

Hinkle ready to take on role as LHS activities director



Walking into Scott Hinkle's office, it doesn't appear he started a new job two weeks ago.

The moving boxes are mostly gone. His desk is organized with everything in its place, along with a calendar crammed full of upcoming events.

Hinkle is not shy to tell people about his love for the Boston Red Sox. Sitting on one wall are two older chairs from Fenway Park, along other memorabilia.

The one thing that Hinkle hasn't caught up on is his efforts to get some purple gear. An avid Kansas Jayhawk fan, he hasn't had need to purchase any purple flair in the past. Seems like that will change shortly as he was hired as the new activities director and assistant principal at Louisburg High School earlier this summer.

"I have been a Jayhawk fan all my life," Hinkle said. "It will be a little weird to wear purple that is for sure, but I am sure I will get used to it. Before I left my old job, people found out where I was going so they started giving me little gifts with purple on it, like markers and stuff like that. They definitely got a kick out of that."

Hinkle takes over for Jeremy Holloway, who was promoted to principal at LHS and becomes the third activities director in as many years to take over that spot.

"My wife has family in Kansas City and I have family in Wichita and so we were looking to come this way," Hinkle said. "I had a couple friends that told me that the Louisburg position had opened up. I had heard of Louisburg a long time ago. I actually coached at Ottawa University in the early 90s and was familiar with the area. I came up, interviewed and here I am. It has obviously worked out well.

"Everyone has been so helpful and friendly and it is a good time to be coming to Louisburg. I am excited to be here."

Before taking the job in Louisburg, Hinkle had spent the last 22 years in the Liberal school district in a variety of roles. He served as the boys high school basketball coach, along with nine years as an activities director, a year as the head girls basketball coach at the local community college and last year he served as assistant principal at the high school.

Hinkle graduated from Valley Center High School, and went on from there to earn his bachelor's degree from Friends University, where he played basketball, and his master's from the University of Kansas.

Basketball has always been a passion for Hinkle, but during his time as activities director at Liberal, he had a chance to learn the life of other sports as well.

"Liberal changed a lot from when I first got there in the mid 90s when they were a football and track powerhouse," Hinkle said. "There were just athletes galore, but the culture kind of changed. We were really good in soccer and decent in track and volleyball. We still had good kids and good athletes, but it was a big transition as far as sports go when I first got there. My kids grew up there and being involved and being able to watch their events was something that has always appealed to me.

"Basketball has always been in my blood. Other than my nine years as athletic director, I have coached in some capacity

and I am a big basketball fan. Obviously, being an athletic director I am just a big sports fan in general.”

Still new in town, Hinkle is still trying to get to know his coaching staff, but he is excited about the situation he is walking into with the Wildcats finishing as state runner-ups in volleyball and girls soccer last season. Several cross country, golf, wrestling and track athletes also earned state medals.

However, if there is one thing he wanted to relay to everyone is that he wants to give his coaches the freedom to run their programs.

“I want to let the coaches, coach,” he said. “I am not going to be the guy that says this is how we did things in Liberal and I am not that type of leader. If it comes to the point where they need some advice, I want to be a resource for them. I don’t want to be someone that is looking for something.

“I have met a few of the coaches. I have let them know that I am here if they need anything. I have stopped by the weight room to speak to a few coaches and some have stopped by to introduce themselves. I am still learning names and faces. We have a coaches meeting on the 10th and I will see and learn a lot more about them then.”

With all the success the Wildcats had last season in the sports arena, Hinkle is happy to be a part of the LHS family and is learning new things about the town every day.

“I have heard all types of things,” he said. “I have heard they take football pretty seriously here. I know they were state runner-up in volleyball and girls soccer last year and that is an exciting thing to walk into. I think expectations are obviously high in those sports, but I think everyone always has high expectations. I am not going to do anything different than normal and I am just going to sit back and

observe for a while and take it all in.”

Hinkle will experience some different things along with his new position. This season, the Frontier League will welcome three new teams – Bonner Springs, Piper and Tonganoxie – and will say goodbye to De Soto.

Another big change will be the postseason formats with several sports as the Kansas State High School Activities Association reshuffled their classification system, eliminating Class 4A-Division II.

“With the changes in the league, the classification system and being a new AD, it is probably a good time to be coming on,” Hinkle said. “The learning curve is going to be the same for all of us.

“I walked into a good situation for scheduling because (Holloway) already had everything all taken care of,” he said. “I think the dynamics of the league are going to change. Liberal’s former girls basketball coach is the coach at Piper and I know a little bit about them. As far as the programs and rivalries, that is something that is going to come with time.”

Even with all the changes in his life – moving, starting a new job, getting to know new faces – Hinkle is ready for what lies ahead and the staff at Louisburg has helped with that transition.

“It has been a whirlwind and it has been information overload,” he said. “It is a lot of the same things I did in Liberal as athletic director, I just haven’t done it for the last five years. Being an assistant principal at Liberal last year, I think, helped me prepare for the principal side.

“People have just gone out of their way to be helpful. From the administration to the custodial staff to the secretaries, everyone has been super helpful. When I was out around town, people have welcomed me and it has been a friendly feel

everywhere I have been.”

Holtzen accomplishes rare feat earning 12 varsity letters



Isabelle Holtzen became the first female athlete in Louisburg High School history to earn 12 varsity athletic letters after finishing out her senior season. Holtzen earned letters in cross country, basketball and track and field in each of her four years of high school.

Once Isabelle Holtzen received her diploma and walked out of Louisburg High School for the last time as a student, she officially became one of the most decorated female athletes in school history.

No, she doesn't have any individual state championships, or even one as part of a team. Holtzen's decorations aren't ones in the form of trophies or all-state honors, but instead, they can be found on the front of her letter jacket.

Holtzen became the first female athlete in at least 20 years to earn 12 varsity letters, which means she lettered on the

varsity level in three sports in each of her four years of high school.

In research done by Louisburg Sports Zone, it was unable to find the last athlete to accomplish the feat, which could mean Holtzen could be the first Lady Cat to do so.

The last athlete to come close was in 2001 when Krystal Bowes earned 10 varsity letters before moving on to a collegiate track career at Wichita State.

"The biggest thing that it means to me is to just have an opportunity to participate in three sports at a school like Louisburg," Holtzen said. "The bigger the school that you go to, the harder it is to play multiple sports at the varsity level and I think Louisburg is unique in that fact. The best part of this whole journey was I think my freshman year because there was no pressure and no one was expecting anything from me. It was surprising and exciting to be able to letter in all three sports."

Thoughts of finding her way onto the varsity team her freshman year was one she couldn't even fathom four years ago. She wasn't experienced in cross country. She enjoyed basketball, but didn't even dream of playing with the school's best.

In track, Holtzen would qualify for state in the pole vault for all four years of high school and earned two state medals. It was that sport where she almost didn't get a letter her freshman year.

It is the same sport where she earned a Division I scholarship offer to pole vault at Northern Iowa University next season.

"I was not very good my freshman year," Holtzen said. "I wasn't that great in pole vault and I remember throughout the season that I would add up all my points to see if I was going to have to have enough to letter. I actually barely lettered my freshman year. I think you had to get 20 points and I ended

up getting 20.5 or something like that.

“In basketball, I was not expecting to letter at all and it didn’t even cross my mind that it would. We had some really good seniors that year in Natalie Moore, Kirstin Lowry and Kallie O’Keefe and they were all playing at a high level. I just remember standing next to them and I was about 4-5 inches shorter than they were and I felt like a little freshman. I wasn’t expecting to play any varsity at all. I thought freshman and maybe a little JV, so it was surprising when I got a few minutes on the varsity level.”

However, it was in cross country where she first realized that she had more to give and it was thanks in part to a special conversation from a senior.

Holtzen found herself holding back in practice and not wanting to pass the team’s upperclassmen. She was told that things needed to change.



"My freshman year I had some of the best seniors that I have ever gone through here," Holtzen said. "Mary Kate Roy always pushed me in cross country. One time at practice she pulled me aside and told me that if I want to be faster that you are going to have push yourself and don't be afraid to go ahead of us."

"Her saying that really impacted me because I was all about running with my friends, but I realized that I needed to push myself for my teammates and have a chance to get team medals and individually get better too. As a scared little freshman, what she said really meant a lot."

Very quickly, Holtzen found her way to the varsity level in cross country and stayed there through her four years. This past season, Holtzen was on the Lady Cat squad that became the first team in school history to qualify for the Class 4A state meet.

"It is a big accomplishment to earn a varsity letter in any sport, but to do that all four years in three sports is amazing," Louisburg cross country coach John Reece said. "Most freshmen find themselves waiting their turn to see varsity time and understand their role. Isabelle was looked to by her coaches to step up and fill voids at the varsity level as a freshman and even be a top performer for the team in some cases.

"She was prepared in her athletic skills to do so and also went through the growing pains of mentally developing at the next level of competition. Because of her never quit attitude, she took coaching criticism, both positive and negative, and used it to get better. In cross country, she ran her way into the top seven and never looked back. She was always a top five runner for the team and was that kid that would run their guts out to support her teammates in front of her."

After seeing a little varsity time her freshman year in basketball, Holtzen eventually worked her way up the ranks to where she found herself as a starting guard and team captain her senior year.

"To accomplish something like this requires such significant commitment and determination," girls basketball coach Shawn Lowry said. "She's such an impressive student-athlete because of the leader she was for multiple teams at Louisburg High, her high level of success in the different programs and her outstanding academic performance."



Earning 12 varsity letters might be impressive enough to some, but it certainly wasn't enough for Holtzen as she also had a lot of success in the classroom.

Holtzen was No. 1 in her class with a 4.0 GPA and was a fixture on the Wildcat debate team. She went on to finish third in the state in the 2-speaker competition for two years and was also a member of the 4-speaker team to take third at state last season.

To find time to participate in three sports, debate and find a way to get her school work done, Holtzen had to become a master planner.

"The biggest you thing you have to do, no matter what activity you are doing, is you have to prioritize your time," she said. "You have to choose what is the most important to you and what is going to help you most on the long run."

“For me, it was having good grades. Learning in school is going to transfer in my job later in life and the odds of me actually pole vaulting professionally are really, really slim, so you have to prioritize getting your homework done and staying on task in class. A lot of what I tried to do was to get as much stuff as I could in class and then after school I could just go to my sport and finish up the homework later.”

In a time where specialization in sports has become the norm, the multi-sport athletes are becoming harder and harder to come by.

At a smaller school like Louisburg, many believe it is important to have athletes out for multiple sports if it wants to compete at a high level and Holtzen enjoyed her time with the different activities. In fact, she believes it helped her in her sport of choice – track.

“On the athletic side, playing multiple sports keeps you from getting injured because you are working different muscles constantly and not overworking the same ones,” she said. “Outside of that, I like doing different activities because it is fun and I get bored when I have to do the same thing over and over again. Being active helps keep it more fun and exciting. Each sport taught me something different.

“Cross country teaches you to push through how hard it is because it is a big mental game and the most successful runners may not be the fastest, but they are most mentally strong. In basketball, I think it teaches you a lot of hard work and commitment and you have to work with other people and not just yourself. With doing pole vault, it is just fun for me because you have to learn a lot of different things and it teaches you patience.”



However, the drawback of being involved in so many things is that sometimes they will overlap, which has happened the last few winters with basketball and debate. Holtzen has had to miss games to attend state debate competitions.

"Basketball season is when it got the hardest for me because it was the same time as debate," Holtzen said. "Both of those are team activities and I don't get to set my own schedule. It was hard for me to balance the two and I definitely thought about quitting one or the other a few times, but I didn't because I enjoy them way too much.

"It is really hard when I have to tell my coach I am not going to be able to be at the game, because it is going to be hard for the team. Everyone on the team has a role, and whenever I am not there to fill my role, it is hard for them and hard for me. I don't want to miss any games because it is so much fun and you make memories from those."

Despite all the hustle and bustle of being a 3-sport athlete and achieving academic success, Holtzen would do it all over again if she could.

“It will mean more to me later,” she said of the 12 letters. “My parents have always told me to do three sports and to be involved in as many things as you can. For me, I was going to do it no matter what. I know not everyone thinks that way or has the opportunity. When I look back at high school knowing that I got everything out of it that I could by being involved in three sports and other activities, I will definitely appreciate it more later on.

“It is awesome to see other people doing multiple sports because it is extremely fun and you get to meet and be involved with different people. You get to have a lot of memories with these girls and I think that is one of the best parts of high school.”

Lady Cats ready to put in work during summer workouts



Louisburg sophomore Madilyn Melton works on her dribbling during a drill, while being guarded by junior teammate by Erin Lemke, during the team's camp earlier this month.

In what was a transition year that saw the inclusion of several young underclassmen to its lineup throughout the season, the Louisburg High School girls basketball team is still a little young and inexperienced.

After an 8-13 record a year ago, the Lady Cats had just two seniors – Carson Buffington and Kennia Hankinson – at their week-long team camp that ended on June 7. Despite the small senior class, there was still plenty of leadership to go around.

It was on full display during the team camp, not just at the high school level, but the Lady Cat players also showed it during the elementary and middle school camps as well.

“We had a very good week of camps at all levels,” Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. “Our returning players did a great job of setting the tone for us with great energy, effort and leadership. I thought everyone did a good job of competing for everything and several girls have made big improvements in their development. I was impressed with the incoming freshmen group’s attitudes, athleticism and their willingness to learn and compete.”

Lowry had 28 players attend his high school session, while he had 100 total girls attend the high school, middle school and elementary school camps.

Since they last left each other in early March after a sub-state tournament loss to rival Paola, the Lady Cats came back together in hopes of, not only improving their record, but making a longer run in the postseason tournament.



Louisburg head girls coach Shawn Lowry speaks to his team with new assistant coach Leanna Willer during the Lady Cat team camp earlier this month.

To do that, the players all had to get back on the same page, which is where the team camp comes into play.

"Team camp is primarily about the start of shaping our team's identity through our work and competition during the week," Lowry said. "Throughout the week the girls learn about each other and they start to build trust in and respect for each other. It's also about establishing a mentality within this group to compete and battle for everything."

There will be enough competition to go around through the summer as the Lady Cats will compete in several summer league games and tournaments, not to mention the usual summer workouts.



Louisburg junior Sydney Keagle goes up for a basket during the Lady Cats' team camp.

"The girls have strength training and basketball open gyms three days a week," Lowry said. "The girls understand the importance of their commitment to getting stronger and improving their fundamental skills this offseason.

"We will be participating in several scrimmages with schools we don't have on our schedule along with some of our league schools. In addition, we have or will be participating in several games played at one of the Missouri universities and in a local tournament."

It is that work over the summer, along with what they learned last year, is what Lowry hopes can help his team take another step forward this coming season.

“We have several girls returning that gained some very good experience last season,” Lowry said. “As part of that experience they already know what kind of effort they have to give, what kind of teammate they have to be and they have a lot of confidence and trust in each other. We have some great upperclassmen that will provide our team with strong leadership and we really like how the girls are embracing the opportunities and challenges ahead of them.”

Holtzen earns Louisburg Sports Zone Female Athlete of the Year



Isabelle Holtzen had a senior year to remember when it came to the athletic stage at Louisburg High School.

For starters, Holtzen was a member of the first cross country team in Louisburg history to qualify for the Class 4A state meet. She was also a starting guard and team captain for the Lady Cat girls basketball team.

Holtzen topped it all off this past spring when she medaled sixth in the pole vault at Class 4A state track championships in May.

Those were just one of the many reasons why she was chosen as

the 2018 Louisburg Sports Zone Female Athlete of the Year.

The award, which is in its first year, is to recognize an outstanding Louisburg High School student athlete. Louisburg Sports Zone asked the head coaches at LHS to submit nominations and those nominations were then organized and submitted back to the coaches for a vote.

The coaches then submitted their top three choices and the number of votes were added up, which decided the winner.

Holtzen finished her high school career on a high note as she racked up 12 varsity letters during her time as a Wildcat and did all that while earning a 4.0 GPA, which was the top in her class.



Pictured (from left) is Louisburg track coach Andy Wright, cross country and track coach John Reece, Isabelle Holtzen and Lady Cat basketball coach Shawn Lowry.

“Her hard work attitude once again helped her to succeed in

all events and rewarded her with a school record in the pole vault and state medals," Louisburg cross country and track coach John Reece said. "It would be cliché to say she is a hard worker as all of her teammates are hard workers and they really compete to do their best in any sport in Louisburg, but she has been a pleasure to coach."

She made her biggest impact in track and field as she had a record-breaking year in the pole vault this past season for the Lady Cats. She broke her own school record in the event with a vault of 11 feet, 6 inches early in the year and went on to earn her second state medal at the Class 4A state track meet with a clearance of 11-0 and took sixth overall.

Holtzen was also a league and regional runner-up in the pole vault, while also running on legs of the 4×100 and 4×400-meter relay teams.

She also spent a lot of time on the Louisburg cross country and basketball teams, where she was a key part in both of their successes.

"From Isabelle's first day of basketball at LHS she had a great work ethic, competed hard every day and never gave less," Louisburg girls basketball coach Shawn Lowry said. "She embodies those things that are at the core of our program and leaves it so much better because of her involvement."

Holtzen, who graduated in May, will continue her pole vault career at the University of Northern Iowa.

2018 Female Athlete of the Year Nominees



For the past two years, Louisburg Sports Zone has given out Athlete of the Week awards during each of the three sports seasons. I do it to recognize special athletic achievements and highlight them a little bit. So this year, I wanted to take it a step further.

This year Louisburg Sports Zone will be handing out an Athlete of the Year honor to a male and female athlete at Louisburg High School. I wanted the opportunity to recognize those who exemplify what it means to be an “athlete.”

Although I am giving out the award, I wanted the process to be subjective, so I asked the head coaches at LHS to help me out. I asked each coach to send me nominations of who they thought exemplified the Athlete of the Year honor. They will then vote for their top 3 male and female and then I will tabulate the results and determine the winner. In the next couple of weeks, I will announce this year's recipient.

Below are the female nominees for this year's award in alphabetical order by last name. Congrats to all those who were nominated and best of luck!

2018 LOUISBURG SPORTS ZONE

FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR NOMINEES



Bailey Belcher, Senior, Basketball and Girls Soccer

Belcher led the Wildcat girls soccer team to a state runner-up finish this past season as she was among the leading scorers on the team with 28 goals and 14 assists, which included five hat tricks. She is a three-time all-Frontier League and all-state first teamer, and has been a team captain for the last two seasons.

She holds the Louisburg record for most goals in a season with 33 and in a career with 91. She is will continue her soccer career at Missouri Southern next season.

Belcher was also a starter on the Lady Cats' basketball team and earned honorable mention all-league honors after averaging eight points, four rebounds and two steals a game.



Carson Buffington – Junior – Volleyball, Basketball and Girls Soccer

Buffington helped the Louisburg volleyball team to a state runner-up performance in the Class 4A-Division I state tournament as the team's setter. She finished the season with more than 1,100 assists and had 30 aces. She also helped out defensively with 244 digs.

She earned second team all-Frontier League honors and was also placed on the Kansas Volleyball Association's (KVA) all-state second team. Buffington was also selected to the KVA all-state tournament team.

On the basketball court, Buffington earned second team all-Frontier League honors and led the league in rebounding for the third straight season. She averaged 11.6 rebounds a game

to go along with 9.2 points and 2.7 steals from the forward spot.

Buffington also served as the back-up goalie for the Wildcat soccer team and saw action in several varsity games.



Anna Dixon – Junior – Volleyball

Dixon played a big role in the Lady Cats' state runner-up volleyball team this past season. As an all-around player, Dixon led Louisburg with 613 kills and 61 blocks on the season. She was also third on the team with 58 aces and 329 digs.

She earned first team all-Frontier League and all-state honors. Dixon was named as the Kansas Volleyball Association's Class 4A-D1 Co-Player of the Year and was selected to the KVA

all-state tournament team.

Dixon also earned Best of Kansas Preps selection by the Topeka Capital-Journal, which is a new award this season. She has committed to Kansas State University to play volleyball in the fall of 2019.



Carlee Gassman – Sophomore – Cross Country, Basketball, Track and Field

Gassman had a record-breaking season for the Louisburg track team. She broke a 29-year old school record in the 300-meter hurdles in early April and then broke her own school record several more times this season, including at the Class 4A state meet where she ran a time of 45.68 to finish second in the state.

It was her first of two state medals on the season as she also finished fifth in the state in the long jump with a mark of just more than 17 feet. She also won a regional title in the 300-meter hurdles.

Gassman was also a consistent runner on the Wildcat cross country team that qualified for the state meet for the first time in school history. She served as the No. 2 runner for most of the season.

On the basketball court, Gassman saw a lot of varsity time for the Lady Cats as well as one of the team's point guards.



Isabelle Holtzen – Senior – Cross Country, Basketball, Track and Field

Holtzen had a record-breaking season in the pole vault this past season for the Lady Cats' track and field team. She broke her own school in the event with a vault of 11 feet, 6 inches

and went on to finish sixth at the Class 4A state track meet with a clearance of 11-0.

She was also a league and regional runner-up, while also running on legs of the 4×100 and 4×400-meter relay teams.

On the cross country team, Holtzen was a consistent runner on a varsity team that qualified for state for the first time in school history.

On the basketball court, Holtzen served as a team captain and was a full-time starter for the Lady Cats at the guard spot.

At the end of the school year, Holtzen became the first Lady Cat in several decades to earn 12 varsity athletic letters and did so while earning a 4.0 GPA, which is first in her class.



Sophie McMullen – Senior – Volleyball

McMullen was another key piece to the Lady Cats' success this past season on the volleyball court. She made the switch from setter to outside hitter and defensive player to help Louisburg to a state runner-up campaign.

She was first on the team with 114 aces to go along with 437 digs defensively. As an outside hitter, McMullen added 381 kills.

McMullen was selected to the all-Frontier League and all-state first team and was named to the Kansas Volleyball Association all-state tournament team. She was also selected to the Greater Kansas City Coaches Volleyball Association all-star team.

McMullen signed to play volleyball at Northwest Missouri State this coming fall.

Buffington, Belcher garner all-league basketball honors



Louisburg junior Carson Buffington led the Frontier League in rebounding for the third consecutive season as she averaged 11.6 rebounds to go along with 9.2 points per game. That effort earned her a second-team all-Frontier League selection.

The Frontier League has always been considered one of the tougher leagues in the state when it comes to girls basketball and this year was no exception.

The league had two teams advance to their respective state tournaments in Baldwin (4A-DII) and Paola (4A-DI), and Baldwin won a state title. It was a competitive league all season and Louisburg was a part of it.

Louisburg finished its season with an 8-13 record, but the league coaches awarded the Lady Cats with two selections on the all-league team that was released Monday.

Junior Carson Buffington and senior Bailey Belcher garnered all-league honors as both finished with strong seasons. Buffington was selected to the second team and Belcher earned a spot on the honorable mention squad.

Buffington earned her third consecutive all-league honor as she led the Frontier League in rebounding for third straight season. She averaged 11.6 rebounds a game to go along with 9.2 points and 2.7 steals a contest.

"It's hard to express just how good Carson was this year for us," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "She led the Frontier league for a third consecutive year in rebounding and finished in the top of the state rankings for all classes. What's most impressive about her rebounding this year is that she played positions away from the basket. She does all of those things I ask of players when it comes to effort, hustle, character, being unselfish and she does it all with great pride. Carson was voted team captain by her teammates and was a great leader for us."



Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher was named as an all-league honorable mention when the list was released Monday.

Belcher, who is in her first year with the program, made strides as the season went along and became one the Lady Cats' leading scorers. She ended her season with 7.8 points, 4.3 rebounds and 2.0 steals a game from the guard spot.

"With this being Bailey's first year playing basketball in high school there was a learning curve for her most of the season," Lowry said. "However, Bailey made up for that with how coachable she was, what a great teammate she was and in how determined she was to compete. She was definitely one of the girls that set the tone for us in the way she battled for everything in practices and games. She was named a team captain that she earned through her hard work, leadership and unselfishness throughout the season."

The Frontier League provided the Lady Cats with a lot of competition throughout the season, and although they would have liked to have more selections, they also realize the league is full of talent.

"I think like most coaches, I would like to have had more of our players recognized and for higher positions," Lowry said. "I thought we had some kids that deserved recognition based on the scope of their work and all the intangible things they did for our team, but I also understand that there are a lot of really good players in our league."

Baldwin, the league and state champion, led the way with four all-league selections and two on the first team, while Spring Hill finished with three overall.

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE GIRLS BASKETBALL

FIRST TEAM

Abby Ogle, Baldwin, senior

Lauren Delker, Spring Hill, junior

Kayla Kurtz, Baldwin, junior

Mackenzie Shupe, De Soto, sophomore

Skyler Williams, Paola, senior

SECOND TEAM

Kamryn Shaffer, Ottawa, senior

Meghan Goff, Spring Hill, junior

Ady Edwards, Paola, senior

Catherine Grosdidier, Eudora, senior

Carson Buffington, Louisburg, junior

HONORABLE MENTION

Hailey Lovetinsky, Spring Hill, senior

Reilly Stewart, Baldwin, senior

Bailey Belcher, Louisburg, senior

Carly Lindenmeyer, Baldwin, junior

Lady Cats' season comes to a close with loss to Paola



Louisburg freshman Madilyn Melton goes up for a basket against Paola on Thursday during the Class 4A sub-state semifinals at Paola High School. The Lady Cats fell to the Panthers, 51-35, to end their season with an 8-13 record.

PAOLA – Earlier in the season, the Louisburg girls basketball team accomplished something they hadn't done in several years when the Lady Cats swept rival Paola.

They just weren't able to make it three in a row.

With their postseason lives on the line Thursday, Louisburg traveled to Paola to face off with the Panthers in the Class 4A sub-state semifinal but came up short in a 51-35 loss, despite having a 3-point halftime lead.

The defeat ended the Lady Cats' season with an 8-13 record and with a tearful locker room, but they accomplished much more than what their record showed according to coach Shawn Lowry.

"I was really extremely proud of this group in particular just because of their growth and development over the season," Lowry said. "I wasn't sure what we were going to have coming in with young and experienced players just mixing together, but they are as tight as tight can be right now. They are as tight as any team we have had. They battle for each other, and it may not be pretty all the time, but they scrap and fight and care about each other. They care about playing hard for each other and that is why it is painful for them right now. They care about their team and their program."

Louisburg faced many different obstacles in the second half, but none bigger than foul issues, as they had four starters with four fouls in the third quarter.

Senior Isabelle Holtzen, junior Carson Buffington, sophomore Haley Cain and freshman Madilyn Melton were all saddled with foul trouble and the Lady Cats were forced to use different personnel. Their bench got even shorter when reserve guard Brooklyn Diederich had to leave with an injury in the third quarter.

Those foul problems worked into Paola's favor. The Panthers converted 25 of 34 free throws for the game, with 32 of those attempts coming in the second half as they outscored Louisburg 32-13 in the third and fourth quarters.

The Lady Cats were unable to get to the foul stripe as they

converted just 2 of 9 attempts from the free-throw line and that disparity was a big impact on the game.

“It was a factor, but this is a crazy game (basketball) where things get called,” Lowry said. “Our girls were playing hard, and they were hustling, and some of those were hustle fouls, which we will take.”

Both teams contributed to a frantic first half that consisted of 19 combined first half turnovers. Paola took an 11-9 lead after the Panthers’ Ady Edwards knocked down a 3-pointer at the buzzer.

Paola extended its lead to five to start the second quarter before the Lady Cats went on an 11-0 run to take the lead back. Melton scored six points during the run, Holtzen hit a 3-pointer and senior Bailer Belcher added a basket to give Louisburg a 20-14 lead.

Another Belcher basket made it 22-16 late in the first half before Paola’s Trinity McDow connected on another 3-pointer at the buzzer and Louisburg led by three at half.



Senior Bailey Belcher puts up a shot in the lane Thursday against Paola.

Paola turned up its defensive pressure after halftime and forced the Lady Cats into 12 second half turnovers. The Panthers also converted on 9 of 12 free throws in the third quarter as they outscored Louisburg 15-7 in the frame.

"To lose the way that we did, and to play as poorly as we did, and to go out that way was probably the hardest thing for them," Lowry said of his team. "They know didn't play their best and we put in some good work leading up to this, but it is the way it goes. It is the kind of game where it can happen like that sometimes.

"I think we just hurt ourselves and it wasn't as much as what they did to us. It was a lot of mental stuff on our part and just breakdowns."

Belcher finished the game with 10 points and seven rebounds to lead Louisburg and was the only Lady Cat to finish in double figures.



Louisburg senior Isabelle Holtzen dribbles into the lane Thursday against Paola.

Buffington was also close to another double-double with eight points and a team-high 10 rebounds and Melton also finished with eight points. Cain was second on the team with eight rebounds and freshman Alyse Moore added six of her own.

Paola advanced to the sub-state championship game where it met Spring Hill and the Panthers pulled off the upset of the No. 1 seed, 38-29, on Saturday in Paola.

PA0 11 8 15 17 –
51

LOUISBURG (8-13): Bailey Belcher 10, Carson Buffington 8, Madilyn Melton 8, Isabelle Holtzen 3, Alyse Moore 3, Haley Cain 2, Mikayla Quinn 1. Totals: 15-46 2-9 35. 3-point field goals: 3, (Buffington 2, Holtzen)

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.

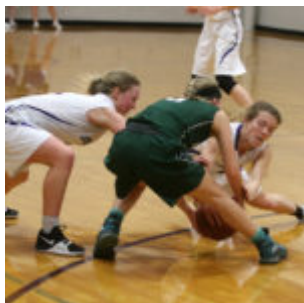
"We have talked a lot this season about having many young and inexperienced players and that we hoped we could just keep improving and learning so that we would be playing our best basketball at this point in the season," Lowry said. "All the girls have embraced the process, worked their tails off and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

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|-------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-------------|
| 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)

Belcher, Quinn, Holtzen play final home game for Lady Cats



Louisburg seniors Bailey Belcher (left) and Isabelle Holtzen get on the floor for a loose ball Wednesday against De Soto. The Lady Cats fell to De Soto on Senior Night, 55-38.

It was a scene full of mixed emotions Wednesday afternoon at Louisburg High School.

The Louisburg girls basketball team got a chance to honor its three seniors – Bailey Belcher, Isabelle Holtzen and Mikayla Quinn – during the Lady Cats' Senior Night game against De

Soto, but before that could happen, they had a game to play.

Not only did it have reschedule its game to a Wednesday afternoon due to inclement weather, but De Soto came into Louisburg with 11 wins on the season. Despite a couple different runs by the Lady Cats, Louisburg couldn't overtake the Wildcats in a 55-38 loss.

"We wanted to recognize our seniors by playing with everything we have to show our respect and appreciation for what they have given to each of us and our program," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "I thought the girls battled for each other with this in mind from start to finish. I'm very proud of the effort, toughness and unselfishness this group continues to play with.

"We talk often about not taking any of this time for granted because of how fast it goes. I'm glad we do because it reminds all of us around the program how special it is to share in this journey with these girls."

Louisburg (7-12) stayed with De Soto (12-7) for much of the first half as the Lady Cats trailed just 14-9 after the first quarter and made a run at the Wildcats. Louisburg made it a one possession game late in the second quarter, before De Soto pushed back its lead to five points at halftime.

The third quarter proved to be the biggest difference in the contest as De Soto outscored Louisburg 18-11 and held off the Lady Cats in the final period to pull away.

Belcher and junior Carson Buffington provided a bulk of the offense for the Lady Cats as they each scored in double figures.

Belcher scored a game-high 14 points and had six rebounds in her final home game, while Buffington recorded a double-double with 11 points and 13 rebounds. Sophomore Haley Cain was also active on the glass with eight rebounds.



Seniors (from left) Bailey Belcher, Mikayla Quinn and Isabelle Holtzen were honored during Senior Night following Wednesday's game.

Despite the loss, the team still took the time to honor Belcher, Quinn and Holtzen for their time they have spent with the program.

"This group of seniors has each contributed so much to our program in their own special way," Lowry said. "Bailey is one of the strongest competitors and flat out battles for everything all the time. That toughness and drive elevates the play of her teammates and you can't help but love playing with her.

"Mikayla has been a great teammate and one of the most unselfish players. She is always encouraging and motivating with her teammates and has always been ready to do whatever

she can to help her team.

“Isabelle has always embraced the process and has grown into a great leader for our team. She exemplifies so many of those things that are at the core of our program. She is also a great example for all the younger players about the level of commitment and determination that’s required to be successful.”

Louisburg has one more game before the Lady Cats head into sub-state action. The Lady Cats will travel to Paola on Friday as they try to sweep the Panthers on the season. Tipoff is set for 6 p.m.

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|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| LOU | 9 | 11 | 11 | 7 – |
| 38 | | | | |
| DES | 14 | 11 | 18 | 12 – |
| 55 | | | | |

LOUISBURG (7-12): Bailey Belcher 14, Carson Buffington 11, Haley Cain 5, Sydni Keagle 4, Alyse Moore 2, Madilyn Melton 2. Totals: 12-55 13-24 38. 3-point field goals: 1, (Buffington)

Lady Cats’ rally not enough in loss to Spring Hill



Louisburg sophomore Carlee Gassman drives to the basket on a Spring Hill defender Friday during the Lady Cats' 61-45 loss to the Broncos. The Lady Cats return to action Wednesday when they host De Soto for Senior Night.

When Spring Hill knocked down a 3-pointer at the buzzer to end the first quarter, the Broncos built a 15-point lead on the Louisburg girls basketball team and the Lady Cats could have just played it out.

In two previous matchups earlier in the year, No. 10 Spring Hill ran away from Louisburg and it looked like déjà vu all over again.

Instead, the Lady Cats weren't about to let the same thing happen. Louisburg rallied to cut the Spring Hill to five at one point in the second half, before leaving with a 61-45 loss to the Broncos on Friday at Louisburg High School.

Despite the loss, Louisburg saw progress against a Spring Hill team that has all but locked up the No. 1 seed in the upcoming sub-state tournament.

"It was obviously an improvement from the first two times we played them," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "I think it was a little sloppy for both teams, but there are things that we are getting better at and are continuing to get better at. We just have to get back in the gym for practice and continue to get better. With this group, it is about how much we can improve this week coming up as we get ready for sub-state."

Louisburg (7-11) struggled early on as the Lady Cats couldn't stop Spring Hill from the perimeter. The Broncos knocked down four 3-pointers in the first quarter, that included the buzzer-beater that gave them a 21-6 lead going into the second.

The Lady Cats picked it up offensively as they outscored Spring Hill 14-9 before halftime and trailed just 30-20. Louisburg opened the third quarter on a quick 7-2 run that cut the Bronco lead to just five points with 5 minutes left in the period, but the Broncos fought back and extended their lead to 13 going into the final frame.

"The girls just fight," Lowry said. "They are scrappy and they battle. Sometimes it is ugly, but that is what we are and what we have been. Our girls are just going to fight their tails off and just like that we were back in it. But then comes the experience part that hurts when you overcome a big deficit and you have to try and keep it going. It was tough."



Sophomore Haley Cain weaves in-between two Spring Hill defenders Friday in Louisburg.

Spring Hill kept its double-digit lead throughout the fourth quarter and were able to hold off the Lady Cats' run.

Senior Isabelle Holtzen and freshman Madilyn Melton provided the scoring punch as they each scored 11 points and had five 3-pointers between them.

Junior Carson Buffington had eight points and a team-high 13 rebounds and freshman Alyse Moore was next on the team with seven rebounds off the bench. Senior Bailey Belcher provided the Lady Cats with a spark with six rebounds and four assists to go along with two steals.

Although the Lady Cats suffered the loss, Lowry is still happy with where his team is heading.

"We still had a lot of defensive breakdowns, but I see more

positives all the time,” Lowry said. “I saw it individually and collectively. When you see that, and then you see a girl like Bailey Belcher working her tail off on defense at the end of the game. She didn’t care that the game was basically over, she was going to work when the buzzer sounded. That is the mentality that we have to play with from start to finish and I think that this group will.”

Louisburg will play its final home game at 5:30 p.m., on Wednesday against De Soto on Senior Night. The game was originally scheduled for today, but had to be postponed due to inclement weather. Senior Night ceremonies will be immediately following the girls contest as they will honor seniors Isabelle Holtzen, Bailey Belcher and Mikayla Quinn.

“We are going to play our hearts out for our seniors,” Lowry said. “Then we go to Paola for their Senior Night, so we have a nice run coming up before sub-state begins. This will be an important week for us.”

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|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| LOU | 6 | 14 | 12 | 13 – |
| 45 | | | | |
| SH | 21 | 9 | 15 | 16 |
| – 61 | | | | |

LOUISBURG (7-11): Isabelle Holtzen 11, Madilyn Melton 11, Carson Buffington 8, Haley Cain 6, Alyse Moore 3, Bailey Belcher 2, Carlee Gassman 2, Sydni Keagle. Totals: 18-48 4-10 45. 3-point field goals: 5, (Melton 3, Holtzen 2)