

Lady Cats nearly pull off upset of Baldwin



Louisburg sophomore Carson Buffington backs down a Baldwin player under the basket Tuesday during the Lady Cats' home game. Louisburg came up just short against No. 7 Baldwin in a 55-52 loss.

In prior years, a near upset of a state-ranked team might have been looked at as a moral victory for the Louisburg High School girls basketball team.

However, in Tuesday's close 55-52 loss at home to No. 7-ranked Baldwin, it was viewed a bit differently.

"I am so proud of them, but the girls don't like it right now," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "It is great to see that out of this group. It bothers them to lose on this floor, in front of our crowd. They are disappointed, but we are going to build from this."

The Lady Cats were on the verge of knocking off one of the top teams in the Frontier League thanks to their defense. Louisburg was able to hold Baldwin to just 20 first half points and took a 23-20 halftime lead.

The one player the Lady Cats weren't able to slow down was Baldwin's Abby Ogle. The Bulldog junior accounted for more than half of her team's points with a game-high 31.

Still, the Lady Cats were within striking distance in the game's final minute.

"They played fantastic," Lowry said. "I am as proud of them right now as I was when we took the floor. I knew what they were going to give tonight. We made some adjustments at practice to help slow Baldwin down and took that and implemented it in the game. We have some tough kids and they played hard."

Louisburg (9-8) found itself down five points with under three minutes left in the game, but senior Tayler Lancaster hit a 3-pointer to cut the lead to two. Sophomore Carson Buffington tied it with a shot after pulling down an offensive rebound with 1 minute and 45 seconds left.

About six seconds later, Baldwin took the lead again thanks to Ogle who hit a basket and was fouled to convert the three-point play. The Baldwin lead ballooned again to five thanks to another score from Ogle.

The Lady Cats were able to stay in the game after Baldwin missed six of its final eight free throws. Louisburg senior Madisen Simpson hit a pair of free throws with 14 seconds remaining to cut the deficit to two

Baldwin added a free throw to make it a three-point game with 12 seconds left, but the Lady Cats' attempt to tie the game came up short.

The Lady Cats fought the entire game as they used a big second quarter run to turn what was a big deficit into a halftime lead. Louisburg found itself down eight, but went on a 13-2 run to end the first half.



Louisburg senior Chloe Renner drives to the basket Tuesday against Baldwin.

Simpson made two 3-pointers and junior Isabelle Holtzen hit another 3-pointer during the run, while senior Chloe Renner hit a pair of free throws and freshman Haley Cain made a basket after an offensive rebound shortly before halftime.

“They are finding ways together, and different kids are doing different things, to stay in games maybe when things aren’t

going their way,” Lowry said. “They don’t freak out, or let down about the situation they are in, they just keep battling. They keep rebounding, they keep defending and they keep doing things offensively that they want to do.”

Louisburg extended that lead to six midway through the third quarter, before Baldwin would rally back.

Another positive for the Lady Cats is they converted 20 of 22 from the free-throw line and have shown improvement in that department as of late.

“We have to be good from the free-throw line, especially with some of the things we try to do offensively,” Lowry said. “We have made strides from the beginning of the season to where we are at now. The girls have bought in and are committed to get better. We have some younger kids who are getting better too.”

Simpson led the Lady Cats in scoring with 24 points, including four 3-pointers. Senior Paige Buffington also finished in double figures with 10 points – as she was 10-for-10 from the free-throw line.

Carson Buffington led Louisburg with 12 rebounds and Renner added eight.

Louisburg will travel to Spring Hill on Friday for what is an important game for postseason ramifications as both teams are in the same substate and could see each other in the first round. The two teams are 1-1 against each other so far this year.

“It will be a big one to see where the league will finish out and preparing for substate,” Lowry said. “The girls will be ready.”

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LOUISBURG (9-8): Madisen Simpson 24, Paige Buffington 10, Carson Buffington 6, Tayler Lancaster 5, Isabelle Holtzen 3, Chloe Renner 2, Haley Cain 2. Totals: 13 20-22 52. 3-point field goals: 6, (Simpson 4, Lancaster, Holtzen)