

Bishop Miege ends Wildcats' run in state tourney



Louisburg senior T.J. Dover gives a hug to teammate Jake Hill as he was taken out of the game for the final time with teammate Grant Harding (22) and others Wednesday in the Class 4A-DI state basketball tournament in Salina.

SALINA – One by one, the Louisburg players walked out of the locker room and into the halls of the Tony's Pizza Events Center.

As each player came around the corner, they were greeted with roaring cheers and applause from parents and fans who made the trek to Salina to watch the Wildcats play in the Class 4A-Division I state tournament.

It was the type of celebration normally reserved for a victory, but this was different.

The Wildcats just came off an 81-47 loss in the first round Wednesday to Bishop Miege, the No. 1 ranked team in the state and overwhelming favorite to win the tournament. Their season was over.

Instead of moping, however, the fans who made the trip hung around to give the players one final ovation for a season that resulted in a state tournament appearance for the first time

in 12 years. They did it also to say thank you to the seven-member senior class of T.J. Dover, Grant Harding, Jayce Geiman, Dalton Stone, Jake Hill, Sam Guetterman and Alex Seuferling, who all played their final game as a Wildcat.

“To have a group of seniors come like this is pretty special,” Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. “I decided to coach because of the group of players that we have and the students in general. They are all great kids.

“This season was definitely worthwhile. We got to state and that is something. We wanted a different draw, but we fought, clawed and did everything we could to pull out a win.”



Grant Harding lays the ball up for two points Wednesday during the Class 4A-DI state tournament in Salina.

Louisburg (10-13) faced an uphill battle from the start as it had to go up against a Bishop Miege front line that stood 6-foot-8, 6-8 and 6-5. The Stags were also able to score in transition and use their speed and athleticism to make it difficult on the Wildcats.

That front line of Francesco Badocchi, Jeremiah Robinson-Earl and Joseph Gleason each scored in double figures for Bishop Miege and Badocchi led the way with 15 points.

"It was what it was," Nelson said. "There were a couple things where we could have executed better or moved without the ball better, but it is one thing to do it well in practice and then another to go out there and see 6-8, 6-8 and 6-7 or however tall they are. It is tough. Our kids weren't intimidated, but there might have been a little 'Wow' factor actually going up against them.

"We had good position, we would block out but what can we do when it is 6-3 versus 6-8? They could jump over us without making contact, even if we are falling back into them. Our kids did what our kids do, they fought and scrapped and I am so proud of them."

Harding led Louisburg in scoring with 17 points and was the lone Wildcat to score in double figures. Geiman and Dover were next with six points each.

Junior Dalton Ribordy led Louisburg with six rebounds and Guetterman added five points and five rebounds.

Bishop Miege (20-3) outscored the Wildcats 27-11 in the first quarter as the Stags used their length and athleticism to their advantage. Miege then held Louisburg to two second quarter points and took a 37-13 halftime lead.

With the game out of reach in the fourth quarter, Nelson took out his starters for the final time for them to be recognized. That gave the bench players a chance to get some time as

Brayden Gage knocked down a 3-pointer and Seuferling – a seldom used senior – got in the scorebook as he knocked down a 3-pointer at the buzzer.



Senior Alex Seuferling rises up for a 3-pointer against Bishop Miega on Wednesday in Salina.

“I think we gave up four points trying to get him that shot,” Nelson joked. “But seriously, Alex is such a vital part of the team. He comes in and grinds every single day and gets on

Jayce on defense and never lets up. We could have told him to guard on of their 6-8 kids and he would have done it without asking a question. All of our players are like that.”

Despite the loss, it was a successful season for the Wildcats as they defeated their rival – Paola – for the first time since 2012 in substate and then advanced to their first state tournament since 2005.

They became just the 10th team in Louisburg history to earn a spot in the state tournament since it all started in 1912.

“We got to put something on the banner and my kids are going to get to come to school and look at that every day,” Nelson said. “That means a lot and I am so proud of them.”

LOU	11	2	11	23 –
47				
BM	27	10	24	20 –
81				

LOUISBURG (10-13): Grant Harding 17, Jayce Geiman 6, T.J. Dover 6, Sam Guetterman 5, Alex Seuferling 3, Dalton Stone 3, Brayden Gage 3, Dalton Ribordy 2, Jake Hill 2. Totals: 17-54 4-7 47. 3-point field goals: 9, (Harding 3, Geiman 2, Guetterman, Stone, Seuferling, Gage)





