

Wildcats win thriller against Pittsburg



Louisburg junior Grant Harding dunks the ball after a steal during Friday's season opener against Pittsburg in Louisburg. The Wildcats rallied from seven points down with under three minutes left to pull off a 51-50 victory.

It may have been just the season opener, but the Louisburg boys basketball team provided all the drama any fan could ask for.

There were rallies, dunks, floor burns, big defensive stops and enormous free throws all played in front of an electric crowd Friday inside the LHS gymnasium. When all was said and done, it was the Wildcats that were left standing.

Louisburg rallied from seven points down with under three minutes left in the game to outduel Pittsburg 51-50 and provided the Wildcats with a positive start to the season.

"I love these kids so much," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "When we were down we didn't get discouraged and they all stuck together. They don't care who is on the court, they just play well together. This is a team and these kids are close and that is what makes this a special group. The effort was there the whole time and that was fantastic."

Except for the opening minutes of the game, the Wildcats found themselves behind most of the way, until they took the lead for good with a minute left in the contest. Louisburg trailed 48-41 with 2 minutes and 41 seconds remaining, then went on a 10-0 run to end the game.

The game seemed to turn the Wildcats' way when they got baskets on back-to-back steals with under two minutes left. The first one came thanks to junior Sam Guetterman and then fellow junior Grant Harding stole the ball and drove it down the floor for an uncontested dunk to cut the Pittsburg lead to just one.

Senior Mitchell McLellan came through for the Wildcats after that with a basket with 1:10 remaining, then after a Pittsburg missed free throw, calmly hit two free throws himself with 28 seconds left. It would be all the Wildcats would need.



Mitchell McLellan puts up a shot Friday against Pittsburg. The Louisburg senior scored the final four points to help the Wildcats get the win.

“Grant was outstanding and Mitchell was outstanding,” Nelson said. “Mitchell will be the first one to tell you that he didn’t have his best game, but when the time mattered he was there.”

Louisburg (1-0) got production from up and down its bench throughout the contest.

Junior T.J. Dover led the Wildcats in scoring with 12 points as he was 6 for 9 from the field. McLellan was also in double digits with 10 points.

Harding was all over the floor for the Wildcats with nine points, including a pair of dunks, to go along with nine rebounds, five assists and three steals. Senior point guard Jacob Welsh ended with six points, two assists and two steals, while sophomore forward Dalton Ribordy had five points in his first varsity game.

“Welsh was outstanding,” Nelson said. “Dalton, for his first varsity game, I really thought his defense was fantastic in the paint. Jayce (Geiman) hit a big 3-pointer down the stretch too, so a lot of guys contributed for us. We have a lot more options this season and we can go 9 to 10 players deep, while last season we could go seven or maybe eight, on a good night.”

The first quarter wasn’t the start Louisburg was hoping for. While they scored 14 points in the opening frame, the Wildcats gave up 23 points to Pittsburg and weren’t able to get many stops on the defensive end.

After that, Louisburg clamped down on the Purple Dragons defensively and the Wildcats found themselves on the floor for countless loose balls and seemed to frustrate Pittsburg, especially in the second and fourth quarters.

The Wildcats held Pittsburg to just 27 points in the final three quarters, including just five points in the second and

fourth quarters.

"Pitt can pose a lot of matchup problems," Nelson said. "They are athletic, super quick and they are a handful. The problem in the first quarter was we gave up 23 points. One of the kids' goals before the season was to hold teams to 56 points a game and we give up 23 in the first quarter.

"They knew they made some young mistakes that they shouldn't have made and came out after that and only gave up 27 points in the next three quarters. A lot of it just comes with the maturation process and having each other's back, which they clearly did."

The Wildcats return to action tonight as they host the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic all week. Louisburg will matchup with Iola at approximately 6:30 p.m. tonight and then will play Burlington at the same time Thursday.

PITT	23	5	17	5 –
50				
LOU	14	9	13	15 –
51				

LOUISBURG (1-0): T.J. Dover 6-9 0-0 12; Mitchell McLellan 4-9 2-2 10; Grant Harding 4-13 1-2 9; Jacob Welsh 3-6 0-1 6; Dalton Ribordy 1-3 3-4 5; Ben Minster 2-2 0-0 4; Jayce Geiman 1-5 0-0 3; Sam Guetterman 1-1 0-0 2. Totals: 22-48 6-9 51. 3-point field goals: 1, (Geiman)