

Lady Cats' season comes to a close



Louisburg senior Kallie O'Keefe dives on the floor for a loose ball with Paola's Morgan Laudan during the Class 4A Division I substate championship game Saturday at Paola High School. The Lady Cats fell 62-28.

PAOLA – The Louisburg girls basketball team had the tough task of trying to end undefeated Paola's season on its home floor, in the substate finals, no less.

It was as difficult as it sounded for the Lady Cats as they couldn't stay with the bigger, deeper Panther team. Louisburg fell 62-28 on Saturday in the Class 4A Division I substate championship game in Paola.

As much as the end of the season hurt, the Lady Cats also had to say goodbye to three senior starters. Natalie Moore, Kirstin Lowry and Kallie O'Keefe all suited up for Louisburg for the final time.

"They are hurting, there is no doubt about that," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "I think that finality is starting to set in. Those three players have meant so much to this program. They all left it out on the floor, and they may be leaving, but they put so much into the program that the

returning players can learn from for years to come.”

Against an athletic and deep Paola team, the Lady Cats tried to slow the game down early. Louisburg worked the clock in the first quarter and were able to get shots off, but they didn't fall.

On the other end, Paola went on an 11-0 run to take a 14-2 lead going into the second quarter and the Lady Cats (11-11) were forced to play faster. Paola took a 36-13 lead at halftime and didn't look back.

“We tried a bunch of different things,” coach Lowry said. “We slowed it down early and then we even tried some zone a little later and that didn't really work. They are just a great team with a lot of weapons. They are one of the best teams in the state for a reason.”

Moore led the Lady Cats with 14 points and Lowry finished with eight in the loss. Megan Lemke, O'Keefe and Paige Buffington also scored in the loss.

Coach Lowry has seen his team progress throughout the season, a team that is filled with underclassmen to go along with three senior leaders.

“You could tell the chemistry wasn't where it needed to be to start the season, but this team is so close right now,” he said. “The seniors did a good job of leading those underclassmen and they have really come together. Before the game, they basically just hung out all day, not because they had to, but because they wanted to.

“I am just as proud of this 11-11 team as I am of the 17-5 team that made it this far last year. They really have improved a great deal and have worked hard at it.”

11 11 4 - 28

PAOLA 14

22 16 10 - 62

LOUISBURG (11-11): Natalie Moore 3-11 6-9 14; Kirstin Lowry 3-8 2-2 8; Megan Lemke 1-4 1-2 3; Kallie O'Keefe 1-2 0-0 2; Paige Buffington 1-4 0-0 2. Totals: 9-36 9-13 28. 3-point field goals: 2, (Moore 2)