

Lady Cats fall to Pittsburg in opener



Louisburg junior Madisen Simpson drives toward the basket Friday during the Lady Cats' season opener against Pittsburg in Louisburg. The Lady Cats fell 43-20 and will take part in the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic this week.

Shawn Lowry knew it wasn't going to be easy and all he had to do was look at his starting lineup.

The Louisburg girls basketball coach started two freshmen, Carson Buffington and Kennia Hankinson, on Friday against Class 5A Pittsburg and had just three players back who saw significant varsity time from a year ago. Lowry knows this process is going to take time.

Despite the Lady Cats' 43-20 home loss to the Purple Dragons, Lowry saw a lot of positives from his team in their season opener.

"I am just so proud of our effort and our toughness," Lowry said. "These kids right now are in the same spirit and attitude that they were before the game started, which I love. They could be in there with their heads down, but they know they busted their tail out there. I couldn't have asked for more."

The Lady Cats (0-1) were in the game early as the hung around with the Purple Dragons in the first quarter. Louisburg trailed 10-4 before junior Madisen Simpson connected on a 3-pointer, but Pittsburg answered with a basket to take a 12-7 lead into the second quarter.



Freshman Kennia Hankinson drives the lane during Friday's home opener in Louisburg.

In the frame, both teams had problems finding the basket as Pittsburg was responsible for the only five points scored in the second quarter and had a 17-7 halftime lead.

The Purple Dragons used a full-court press most of the night, which made it difficult for the Lady Cats to get in a rhythm. Pittsburg took advantage of that in the third quarter as it outscored Louisburg 19-4 and pulled away for a 32-11 advantage.

Although the Lady Cats faced a large deficit, Lowry didn't see his team give in and watched them compete until the end.

"I think that is part of the way we have worked with them," Lowry said. "We told them this is going to be tough and they challenge each other. When things get tough, we don't react to all the highs and lows and they did that. It is not easy for

young kids to do. They were playing just as hard in the fourth quarter as they were in the first and that is great to see.”

Junior Paige Buffington and Simpson each finished with six points to lead the Lady Cats as each connected on a pair of 3-pointers. Freshman Carson Buffington was next on the team with three points.

“It is game one, but some other kids are going to have to step up and play more down the road,” Lowry said. “I thought Carson Buffington was really good for her first high school varsity game. I think she will get better and stronger as the year goes on.

“Our growth potential is really high. This group is so coachable. They work their tails off and they give us everything and they will get better as the year goes on.”

Louisburg will try for its first win at 5 p.m. tonight when it hosts Iola in the first round of the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic. The Lady Cats will also meet Burlington at 5 p.m. on Thursday in the next round before ending the tournament Friday.

PITT	12	5	19	7 –
43				
LOU	7	0	4	9
– 20				

LOUISBURG (0-1): Paige Buffington 6, Madisen Simpson 6, Carson Buffington 3, Megan Lemke 2, Kennia Hankinson 2, Isabelle Holtzen 1. 3-point field goals: 4, (P. Buffington 2, Simpson 2)