

Lady Cats' season comes to a close with loss to Paola



Louisburg freshman Madilyn Melton goes up for a basket against Paola on Thursday during the Class 4A sub-state semifinals at Paola High School. The Lady Cats fell to the Panthers, 51-35, to end their season with an 8-13 record.

PAOLA – Earlier in the season, the Louisburg girls basketball team accomplished something they hadn't done in several years when the Lady Cats swept rival Paola.

They just weren't able to make it three in a row.

With their postseason lives on the line Thursday, Louisburg traveled to Paola to face off with the Panthers in the Class 4A sub-state semifinal but came up short in a 51-35 loss, despite having a 3-point halftime lead.

The defeat ended the Lady Cats' season with an 8-13 record and with a tearful locker room, but they accomplished much more than what their record showed according to coach Shawn Lowry.

"I was really extremely proud of this group in particular just because of their growth and development over the season," Lowry said. "I wasn't sure what we were going to have coming in with young and experienced players just mixing together, but they are as tight as tight can be right now. They are as tight as any team we have had. They battle for each other, and

it may not be pretty all the time, but they scrap and fight and care about each other. They care about playing hard for each other and that is why it is painful for them right now. They care about their team and their program.”

Louisburg faced many different obstacles in the second half, but none bigger than foul issues, as they had four starters with four fouls in the third quarter.

Senior Isabelle Holtzen, junior Carson Buffington, sophomore Haley Cain and freshman Madilyn Melton were all saddled with foul trouble and the Lady Cats were forced to use different personnel. Their bench got even shorter when reserve guard Brooklyn Diederich had to leave with an injury in the third quarter.

Those foul problems worked into Paola’s favor. The Panthers converted 25 of 34 free throws for the game, with 32 of those attempts coming in the second half as they outscored Louisburg 32-13 in the third and fourth quarters.

The Lady Cats were unable to get to the foul stripe as they converted just 2 of 9 attempts from the free-throw line and that disparity was a big impact on the game.

“It was a factor, but this is a crazy game (basketball) where things get called,” Lowry said. “Our girls were playing hard, and they were hustling, and some of those were hustle fouls, which we will take.”

Both teams contributed to a frantic first half that consisted of 19 combined first half turnovers. Paola took an 11-9 lead after the Panthers’ Ady Edwards knocked down a 3-pointer at the buzzer.

Paola extended its lead to five to start the second quarter before the Lady Cats went on an 11-0 run to take the lead back. Melton scored six points during the run, Holtzen hit a 3-pointer and senior Bailer Belcher added a basket to give

Louisburg a 20-14 lead.

Another Belcher basket made it 22-16 late in the first half before Paola's Trinity McDow connected on another 3-pointer at the buzzer and Louisburg led by three at half.



Senior Bailey Belcher puts up a shot in the lane Thursday against Paola.

Paola turned up its defensive pressure after halftime and forced the Lady Cats into 12 second half turnovers. The Panthers also converted on 9 of 12 free throws in the third quarter as they outscored Louisburg 15-7 in the frame.

"To lose the way that we did, and to play as poorly as we did, and to go out that way was probably the hardest thing for them," Lowry said of his team. "They know didn't play their best and we put in some good work leading up to this, but it is the way it goes. It is the kind of game where it can happen

like that sometimes.

“I think we just hurt ourselves and it wasn’t as much as what they did to us. It was a lot of mental stuff on our part and just breakdowns.”

Belcher finished the game with 10 points and seven rebounds to lead Louisburg and was the only Lady Cat to finish in double figures.



Louisburg senior Isabelle Holtzen dribbles into the lane Thursday against Paola.

Buffington was also close to another double-double with eight points and a team-high 10 rebounds and Melton also finished with eight points. Cain was second on the team with eight rebounds and freshman Alyse Moore added six of her own.

Paola advanced to the sub-state championship game where it met

Spring Hill and the Panthers pulled off the upset of the No. 1 seed, 38-29, on Saturday in Paola.

LOU	9	13	7	6 –
35				
PAO	11	8	15	17 –
51				

LOUISBURG (8-13): Bailey Belcher 10, Carson Buffington 8, Madilyn Melton 8, Isabelle Holtzen 3, Alyse Moore 3, Haley Cain 2, Mikayla Quinn 1. Totals: 15-46 2-9 35. 3-point field goals: 3, (Buffington 2, Holtzen)