

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.

PAOLA 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.

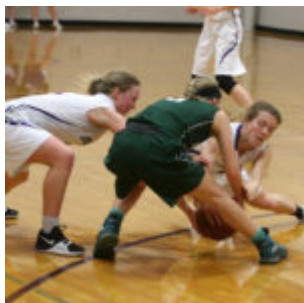
"We have talked a lot this season about having many young and inexperienced players and that we hoped we could just keep improving and learning so that we would be playing our best basketball at this point in the season," Lowry said. "All the girls have embraced the process, worked their tails off and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

LOU 47	13	8	10	16 –
PAO – 40	8	9	9	14

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.

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.”

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)

Louisburg boys, girls fall on the road to Baldwin



Louisburg junior Brayden Gage draws a foul while driving toward the basket Tuesday at Baldwin High School. Gage finished with eight points in the road loss to the Bulldogs.

BALDWIN CITY – The Louisburg boys basketball team had an opportunity to break its losing skid Tuesday when it faced off with Baldwin – a team the Wildcats had split with earlier this season.

It became evident early on that it was not going to be the Wildcats' night.

Baldwin caught fire on the offensive end as it shot 54 percent from the field in its 77-44 win over Louisburg at Baldwin High School.

"Our defense was not very good," Louisburg coach Ty Pfannenstiel said. "We pride ourselves on playing tough defense and this was our poorest effort of the season by far. With our offensive struggles this year, it has been so important for us to be good on the defensive end of the floor each night. We didn't compete as a team and that's disappointing."

Senior Ben Minster led Louisburg (2-15) in scoring with 12 points and fellow senior Justin Sievert also finished in

double figures with 10. Junior Brayden Gage added eight points in the loss, while senior Dalton Ribordy and sophomore Madden Rutherford both pulled down a team-high six rebounds.

Jayce Dighans led Baldwin in scoring with 28 points and had seven rebounds.

Louisburg returns to action tonight when it hosts Spring Hill. Tipoff is set for approximately 7:30 p.m.

Lady Cats fall to Baldwin

The Louisburg girls basketball team hit the road Tuesday for a matchup with Baldwin, the No. 1 team in Class 4A-Division II.

Baldwin showed exactly why they considered as one of the favorites to win a state title. Louisburg couldn't keep up with the hot-shooting Bulldogs in a 63-28 loss.



Freshman Madilyn Melton led the Lady Cats with 13 points in a loss to Baldwin.

Freshman Madilyn Melton and senior Bailey Belcher provided Louisburg (7-10) with a bulk of its offense. Melton was the lone Lady Cat in double figures with 13 points to go along with seven rebounds, while Belcher added eight points.

Junior Carson Buffington did the work on the glass as she led Louisburg with 15 rebounds on the night.

Lady Cats overcome slow start

to beat Ottawa



Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher goes up for a shot and gets fouled Friday during the Lady Cats' game at Ottawa High School. The Lady Cats rallied from 20 points down to beat the Cyclones, 48-44.

OTTAWA – For the first 12-plus minutes of Friday's game with Ottawa, the Louisburg girls basketball team found themselves in dire straits.

The Lady Cats had managed just two points during that stretch and were down 20 with three minutes left in the first half.

Offensively, no matter what the Lady Cats tried, nothing seemed to work.

"Based on some of the shots I saw in the first quarter, it was just us and trying to get settled down," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "Maybe we practiced really hard for those first four days that we were off, because we were all amped up for those first few shots of the first quarter."

Once the lid finally came off the basket for Louisburg, that all changed.

Louisburg put together a furious rally that eventually ended in a 48-44 victory over the Cyclones and gave the Lady Cats a big road win in the process.

"It was great, especially to do it at this point in the season

and battle back like we did on the road,” Lowry said. “Ottawa has been playing really well here the last couple weeks and we knew it would be tough coming in.

“To play as poorly as we did to start that game, and for the girls not to lose focus, was great to see. What I was most proud of is they battled together. It wasn’t one person battling by themselves, they battled together. They played for each other and that was fun to watch.”

As good as the ending was, the beginning was a tough one to watch for Louisburg as Ottawa jumped out to an 11-2 lead at the end of the first quarter. The scoring drought continued into the second quarter and the Cyclones eventually took a 22-2 advantage with under four minutes left in the first half.

Along with their offensive woes, the Lady Cats were also battling their 12 first half turnovers that turned into some easy Ottawa baskets.

Senior Isabelle Holtzen ended Ottawa’s long run with a 3-pointer with 3 minutes and 10 seconds left in the second quarter and the Lady Cats started chipping away from there.

Louisburg (7-9) eventually whittled the Ottawa lead to 24-13 at halftime as it ended the first half on an 11-2 run thanks to six straight points from junior Carson Buffington and another basket from freshman Brooklyn Diederich.

Still, the Lady Cats had a lot of work to do in the second half.



Freshman Brooklyn Diederich puts up a shot in the lane Friday against Ottawa.

"The message to the girls at halftime was the game isn't over and we have to chip away at this," Lowry said. "I told the girls that it starts with what we do defensively. We have to win the 50-50 balls and we have to win the rebounds and then the offense will come from that. It just seemed like we settled down in the second half."

Ottawa still led by 10 late in the third quarter when freshman Madilyn Melton connected on a 3-pointer and another freshman, Alyse Moore, scored near the basket to make it 34-29 going into the final eight minutes.

Buffington, who finished with a team-high 16 points and seven rebounds, hit one of her four 3-pointers to get Louisburg within one with 4:40 left, but seconds later the Lady Cats would be without their leading scorer as she fouled out of the

contest.

Several Lady Cats picked up her slack down the stretch. Holtzen hit the go-ahead jumper with 2:17 remaining, while senior Bailey Belcher connected on 3 of 4 at the free-throw line to widen Louisburg's lead to 46-43 with 1:06 left as she finished with eight points on the night.

"Bailey came through late for us there at the end," Lowry said. "In fact, she was the one who stayed late after practice (Thursday) to work on free throws and I really think it paid off."

Diederich and Melton each hit 1 of 2 free throws in the final seconds to help hold off the Cyclones and complete their furious comeback.

Melton and Diederich provided Louisburg with big minutes down the stretch as they scored nine and five points, respectively, while Moore filled in for Buffington down low late with six rebounds. Melton also tied Buffington with a team-high seven rebounds.

"I thought both Brooklyn and Alyse are both growing and maturing throughout the season and what a great time for both of them to step up and do what they did to contribute to this," Lowry said. "They are still freshmen, but getting opportunities like this is good for them, and at this point in the season they are no longer freshmen. They are basketball players."

Louisburg will try to build on its win Tuesday as it faces another difficult test when it travels to No. 1 Baldwin in its first of four final regular season games.

"As we prepare for our run, this is absolutely one we can use later on," Lowry said. "We have young and inexperienced players who got experience in a big game on the road. To come from that far behind, and not just compete, but to win, we

will definitely use and build off this.”

LOU	2	11	16	19 –
48				
OTT	11	13	10	10 –
44				

LOUISBURG (7-9): Carson Buffington 16, Madilyn Melton 9, Bailey Belcher 8, Brooklyn Diederich 5, Isabelle Holtzen 5, Haley Cain 3, Alyse Moore 2. Totals: 14-50 13-22 48. 3-point field goals: 7, (Buffington 4, Belcher, Holtzen, Melton)

Eudora uses late run to pull away from Lady Cats



Louisburg junior Carson Buffington dives for a loose ball Friday during the Lady Cats’ home game against Eudora. Buffington finished with 10 points and 16 rebounds in the Lady Cats’ 41-34 loss.

The shots weren’t falling. Turnovers were piling up, as were the foul problems.

It wasn't exactly the performance the Louisburg girls basketball team wanted to have following its big win over rival Paola earlier in the week. Then, in just a few minutes time, the Lady Cats had life again.

Louisburg rallied to tie Eudora late in the third quarter and it seemed to have all the momentum. Then in a matter of seconds – it was a gone again.

The Cardinals scored the next seven points and took that momentum into the final period for a 41-34 win over the Lady Cats in their homecoming game Friday.

"We just weren't ready to play," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "You always worry about a letdown after a good showing, then with homecoming added on to that, we just weren't checked in at all to play and that is on me."

It was a rough first half for the Lady Cats offensively. They managed just three points in the first quarter, and struggled at times in the second, but still managed to claw back to a 17-13 deficit at halftime.

Louisburg turned up its defensive pressure to start the third quarter and got back in the game. A 3-pointer from freshman Brooklyn Diederich cut it to 18-17 and a free throw from freshman Madilyn Melton tied it up with 3 minutes left in the third.

Eudora grabbed the lead right back with a basket, but another Louisburg freshman, Alyse Moore, drove to the basket and scored to knot it at 20-all.

From there, it was all Eudora.

The Cardinals forced Louisburg into eight turnovers in the third and turned several of those into transition points as they went on an 18-3 run that went into the fourth quarter and built a 15-point lead.

“Eudora just made some plays and some shots,” Lowry said. “To their credit, they worked harder than we did at getting 50-50 balls, which we take a lot of pride in and we didn’t this time. Eudora was ready to come in here and play.”



Sophomore Haley Cain dribbles around a Eudora defender Friday.

The Lady Cats (6-9) tried to get back into the game, as Moore scored three baskets in the final quarter and junior Carson Buffington hit a 3-pointer to cut the lead to six late in the game, but Louisburg couldn’t get any closer.

Eudora employed a zone defense for most of the night and the Lady Cats weren’t able to crack it as the Cardinals forced 24 turnovers.

“We weren’t very strong with the basketball,” Lowry said. “We weren’t very strong with our passes, we weren’t strong

catching the ball and if you don't do those two things first, then it doesn't matter what happens after that. That kind of fed into everything and that kind of goes into the mental side of the game.

"I was concerned about it going into the game, and as a coach, you just kind of get that feeling that maybe not everyone was ready for the game. There is a lot of stuff going on, but that is no excuse. You have to be ready to play a basketball game and we weren't."

Buffington recorded another double-double to lead the Lady Cats' offense with 10 points and team-high 16 rebounds. Moore was next on the team with nine points and Diederich added six in the loss. Melton was second on the team with eight rebounds.

Louisburg will try to bounce back Friday when it travels to Ottawa for another Frontier League matchup.

"This is one that we have to learn from," Lowry said. "We have to pick ourselves back up and individually they have some things they have to think about and make sure that they are all in and then we go from there."

LOU	3	10	10	11 –
34				
EUD	9	8	12	12
– 41				

LOUISBURG (6-9): Carson Buffington 10, Alyse Moore 9, Brooklyn Diederich 6, Bailey Belcher 2, Carlee Gassman 2, Haley Cain 2, Isabelle Holtzen 2, Madilyn Melton 1. Totals: 10-40 10-24 34. 3-point field goals: 4, (Buffington 2, Diederich 2)

Lady Cats score first win over Paola in four years



Louisburg freshman Madilyn Melton goes up for two of her team-high 21 points against Paola on Tuesday at Louisburg High School. The Lady Cats downed the Panthers, 69-57, for their first win over the Panthers since 2014.

It has been four years since the Louisburg girls basketball team has left the floor after a victory over Paola.

Since then, there has been a lot of heartbreak and disappointment.

Louisburg got a chance to change all that Tuesday when it hosted its rival and the Lady Cats were able to turn the tables on the Panthers. There was no heartbreak this time around.

Defense and free throws turned out to be the difference as the Lady Cats were able to pull out a 69-57 win over Paola – their first victory over the Panthers since 2014.

“They are excited to win a basketball game, but at the same time they are collectively starting to figure things out,” Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. “Our effort and toughness

was really good and Paola was a tough, physical team too. For us to play that way, and match that intensity and toughness, was important and we want to defend our home court with everything we have.”

It all started on the defensive end of the floor for the Lady Cats as they forced 21 Paola turnovers and recorded 15 steals on the night.

Louisburg used a half-court trapping defense that took Paola out of any kind of rhythm offensively and led to several baskets in transition.

“It started defensively for us and that just fed into everything else,” Lowry said. “As a coach, I still see those things that we have to clean up, but it was a good team effort. They were able to respond and battle through adversity when it happened.”

The Lady Cats (6-8) experienced a little adversity in the fourth quarter. Louisburg held a 17-point lead early in the final period, before junior starter Carson Buffington fouled out.

Paola went on a run and cut the lead to seven with 2 minutes and 28 seconds left in the game, but the Lady Cats were able to put the game away at the free-throw line. Louisburg converted 33 of 45 free-throw attempts for the game, including 10 straight makes to end the game by senior Isabelle Holtzen, sophomore Carlee Gassman and freshman Madilyn Melton.

“It is nice to see some of our inexperience go away at the end of the game like that,” Lowry said. “Our kids stood tall, and Isabelle provided some great senior leadership and really took control of things when we were in foul trouble. Other people stepped up and made some good plays as well.

“We work a lot on free throws to win the game and that is what it came down for us. That won us the game.”



Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher gets fouled while driving to the basket Tuesday against Paola.

Louisburg also got a big performance from Melton, who didn't play like a freshman. With the game tied at 23-all late in the first half, the Lady Cat freshman scored 11 straight point as Louisburg went on an 11-4 run and took a 34-27 lead at halftime.

For the game, Melton finished with a team-high 21 points and 11 rebounds and she converted 12 of her 16 free-throw opportunities.

"I think all the girls did really, really well," Melton said. "Playing against Paola in middle school was tough, so coming in as a freshman playing varsity, I knew it was going to be even harder. I am just so proud of the girls and I knew we could pull through."

"I just want to go out there, and even though that I am a freshman, I want to be there for my team and help them when they need me."

The Lady Cats got big performances up and down their lineup. Holtzen was second on in the team in scoring with 18 points, including 9 of 10 from the free-throw line.

Along with Melton, Buffington also finished with a double-double with 10 points and 11 rebounds to to alon with a team-high four steals. Senior Bailey Belcher also added 10 points and three steals in the win, while sophomore Haley Cain added seven rebounds.

"We were all pretty hyped up for this one, knowing we were going to play our rival," Holtzen said. "We just played hard as a team and we played together, even though we had some foul problems throughout the game. I think everyone stepped up at the right time and we were able to get a big win."

Louisburg will hope to build on this win tonight when it hosts Eudora for a homecoming matchup. The Lady Cats hope to exact some revenge after falling to the Cardinals in overtime early in the season.

"We are preparing for this run here," Lowry said. "Now we are going back through the league teams, and when it is all said and done, we are going to be in Paola for a sub-state tournament. We are going to see them again on their senior night, so I am sure it will be emotional for them and it will be a tough place to play. We will be ready though."

LOU	12	22	14	21 –
69				
PAO	9	18	6	24
– 57				

LOUISBURG (6-8): Madilyn Melton 21, Isabelle Holtzen 18, Bailey Belcher 10, Carson Buffington 10, Carlee Gassman 5, Haley Cain 5. Totals: 16-47 33-45 69. 3-point field goals: 4, (Holtzen, Melton, Belcher, Buffington)