

Paola hands Lady Cats loss on Senior Night



Senior Paige Buffington prepares to give coach Shawn Lowry a hug as she comes off the floor for the final time at Louisburg High School on Friday against Paola. Buffington, along with Madisen Simpson, Emalee Overbay, Tayler Lancaster and Chloe Renner, were all honored during Senior Night ceremonies.

It is never easy when the Louisburg girls basketball team faces off with rival Paola.

Going into Friday's contest in Louisburg, Paola was ranked No. 6 in Class 4A-DI and has won four consecutive Frontier League crowns. Not even an emotional senior night could stop the Panthers from getting their fifth.

Paola defeated Louisburg 52-38 to wrap up their fifth league crown, but the Lady Cats didn't go down without a fight as their five seniors laid it all out there in what was their final home game.

Madisen Simpson, Paige Buffington, Emalee Overbay, Tayler Lancaster and Chloe Renner all said goodbye to their home fans for the final time. It was a group that helped their team to a 10-win season this year after coming off a three-win season a year ago.

"This was the first group of freshmen that I had as a head

coach and to be seniors this year – they are just awesome,” Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. “I love them to death. For what they have given, what kind of leaders they become, and what kind of women they have grown into, they are special. What they have done doesn’t leave with them, it stays in the program and passed on to the next group of Lady Cats.”

Although Louisburg played with a lot of energy, it didn’t necessarily turn into points for the Lady Cats. Louisburg managed just nine first-half points but only trailed by 12 points going into halftime.

The Lady Cats (10-10) found a groove offensively in the third quarter as they scored 18 points and were able get Paola’s lead to single digits. Sophomore Kennia Hankinson was a spark off the bench late as she connected on back-to-back 3-pointers to help keep the game within reach.



Sophomore Carson Buffington tries to drive to the basket Friday against Paola.

"It was a great effort and they played with great toughness," Lowry said of his team. "They didn't play basketball very well with some of the things we wanted to do offensively, but that happens sometimes. I will take that toughness and effort all the time. It was a special night and everyone wanted to give a

lot, and they did. I am proud of them for that.”

Paola was able to put the game away in the fourth quarter as it ballooned its lead to 16 at one point. Panther senior Matti Morgan led all scorers with 16 points, including four 3-pointers.

Simpson led Louisburg in scoring with 13 points, while Hankinson added 10 in the loss.

Prior to the final buzzer, Lowry subbed out each senior for the last time – one by one – to let them be recognized. It was a group that left a lasting impression on their teammates.

“They are outsized, they are not the biggest, they are not the most athletic, but they play together and for each other,” Lowry said. “For where they have come from as freshmen to where they are now, it is great to see and it is so much fun to see kids develop that winning attitude. It is not just the basketball stuff, but it is seeing them mature and gaining leadership. You see them being unselfish and loving their teammates and I will take that every day of the week.”

Louisburg’s season is not over, however. The Lady Cats earned the No. 3 seed in their substate tournament and will travel to Spring Hill on Friday to face the No. 2 Broncos in a 7:30 p.m. tipoff. The winner of that game will play the winner of No. 1 Paola and No. 4 Fort Scott on Saturday.

LOU	4	5	18	11
– 38				
PAO	10	11	19	12 –
52				

LOUISBURG (10-10): Madisen Simpson 13, Kennia Hankinson 10, Emalee Overbay 6, Tayler Lancaster 3, Carson Buffington 2, Chloe Renner 2, Paige Buffington 1, Isabelle Holtzen 1.

Totals: 12 10-19 38. 3-point field goals: 4, (Hankinson 3, Lancaster)