker – 1 over Tage Skocny (Carbondale-Santa Fe Trail) 13-21 (TB-1 2-1)
- Cons. Round 3 – Brayden Yoder (Louisburg) 32-14 won by fall over Cyrus Harding (Hoyt-Royal Valley) 24-16 (Fall 2:14)
- Cons. Semi – Carter Wilmarth (Wellsville) 37-8 won in tie breaker – 1 over Brayden Yoder (Louisburg) 32-14 (TB-1 6-5)

215

Trace Eslinger (24-19) placed 4th and scored 11.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Trace Eslinger (Louisburg) 24-19

- received a bye () (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Conner Murry (Baldwin) 28-13 won by fall over Trace Eslinger (Louisburg) 24-19 (Fall 0:54)
- Cons. Round 2 – Trace Eslinger (Louisburg) 24-19 won by fall over Branden Gregory (Eudora) 2-24 (Fall 0:40)
- Cons. Round 3 – Trace Eslinger (Louisburg) 24-19 won by fall over Mason Charvat (Topeka-Hayden) 7-14 (Fall 1:28)
- Cons. Semi – Trace Eslinger (Louisburg) 24-19 won by decision over Cooper Stone (Ottawa) 12-8 (Dec 6-2)
- 3rd Place Match – Conner Murry (Baldwin) 28-13 won by fall over Trace Eslinger (Louisburg) 24-19 (Fall 1:49)

285

Elijah Eslinger (38-5) placed 1st and scored 24.0 team points.

- Champ. Round 1 – Elijah Eslinger (Louisburg) 38-5 received a bye () (Bye)
- Quarterfinal – Elijah Eslinger (Louisburg) 38-5 won by fall over Alex Strother (Carbondale-Santa Fe Trail) 9-5 (Fall 1:14)
- Semifinal – Elijah Eslinger (Louisburg) 38-5 won by decision over Hunter Diederich (Topeka-Hayden) 10-5 (Dec 3-0)
- 1st Place Match – Elijah Eslinger (Louisburg) 38-5 won by fall over Gavin Rhoads (Tonganoxie) 20-15 (Fall 0:37)