

Upset-minded Lady Cats come up short



PAOLA – Scoring just two points in a quarter against the No. 2 ranked team in Class 4A-Division I, on its home floor no less, usually means blowout city.

Instead, the Louisburg girls basketball team nearly put together the upset of the season. The Lady Cats had undefeated Paola down with 5 minutes left in the contest, but couldn't hold on in a 51-39 loss Tuesday in Paola.

The Lady Cats took the lead with 5 minutes and 29 seconds left in the contest on a pair of Natalie Moore free throws, but Paola answered with a 17-4 run to end the game, with many of those points coming at the free-throw line late.

Even with the loss, Louisburg (8-6) knows it will get a chance to see Paola one, if not two more times before the end of the season.

“To be honest, yes it was a loss and we don't like to lose, but at the same time this was big for our girls,” Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. “They needed to get the confidence that we can play with teams like Paola and we did. It really helps us take that next step and hopefully we can keep building on this.”

It was a sluggish start for both teams as the first four minutes of the game was scoreless and was littered with turnovers on both sides. Paola found a little rhythm to take a

7-0 lead and Louisburg just missed getting shutout of the frame but Moore hit a runner with 20 seconds left.

The basket seemed to carry over into the second quarter as the Lady Cats outscored Paola 17-9 and took a 19-16 lead into halftime. Louisburg took advantage of some Paola foul problems and charged back.



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Louisburg sophomore guard Madisen Simpson drives to the basket on Feb. 3 against Paola. The Lady Cats fell to No. 2 Paola 51-39. (Top) Louisburg junior Megan Lemke battles for a rebound in Paola.

Senior Kirstin Lowry connected on two 3-pointers, including one that tied the game, while senior Kallie O'Keefe tied the game again on a basket with 1:33 left in the game. Moore and O'Keefe each hit free throws down the stretch to give the Lady Cats the halftime lead.

"I think both teams were playing hard at first, even though it was a little sloppy, but I think both were just feeling each

other out," coach Lowry said. "We made a nice run in the second quarter and felt pretty good at halftime. Even when we were down early, it was good to see the girls battle back and feel like they can play with Paola."

The third quarter went back and forth, but the Lady Cats seemed to seize the momentum heading into the fourth when Kirstin Lowry knocked down another 3-pointer to put Louisburg up 31-29 with under 10 seconds left.

However, Paola's Taylor Williams took the ball down the floor, scored, was fouled and converted the 3-point play with 1 second left to put the Panthers back up by one.

Moore hit four straight free throws in the fourth quarter to give the Lady Cats the lead at 35-34, but Paola would take control after that. Moore led the Lady Cats in scoring with 16 points to go along with six rebounds and was 8-for-10 from the free-throw line.

Kirstin Lowry also finished in double figures for the Lady Cats with 13 points. O'Keefe added six points, but also pulled down a team-high 12 rebounds against a big Panther front line.

"I thought Kallie really battled in there and played smart," coach Lowry said. "She was going up against some big girls and she did well. She was very aggressive, which was good to see."

LOUISBURG 2 17 12 8 – 39

PAOLA 7 9 16 19 – 51

LOUISBURG (8-6): Natalie Moore 4-13 8-10 16; Kirstin Lowry 4-11 2-2 13; Kallie O'Keefe 3-14 2-5 6; Megan Lemke 2-3 0-0 4. Totals: 12-35 12-21 39. 3-point field goals: 3, (Lowry 3)