

Experience dominates Wildcat basketball camp



Senior T.J. Dover goes up for a turnaround jumper during Louisburg's intrasquad scrimmage July 15 on the final day of the Wildcats' team camp. Louisburg will return six seniors that saw varsity time a season ago.

It has been a different kind of summer for the Louisburg boys basketball team.

Wildcat head coach Jason Nelson had taken his team to a summer league at Rockhurst in Kansas City, Mo., the last three seasons in order to work on their game and become more comfortable working together.

Nelson still wanted to stress that continuity, but decided to change things up a bit. He kept his team back in Louisburg and took part in scrimmages with Osawatomie High School along with open gym workouts.

"The summer league provided many opportunities for them to play to the expectations of the staff, however, this year we are fortunate enough to be able to focus on perfecting our program, and not our style of play, which is a testament to our boys progress," Nelson said. "We played two controlled scrimmages against Osawatomie and I couldn't be more pleased with the outcomes. We didn't keep score, but really were able to focus on our half court sets and transition in a controlled

atmosphere in which (Osawatomie) coach (Chris) Pitts and myself could stop and 'coach' when needed.

"Perhaps the best aspect of the scrimmages aside from our tangible improvements was that we were able to play with many different rotations."



Grant Harding drives the lane for a shot during the team's final day of camp on July 15.

Those results of that offseason work came together for the Wildcat team camp. The camp, which started on July 11, brought the team together for five consecutive days in order to work on basics, but also to help bring along the younger players.

Nelson also brought back a couple Louisburg High Schools alums as former players David Embers and Garrett Griffin each attended the camp sessions to help out.

"First and foremost, camp provides a 'bridge' between middle school and high school for our incoming freshmen," Nelson said. "It gives them the opportunity to see what our program is about, the dedication our older boys put into the program and that our ultimate goal is to be a credible team in one of, if not the best league in the state. We focused more on fundamentals with the younger guys and the older guys worked

on refining some of the things we need to do better this year.

“It was fantastic to have David and Garrett there to assist. The boys respect both of them and their presence lends itself to a program mentality, not just a team.”

The Wildcats have a senior-heavy roster for the upcoming season and that experience hopes to lend to a successful 2016-17 season. Senior Grant Harding, an all-Frontier League and all-state player, returns as the team’s top scorer.

Guards Jayce Geiman, Sam Guetterman, Jake Hill, Korbin Hankinson and forward T.J. Dover are the other seniors who hope to get Louisburg closer to the top of the league standings.

Louisburg got off to a good start last season as it won six of its first nine games, but struggled down the stretch as the Wildcats lost their remaining games to finish with a 6-15 record. Nelson hopes that rough stretch propelled his team to get better in the offseason.

“If adversity makes a group stronger, than this group of seniors ought to be the strongest in the state,” Nelson joked. “In all seriousness, I feel like this squad is far better in terms of both their individual and team skill set. They all went through the excruciating adversity last year and came to summer ready to improve and I couldn’t be happier or more proud of them.

“For the first time in my tenure, we have multiple kids playing AAU ball, working on their games individually when the time permits by shooting, dribbling, etc., and I feel some of this can be attributed to the roller coaster of emotions that last year provided.”