

Lady Cats fall to Pittsburg in season opener



Louisburg senior Emalee Overbay stretches out for a rebound Friday during the Lady Cats' season opener at Pittsburg High School. Overbay finished with seven rebounds in a 51-35 loss.

PITTSBURG – It went up against a bigger school on its home floor, but the Louisburg girls basketball team didn't back down.

The Lady Cats traveled to Pittsburg for their home opener Friday and stayed with the Purple Dragons for much of the contest, but Pittsburg used a couple different runs to pull away for a 51-35 win over Louisburg.

Both teams got out and ran, especially in the first half, which made for a back-and-forth contest for much of the night.

"I liked it," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "At this point, with this being the first game out against a good 5A team who will probably win their league, I thought we did OK. This is a tough place to play. We work hard enough though that we can play any style of play."

Louisburg made things difficult on Pittsburg early as it took a one-point lead when sophomore Carson Buffington got an offensive rebound put back to give the Lady Cats a 12-11 lead. Down 13-12 to start the second quarter, Paige Buffington

connected on a 3-pointer to give Louisburg the lead right back.

The game was tied again with six minutes left in the second quarter when senior Madisen Simpson hit a jump shot to give Louisburg a two-point lead again. It was there where Pittsburg went on an 11-2 run toward the end of the first half.

Senior Tayler Lancaster knocked down a 3-pointer and Simpson hit a basket to cut the Pittsburg lead to four with 33 seconds left in the first half, but Louisburg could get no closer.

The Lady Cats had a chance to get back in the game at the free-throw line, but couldn't convert as they were 5-for-17 for the game.

"I think Pittsburg might have been a little shocked that we were playing that tough early," Lowry said. "We have a lot of stuff to shore up like free throws and stuff around the basket, but it is all fixable.

"You can't leave free throws on the table, especially against a team like this. It also starts to build upon itself. If you aren't hitting those, then the score starts to spread out a little bit, it starts to affect your other shooting too."



Louisburg senior guard Tayler Lancaster finished the game with a team-high 11 points.

Lancaster led Louisburg in scoring with 11 points, while Paige Buffington and Simpson each finished with eight points.

Carson Buffington added seven points in the loss, but that wasn't where she made the most impact. Carson pulled down a career-high 18 rebounds, eclipsing her previous high of 17 rebounds last season.

"Carson takes a great deal of pride in doing something that very few want to give the kind of effort that is required," Lowry said.

Pittsburg's Taylor Muff also proved to be a difficult matchup as the 5-foot-11 forward brought the ball up the floor, drove the basket and hit baskets from all over the floor. Muff, who

has signed with Northern Colorado to play volleyball, is a state track champion.

Louisburg senior Emalee Overbay drew the challenge of guarding Muff for most of the night and did her job as she, and the rest of the Lady Cats, held her to 13 points.

"She is a really good player," Lowry said of Muff. "She is one of the best players that we will get a chance to see this year. But I thought Emalee did a good job on her. Emalee is a good defender, she is physical and she limited her a little bit. I thought a lot of our individual efforts were good. Pittsburg has some good guards and I thought Madisen, Paige, Tayler and Isabelle (Holtzen) all did good things defensively."

Pittsburg pulled away in the third quarter as it opened the frame on a 12-2 run and built a 15-point lead late. Louisburg struggled to find an offensive rhythm in the second half as it scored just 11 points in the two quarters combined.

"The first couple minutes of the second half was just a stalemate," Lowry said. "Both teams were trying to find some rhythm in that first quarter and we just couldn't. That is something we are going to have to fix. Last year, we weren't a very good third quarter team and that is going to have to change. We have to play well in the third quarter. We can't play a decent half and then come out flat."

Louisburg will have a busy week ahead of itself this week as it competes in the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic in Burlington. The Lady Cats will play Burlington, the No. 4 in Class 4A-Division II, tonight and then face No. 8 Baldwin (4A-DII) on Tuesday. The tournament will wrap up with games Friday.

"It is going to be fun," Lowry said of the tournament. "They have worked their tails off in practice and they are just happy to be on the court playing someone. We are going to be playing two ranked teams back to back in Burlington and

Baldwin and the girls are ready to go play them. That is what I like about this group is they are tough kids.”

LOU	12	12	5	6 –
		35		
PITT	13	17	12	9 –
		51		

LOUISBURG (0-1): Tayler Lancaster 11, Madisen Simpson 8, Paige Buffington 8, Carson Buffington 7, Haley Cain 1. Totals: 12-55 5-17 35. 3-point field goals: 6, (Lancaster 3, P. Buffington 2, Simpson)