

# Paola knocks off Louisburg softball to start season



Louisburg third baseman Karson Griggs reaches back to make a throw to first base last Tuesday during the Lady Cats' doubleheader in Paola. Louisburg fell to the Panthers 9-0 and 7-3.

PAOLA – Although the season opener didn't go as the Louisburg softball team had hoped – a 9-0 and 7-3 loss to rival Paola – the Lady Cats were still able to pull away positives.

Despite getting shutout in the opener, Louisburg responded in the nightcap and actually held a lead into the fifth inning before Paola used the long ball to go back on top to complete the sweep.

"I was very encouraged with our play in the second game," Louisburg coach John Ozier said. "It was tough to face a team like Paola right out of the gate, but once we got past the jitters, I felt like we settled down and began to play at the level that we coaches have seen thus far in practice."

The Lady Cats (0-2) had a tough time getting going against Paola starter Jordan Johnson and allowed just two hits through six innings and struck out five. Sophomores Madison Svoboda and Bailey Kern had the lone hits for Louisburg.

Paola scored a run in the first, three in the third, two in the fourth and three more runs in the sixth to pull out the nine-run win.

Louisburg starter Allyssa Griggs gave up six hits and only four of those nine runs were earned. She also struck out four against a veteran Paola lineup.

"Allyssa had some great battles with many of the Paola hitters," Ozier said. "They are very opportunistic, so any defensive or pitching lapses, they will capitalize. Once she pitches a few more games, we will see the pitching rhythm that she demonstrated last year.

"Our hitters had a tough time getting comfortable at the plate in the first game. It is hard in practice to replicate the velocity of the pitches coming at them in real game situations."

The nightcap got off to a positive start for the Lady Cats as they took a 3-0 lead in the third inning. Karson Griggs led the inning off with a double, Svoboda reached on an error and Emalee Overbay reached on a fielder's choice.



**Louisburg shortstop Kennia Hankinson jumps in the air to bring down a throw Tuesday against Paola.**

The bases were loaded for Allyssa Griggs and she drove all three runners home on a long single to centerfield.

Paola responded with two runs in the third inning to cut into the Louisburg lead and then answered with four runs in the fourth inning. Johnson, who also started the second game for

Paola, broke open the tie game with a 3-run home run.

The Panthers added another run in the sixth to secure the sweep over Louisburg.

Freshman Allison Boles started her first game on the mound for the Lady Cats and she was able to keep her team in it for much of the contest. Boles had three strikeouts and gave up eight hits.

"Boles did a great job in pitching her first game at the high school varsity level," Ozier said. "She showed great composure, even through the one rough inning when Paola took the lead. I believe that she will continue to grow this season and put together some quality appearances.

"In the second game, I was very proud of how the girls adjusted at the plate, and developed better timing. In fast pitch softball, much of your success in hitting is all about timing."

Karson had the lone extra base hit for the Lady Cats, while Svoboda, Overbay, Allyssa Griggs and Kern all had singles.

The Lady Cats will use this week in practice to help shore up their defense that committed seven errors over the two games as they get ready to face Prairie View on Thursday in their home opener at Lewis-Young Park.

"We will continue to work out some of the kinks with our defense, which was shaky at times against Paola," Ozier said. "We did make some nice plays on the defensive side, but like any team, we have to avoid giving up the big innings."