

Wildcats fall just short of upset bid against Paola



Louisburg senior Ben Minster gets to the basket during the Wildcats' game with Paola in January. On Friday, the Wildcats traveled to Paola for its final regular season game of the season, and came up just short in a 45-43 loss.

PAOLA – The Louisburg boys basketball team laid it all out on the line in its regular season finale against its rival Friday.

Louisburg squared off against Paola in its last tune-up before the sub-state tournament and the Wildcats nearly pulled off the road upset. The Wildcat held a one-point lead with 13 seconds left in the contest, but Paola knocked down a pair of free throws and Louisburg couldn't get its last attempt to fall in a 45-43 loss.

Although it was a painful defeat, there were a lot of positives to take from it according to Louisburg head coach Ty Pfannenstiel.

"I thought we played really well," Pfannenstiel said. "Paola is the hottest team in our league the past two weeks, knocking off Desoto, Eudora and Ottawa. For us to play at that level was very encouraging moving forward. I was really proud of the way that we played."

Wildcat senior Desmond Doles hit a couple big shots late as he tied the game at 42-all with a runner in the lane with just under two minutes left in the game. Louisburg later forced a turnover and Doles was fouled on the ensuing possession and made 1 of 2 free throws to put Louisburg up 43-42 with under a minute remaining.

Paola's Kale Clark hit a pair of free throws with 13 seconds left to give the Panthers a one point lead, but the Wildcats had one final opportunity. A 3-point shot from Justin Sievert wouldn't go down, but Louisburg grabbed an offensive rebound for a second chance, but turned the ball over.

The Panthers would add another free throw to ice the game with two seconds left.

It was a close contest throughout as Louisburg hit a basket at the buzzer to give it a 16-14 lead at the end of the first quarter and took that two-point lead into the locker room at halftime.

Paola outscored Louisburg 10-7 in the third quarter to grab a one-point lead and then expanded it to six midway through the fourth quarter, only to see Louisburg battle back and take the one-point lead late.

Doles led Louisburg in scoring with 12 points to go along with seven rebounds and four assists. Seniors Ben Minster and Dalton Ribordy also finished in double figures with 10 points each, while Minster added six rebounds and three assists.

Clark and Brandon Wilkes each scored 15 points to lead the Panthers.

"When we play with energy, play smart, and communicate with each other, we can play with anybody in this league and we proved that (Friday)," Pfannenstiel said. "We were able to be consistent on both offense and defense for four quarters."

The regular season might not have gone the way the Wildcats had hoped it would, but they are looking for a fresh start when postseason action begins this week.

Louisburg (2-18) will try for its second straight trip to the state tournament Friday as they will face off with No. 1 Spring Hill (12-7) at 6 p.m. at Paola High School in the first round of the sub-state tournament. The winner of that game will meet the winner between No. 2 Ottawa (11-8) and No. 3 Paola (11-8) at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday in the championship game.

"I think our competitiveness against Ottawa, Spring Hill and Paola the last few weeks has definitely given us confidence for sub-state," Pfannenstiel said. "Anything can happen in a win or go home game. We played a good game against Paola and we will have to play even better on Friday against Spring Hill. If we can play with energy and play with confidence, I really like our chances."

LOU	16	11	7	9 –
43				
PAO	14	11	10	10 –
45				

LOUISBURG (2-18): Desmond Doles 12, Ben Minster 10, Dalton Ribordy 10, Justin Sievert 6, Dylan DeShazer 3, Kohl Vogel 2. Totals: 19-42 3-9 43. 3-point field goals: 2, (Doles, DeShazer).