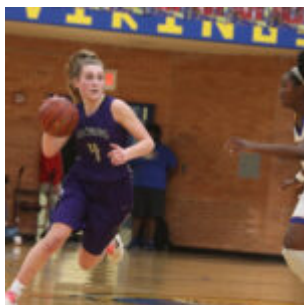


# Lady Cats can't slow down Parsons' Taylor in season-ending loss



Louisburg senior Carson Buffington drives toward the basket on Parsons' Nena Taylor on Thursday during the Class 4A sub-state semifinal at Parsons High School.

PARSONS – Going into Thursday's Class 4A sub-state semifinal game, the Louisburg girls basketball team knew if it was going to leave Parsons with a win, the Lady Cats were going to have to slow down the Vikings' best player – Nena Taylor.

As much as the Lady Cats tried, there was no slowing Taylor and her Vikings teammates.

Mixed in with a slow start offensively, Louisburg had a tough time containing Taylor as Parsons handed the Lady Cats a 50-44 loss and ended their season one game short of a sub-state championship.

"The one thing that is great about it is that they are so disappointed," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "They didn't want to be done. It says a lot about this group that they wanted to play

together for another game. They are disappointed, but at the same time they are disappointed for the right reasons. It hurts for sure.”

Offensively, Louisburg struggled to get going as it scored two points in the first quarter before picking up the pace that led to a 22-point fourth quarter as it tried to rally. The rally, unfortunately for the Lady Cats, came up short thanks to Taylor.

The Lady Cats had a tough time keeping Taylor out of the lane as she scored a bulk of her game-high 34 points around the basket or at the free-throw line. She also added 12 rebounds to her line for the double-double.

“She is a great player and will be a good player again next year,” Lowry said of Taylor. “She is really talented. We tried to do some different things with her and I thought the girls battled better in the second half with her, but she is going to do what she does.”



**Lady Cat sophomore Brooklyn Diederich puts up a runner at the buzzer Thursday in Parsons.**

Louisburg stayed within striking distance of Parsons for much of the game and trailed by just six points early in the third thanks to back-to-back 3-pointers from senior Kennia Hankinson.

Next, it was Taylor's turn to answer as she went on a 10-0 run on her own and eventually helped give Parsons a 15-point cushion heading into the fourth quarter.

The Lady Cats chipped away at the Parsons lead and eventually cut it to six with 30 seconds left after a couple baskets from sophomore Madilyn Melton, but Louisburg could get no closer.

Melton led the Lady Cats in scoring with 19 points and also had a team-high seven rebounds. Hankinson was

next with nine points and senior Carson Buffington had seven points, five rebounds, six deflections and four steals in her final game.



**Louisburg senior Kennia Hankinson drives past a Parsons defender Thursday during the Class 4A sub-state tournament.**

Sophomore Alyse Moore had a team-high seven steals to lead the Lady Cats on defense and also had six rebounds and five points. Junior Haley Cain had a team-high five assists to go along with six rebounds.

“I knew they were going to continue to battle,” Lowry said of his team’s rally. “What is great about it is we have younger players that are battling their tails off and they are going to be hungry coming back next year. I also can’t say enough about our leadership. I can’t say enough about our captains Carson and Haley, and even

our younger players are starting to be leaders now like Alyse, Madilyn and Brooklyn (Diederich). They turned into great leaders right in front of us here at the end of the season. It is a result of what the program has done throughout the years.”

Louisburg finished its season with a 10-11 record and saw improvement from a year ago, but the end of the year is always difficult, especially as Buffington and Hankinson played their final game as Lady Cats.

“I thought we competed all year and they did what I asked them to do,” Lowry said. “The personal and collective growth of this group was fantastic and I can’t ask any more of the kids than what they gave here at the end. I am proud to be their coach.”

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LOUISBURG (10-11): Madilyn Melton 6-12 6-13 19; Kennia Hankinson 3-9 0-0 9; Carson Buffington 2-5 2-4 7; Alyse Moore 2-8 1-2 5; Brooklyn Diederich 1-8 0-0 3; Haley Cain 0-5 1-2 1. Totals: 14-49 10-21 44. 3-point field goals: 6, (Hankinson 3, Buffington, Diederich, Melton)