

Inspired effort nearly gives Lady Cats upset of Baldwin



Louisburg senior Haley Cain goes up for a jumper during the team's game with Baldwin on Tuesday at Baldwin High School.

BALDWIN CITY – When it was all said and done, the Louisburg girls basketball walked off the court for the final time this season following a 44-32 loss to Baldwin Tuesday in the Class 4A sub-state semifinals.

There was obvious disappointment for the Lady Cats following the defeat, but the setback didn't deter from what was one of their best performances of the season – especially on the defensive end of the floor.

Louisburg held Baldwin to 28 percent from the floor and forced 19 turnovers as it was a tight game until the final minute.

Baldwin would go on to defeat No. 4 Labette County on Friday in the sub-state championship and the Bulldogs will join fellow Frontier League members Eudora and Piper in the state tournament this week.

“We

are so proud of these girls and how they showed tremendous resilience

throughout that game,” Louisburg coach Leanna Willer said. “It would

have been easy for the girls to see themselves as underdogs and let the

game get away from them, but they fought every step of the way. I believe it

showed everyone just how much heart and soul this team can play with when we

truly play together.”

The Lady Cats (8-13) got up on the

Bulldogs early as they took a 10-6 lead at the end of the first quarter thanks

to a 3-pointer from Brooklyn Diederich and a basket from Madilyn Melton in the

final minute to give them some momentum.

Louisburg’s offense cooled in the

second quarter as it managed three points, but the Lady Cats still found

themselves down just five at halftime – thanks in part to their defense.

Louisburg was active defensively as they recorded 33 deflections to go along

with 12 steals and four blocks in the game.

“Our

defensive effort was huge,” Willer said. “We are not a team that tends to score

a lot of points, so maintaining a strong defense and holding the other team to

a low score was ideal. We had all kinds of players making big plays – getting

steals, deflections, applying ball pressure, fronting their post, etc. It was a

solid team effort and we worked really well together. Communication stepped up as well, and that energy carried us through our comeback in the fourth quarter.”

That comeback seemed to give the Lady Cats, who were the No. 12 seed coming into the tournament, a chance for an upset and a spot in the championship game.

Down 23-18 going into the fourth quarter, junior Alyse Moore hit a pair of free throw and Melton connected on a basket to cut the lead to one. Baldwin knocked down a shot to go back up three, but after a Delaney Wright made free throw, junior Megan Foote knocked down a 3-pointer to give Louisburg a 26-25 lead midway through the frame.



The Louisburg girls basketball team leaps off the bench after Megan Foote hit a 3-pointer to give the Lady Cats the lead in

the fourth quarter.

Unfortunately for the Lady Cats, Baldwin answered with a 3-pointer of its own to take the lead back. The Bulldogs would go on to make 12 of 14 free throws down the stretch to ice the game and the Lady Cats didn't have a chance to catch up.

"We'll give credit where credit is due – Baldwin was extremely good from the free-throw line that night, especially during the fourth quarter," Willer said. "Fouling was the only way for us to stop the clock toward the end, and they were just solid – we couldn't catch a break. We always say that free throws win games, and Baldwin's girls did an excellent job."

Melton scored a bulk of the Lady Cats' points as she finished with a team-high 18 points to go along with nine rebounds and two steals. Diederich was next on the team in scoring with six points, but was also active defensively with a team-high 11 deflections and Foote also had 10 of her own. Both players also had three steals.

Moore was second on the team with seven rebounds, while Wright had five deflections, a steal and a block.

Although, the Lady Cats came up short, Willer was excited to see her team's effort in what was team's most important game of the year.

"This season has definitely been a roller coaster filled with many ups and downs," she said. "It's been an emotional ride for all of us, but I think we finally saw during that last game how truly special this team could be. We battled through so many tough moments and I believe we are all stronger for it. It has been a truly unforgettable year that I won't soon forget. I am so proud of the determination our team had to finish out the season strong."

LOU	10	3	5	14
- 32				
BAL	6	12	5	21
- 44				

LOUISBURG (8-13): Madilyn Melton 6-14 6-9 18; Brooklyn Diederich 2-10 0-0 6; Alyse Moore 1-6 2-2 4; Megan Foote 1-3 0-0 3; Delaney Wright 0-6 1-2 1. Totals: 10-46 9-14 32. 3-point field goals: 3, (Diederich 2, Foote)