

BANNER WIN! Wildcats end drought with sub-state title



The Louisburg boys basketball team holds up its Class 4A-Division I sub-state championship trophy Saturday following its 64-52 victory over Fort Scott at Spring Hill High School. The Wildcats advanced to their first state tournament since 2005.

SPRING HILL – Two years ago, Jason Nelson had his team look up at the wall in the Louisburg High School gymnasium – more specifically – the state basketball banner.

The Wildcat head coach wanted his team to look at just how long it has been since Louisburg has been to the state tournament.

2005

Nelson hoped that would stick with his team and give them a little motivation.

“It was probably the cheesiest thing I have ever done in my life,” Nelson said. “I just wanted them to know what all this hard work was for.”

Two years later, during the team’s shoot-around just hours before they were to play for the right to go to the state tournament, Nelson had the same talk with his team.

It was a reminder of what they were playing for.

On Saturday, the Wildcats downed Fort Scott 64-52 in the championship game of the Class 4A-Division I sub-state tournament at Spring Hill High School to advance to their first state tournament in 12 years.

In the midst of the celebration, there was one thing several players had on their minds – the banner.

“It is awesome,” Louisburg senior Jayce Geiman said. “I have never felt anything like this before. Ever since freshman year we have been focusing on getting something up on the banner because it was looking pretty bad. We were finally able to put something up there and it is great.”



Senior Grant Harding gets fouled by a Fort Scott player as he goes up for a basket Saturday.

Geiman, along with Grant Harding, Dalton Stone, T.J. Dover, Sam Guetterman, Jake Hill and Alex Seufferling, are the seven-member senior class that have stayed together since they were freshmen. Add in juniors Dalton Ribordy, Desmond Doles and Garrett Lowry, and the Wildcats have created a strong core

that has carried them through tough situations during the season and the sub-state tournament.

“We have had a lot of time together,” Dover said. “It is starting to click at the right time. We have such a great bond and we are like a bunch of brothers. We are playing good basketball at the right time and it is a lot of fun.

“It feels great to do something that Louisburg hasn’t done in a long time. It is really rewarding to see the four long years that we have put in come to fruition and hopefully the best is still yet to come.”

Coming off a win against Paola two days earlier in the first round of the tournament, where the Wildcats beat their rivals for the first time since 2012, Louisburg carried that momentum over into Saturday against Fort Scott where it ended a sub-state championship drought.

The Wildcats (10-12) did it thanks to a strong performance after halftime. Louisburg took a 27-23 lead into the locker room and wanted to bring Fort Scott out of its zone defense.



Louisburg senior Dalton Stone pulls up for a 3-pointer against Fort Scott on Saturday.

Louisburg was able to do that and move the ball around to get several easy baskets that led to a 19-6 run in the third quarter, that included a 3-pointer from Guetterman at the buzzer to put Louisburg up 18 points going into the fourth.

“We had another great game plan,” Harding said. “We knew they

were going to go zone on us most of the night and we executed great at the beginning and we were able to put together a decent lead at half. We knew if they were going to stay in that zone, that we were just going to hang back and we found the gaps and kept scoring on them.”

The Wildcats secured that double digit lead throughout the fourth quarter as they waited for the final buzzer to sound to begin celebrating.

“It is just unreal right now,” Guetterman said. “This was definitely one of our team goals at the beginning of the year was to win substate. This year with all the seniors we have and the underclassmen with experience, we knew that we could do it and it is a great feeling to finally pull it off.

“We played so well as a team in this tournament and it is awesome to be a part of. We have put in a lot of hard work and dedication over these last four years. Coach Nelson coaching us through these four years has been great as well.”



Jayce Geiman pumps his fists following the final buzzer in the Wildcats' substate championship victory over Fort Scott.

Louisburg took the lead from the opening tip and never relinquished it. The game was tied at 12-all at the end of the first quarter, but the Wildcats used an 8-2 run in the second quarter to expand its lead to eight before Fort Scott hit a shot just past half-court at the buzzer.

Harding and Geiman led Louisburg in scoring with 15 points each, while Geiman knocked down three 3-pointers and Harding pulled down a team-high nine rebounds. Dover finished with 13 points, while Ribordy had eight points and eight rebounds.

Stone added seven points, including a 3-pointer during the team's run in the second quarter, and Guetterman scored six in the win.

“It feels really good and these boys really earned it,” Nelson said. “They busted their butts. They have dealt with tongue-lashings and other things from me, but they also had this end result in their minds. I am really happy for them.”



T.J. Dover wins the opening tip.



Jayce Geiman moves the ball around on offense.



The Louisburg student section gets into the game



Jake Hill splits the Fort Scott defense



Senior Sam Guetterman pulls up for a 3-point shot at the end of the third quarter.



Dalton Ribordy muscles his way up for two points



Louisburg coach Jason Nelson instructs his team during a timeout.



Desmond Doles (left) cheers from the bench



T.J. Dover (44) and Sam Guetterman go out to receive the substate championship trophy.



The Wildcats will now prepare for their first state tournament game in more than decade as they earned the No. 6 seed and will face No. 3 Bishop Miege (19-3) at 8:15 p.m., on Wednesday at the Tony's Pizza Events Center (formally the Bicentennial Center).

Miege is currently the No. 1 ranked team in Class 4A-Division I and has been all season, but the Wildcats are going to make sure they enjoy this win and think about – but what else – the banner.

“We have looked at the banner all year and 2005 was the last time we have won this,” Harding said. “So it will be good to see 2017 up there for everyone to see for a long time to come.

