

Lady Cats nearly get second win in a row



Junior Emalee Overbay dives onto the floor for a loose ball Tuesday against Ottawa at Louisburg High School. The Lady Cats came close to their second win in a row, but fell 41-36.

The Louisburg girls basketball team may have come up short in a 41-36 loss to Ottawa on Tuesday at Louisburg High School, but the Lady Cats took another step forward in their development.

Louisburg nearly pulled off its second straight victory of the season, but foul trouble and missed shots late hurt the Lady Cats' chances in their first game back from the holiday break.

"We are growing, the kids are developing and buying in to what we want to do," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "They like each other, care about each other and it is fun to be around. It is not always like that with other teams, especially when freshmen are playing at the varsity level, but I think that speaks to our leadership and they care about each other like that."

The Lady Cats (1-5) faced adversity from the start as they trailed 13-4 early in the second quarter. Louisburg's offense picked up in a hurry as it scored 12 points in the final six

minutes of the first half.

Junior Madisen Simpson and freshman Kennia Hankinson each connected on 3-pointers and the Lady Cats eventually cut the Ottawa lead to three points after a basket from Emalee Overbay.

Louisburg continued to put the pressure on the Cyclones as it opened the third quarter with an 8-0 run. Baskets from sophomore Isabelle Holtzen, senior Megan Lemke and Simpson put Louisburg up 25-23 with 2 minutes and 50 seconds left in the quarter.



Senior Megan Lemke goes up for a shot during Tuesday' contest against Ottawa in Louisburg.

The lead changed hands five times after that before Ottawa took a two-point lead going into the final quarter.

The offense came thanks to their defense as the Lady Cats made it difficult on Ottawa. They forced 17 Cyclone turnovers in the final three quarters, including eight in the fourth quarter alone.

"It started with how we play on the defensive end," Lowry said. "We got on the floor for some loose balls and we got some rebounds offensively that was just effort and 'want to' stuff. We talked about that at halftime and they took it to heart. That is what I like about these girls is we talk about doing stuff that is going to be hard and give a lot of effort and they go out and do it."

Foul trouble began to creep in for Louisburg as starting forwards Carson Buffington and Overbay each fouled out early in the fourth quarter. Ottawa took advantage as it built a six-point lead early on, but both teams would struggle offensively, until Louisburg made one final run.

Simpson hit a 3-pointer with 1:15 left and Paige Buffington connected on a 3-pointer as well to cut the lead to two with 40 seconds remaining. Louisburg was forced to foul and Ottawa connected on three free throws to close out the game.

Simpson scored a team-high 14 points to lead the Lady Cats and Paige Buffington finished with seven on the night. Lemke led the team with 10 rebounds.

"I thought Megan Lemke played really well, especially defensively," Lowry said. "I think she had 10 boards tonight on top of that. She just gives and gives and she doesn't come out of the game much, and I thought she gave a lot.

"Kennia came in and did a nice job and Isabelle came in and was working her tail off out there. Our younger kids are learning, and it is tough right now, but we are getting better."

Louisburg will try and get back on track Friday when it travels to Baldwin. The Lady Cats will be on the road for the rest of the month and won't return home until their Feb. 2 meeting with Paola.

LOUISBURG		4	12
13	7 - 36		
OTTAWA		11	10
10	10 - 41		

LOUISBURG (1-5): Madisen Simpson 14, Paige Buffington 7, Isabelle Holtzen 4, Megan Lemke 4, Kennia Hankinson 3, Carson Buffington 2, Emalee Overbay 2. Totals 14 4-6 36. 3-point field goals: 4, (Simpson 2, P. Buffington, Hankinson)