

Lady Cats ready to build off last season



Louisburg's Madisen Simpson is one of five seniors on the Lady Cats basketball team this season as those players look to lead Louisburg starting Friday when they travel to Pittsburg in their season opener.

The Louisburg High School girls basketball team took more than its fair share of lumps from a season ago.

Louisburg featured a lineup of underclassmen, with little varsity experience and low numbers forced a lot of freshmen and sophomores into big spots for the Lady Cats. All that equaled to just a three-win season, but this year they hope those experiences turn into positives.

The Lady Cats return all but one starter from a season ago, and with that, have a strong five-member senior class to help lead the way through what is a difficult Frontier League schedule.

"Last season was good from the perspective that this group never wavered from the process in how they prepared or what they gave in games," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "They have carried that same mentality into this preseason and it has shaped the team's identity."

That identity is a hard-working group that goes after every

loose ball and rebound, finds themselves in the right spots on offense and is aggressive on defense.

It is the senior class of Madisen Simpson, Paige Buffington and Emalee Overbay that helped shape that identity a season ago and they have joined up with a pair of new seniors – Tayler Lancaster and Chloe Renner – to continue the same type of play.

All five seniors figure to play big minutes for the Lady Cats this season as Lancaster will join Simpson and Buffington at the guard spot, while Renner will help out Overbay in the post.

“Paige, Madisen and Emalee will have been in the program for all four years,” Lowry said. “They have each grown so much in that time and have really matured into good leaders. They embrace the process, they are great teammates and have a great deal of pride in their program.

“Chloe and Tayler are a great fit and have both made an immediate impact to our team by their work ethic and discipline in learning their offensive and defensive responsibilities.”



Sophomore Carson Buffington led the Frontier League in rebounding a season ago and looks to do the same this year.

The Lady Cats also return their top post player from last season in sophomore Carson Buffington. As a freshman, Buffington led the Frontier League with 11 rebounds a game, which earned her honorable mention all-league and all-state accolades.

Junior guard Isabelle Holtzen also figures to see playing time for the Lady Cats after logging several varsity minutes as a sophomore. That group of seven players could also expand as the season goes on.

"We should have a good rotation with those players," Lowry said. "There are also some juniors, sophomores and freshmen that I expect to contribute in various roles this season.

"I would say our strengths at this point are our senior leadership, returning some experienced players that understand how we want to play and that our players are unselfish in everything they give."

The schedule doesn't get any easier for the Lady Cats as it features a round robin with their fellow Frontier League teams, including state-ranked squads in No. 2 Paola (4A-Division I) and No. 8 Baldwin (4A-Division II).

However, the fact the Lady Cats return all but one starter from a season ago should help them navigate through some rough waters.

"It is definitely a positive to return most of the players in this year's sophomore, junior and senior classes," Lowry said. "We were able to get right into the core of our work and allowed for more intense competition.

"The Frontier League will again have some of the best 4A and 5A teams. In addition to a very strong league, we have the opportunity to play some non-conference and tournament games against some very good, ranked teams. With all this said, I trust in our players to give great effort and compete with great pride every time we take the floor against these teams."

Louisburg opens its season Friday when it travels to Pittsburg for a 6 p.m. tipoff. It is a game the players have been waiting for since the end of last season.

"The girls have worked hard in preparing for the upcoming season," Lowry said. "Our seniors have helped foster an environment that is competitive and positive with their work ethic and attitudes. As with each year, we stress the importance of competing hard on every rep and every play.

"The girls are always anxious to start playing games after the preseason conditioning work and three weeks of practice."