Frontier League shakeup could happen soon



In a few months – or even weeks – the Frontier League as it currently stands could have a different look.

Since March, meetings have gone on within member schools of the Frontier League and Kaw Valley League to discuss possible realignment of both leagues.

The Frontier League currently has seven members – Louisburg, Paola, Spring Hill, De Soto, Ottawa, Baldwin and Eudora – and a meeting between the schools took place on March 28 to discuss where each school stood as far as their happiness in the league.

Brian Biermann, superintendent of USD 416, and Louisburg High School athletic director Darin Gagnebin attended the meeting on Louisburg's behalf and both relayed the fact that every school stated they were happy with the way the league is currently set up, but a couple schools came to the realization the Frontier League might not be able to offer what they are looking for.

De Soto and Spring Hill currently have growing enrollment numbers are interested in playing Class 5A competition. De Soto moved up to 5A this school year and Spring Hill will look to make the jump in the coming years with its larger enrollment. The rest of the schools all compete in Class 4A.

Both schools stated they would like more competition at the

sub-varsity level that schools like Louisburg, Baldwin and Eudora cannot provide. Competing in a mainly 5A league would relieve some of those problems.

“De Soto said they will probably open next year with 950 kids and they would grow by 100 the year after that,” Biermann said. “They are happy in the Frontier, but they feel like they need 5A competition and they feel like it could hurt them in football with seedings and tie-breakers. They could potentially get penalized by competing in a mainly 4A league.

“Spring Hill wants to be proactive. Their growth is coming. Their classes in the middle school are pretty good size. They won’t grow a lot next year, but they will in the next few years.”

What started the meetings is due to the fact that the Kaw Valley League is looking to rework their situation or create a brand new look altogether. The Kaw Valley currently has seven schools in Lansing, Turner, Bonner Springs, Tonganoxie, Piper, Bishop Ward and Basehor-Linwood, but one member – Bishop Ward – is leaving for a new league beginning next school year.

According to report in March from the *Tonganoxie Mirror*, Lansing wants to create a larger league that would contain all or some combinations of Lansing, Blue Valley Southwest, De Soto, Leavenworth, Bonner Springs, Basehor-Linwood, Tonganoxie, Ottawa, Piper, Spring Hill, Turner and Topeka schools Seaman, Shawnee Heights and Topeka West.

Many of those schools are either in Class 5A already or are close based on enrollment numbers. The idea of competing against bigger competition is intriguing to De Soto, Spring Hill – and possibly Ottawa – the three largest schools in the Frontier League.

An idea was thrown around of creating a league of two divisions between the Kaw Valley and Frontier. One division would be 5A schools and the other would be 4A.

“We visited with our board of education and we are not in favor of a mega-league,” Biermann said. “That has been talked about – having a league of 5A and 4A schools. We don’t want to invite new 5A schools. We are ok with Spring Hill and De Soto staying in the league, even though they are growing, but we don’t want to invite other 5A schools or have a mega league so they can have better competition.

“Our stance is if De Soto and Spring Hill feel like they need 5A competition and leave, then they can work towards that and we can work on filling those spots with 4A schools.”

Both Biermann and Gagnebin feel like the Frontier League needs to be proactive as changes could be made sooner rather than later.

“We aren’t panicking as a league as much as the Kaw Valley schools are because they know they are headed for a break up,” Gagnebin said. “We could easily stay with the seven schools we have. Pretty soon, De Soto will have close to 1,000 kids. It is more on them if they want to be in our league, and if they are happy, by all means stay. We are not saying they have to leave, but they have to do best what is for their school, and if this league isn’t the best option for you, then you have to look elsewhere.”

Due to the fact De Soto and Spring Hill could be moving on, the Frontier is being proactive and inviting some members of the Kaw Valley League to come make presentations at a meeting Wednesday to see if they would be a fit in the Frontier.

According to Biermann, Tonganoxie, Piper, Bonner Springs and Basehor-Linwood High Schools will all make presentations at the meeting and then schools from both the Kaw Valley and the Frontier will meet to discuss options at a later date.

“I led the (March 28) meeting and I wanted to make sure everyone was as honest and open as possible,” Biermann said. “There were no hurt feelings. Collectively we don’t want a

mega-league, no additional 5A schools and that is firm from us, Paola, Baldwin and Eudora. Spring Hill and De Soto left the meeting, I think, that they need to start looking for potential 5A competition.

“The easy fix would be for De Soto and Spring Hill to join the bigger league and we take someone like Tonganoxie and Piper to replace them. Every school said they loved the Frontier League and competition, but it is time there has to be some conversations. They biggest thing is we don’t have three baseball, softball or soccer teams to schedule, but De Soto and Spring Hill want that. We can’t field C teams in some cases.”

The leagues are on a sort of a time crunch. With football reclassifications and scheduling beginning this October for the next two years, it would be the best case scenario to get the reshuffling done before then so they can schedule for the 2018-19 season and beyond according to Gagnebin.

The Louisburg activities director also believes keeping the right number of teams is also imperative for a healthy league.

“We want to maintain the integrity of our league, whether that is with seven or even eight schools,” Gagnebin said. “We want to maintain that number. Nine is a scheduling nightmare, and if you only have six teams, you are opening up a can of worms where if you leave an open spot, then the state could come in and assign certain schools to us that aren’t a good fit.

“I don’t necessarily want them to leave the league, but we need to be told if they are. I am more afraid of them leaving our league than them staying in our league. I am not afraid of the competition we face with them. We can compete with them in all the sports, but I am more afraid of us dropping from a seven to a five-team league.”

However, one hiccup remains. The Frontier League bylaws state that a member school must give two years notice before leaving

the league.

“If the dominoes start falling fast, the league could pass a bylaw amendment to allow for movement for De Soto or whoever, which is something I think they will have to do,” Gagnebin said. “Not much is happening now, but when it does it is going to happen quick. You better be ready to move with it and have a plan in place or you could be stuck on the outside.”

Nelson resigns as head boys basketball coach



Jason Nelson spent the last four years as the Louisburg High School boys basketball head coach, but after leading the Wildcats to their first state tournament since 2005, Nelson resigned from the position last week.

Jason Nelson walked off the state tournament floor in Salina a month ago following a loss to Bishop Miege.

He had just taken the Louisburg boys basketball team to their first state tournament since 2005 and wrapped up his best season as the Louisburg head coach. It was a good year for him and his Wildcat group.

Despite the success, Nelson won't be on the sideline next season as he resigned his post as the Wildcat head coach last week, citing family reasons. Although Nelson considers his team a family of sorts, it is his family at home that needs more of his attention.

"It is never easy to step away on your own accord," Nelson said. "I was joking with some people that it would have been easier had I been fired. My rationale for stepping aside is my kids and family – nothing more and nothing less. My sons are both super active in different sports and Michelle and I assume it's only going to get worse (with regard to their schedule) as they get older.

"As wonderful as my basketball boys and building administration are, the well-being of Micah, Jonah and my family is paramount. It has been one of the most difficult decisions I've had to make. I love the coaching job and with the support I received from within my building, it really was one of the most memorable aspects of my career."

Nelson was the Wildcat head coach for four years and was previously an assistant for one year. Although Nelson created several memories during the run to the state tournament this season, it is his senior classes that have left a lasting impression on him.

"State was obviously a great memory for me and the program," Nelson said. "I will never forget that. But my favorite memories are every senior night I have been a part of. You've got kids who've worked their tails off for four years and they get one chance for the game to be about them – not the league, not the substate, not the crowd, but them. Every single senior I've had the honor to coach has left their mark on our program and been responsible for where we've gotten during my tenure.

"When I took the job, my building administration gave me their goals for the program. We hit them and were working on our

own, and while we weren’t finished writing our own book, life happens. That’s the real testament to the players in our program. They’ve never been about their own stats or objectives. They’ve always held the fact that they represent their school and community close and it manifested itself in the constant, tangible improvement we’ve experienced.”

Nelson created a special bond with his players, one that allowed him to bring his two boys – Micah and Jonah – around the team. He has watched the players interact with his kids and it created a family atmosphere around the program.

“Micah is 7 and Jonah is 4,” Nelson said. “My kids are better people for having been around the LHS basketball team and I don’t think that’s the norm for all. I took the job when Jonah was just born and so much of who he is at this point is because of the quality of our boys. It sounds selfish, but what I’ll miss the most is how the players loved my boys. I have countless instances of this and many of them are my most treasured memories.

“My kids not withstanding, I’ll truly miss the competitive nature of the game. I’ve always loved competition and basketball is the most team oriented, competitive sport there is. It’s fast, never goes as anticipated and while personnel is as always paramount, basketball is the one sport that teamwork usually overcomes individual successes. Basketball is the apex of team sports and I’ll miss the hell out of the pregame, in game and postgame coaching.”

Three Wildcats named to all-

state basketball team



Senior Madisen Simpson was one of three Louisburg basketball players to receive all-state honors last week. Simpson averaged 17 points a game for the Lady Cats.

Three Louisburg High School basketball players earned all-state honors from two major Kansas newspapers.

Senior Madisen Simpson was named to the Class 4A-Division I third team by the Topeka Capital-Journal and was also selected as an honorable mention by the Wichita Eagle. Sophomore teammate Carson Buffington was also named to the honorable mention team by the Capital-Journal.

Grant Harding, a senior on the boys' basketball team, was selected to the Class 4A-Division I honorable mention team by both the Capital-Journal and Wichita Eagle.

Simpson, who served as the Lady Cats' point guard, was the team's leading scorer with nearly 17 points a game and knocked down 55 3-pointers on the season. She also was 83 percent from the free-throw line and made 25 in a row at one point during the season. She also knocked down six 3-pointers in a game.



Carson Buffington was named to the Class 4A-Division I team by the Topeka Capital-Journal.

As for Buffington, she averaged a team-high 11 rebounds a game, including five offensive rebounds a contest. She had several big rebounding nights for the Lady Cats, including a 22-rebound performance early in the season and also had 17 rebounds in their sub-state game against Spring Hill.

Buffington also averaged six points and two steals a game as she was one of the team’s starting forwards. She the Frontier League in rebounding for the second consecutive season and finished in the top 10 in the state in rebounds.

Earlier in the month, Simpson was named to the all-Frontier League first team, while Buffington was named an honorable mention.



Louisburg senior Grant Harding was named to the Class 4A-Division I honorable mention team last week.

Harding led the Wildcats to their first state tournament since 2005 and was the team's leading scorer. He averaged close to a double-double with 17 points and eight rebounds a contest.

He was also selected to the all-Frontier League first team earlier this month and Harding earned all-league honors in three of his four years with the program.

Harding, Geiman named to all-

league team



Louisburg senior Grant Harding was selected to all-Frontier League first team after he averaged 17 points a game this season to lead the Wildcats in scoring to go along with eight rebounds a contest.

Fresh off its first state tournament appearance since 2005, honors are starting to come in for the Louisburg High School boys basketball team.

Shortly following the state tournament, the all-Frontier League teams were released and two Wildcats earned spots among the league's best.

Senior Grant Harding earned first team all-league honors, while fellow senior Jayce Geiman was selected to the honorable mention team in a league filled with senior-laden squads.

"If I had my way, all 12 boys would have made all league," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "As usual, our league was loaded, so any representation be it first team, second team or honorable mention was a fantastic honor. It was hard to argue with the all-league when you look at the final product, but any coach would want to have as much representation as possible."

Harding is Louisburg's first all-league first team selection since Garrett Griffin in 2012 and has been on the all-league list for the last three years. Harding was an honorable

mention as a sophomore and made the second team his junior season.

He was among the leading scorers in the Frontier League as he averaged nearly a double-double. Harding scored 17 points and grabbed eight rebounds a game.

Harding joins first-team that includes Eudora's Mitchell Ballock, a Creighton commit, the Ottawa duo of Isaac McCullough and Perry Carroll along with Spring Hill's Trey Heinrich.



Senior Jayce Geiman was named to the honorable mention all-Frontier League team after averaging 10 points a game this season.

"We haven't had a first team selection since Garrett and we've

had some quality players come through since then, which shows the strength of the league," Nelson said. "When Grant can be represented with Ballock, McCullough, Heinrich and Perry Carroll, it speaks volumes about his season, his legacy and the impact he had on league."

As for Geiman, he was selected to the all-league team for the first time and the Louisburg point guard finished the season in double-figure scoring. Geiman averaged 10 points a game to go along with four assists.

"Jayce put together a fantastic season and definitely left his mark on our program especially given that we had him run the point guard spot for us this year out of necessity and he ended up being a top 3 point guard in our league," Nelson said. "Couldn't be more proud of all our guys."

Eudora, which tied for the league title with Ottawa, led the way with four selections. Ottawa, Paola and Spring Hill each had three selections. It was also a team filled with seniors as only three of the 17 all-league players were underclassmen.

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE BOYS BASKETBALL

First Team

Mitchell Ballock, senior, Eudora

Isaac McCullough, senior, Ottawa

Perry Carroll, senior, Ottawa

Grant Harding, senior, Louisburg

Trey Heinrich, senior, Spring Hill

Second Team

Tanner Moala, senior, Paola

Noah Wilson, senior, De Soto

Hayden Brown, senior, Eudora

Brandon Wilkes, junior, Paola

Brennen Feeback, sophomore, Spring Hill

Honorable mention

Devion Bethea, junior, Ottawa

Tanner Jackman, senior, Baldwin

Jordan Hoston, senior, Spring Hill

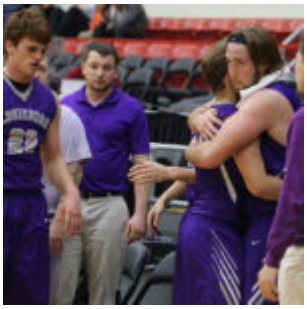
Noah Bell, senior, Paola

David Hornberger, senior, Eudora

Ryan Verbanic, senior, Eudora

Jayce Geiman, senior, Louisburg

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 Miege 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)





















Wildcats face tall task against Bishop Miege



Louisburg senior Grant Harding splits the Fort Scott defense thanks to a screen from teammate Dalton Ribordy (31) on Saturday in the Class 4A-DI sub-state championship game. Harding will lead the Wildcats against No. 3 Bishop Miege Wednesday in the first round of the state tournament.

In its final practice before its first state tournament game in 12 years, the Louisburg boys basketball team was all smiles.

If the Wildcats had a little bit of bounce in their step, who could blame them? Normally at this time, the Wildcats have already checked in their uniforms and many of them were focused on what spring sport they were going to play.

“It is just good to have extra basketball,” Louisburg senior Jayce Geiman said.

The Wildcats were loose and having fun as they prepared for what could be their biggest challenge of the season. That’s

not to say they didn’t get work done though.

Louisburg (10-12), the No. 6 seed, has a big task at hand as they meet No. 3 seed Bishop Miege (19-3) at 8:15 p.m. on Wednesday in the Class 4A-Division I state tournament at the Tony’s Pizza Events Center in Salina. Miege has been the No. 1 ranked team in 4A-DI all season and is considered one of the better teams in the state.

Still, the fact the Wildcats are in this position for the first time since 2005 leaves them excited for the chance to play on the state’s biggest stage.

“It really hasn’t sunk in yet,” Louisburg senior Grant Harding said. “It probably won’t until we step on the court, but we are looking forward to the challenge. They are obviously a great team, so we have to go in and play our game and don’t be afraid. A lot of teams lay down for them because of the name and we can’t do that.”

Bishop Miege, the defending state champion, has put together a strong season against a schedule that features mainly Class 5A and 6A teams. The Stags opened the season with a win over 4A-DI McPherson, who is also in the state tournament, but played higher classification teams the rest of the way until the sub-state tournament.

The Stags defeated Bonner Springs (72-32) in the first round of sub-state and then defeated the state’s No. 2 ranked team – Eudora – 49-40 in the championship game. Their lone losses on the season were to Blue Valley and St. Thomas Aquinas (twice).

Louisburg played both Eudora and state-ranked Ottawa a total of four times on the season, so the Wildcats have played the state’s upper-echelon teams in the past, despite losing each contest.



Senior guard Sam Guetterman pushes the ball up the floor against Fort Scott last Saturday.

“It does give us a good barometer of what we are going up against,” Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. “Just from the limited film I have seen, Eudora played them pretty well and Eudora is one of the better teams in the state as well and hopefully we can take things that they did well and tweak them to make them work for us.”

Although they have seen tough teams in the past, the Wildcats haven’t faced a front line like they will see from Miege. The Stags feature a line that stands 6-foot-8, 6-8 and 6-5, which forces the Wildcats to adjust what they normally do.

“It is hard to simulate that in practice,” Geiman said. “We have been practicing against six and seven guys on defense, which is really hard, so it will be a challenge. They are a really good team.”

Jeremiah Robinson-Earl is of the Stags' top players as the 6-8 sophomore forward averages 14 points and nine rebounds a game to go along with three assists. He is also drawing interest from a lot of NCAA Division I schools, including Kansas.

Senior forward Francesco Badocchi (6-8) averages 15 points and six rebounds a contest. He wasn't able to play varsity at Miege until the second semester last season as he transferred from Italy, but since then he has elevated Miege's play even more. Badocchi has also drawn interest from Kansas and other D-1 programs.

"Their height is definitely the biggest challenge, especially when they run a line of 6-8, 6-7 and 6-6 or whatever they are," Nelson said. "It does significantly alter your game plan going in because we aren't going to be able to get our traditional inside looks, but I feel good with our game plan. We are just going to give them our best shot."

The Stags also feature skilled guards in Landry Weber and Semaj Ray. Weber leads the team with seven assists a contest and Ray averages close to 11 points a game. Guard Ezekiel Lopes also averages close to 11 points a game.

As for the Wildcats, Harding (6-2) has led the Wildcats in scoring most of the season. He averages 17 points a game, while Geiman (6-0) also averages 10 points a contest from the point guard position.

Senior Sam Guetterman (6-1), senior T.J. Dover (6-3) and junior Dalton Ribordy (6-2) will fill out the starting lineup, while the Wildcats also look for production from senior Jake Hill (5-9), senior Dalton Stone (6-0), junior Desmond Doles (6-1) and junior Garrett Lowry (6-4) off the bench.

Should Louisburg advance, it will play the winner of No. 2 Abilene and No. 7 Mulvane on Friday in the semifinals and will guarantee the Wildcats their first top four finish in 38 years. Louisburg has only placed at state two years, the

Wildcats took fourth in 1979 and third in 1948.

Despite facing their toughest challenge of the season, the Wildcats aren't worried about making history again, but they are looking forward to the game and their chance at playing in the state tournament.

"It will be exciting," Harding said. "I have had butterflies the last two games of sub-state, so I am sure I will for state as well. We are just going to go out there, play hard and see what happens."

BANNER WIN! Wildcats end drought with sub-state title



The Louisburg boys basketball team holds up its Class 4A-Division I sub-state championship trophy Saturday following its 64-52 victory over Fort Scott at Spring Hill High School. The Wildcats advanced to their first state tournament since 2005.

SPRING HILL – Two years ago, Jason Nelson had his team look up at the wall in the Louisburg High School gymnasium – more specifically – the state basketball banner.

The Wildcat head coach wanted his team to look at just how long it has been since Louisburg has been to the state tournament.

2005

Nelson hoped that would stick with his team and give them a little motivation.

“It was probably the cheesiest thing I have ever done in my life,” Nelson said. “I just wanted them to know what all this hard work was for.”

Two years later, during the team’s shoot-around just hours before they were to play for the right to go to the state tournament, Nelson had the same talk with his team.

It was a reminder of what they were playing for.

On Saturday, the Wildcats downed Fort Scott 64-52 in the championship game of the Class 4A-Division I sub-state tournament at Spring Hill High School to advance to their first state tournament in 12 years.

In the midst of the celebration, there was one thing several players had on their minds – the banner.

“It is awesome,” Louisburg senior Jayce Geiman said. “I have never felt anything like this before. Ever since freshman year we have been focusing on getting something up on the banner because it was looking pretty bad. We were finally able to put something up there and it is great.”



Senior Grant Harding gets fouled by a Fort Scott player as he goes up for a basket Saturday.

Geiman, along with Grant Harding, Dalton Stone, T.J. Dover, Sam Guetterman, Jake Hill and Alex Seuferling, are the seven-member senior class that have stayed together since they were freshmen. Add in juniors Dalton Ribordy, Desmond Doles and Garrett Lowry, and the Wildcats have created a strong core

that has carried them through tough situations during the season and the sub-state tournament.

“We have had a lot of time together,” Dover said. “It is starting to click at the right time. We have such a great bond and we are like a bunch of brothers. We are playing good basketball at the right time and it is a lot of fun.

“It feels great to do something that Louisburg hasn’t done in a long time. It is really rewarding to see the four long years that we have put in come to fruition and hopefully the best is still yet to come.”

Coming off a win against Paola two days earlier in the first round of the tournament, where the Wildcats beat their rivals for the first time since 2012, Louisburg carried that momentum over into Saturday against Fort Scott where it ended a sub-state championship drought.

The Wildcats (10-12) did it thanks to a strong performance after halftime. Louisburg took a 27-23 lead into the locker room and wanted to bring Fort Scott out of its zone defense.



Louisburg senior Dalton Stone pulls up for a 3-pointer against Fort Scott on Saturday.

Louisburg was able to do that and move the ball around to get several easy baskets that led to a 19-6 run in the third quarter, that included a 3-pointer from Guetterman at the buzzer to put Louisburg up 18 points going into the fourth.

“We had another great game plan,” Harding said. “We knew they

were going to go zone on us most of the night and we executed great at the beginning and we were able to put together a decent lead at half. We knew if they were going to stay in that zone, that we were just going to hang back and we found the gaps and kept scoring on them.”

The Wildcats secured that double digit lead throughout the fourth quarter as they waited for the final buzzer to sound to begin celebrating.

“It is just unreal right now,” Guetterman said. “This was definitely one of our team goals at the beginning of the year was to win substate. This year with all the seniors we have and the underclassmen with experience, we knew that we could do it and it is a great feeling to finally pull it off.

“We played so well as a team in this tournament and it is awesome to be a part of. We have put in a lot of hard work and dedication over these last four years. Coach Nelson coaching us through these four years has been great as well.”



Jayce Geiman pumps his fists following the final buzzer in the Wildcats' substate championship victory over Fort Scott.

Louisburg took the lead from the opening tip and never relinquished it. The game was tied at 12-all at the end of the first quarter, but the Wildcats used an 8-2 run in the second quarter to expand its lead to eight before Fort Scott hit a shot just past half-court at the buzzer.

Harding and Geiman led Louisburg in scoring with 15 points each, while Geiman knocked down three 3-pointers and Harding pulled down a team-high nine rebounds. Dover finished with 13 points, while Ribordy had eight points and eight rebounds.

Stone added seven points, including a 3-pointer during the team's run in the second quarter, and Guetterman scored six in the win.

“It feels really good and these boys really earned it,” Nelson said. “They busted their butts. They have dealt with tongue-lashings and other things from me, but they also had this end result in their minds. I am really happy for them.”



T.J. Dover wins the opening tip.



Jayce Geiman moves the ball around on offense.



The Louisburg student section gets into the game



Jake Hill splits the Fort Scott defense



Senior Sam Guetterman pulls up for a 3-pointer at the end of the third quarter.



Dalton Ribordy muscles his way up for two points



Louisburg coach Jason Nelson instructs his team during a timeout.



Desmond Doles (left) cheers from the bench



T.J. Dover (44) and Sam Guetterman go out to receive the substate championship trophy.



The Wildcats will now prepare for their first state tournament game in more than decade as they earned the No. 6 seed and will face No. 3 Bishop Miege (19-3) at 8:15 p.m., on Wednesday at the Tony’s Pizza Events Center (formally the Bicentennial Center).

Miege is currently the No. 1 ranked team in Class 4A-Division I and has been all season, but the Wildcats are going to make sure they enjoy this win and think about – but what else – the banner.

“We have looked at the banner all year and 2005 was the last time we have won this,” Harding said. “So it will be good to see 2017 up there for everyone to see for a long time to come.

It is an honor to be going to state and we are just going to enjoy every moment of it.”

LOU	**12**	**15**	**19**	**18 – 64**
FS	**12**	**11**	**6**	**23 – 52**

LOUISBURG (10-12): Grant Harding 15, Jayce Geiman 15, T.J. Dover 13, Dalton Ribordy 8, Dalton Stone 7, Sam Guetterman 6. Totals: 22-34 16-28 64. 3-point field goals: 5, (Geiman 3, Guetterman, Stone)



Wildcats win substate title, state bracket released



The Louisburg boys basketball team posed with their substate championship trophy following Saturday's 64-52 win over Fort Scott.

The Louisburg High School boys basketball team captured the substate tournament title Saturday when the Wildcats defeated Fort Scott 64-52.

The Wildcats (10-12) advanced to the state tournament for the first time since 2005 thanks to a big third quarter in which the Wildcats outscored Fort Scott 19-6.

Louisburg had three players score in double figures as seniors Grant Harding and Jayce Geiman each finished with 15 points, while T.J. Dover finished with 13.

The Class 4A state bracket was released this morning and the Wildcats earned the No. 6 seed and will play No. 3 Bishop Miege (19-3) at 8:15 p.m. on Wednesday.

Look for a full story on Saturday's substate title game in the near future.

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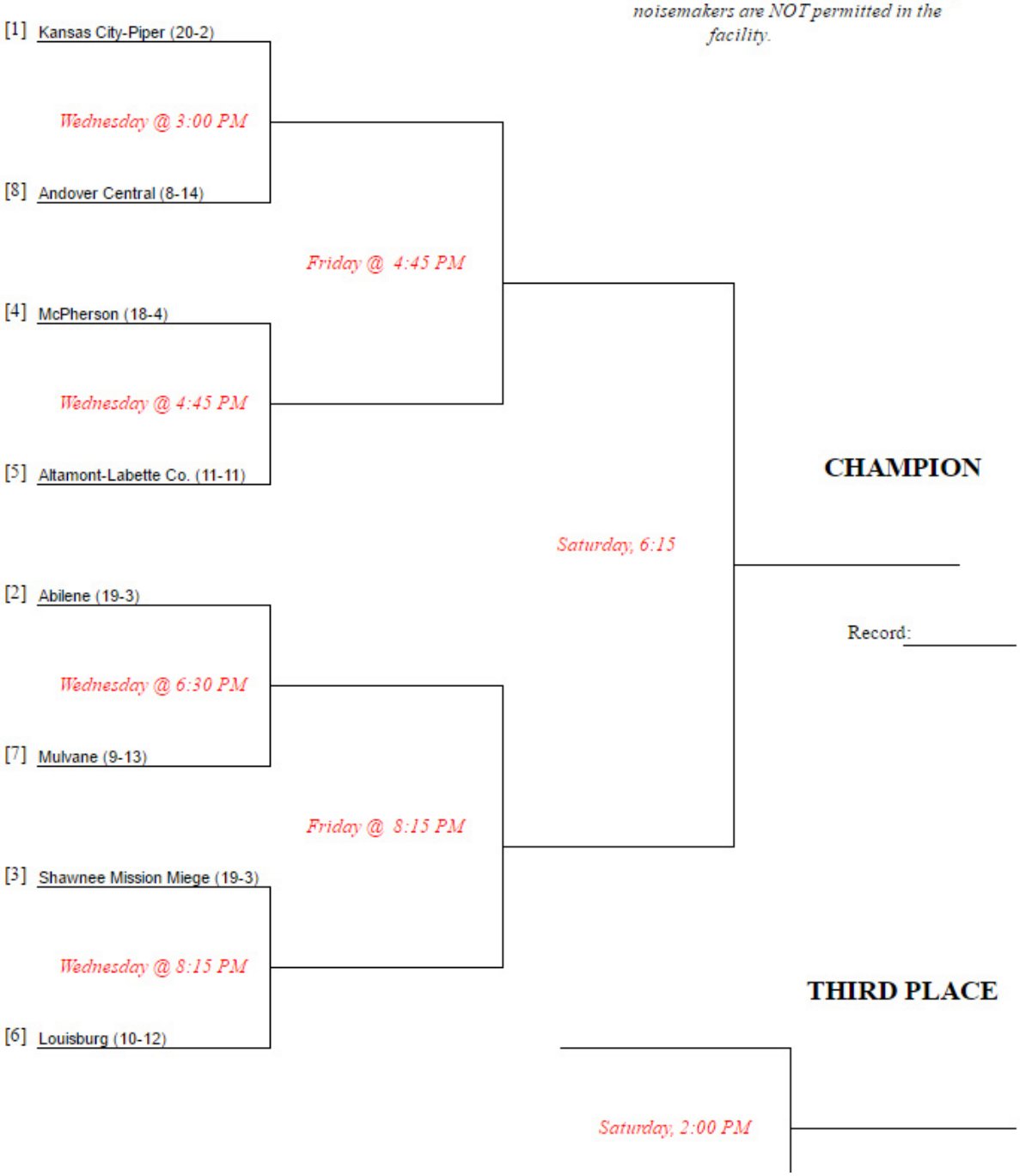
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Louisburg knocks off Paola to play for substate title



Louisburg's Jayce Geiman (3) was all smiles, as was teammate Dalton Ribordy, following Thursday's 54-44 win over Paola in the Class 4A substate semifinals at Spring Hill High School.

SPRING HILL – Louisburg exorcised a lot of demons Thursday – and it only took about six minutes.

For the first time since 2012, the Wildcats defeated Paola and picked a good time to do it. Louisburg ended the Panthers' season with a 54-44 win in semifinals of the Class 4A substate tournament at Spring Hill High School and ended a 12-game losing streak to the Panthers that dated back five years.

More importantly, the Wildcats (9-12) now find themselves one win away from a berth in the state tournament. Thursday's win gave Louisburg its first substate tournament win since 2013 and are in the substate championship game for the first time since 2010.

The Wildcats went on a 14-1 run in the final 6 minutes and 30 seconds to pull past Paola and continue their quest at a spot in the state tournament.

"It feels great," Louisburg senior Grant Harding said. "It has been a while since Louisburg has beaten Paola in general. I

know my freshman year we lost to Paola in this exact place in substate so it feels good to win this one. It has been a long time since we have been in the subsate championship game, so this definitely feels good."

Louisburg came close in its first two meetings with Paola this season.

On both occasions, the Wildcats would have a lead late, only to see the Panthers rally for a win – including one that spoiled Louisburg's senior night a week ago.

The Wildcats put together that big finish when they needed it most.



Louisburg senior Grant Harding drives to the basket for two points Thursday against Paola.

Paola's Noah Bell hit a 3-pointer with just under seven

minutes left in the contest to put Paola up five points and momentum switched to the Panthers. About 15 seconds later, it all changed as Louisburg senior Sam Guetterman countered with a 3-pointer of his own to begin the run.

“Sam’s three was huge,” Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. “It got everyone going and everyone loosened up and played like the senior team that we know they can.

“We blocked out better. Defensively we were pretty locked in. It was just us being us. There was no overthinking. It was just taking advantage of the opportunities that we had.”

Junior Dalton Ribordy muscled his way up through the Paola defense for two points 30 seconds later to tie the game, then senior T.J. Dover scored back-to-back baskets to put the Wildcats up three.

After a pair of Harding free throws that put Louisburg up five, it was the Wildcat defense that took over. Harding drew a charge near the basket on the next possession and also blocked a pair of Paola shots.

The Wildcats limited the Panthers’ second chance opportunities and they were able to pull away after baskets from Guetterman and Harding that put Louisburg up nine with under two minutes left.

“Everyone’s confidence level went up during that stretch,” Guetterman said. “Everyone wanted this game really bad. I think we all came together as a team and we knew we needed to make a run here. We moved the ball, people were cutting at the right time and we all just played well in those last few minutes.”



Louisburg senior T.J. Dover shoots over Paola's Tanner Moala in the Wildcats' 54-44 win.

Louisburg kept the game close despite dealing with foul trouble most of the way. Ribordy and Dover, the team's starting forwards, were saddled with two fouls in the first quarter and required the Wildcat bench to step it up with key minutes from Jake Hill, Dalton Stone and Desmond Doles.

Harding also moved inside from the perimeter, grabbed key rebounds and blocked a shot in the fourth quarter.

"We were in serious foul trouble most of the night," Nelson said. "If we were in zone, they would exploit their size and when we were in man we would foul. But everyone stepped up and helped out. Desmond gave us great minutes in the post and when we moved Grant down low and he did fantastic. His charge was huge for us as well. Everyone did a good job picking each other up."

Harding finished the game with a double-double as he was one of four Wildcats to score in double figures. He led the Wildcats with 14 points, 14 rebounds and had two blocked shots.

Guetterman finished with 11 points, with seven of those coming in the fourth quarter. Ribordy and Dover each scored 10, while Ribordy added six rebounds.

Louisburg now has a day to prepare for its substate championship opponent – Fort Scott. The No. 4 seed Tigers (6-15) upset No. 1 Spring Hill, 56-52, and Louisburg will face off with the Tigers at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday in Spring Hill.

“Fort Scott is going to be ready to go,” Nelson said. “They are well coached and they are scrappy. They put good pressure on defense from what we saw earlier. We are going to have play as well as we did in that third and fourth quarter because Fort Scott is going to be hungry.

“Our guys are ready to put in the work today. If we let them, they would probably have a sleepover and watch film all night long. They will be ready to play.”



Louisburg coach Jason Nelson gets hug from Dalton Ribordy after Louisburg's win over Paola. It was the Wildcats' first win over Paola since 2012.

The players are also excited to try and end another Louisburg drought. The Wildcats haven't advanced to the state tournament since 2005.

"No one is easy to beat and we have seen that all year in some

of the games we have been in," Guetterman said. "We just need to come out and play hard like we did (Thursday) and hopefully we will come out with a W."

And – hopefully for the Wildcats – another demon will be exorcised Saturday night.

LOU	**16**	**6**	**10**	**22 – 54**
PAO	**14**	**4**	**16**	**10 – 44**

LOUISBURG (9-12): Grant Harding 14, Sam Guetterman 11, T.J. Dover 10, Dalton Ribordy 10, Jayce Geiman 4, Dalton Stone 3, Jake Hill 2. Totals: 21-48 9-18 54. 3-point field goals: 3, (Guetterman, Harding, Stone)

Wildcats can't overcome Paola in rivalry battle



Louisburg senior Jayce Geiman puts up shot at home Friday during the Wildcats' game with Paola. The Wildcats fell 47-42 on Senior Night as Geiman, Grant Harding, Jake Hill, Sam Guetterman, T.J. Dover, Dalton Stone and Alex Seuferling were

all honored prior to the game.

For the second time this season, the Louisburg boys basketball team had rival Paola where it wanted – tied or with the lead in the fourth quarter.

And for the second time, the Wildcats couldn’t quite get over the hump. This time Paola handed Louisburg a 47-42 loss on Senior Night at Louisburg High School.

Along with the loss, the Wildcats and their fans also had to say goodbye to seven seniors as they played their final home contest. Grant Harding, Jayce Geiman, Dalton Stone, Sam Guetterman, T.J. Dover, Jake Hill and Alex Seuferling all had a chance to take the floor one last time.

“They are a group where I can bring my kids to practice if I need to and know they are in good hands,” Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. “They are a good group of boys. The four years they have been tasked with helping change the mentality of the program. I can get knit picky on them sometimes, and they have heard it all, but these are kids that would do anything for now or in the future.”

Down by two points, the Wildcats (8-12) had a chance to either tie or win the game with under a minute left and they called a timeout to set up a play.

Louisburg drew it up to go for the last shot but Guetterman lost the ball near the top of the key as the Wildcat bench thought he was fouled. Instead, it was a no call and turned into two free throws for Paola.

“That was a terrible no call on Sammy there,” Nelson said. “I thought he was fouled and it hurts because I had 100 percent certainty that either Stone, Jayce or Grant were going to

slide to the ball and hit it. We asked the kids to give everything they have on senior night and see what happens. For the most part we did that."



Louisburg senior Sam Guetterman puts up a shot in the lane Friday against Paola.

Louisburg built a 16-11 lead in the second quarter on a basket

from junior Dalton Ribordy and a 3-pointer from Harding, but Paola battled back and eventually tied it at 18-all before halftime on a Noah Bell 3-pointer.

The lead changed hands six times and there were two ties in the third quarter alone before Paola widened its lead to five late. Geiman knocked down a 3-pointer at the buzzer to cut the Paola lead to two.

Louisburg grabbed the lead in the fourth quarter on back-to-back baskets from Dover and another from Guetterman to go up 40-39. Bell hit a 3-pointer to give the Panthers the advantage again, before Dover tied it with another bucket.

Paola's Tanner Moala, who led all scorers with 14 points, put the Panthers up with under a minute left, which ended up being the game-winner.

"Defensively this was one of the better games we have played on the year with regard to pressuring the ball," Nelson said. "Even rebounding, we didn't give up much after the first quarter. Pressure was fantastic.

"Offensively, you see bits and pieces of it here and there. When we were running our half court sets and looking to attack, we didn't have many easy opportunities because they were sagging quite a bit inside. We were able to slide on the perimeter and get good looks, we just couldn't knock them down."

Harding was the lone Wildcat in double figures with 12 points, with nine of those coming in the first half. Guetterman and Dover each added eight points in the loss.

It won't be long before the Wildcats get another shot at the Panthers. Louisburg earned the No. 3 seed in the substate tournament and will face No. 2 Paola at 7:30 p.m., on Thursday at Spring Hill High School.

“We know them well obviously and I like Paola,” Nelson said. “They have good kids and we have good kids. We play hard against each other and it is always a fun game. We have been working on some stuff in practice to use in substate, so we will see what happens.”

LOU	**7**	**11**	**16**	**8 – 42**
PAO	**9**	**9**	**18**	**11 – 47**

LOUISBURG (8-12): Grant Harding 12, Sam Guetterman 8, T.J. Dover 8, Jayce Geiman 6, Dalton Ribordy 4, Dalton Stone 2, Jake Hill 2. Totals: 17 3-7 42. 3-point field goals: 5, (Geiman 2, Harding 2, Guetterman)