

Opinion: Rough patch leads to new beginning



I am just going to come right out and say it, "I'm scared."

Yeah, it is an unusual way to start out an opinion piece, but there is no two ways around it – I am petrified. But believe it or not, it is what keeps me going.

We have all had at least one point in our existence where our lives changed for better or worse. I have had more than a few of those in my life, but the latest one came on Jan. 9.

It started out like all the other Fridays over the last seven years. I reported to work, spent a few hours in the office getting ready for what was a busy weekend of prep coverage ahead. It was the first action after Christmas break and I was ready to get back into the swing of things.

That never took place.

My bosses came into my office early that afternoon to inform me I was being let go. The job of covering Louisburg athletics was no longer mine. I packed up my things, turned in my key, went home, punched the wall a couple times and cried.

I was scared.

After all the tears came the questions. How was I going to support my family? What am I going to do for a job? The list went on and on and I couldn't come up with many answers.

As it turned out, one of the worst experiences of my life turned into one of the best.

Thanks to a lot of prayers, and support from family and friends, I decided to start Louisburg Sports Zone. Yep, that's right, I went from being unemployed to starting my own business for the first time in my life.

Not exactly the best way to alleviate fears.

However, when I kicked off the site just a month later, I was overwhelmed with the amount of support from students at Louisburg High School, employees throughout the district, parents and several others who offered encouragement and supported my new venture.

I finished the last half of the winter season and all of the spring doing what I took for granted the previous seven years. I got the chance to cover Louisburg athletics again.

You know, this whole starting your own business thing might not have been a bad idea after all. I would have never had the courage to go out on my own had I not been pushed in that direction.

Fast forward to the present and I am still alive and kicking, ready to start my eighth season of roaming the Wildcat sidelines with camera in hand, waiting to tell that next story.

This fall brings a lot of story lines to the Wildcat programs. The football team is looking to improve off its 3-win season a year ago and find its way back to the playoffs with a veteran group returning.

Volleyball is primed and ready to make its fourth consecutive state tournament this year after placing in the top four in the last three years. The Lady Cats return five seniors that have a lot of state experience and that bodes well for another

trip to Salina.

The Wildcat soccer team returns an experienced group from a year ago as they try to crack the top of the Frontier League standings. The cross country team also has several returning runners who will try and qualify for the state meet.

There is a lot to be excited about when it comes to Louisburg sports, but for me personally, I am just fortunate enough to still be a part of it in a small way.

I take a lot of pride in what I do and I hope that it shows when you read stories or look at pictures on this site. I started this business knowing that I will never be rich, but it gives me an opportunity to continue to do what I love.

Thanks to all those who have supported me and for the more than 23,000 views on the site in the last six months. I have said it before, but I am extremely blessed to live in a community that supports each other through good times and bad.

Every day I am fortunate enough to be able to go to work and support my family doing what I know how to do. That is all I have ever wanted, so thank you Louisburg for allowing me to do it.

I am still scared, though.

It is that fear that drives me to do the best I can in what I do in my job and in life. I don't want what happened on that day in January to happen again and I will do everything to make sure it doesn't.

Right now I am living the good life. I have the opportunity to work for myself, support my family and do what I enjoy. I can't ask for any more.

I am living the American dream.

I just don't want to wake up.

Wildcats looking for leadership, identity



Louisburg's Sam Guetterman (right) and Alex Seuferling battle for a loose ball during a team scrimmage Thursday at Louisburg High School. The Wildcat basketball team concluded their week-long team camp Friday and will continue workouts throughout the summer.

It was never easy for Louisburg boys basketball coach Jason Nelson or his team last season.

The Wildcats had six wins a season ago and dealt with injury problems most of the way. Those injuries forced younger players to play roles on the varsity level before they were ready and it all trickled down.

However, the Wildcats hope going through those rough times will pay off in a big way for this coming year. Louisburg went to work last week and held its annual team camp at the high school as they prepare for what could be an exciting season.

Louisburg will do so with two new coaches in the fold. Kyle Conley and Jason Friesen take over as assistants in the

program and replace former coaches Kyle Wright and Brian Keegan who resigned their spots.

"Camp was fantastic," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "We saw the evolution of our leaders and the beginning of our identity as a group. It further served as a great introduction for our new staff members for our group. We gain a great deal of knowledge and experience with our new assistant coaches and we couldn't be more excited."

Along with two new coaches, the Wildcats are also in the process of finding new leaders. Last season's core of Corbin Wertz, Brady Lambeth and Nathan Moore graduated and Nelson is looking to this year's junior class, along with seniors Mitchell McLellan and Alex Dunn to provide that departed leadership.



Louisburg boys basketball coach Jason Nelson looks on during the Wildcats' week-long camp Thursday at the high school.

According to Nelson, juniors Grant Harding, Sam Guetterman and T.J. Dover are among the others who are looking to lead what is still a young team. In fact, Nelson is looking to Harding to lead the team on and off the floor this season.

Harding was an honorable mention all-Frontier League player a season ago and is the team's top returning scorer. Harding averaged 11.1 points a game to go along with nine rebounds. He also averaged one block a contest.

"When Grant was a freshmen, we saw the potential in him," Nelson said. "When he was a sophomore, we slowly integrated him into our plans so as to allow for a slow, steady evolution. As a junior, he's ready to both lead by example and word."

The Wildcats are putting in a lot of work in the offseason. Along with their team camp, they have workouts twice a week, weights twice a week and participate in a summer league at Rockhurst University to compete against several Kansas City area high school teams.

Nelson has already seen a growth from his team in summer league action, with a lot of it coming from his junior group.

"The junior class will most definitely reap the benefits of the experience they gained last year," Nelson said. "The Frontier League is not conducive to a 'trial by fire' mentality, but all of our injuries from last year forced our hand. While it was wrought with difficulties, our then sophomores did a fantastic job overall and have the knowledge to step up without suffering from learning on the go."

Wildcats honored at

postseason banquet



Louisburg seniors (from left) Nathan Moore, Corbin Wertz and Brady Lambeth were honored, along with the rest of their teammates, during the Wildcats' postseason basketball banquet Thursday at Louisburg High School.

It wasn't an easy time for the Louisburg boys basketball team this season, but that didn't mean the Wildcats didn't have their successes and good memories.

Those were all shared Thursday during the team's annual postseason banquet at Louisburg High School. Louisburg finished with a 6-15 record on the season, but head coach Jason Nelson knew his team was better than its overall mark.

"I think there was probably six games or so this year where we were leading in the fourth quarter and we ended up losing," Nelson said. "Whether it was injuries or whatever, we just couldn't win those games. As the year went on, we kept getting better and we won a couple of those games late in the year."

Nelson pointed to the fact that his team had to play with a lot of youth on his side as the varsity roster featured up to seven sophomores and only three seniors. Corbin Wertz, Brady Lambeth and Nathan Moore provided that senior leadership throughout the season, while Wertz, the team's leading scorer, was out a few weeks with an injury and others had to pick up

the slack.

However, Nelson knows his three seniors are key for his program, even though their Wildcat playing days are over.

"They displayed to this group of underclassmen what it takes to lead and the kind of character you need to have," Nelson said. "This senior group is so special to me and was one of the reasons I took the job a couple years ago. They did everything we asked of them and more. I will definitely miss them."

Two Wildcats were recognized for their postseason accolades on the all-Frontier League team

Wertz earned second team all-league honors while sophomore Grant Harding found his way on the team for the first time as he was awarded an honorable mention spot.

Wertz averaged 17.2 points a game to go along with 6.3 rebounds and four assists. Harding averaged 11.1 points a game to go along with nine rebounds. He also averaged one block.

Nelson also announced his varsity letterwinners for the season. The winners are:

Seniors: Corbin Wertz, Nathan Moore and Brady Lambeth

Juniors: Mitchell McLellan and Jacob Welsh

Sophomores: T.J. Dover, Jayce Geiman, Sam Guetterman, Korbin Hankinson, Grant Harding and Jake Hill

Wertz, Harding earn all-league honors



Louisburg senior Corbin Wertz was one of two Wildcats to be named to the all-Frontier League basketball team. Wertz earned second team honors after he averaged 17 points a game.

The talent in the Frontier League for boys basketball was at its usual high caliber this season and Louisburg found itself in the mix of it all.

Louisburg put two players from its six-win team on the squad. Senior Corbin Wertz earned second team all-league honors while sophomore Grant Harding found his way on the team for the first time as he was awarded an honorable mention spot.

"I felt our team was well represented granted the adversity we had with injury and the quality nature of our league," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "Any coach would want more representation or kids placing higher than they do, but that's the nature of the job itself."

Injury might have been the only thing that kept Wertz off the first-team in his final season as a Wildcat. He missed several games with a hamstring injury, but he had first-team type numbers for Louisburg.

Wertz averaged 17.2 points a game to go along with 6.3

rebounds and four assists a contest in a tough league schedule.

"For Corbin to receive second team, despite missing four league games to injury, is a testament to his ability and the respect he's earned among the coaches around the league," Nelson said. "He leaves behind a legacy that all younger players will benefit from, be it next year, or four years down the road."



Louisburg sophomore Grant Harding was recently selected to the all-Frontier League basketball team as an honorable mention.

With Wertz out for part of the season, it was up to several sophomores to pick up the scoring load and Harding took on the challenge. Harding nearly averaged a double-double in his first full season on the varsity level.

Harding averaged 11.1 points a game to go along with nine rebounds. He also averaged one block a contest.

"For Grant to be recognized despite being only a sophomore is a great honor for him," Nelson said. "He progressed in the

manner his staff wanted throughout the year and deserved to be recognized."

Underclassmen were littered all over the all-league team. The first team featured four underclassmen and one senior.

Eudora sophomore Mitchell Ballock headed the first team along with junior teammate Austin Downing. Paola junior Mason McDow, Ottawa sophomore Isaac McCullough and Ottawa senior Quentin Blaue rounded out the list.

Ottawa led the way with four all-league selections, while Eudora and Paola followed with three each.

2015 All-Frontier League Boys Basketball

First team

Austin Downing, Eudora, junior

Isaac McCullough, Ottawa, sophomore

Mason McDow, Paola, junior

Mitchell Ballock, Eudora, sophomore

Quentin Blaue, Ottawa, senior

Second team

Christian Gaylord, Baldwin, senior

Corbin Wertz, Louisburg, senior

Danny Hodge, Spring Hill, senior

Ivan Hughes, Spring Hill, junior

Justin Criddle, Paola, junior

Honorable mention

Alex Wilson, Paola, junior

Grant Harding, Louisburg, sophomore

Jake Matney, Ottawa, senior

Jomain Rouser, Eudora, junior

Nick Mullen, De Soto, senior

Tyler Smith, Ottawa, senior

Louisburg can't hold off Fort Scott in loss



Louisburg senior Corbin Wertz goes up for a basket Thursday during the semifinals of the Class 4A Division I substate tournament at Paola High School. The Wildcats fell 65-49 to Fort Scott.

PAOLA – For one half anyway, the Louisburg boys basketball team went toe-to-toe with No. 1 seed Fort Scott.

The second half was a different story.

Fort Scott found its stroke and used a big third quarter to eliminate Louisburg 65-49 on Thursday in the Class 4A Division I substate semifinals at Paola High School. The Wildcats ended their season with a 6-15 record.

"We played as well as we've played all year in the first half," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "We were hitting our shots, contesting theirs and limiting their second chance opportunities.

"In the second half, we weren't hitting our shots as well as we had in the first half, and they went on a little spurt where they hit three contested 3-pointers. To further complicate matters, we had a little foul trouble and consequently our rotation was a little off defensively which led to us not being as aggressive on the boards."

The two teams traded leads in the first half and Louisburg held a 20-18 advantage with under three minutes left in the second quarter. Fort Scott went on a mini 5-0 run before halftime to grab the lead back.

Louisburg senior Nathan Moore made it just a one-point halftime deficit when he hit a runner in the lane with five seconds left to give the Wildcats a little momentum.

Fort Scott didn't waste much time in the third quarter as it went on a 13-4 run to start and the Wildcats all of a sudden found themselves down double digits four minutes into the second half.

Sophomore Jayce Geiman came off the bench to hit two 3-pointers late in the third and Louisburg trailed by 12 points going into the final quarter. It was as close as the Wildcats would get.

Fort Scott defeated Paola in the championship game Saturday to

move on to the state tournament.

Senior Corbin Wertz led the Wildcats in scoring with 19 points and Moore, another senior, finished with eight. Wertz, Moore and senior Brady Lambeth all played their final game for the Wildcats.

"Corbin, Nathan and Brady exemplified this program for the two years I've been responsible for it," Nelson said. "They worked to improve, imparted their knowledge on their younger teammates and always believed in the progress of our program. They will be missed tremendously but their legacy will be seen through the progress and effort of next years and the teams that follow."

It was an up and down season for the Wildcats as they finished with six wins that could have turned into even more. However, Nelson saw a lot of progress from his team despite several obstacles put in its way.

"When the season started, if you'd have told anybody on our staff that we'd have a broken leg, broken toe and a severely pulled hamstring which led to six sophomores on our varsity roster we would have been mortified," Nelson said. "Once this happened, it turned into one of the most enjoyable experiences of my professional career. We had a young roster that grew leaps and bounds by being forced into an adverse situation and through the frustration, the yelling from the coaches, and uncertainty, each and every one of them improved dramatically."

LOUISBURG	14	8
11	16 – 49	
FORT SCOTT	15	8
22	20 – 65	

LOUISBURG (6-15): Corbin Wertz 19; Nathan Moore 8; Grant Harding 7; Jayce Geiman 6; Brady Lambeth 5; T.J. Dover 2; Sam Guetterman 2. Totals: 20 6-8 49. 3-point field goals: 3, (Geiman 2, Lambeth)

Paola spoils senior night for Louisburg



It played against the same players and the same scheme, but the Louisburg boys basketball team played like different squads in each half.

Unfortunately for the Wildcats, the first version put them in a big hole against Paola and they weren't able to recover in the second half. Louisburg outscored Paola in the final two quarters, but still fell 60-43 on Friday in Louisburg, which was also senior night.

"Paola really didn't let up or change it up in the second half, but for some reason we didn't play as well in the first half," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "The second half was just so different. Our intensity was up, our cuts were crisper and we were playing hard. The first half we didn't have that intensity, we didn't play with confidence and we ended up spotting them a lot of points and we can't do that against a team like Paola."

Before the game, Louisburg honored its three seniors: Corbin Wertz, Nathan Moore and Brady Lambeth as each played their final game on their home floor.



Louisburg senior Corbin Wertz escorts his parents Kristin and Todd Wertz onto the floor during senior night Friday.



Louisburg senior Brady Lambeth brings his parents Karen and Mark Lambeth onto the floor for senior night.



Senior Nathan Moore was honored along with his sister Natalie Moore and parents Lynne and Doug Moore on Friday during senior night activities.

Wertz provided the Wildcats a spark as he finished with a team-high 14 points, while Lambeth added eight points in the loss. Moore led the Wildcats with a team-high seven rebounds.

"We are constantly talking about building something and those three guys are our foundation," Nelson said. "Two years ago I came in as a new coach, with a new system and those guys did everything we asked of them and they didn't complain. They are the heart and soul of this team and have done a great job of leading those six sophomores that we have on the bench."

The Wildcats (6-14) had a tough time staying with Paola in the first half. Louisburg committed 13 turnovers against a Paola full-court press in the first half, which led to several transition baskets for the Panthers.

Louisburg had a tough time scoring in the second quarter as the Panthers outscored the Wildcats 19-6 and built a 20-point halftime lead. Paola ended the first half on a 9-2 run.

"The effort was there, we just couldn't execute and we didn't play well against their press," Nelson said. "In the second half though, we came out with a different mentality and cut down those 13 turnovers to just five in the second half. They were still pressuring us and they had the same players out there, we just played better. I just wish we could have started the same way."

The Wildcats got a good performance from sophomore forward T.J. Dover as he finished with 11 points to go along with five rebounds against a tall Paola front line.

It is a new season for Louisburg as it begins substate action Thursday. The Wildcats are No. 4 seed and will play No. 1 Fort Scott (14-6) at 6 p.m. on Thursday at Paola High School.

If the Wildcats advance, they will play for the championship at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday.

LOUISBURG	11	6
16	10	- 43
PAOLA	18	19
14	9	- 60

LOUISBURG (6-14): Corbin Wertz 4-7 6-8 14; T.J. Dover 5-8 1-3 11; Brady Lambeth 3-6 2-2 8; Grant Harding 2-5 0-0 5; Nathan Moore 1-5 2-4 4; Jake Hill 1-1 0-0 2. **Totals:** 16-37 11-18 43. **3-point field goals:** 1, (Harding)

Wildcats pull upset of De Soto on road



The Louisburg boys' basketball team defeated De Soto 46-41 on Tuesday in De Soto to get its second win in three games. The Louisburg girls had a little more difficult time as it fell 51-14.

DE SOTO – The fourth quarter hasn't always been so kind to the Louisburg boys' basketball team.

Before Tuesday's game with De Soto, the Wildcats have had six leads going into the fourth quarter only to come out on the losing end. Louisburg made sure that streak stopped at six.

The Wildcats came through in a big way as they knocked off De Soto on the road with a 46-41 victory despite several runs by De Soto to take the lead back in the fourth quarter. Louisburg didn't let this one get away.

"We played well, but not great," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "However, the best thing about the win is that we had the mentality necessary to win games when we're not our best. Our defensive rotations went into a few lapses, and our offensive sets were a bit stagnant at times."

"To the credit of our boys, however, we found a way to not let this one get away. They were determined not to let that happen again and I couldn't be more proud of that fact."

Louisburg (6-13) took an early 14-9 lead after the first quarter and held that lead as it had a 27-22 halftime lead. De Soto made a mini-run in the third quarter to tie the game going into the fourth quarter.

It was then the Wildcats took a small lead and were able to hold it. The Louisburg defense came through in the final minute as it held De Soto empty in its final possession with Louisburg up three points.

The victory was the second in three games for the Wildcats, and had it not been for a bad fourth quarter last week against Spring Hill, it could have been three in a row. Looking at that, Louisburg seems to be trending upward at the right time of the season with the substate tournament a week away.

"Our boys work as hard as any I've been around," Nelson said. "Be it finishing moves, defense, shooting, offense, or the like, our boys put in the work through high energy and intense practices and I like we're beginning to reap the benefits of this, especially with the six sophomores that suit up on varsity. We've tasked these young men with a great deal of pressure, especially given that they're in 10th grade and they're starting to figure out how to play."

Louisburg senior point guard Corbin Wertz made his return to the Wildcat lineup and made an immediate impact. Wertz had a double-double as he led the team with 15 points and 12 rebounds in the victory.

Another senior, Nathan Moore, also had a strong game as he finished in double figures with 14 points, while sophomore Grant Harding added six rebounds.

Wertz, Moore and teammate Brady Lambeth will play their final

home contest tonight when they Wildcats host rival Paola on senior night. Senior night ceremonies will be held in-between the varsity girls and boys game.

Tipoff for the boys game is set for approximately 7:30 p.m. Nelson hopes it is a memorable night for his three seniors.

"More than anything, I want our seniors to experience success (tonight)," Nelson said. "They truly deserve it and have worked hard towards it. Paola is a fantastic team with a great coach that we may face in substate, so we'll definitely be looking to assert ourselves and let them know that we're a capable and competent group of young men. "

LOUISBURG	14	13
7	12 – 46	
DE SOTO	9	13
12	7 – 41	

LOUISBURG (6-13): Corbin Wertz 4-9 6-9 15; Nathan Moore 5-8 3-4 14; T.J. Dover 3-7 0-0 6; Grant Harding 2-7 0-1 4; Brady Lambeth 2-3 0-0 4; Jacob Welsh 1-1 0-0 2; Sam Guetterman 0-0 1-2 1. **Totals:** 17-36 10-16 46. **3-point field goals:** 2, (Moore, Wertz)

LADY CATS STRUGGLE ON ROAD

DE SOTO – The Louisburg girls basketball team wanted to quickly forget Tuesday's game with De Soto before it even finished.

The Lady Cats struggled offensively as they scored on seven

points in each half and fell 51-14 as they enter their final regular season game tonight against Paola. De Soto jumped out to an 11-5 lead in the first quarter and jumped out to a 22-7 halftime lead.

De Soto put the game away in the third quarter as it outscored Louisburg 23-5 in the frame to seal the win.

Senior Kirstin Lowry led the Lady Cats (10-9) in scoring with six points, while Madisen Simpson and Paige Buffington each had three points.

Lowry, along with fellow seniors Natalie Moore and Kallie O'Keefe, will play their final home game tonight against Paola for senior night. Tipoff for tonight's game is set for approximately 6 p.m.

LOUISBURG	5	2
5	2 - 14	
DE SOTO	11	11
23	6 - 51	

LOUISBURG (10-9): Kirstin Lowry 6, Madisen Simpson 3; Paige Buffington 3; Kallie O'Keefe 2. **Totals:** 3 5-8 14. **3-point field goals:** 1, (Buffington)

Rough fourth quarter haunts Cats



Brady Lambeth goes up for a shot earlier this season. Lambeth and the Wildcats fell to Spring Hill 57-47 on Friday in Spring Hill after the Broncos outscored Louisburg 21-10 in the fourth quarter.

SPRING HILL – It was right there for the taking, but the Louisburg boys basketball team lost a hold of what could have been its second straight win.

A bad fourth quarter haunted the Wildcats on Friday as they fell to Spring Hill 57-47 in Spring Hill. Louisburg held the lead for much of the game, but the Broncos went on a 21-10 run to end the game and halted any momentum the Wildcats had going into the final week of the season.

“For three quarters, we played pretty well,” Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. “We were assertive, got good looks, limited turnovers and controlled the glass, but we encountered a little adversity in the fourth that changed our mentality and we weren’t able to recover.

“We missed a couple bunnies, and they came down and hit two contested 3’s. We lost confidence and they gained confidence and didn’t look back. It’s part of being such a young team with leadership and experience on the bench with injuries in Corbin (Wertz) and Mitchell (McLellan), but I feel like all of our sophomores have progressed in their absence.”

One sophomore has in particular.

For the second game, Grant Harding reached the 20-point mark

as he nearly finished with a double-double. Harding scored 20 points, including three 3-pointers, and pulled down nine rebounds.

The Louisburg sophomore has been more assertive as of late, especially with Wertz, the team's leading scorer, still out with a leg injury.

"We've expected Grant to become a dominant force since we first saw him last year and we're seeing his evolution in the present," Nelson said. "He has such good court awareness and ability to reach the rim that as he gets older and more experienced, he's only going to get better."

"In addition to leading by example, he's becoming a leader on the court. He has grown in the past few weeks as we've asked him to do more on the court, both physically and verbally in Corbin's absence."

Louisburg (5-13) jumped out to a slim lead in the first quarter and took a 27-22 lead into halftime. The Wildcats held a 37-36 lead into the fourth quarter before the Broncos went on a run.

Along with Harding, senior Nathan Moore provided the team with a much-needed scoring punch as he finished with 12 points. Another sophomore, T.J. Dover, added seven points and six rebounds in the loss.

The Wildcats have a tough week to close out their regular season as they travel to De Soto tonight before returning home Friday for senior night against rival Paola. Tonight's tipoff in De Soto is set for approximately 7:30 p.m.

"One of my goals for the last two weeks of the season has been to get all our sophomores some quality minutes to see how they respond and to give them something to build towards for the summer and the future," Nelson said. "We've done that and we're seeing our guys continue to improve."

"For this last week, our goal is to get Corbin back to his pre-injury shape, and continue to see the growth of our sophomores and continued high level of play from Grant, Nathan and Brady (Lambeth). If everything falls into place, we are capable of going on a run."

LOUISBURG		10	17
10	10 – 47		
SPRING HILL		7	15
14	21 – 57		

LOUISBURG (5-13): Grant Harding 7-15 3-6 20; Nathan Moore 4-6 4-6 12; T.J. Dover 3-6 1-2 7; Jayce Geiman 1-2 0-0 3; Korbin Hankinson 1-2 0-0 3; Sam Guetterman 1-1 0-0 2. Totals: 17-36 8-17 47. 3-point field goals: 5, (Harding 3, Hankinson, Geiman)

Harding's big game lifts Wildcats



Louisburg sophomore Grant Harding goes up for two of his 23 points Tuesday against Baldwin in Louisburg. The Wildcats won 57-45.

Grant Harding walked out of the Louisburg boys locker room Tuesday and ran into Louisburg High School activities director Darin Gagnebin, who had a rolled up banner ad in his hand that Harding had broken with a blocked shot during the Wildcats' game with Baldwin.

"You owe me 5 bucks," Gagnebin joked to Harding.

Harding couldn't hold back the grin. He and the rest of the Wildcats had a lot to smile about.

The Louisburg sophomore led the way with a game-high 23 points to help the Wildcats to a 57-45 victory over Baldwin in Louisburg. The victory snapped a nine-game losing skid and is the third time the Wildcats have defeated the Bulldogs this season

"This is obviously a huge win for us," Harding said. "We really needed this as we are getting close to the end of the season. Hopefully this will give us the boost we need and we can start getting some momentum as we get closer to substate."

Harding was a big boost for Louisburg as he seemed to be all over the floor. Along with his 23 points, he finished with 11 rebounds, five assists, two steals, two blocked shots and one broken banner. He was also 11 for 11 from the free-throw line.

A lot of those assists came as Harding brought the ball up the floor. In the absence of point guard Corbin Wertz, who is still out with an injury, he played a point forward at times trying to initiate the offense.

"Grant was fantastic and we really needed him to be," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "With Corbin being out, we needed to find some offense somewhere and Grant really stepped up and took control. It was great to see, but what was even better was we were able to find 34 points from other spots on

the floor."

Senior Brady Lambeth rose to the challenge as he joined Harding in double figures with 17 points, including two 3-pointers. The Wildcats (5-12) also did a good job on the boards as senior Nathan Moore led Louisburg with 14 rebounds from the guard spot.



Wildcat senior Brady Lambeth puts up a shot over two Baldwin

defenders Tuesday in Louisburg.

"I think Brady is getting it and the game is finally slowing down for him," Nelson said. "A lot of times he is a mismatch out there on the floor, and it is all about trying to exploit those mismatches and he did a great job of that for us. He is starting to figure it out."

As good as the game ended up being for the Wildcats, it didn't start out that way. Both teams were sluggish from the floor and the game was tied at 6-all going into the second quarter.

It didn't get much better in the second as Louisburg center T.J. Dover was saddled with three fouls and the Wildcats were forced to play small. Baldwin was able to take advantage and turn that into a 23-18 halftime lead.

Baldwin built a seven-point lead early in the third quarter, but the Wildcats responded with an 18-5 run to grab a 36-30 lead. Lambeth connected on two 3-pointers in the quarter and the Wildcats also got baskets from Harding, Moore and Guetterman.

Louisburg answered with another 8-3 run to start the fourth quarter to pull away for the win.

"There have been times this year where we have lacked a killer instinct and it has hurt us, but we found it in that second half," Nelson said. "This win was huge for us."

The Wildcats will try and start a win streak Friday when they travel to Spring Hill. Tipoff is set for approximately 7:30 p.m.

LOUISBURG	6	12
18	21 – 57	
BALDWIN	6	17

LOUISBURG (5-12): Grant Harding 6-12 11-11 23; Brady Lambeth 7-14 1-1 17; Jacob Welsh 2-5 2-2 6; T.J. Dover 2-8 0-3 4; Nathan Moore 1-4 1-3 3; Sam Guetterman 1-3 0-2 2; Korbin Hankinson 1-1 0-0 2. Totals: 20-47 15-22 57. 3-point field goals: 2, (Lambeth 2)

Second half Ottawa run sinks Wildcats



Louisburg sophomore T.J. Dover goes up for two of his team-high nine points Friday against Ottawa. The Wildcats fell 64-31.

It wasn't exactly the showing the Louisburg boys basketball team wanted to put together on homecoming.

The Wildcats faced a big obstacle against Ottawa, which is ranked No. 4 in Class 4A-Division I. After a back-and-forth first half, Louisburg couldn't keep up with the Cyclones as it fell 64-31.

Louisburg took the Cyclones to overtime a month ago, but it was a little different this time around and the Wildcats'

offense went cold as they scored just 13 points in the second half.

"They hit their open shots and we didn't hit early," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "We had really good looks, but missed too many shots that we need to hit. As they gained confidence from hitting their contested shots, we got frustrated and that frustration snowballed."

Ottawa jumped out to a 9-2 lead to get started, but the Wildcats were able to cut it to one after a bucket from Corbin Wertz, along with a basket and two free throws from T.J. Dover.

The Cyclones tried to pull away again in the second quarter and built an 11-point lead halfway through the period. Again, a basket from Wertz and five straight points from Dover cut the lead to just 21-17.

Louisburg trailed 27-18 at halftime but was still in the game.

"The effort was there most of the night," Nelson said. "Our staff was a little disappointed in the fourth quarter, but for the majority of the game, our defense was solid, communication was good and rebounding was a plus."



Seniors Natalie and Nathan Moore were crowned homecoming king and queen at halftime of the boys contest Friday.

The Wildcats' offense went silent in the third quarter as it recorded just four points and Ottawa came out of the locker room on a 13-1 run. Ottawa sophomore Isaac McCullough led all scorers with 18 points.

Dover, a sophomore, provided the Wildcats with some good

scoring in the post as he finished with a team-high nine points. Another sophomore, Sam Guetterman, came off the bench and finished with five points.

Wertz, the team's leading scorer, made his first appearance in almost a month after sustaining an injury and finished with four points in limited minutes. One positive is it gives the Wildcat underclassmen an opportunity to grow at the varsity level.

"Corbin still isn't 100 percent so it will take him a while, but we feel he's moving in the right direction," Nelson said. "Injuries really have hampered us, but the benefits that all our sophomores will see from having to step up in what should be their 'learning' year will be huge moving forward. I'd think even as we progress this year that we'll see the tangible benefits of our younger guys being forced into action."

Louisburg will try to get back on the winning track tonight when it hosts Baldwin. The Wildcats have defeated the Bulldogs twice this season. Tipoff is set for approximately 7:30 p.m.

LOUISBURG	8	10
4	9 - 31	

OTTAWA	12	15
16	21 - 64	

LOUISBURG (4-12): T.J. Dover 9; Sam Guetterman 5; Brady Lambeth 4; Corbin Wertz 4; Grant Harding 4, Korbin Hankinson 3; Nathan Moore 2. 3-point field goals: 2, (Guetterman, Hankinson)