

Wildcats suffer setback against Pittsburg



Louisburg senior T.J. Dover goes up for a basket Friday during the Wildcats' season opener at Pittsburg High School. Dover finished with a team-high 14 points in Louisburg 53-46 loss.

PITTSBURG – There are many things coaches can simulate in practice to prepare their team for when the season starts.

Athleticism isn't one of them.

That was on full display Friday when the Louisburg boys basketball team traveled to Pittsburg for its season opener. The Purple Dragons caused havoc on the perimeter and it took a while for the Wildcats to settle in.

By then, the Wildcats didn't have enough time to overcome a first half deficit and went on to fall to Pittsburg 53-46. Despite the loss, the Wildcats still left Pittsburg with a good frame of mind.

"I thought our teamwork was fantastic," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "When we had the opportunity to run our two-man game, we did a really good job with that. Pittsburg is just faster than what we can show in practice, but we just have to have that mentality. The boys played their tails off. They were the SEK champs last year and we played them at their place. We knew it would be tough, but we had our chances."

Defensively, the Wildcats held the Purple Dragons on first shot opportunities, but Pittsburg was quicker to the ball on missed shots as it had 12 second-chance points in the first half which helped them jump out to a double digit lead in the second quarter.

Louisburg took an early 6-3 lead after a dunk from senior Grant Harding, but the Purple Dragons responded and Pittsburg took a 14-11 lead after the first period.



Senior Grant Harding dunks the ball during the first quarter Friday in Pittsburg.

Wildcat senior Sam Guetterman cut it to one point with a reverse layup to start the second quarter, but from there Pittsburg went on a 9-2 run that was stopped on baskets from seniors T.J. Dover and Jayce Geiman. Pittsburg went into

halftime with a 27-19 advantage.

Pittsburg also caused havoc on the Louisburg perimeter as it forced 11 first half turnovers, including eight in the second period.

“They put perimeter pressure on us really, really well,” Nelson said. “Looking back, and it is something we emphasize, we give up 12-14 second chance points and that is your ball game right there. Even despite their pressure, we exploited their weaknesses in the post on occasion. There are still so many good things to look back on, and if we can get a couple of those shots to fall that almost went in, then it might have been a little different.”

The Wildcats calmed down in the second half and had just two turnovers the rest of the game. Louisburg stayed in the game from the free-throw line as it converted 7 of 8 opportunities in the third quarter, including six consecutive from juniors Ben Minster and Dalton Ribordy. Louisburg was 13-for-16 for the contest.

Dover, who scored a game-high 14 points, had eight of those in the final quarter to keep the Wildcats in it. Harding was next on the team with nine points.

Although they are still looking for that first win, the Wildcats have positives to build on.

“In my four years here, this is the best defensive rotation we have had,” Nelson said. “Pittsburg is a fast team and we played man defense most of the night. Our rotations were great and there are good things to take from this. We would have liked to get a win, but it is equally important to take our lumps, learn from them and be ready for the tournament.”

That tournament begins today when Louisburg travels to Burlington for the first round of the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic. The Wildcats will face Burlington tonight and then will turn

around and play Baldwin on Tuesday. It will all wrap up with one final game Friday.

LOU	11	8	14	13 –
		46		
PIT	14	13	14	12
		– 53		

LOUISBURG (0-1): T.J. Dover 14, Grant Harding 9, Jayce Geiman 7, Sam Guetterman 6, Dalton Ribordy 5, Ben Minster 5. Totals 17-40 13-16 46. 3-point field goals: 1, (Geiman)