

Lady Cats complete season sweep of Paola



Louisburg freshman Alyse Moore brings down a rebound against Paola during a game between the two teams in January. The Lady Cats ventured to Paola on Friday and left with a 47-40 win.

PAOLA – It has been years, or perhaps more than a decade, since the Louisburg girls basketball team got a season sweep over Paola.

That streak came to an end Friday.

Louisburg put together a complete game effort on the road as it downed Paola, 47-40, to end the regular season on a good note at Paola High School. The Lady Cats picked up their eighth win of the season and this was a big confidence booster going into this week's sub-state tournament.

"I thought the girls played very unselfish in the effort and toughness they gave," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "It would have been easy for them to give less knowing that we had beaten them once and that we were going to play them again in less than a week but the girls were focused and disciplined."

The Lady Cats will see Panthers again shortly as they will return to Paola for the sub-state tournament Thursday. Louisburg (8-12) earned the No. 3 seed and will face No. 2 Paola (9-11) at 7:30 p.m.

With an even bigger game looming on the horizon, the Lady Cats kept their focus and got a big win over their rival thanks to their defensive effort and their work on the glass.

Louisburg pulled down 42 rebounds in the contest, including 20 offensive boards, that led to many second chance opportunities.

Defensively, the Lady Cats turned up the pressure and recorded 12 steals on the night and were able to get some baskets in transition.

"The girls have worked hard at, and taken pride in how they defend and rebound," Lowry said. "I think these two things were probably the biggest difference for us in this game."

The Lady Cats jumped out to a 13-8 lead in the first quarter and never looked back. Louisburg used a 16-point fourth quarter to help put the game away. It also went on a 9-0 run late to push the lead to 40-26 after 3-point plays from senior Isabelle Holtzen and freshman Madilyn Melton.

Senior Bailey Belcher gave the Lady Cats a boost offensively as she finished with a team-high 11 points, including six rebounds and three steals. Nine of her 11 points came in the first quarter as she helped Louisburg rally from an early 7-4 deficit.

Junior Carson Buffington also had a big night with eight points and team-high 10 rebounds and four steals. Melton also flirted with a double-double as she finished with seven points and eight rebounds to go along with three steals.

Fellow freshman Brooklyn Diederich came off the bench to score eight points, including a pair of 3-pointers, that helped erase a Paola lead late in the second quarter. Sophomore Haley Cain also did some work on the glass with seven rebounds on the night.

Ady Edwards led Paola in scoring with 13 points and Skylar Williams finished with 11 points for the Panthers.

The Lady Cats hope they can continue that success Thursday when they see Paola again in sub-state. If they advance past Paola, the Lady Cats will meet the winner of No. 1 Spring Hill (13-6) and No. 4 Ottawa (2-18) in the championship game at 6 p.m. on Saturday at Paola High School.

"We have talked a lot this season about having many young and inexperienced players and that we hoped we could just keep improving and learning so that we would be playing our best basketball at this point in the season," Lowry said. "All the girls have embraced the process, worked their tails off and have a great mentality coming into this week.

"It's always good to win a basketball game but we understand that nothing is guaranteed and that we have to prepare with great focus, discipline, effort and heart this week if we want to be successful. That's what makes this time of year so exciting in that anyone can do something special if they all believe and all are willing to give everything that it will take."

LOU	13	8	10	16 –
47				
PAO	8	9	9	14
– 40				

LOUISBURG (8-12): Bailey Belcher 11, Carson Buffington 8, Brooklyn Diederich 8, Madilyn Melton 7, Isabelle Holtzen 5, Haley Cain 4, Carlee Gassman 2, Alyse Moore 2. Totals: 15-54 12-25 47. 3-point field goals: 5, (Diederich 2, Buffington, Holtzen, Cain)