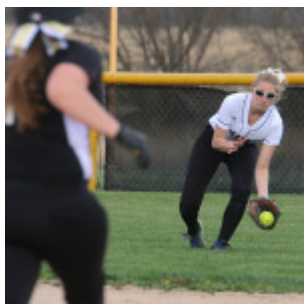


Lady Cats take positives from losses to Paola



Louisburg senior Christina Dalrymple fields a ball in the outfield during the Lady Cats season opener against Paola on Thursday at Lewis-Young Park. The Lady Cats lost both games 9-4 and 7-3.

It may have not walked away with a win, but the Louisburg softball team ended Thursday's season opener against Paola with some positive signs.

The Lady Cats, which had their problems staying in games a year ago, were within striking distance of traditionally-strong Paola in each game of the doubleheader. Despite having leads into the middle innings, Louisburg fell to Paola 9-4 and 7-3.

Paola used a big inning in each contest to surpass the Lady Cats and get the sweep at Lewis-Young Park.

"I thought the girls put together four solid innings with our defense and pitching in the first game," Louisburg coach John Ozier said. "We missed some early scoring opportunities that came back to bite us. Paola is a well-coached, opportunistic team that capitalized on a few of our defensive miscues. The storyline repeated itself in the second game as well. Missed

opportunities at the plate, and mental mistakes on defense lead to one big inning for Paola.

“Take away those two innings, and the final score in both games would have been much closer. We will get back to work at practice to eliminate the mistakes.”

In the opener, it was Louisburg (0-2) that struck first. The Lady Cats scored a run in the third inning after Hailey Crowder led off with a walk and would come around to score on a pair of singles from Miranda White and Allyssa Griggs to take a 1-0 lead.



Second baseman Paige Shaffer covers first base for an out during the Lady Cats doubleheader with Paola on Thursday at Lewis-Young Park.

The Lady Cats took that lead into the fifth inning, when Paola broke the game open. Paola scored six runs in the fifth thanks to some Louisburg miscues. Louisburg committed five errors that led to many of the runs.

Paola scored three more runs in the sixth, including one on a solo home run to take a 9-1 advantage.

Louisburg didn't give in, however, as the Lady Cats scored

three runs in the seventh. Freshman Karson Griggs led the inning off with a solo home run, while Emalee Overbay added a two-run triple scoring White and Paige Shaffer.

For the game, White led the Lady Cat offense with three singles and reached base all four times. Shaffer and Allyssa Griggs also added a single each.

On the mound, Allyssa Griggs went the distance as she struck out five over seven innings as many of those nine runs were unearned.

“Our goals for opening night were to come out and compete hard and walk away with a sense of pride for all of the work we have put into this season,” Ozier said. “I felt like we accomplished both.”

In the nightcap, Louisburg took the lead in the first inning thanks to a couple key hits. White led off the inning with a single, stole second and then scored on an RBI double by Overbay. Overbay later scored on an error to give the Lady Cats a 2-0 lead.



Freshman Karson Griggs (left) celebrates her home run with sister Allyssa (8) and Hailey Crowder in the

first game Thursday.

Paola answered with two runs in the second to tie the game, but Louisburg came right back with a run in the third. Christina Dalrymple and Overbay hit back to back singles and Dalrymple would score on a sacrifice by Allyssa Griggs.

However, the Panthers took control of the game in the fourth inning as they scored four runs to take a 6-3 lead and added another run in the seventh to seal the win.

"I felt like the girls put forth great effort in both games, continuing to battle until the last outs were recorded," Ozier said. "Allyssa Griggs pitched her heart out in both games. I thought our seniors (White, Shaffer and Dalrymple) all contributed in the field and with their bats."

The Lady Cats will try for their first win of the season Tuesday when they host Fort Scott at Lewis-Young Park. First pitch of the doubleheader is set for 4:30 p.m.