

Spring Hill trips up Lady Cats



Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher goes up for a layup Wednesday during the Lady Cats' game at Spring Hill. Belcher scored a team-high 13 points in the 70-37 loss.

SPRING HILL – It was a game the Louisburg High School girls basketball team wanted to quickly forget.

The Lady Cats had a tough time stopping a Spring Hill team that lived in the paint as the Broncos handed Louisburg a 70-37 loss Wednesday at Spring Hill High School.

It was game that featured mistakes on both ends of the floor for Louisburg, but if there is a positive, those mistakes are all correctable.

“We had breakdowns and those are things we are going to have to get back into practice and work on,” Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. “Part of it is some inexperience, at this point though, we have to start to reduce that. We are no longer a senior, junior, a sophomore or a freshman. We are a group of basketball players and we each have individual jobs to do.

“This is a good group of kids and they are going to work their tails off. They want to do the right things and they care about each other. This bothers them and I am going to be anxious to see how they respond.”

Spring Hill jumped out to a big lead early and never let up and it led Louisburg 36-19 at halftime. After an even third quarter, the Broncos went on a 21-4 run in the fourth to seal the win.

The Broncos were able to run a lot of motion offense, which led to a lot of easy points near the basket, and Louisburg couldn't get enough stops early on in the game.

"They are a good team, but we didn't rise to the occasion of playing a good team," Lowry said. "We have some things to figure out about ourselves and each other. We play in one of the strongest tournaments in the state next week we are going to find out a lot about ourselves and how we will respond to how we played against Spring Hill."

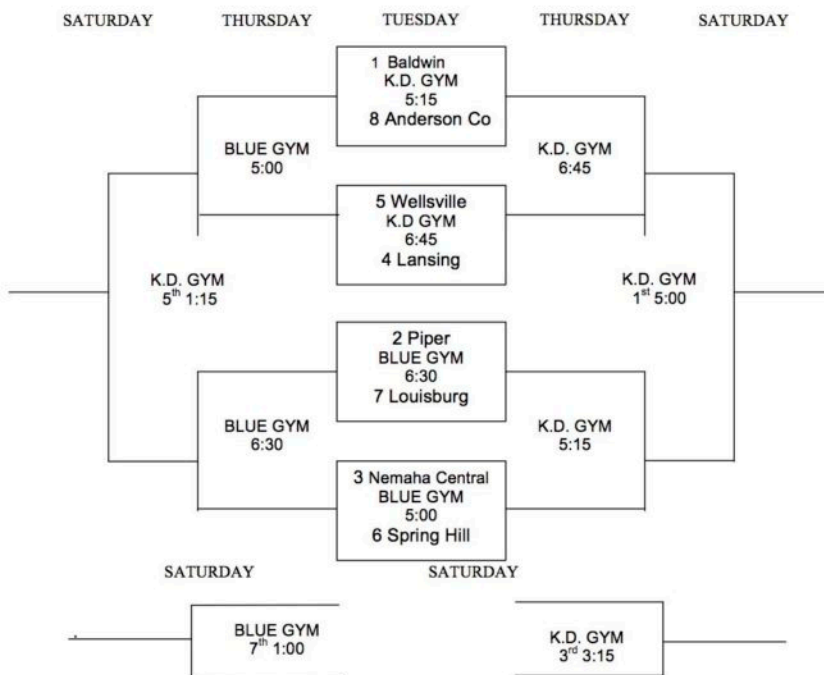
Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher led the Lady Cats in scoring with 13 points, including three 3-pointers, and also added seven rebounds.

Forward Carson Buffington was one point away from another double-double for Louisburg as he finished with nine points to go along with a team-high 10 rebounds. Sophomore Haley Cain and Madilyn Melton added five rebounds in the loss, and senior guard Isabelle Holtzen had a team-high four assists.

This week will present several challenges for the Lady Cats as they compete in the Top Gun Tournament at Wellsville High School beginning Tuesday. Louisburg is the No. 7 seed and will open with No. 2 Piper, which is currently undefeated on the season. The Lady Cats will also play on Thursday and Saturday.

TOP GUN TOURNAMENT

WELLSVILLE, KS
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The top team is considered the home team and will wear their white uniforms.

Along with Piper, which is ranked No. 3 in Class 4A-Division I, is Baldwin (No. 1 in Class 4A-DII), Lansing (No. 1 in 5A) and Nemaha Central (No. 3 in 3A).

“It is a fantastic midseason tournament just looking at the teams that will be there,” Lowry said. “There is one of the best teams in 3A there in Nemaha Central. Baldwin and Piper are undefeated in 4A, then you mix in a Lansing team that is ranked No. 1 in 5A. Wellsville and Spring Hill are really nice teams too. It is an incredible field of teams and it will be a fun one to be a part of.”

LOU	9	12	12	4 –
37				
SH	18	18	13	21
– 70				

LOUISBURG (4-6): Bailey Belcher 13, Carson Buffington 9, Carlee Gassman 5, Isabelle Holtzen 4, Haley Cain 3, Sydni Keagle 2, Madilyn Melton 1. Totals: 11-58 10-26 37. 3-point field goals: 5, (Belcher 3, Buffington 2)

Lady Cats fall short at De Soto



Louisburg sophomore Carlee Gassman drives to the basket for a layup Friday against De Soto. Louisburg came up short in a 54-40 loss at De Soto High School.

DE SOTO – Going on the road in the Frontier League is difficult enough on normal nights, but the Louisburg girls basketball team found itself down a starter for Friday's contest at De Soto.

The Lady Cats were without senior captain Isabelle Holtzen,

who was competing at the Class 4A state debate tournament, and they had to find a way to make up for her production.

De Soto proved to be too much for Louisburg on both sides of the floor as Louisburg fell, 54-40, and the Lady Cats are now 1-3 in Frontier League play and 4-5 overall.

"Our rotation was a little shorter and some girls were on the floor a little longer than maybe I want them to be," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "It is what it is and the next girl has to be ready to go and be ready to play. That is why we work as hard as we do in practice, so when we have a situation like that, they are prepared.

"We were kinda flat. We talk a lot about adversity, and the girls didn't lay down or quit and they kept battling. This is a journey that we are on and we have to have people that are stepping up at different times and doing more and learning more. This is still part of that learning process for us, even a game like this."

De Soto took control of the game early on. The two teams were tied at 5-all early, but De Soto went on a 10-4 run to end the first quarter. The Lady Cats couldn't get in a rhythm offensively in the second quarter and De Soto built a 31-16 halftime lead.



Sophomore Sydni Keagle goes up for two points on Friday in De Soto.

Louisburg couldn't trim the De Soto lead to single digits in the second half as it shot 31 percent for the game.

"We did a lot of stuff to ourselves," Lowry said. "De Soto is a good team, they were well-coached and they were physical. It wasn't anything that we weren't prepared for, but we just didn't execute as well as we should have.

"That is a mentality thing and we just have to be better. We just have to be able to finish some of those shots and watching the ball go through the basket is just about mentality."

Lady Cat junior Carson Buffington recorded a double-double to lead Louisburg with 11 points and 10 rebounds. Sophomore forward Haley Cain also scored in double figures with 10

points.

Freshman Madilyn Melton added nine points in the loss and fellow freshman Alyse Moore was second on the team with eight rebounds.

Louisburg will try and get back on the winning track Wednesday when it travels to Spring Hill for a 6 p.m. contest.

LOU	9	7	11	13
– 40				
DES	15	16	10	13 –
54				

LOUISBURG (4-5): Carson Buffington 11, Haley Cain 10, Madilyn Melton 9, Carlee Gassman 4, Brooklyn Diederich 3, Sydni Keagle 2, Bailey Belcher 1. Totals: 15-49 6-21 40. 3-point field goals: 4, (Melton 2, Buffington, Diederich)

Defense ignites Louisburg to win over Frontenac



Senior Isabelle Holtzen goes up for two of her 13 points during Tuesday's road contest at Frontenac High School. Holtzen and the Lady Cats forced 22 Frontenac turnovers en

route to a 64-56 win.

FRONTENAC – The Louisburg girls basketball team picked the right time to have its best offensive game of the season when it hit the road Tuesday in Frontenac.

As good as the Lady Cats' offense was, their defense might have been even better.

Louisburg forced 22 turnovers on its way to a 64-56 victory over Frontenac and evened their record to 4-4 on the season. The Lady Cats used a lot of those turnovers and turned them into offense as they simply outran the Raiders to a win.

"We practice that way," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "After getting back off break and just getting back into the gym all together, the girls have practiced great. I expected that effort and toughness on the road against a really good team at their place and it is never easy to play down here."

The Lady Cats employed a frantic-style defense that allowed them to trap the Frontenac guards and it ended up forcing 19 steals. Those steals became points for Louisburg on the other end as it held the lead for 29 of the game's 32 minutes.

Louisburg pushed the ball offensively for many of those 32 minutes and got easy transition baskets thanks to its frenetic pace.

"We did some different things defensively that we have been working on and that we have been putting in over break," Lowry said. "There is a lot of breakdown stuff that we have to clean up and fix, but overall I love the effort, the toughness and we have some athletic girls that can cover some ground. We have some freshmen that are still figuring some stuff out, but overall I was really happy with it.

"I thought we did a really good job of pushing the ball up the

floor and we were the aggressor on defense for the most part. When we weren't, that is when they got back in the game a little bit and we have to stay the aggressor and use our speed and athleticism to our advantage."

It was a team effort as Louisburg had four players in double figures for the first time this season.

Junior Carson Buffington had a big night as she recorded a double-double with 12 points and 12 rebounds to go along with five steals. Senior guard Bailey Belcher led the Lady Cats in scoring with 14 points and also finished with six rebounds, four assists and three steals.

Isabelle Holtzen, another senior guard, was a catalyst on the defensive end for Louisburg as she joined Buffington with a team-high five steals. She also scored 13 points and added four rebounds and four assists.



Freshman Alyse Moore goes up for a layup Tuesday against Frontenac.

Sophomore Carlee Gassman gave the Lady Cats some big minutes as well with 12 points, seven rebounds and three steals. Sophomore Haley Cain added six points in the win, while freshman Alyse Moore finished with nine rebounds.

“(Frontenac) played a lot of zone against us, so our guards had to be solid,” Lowry said. “They were all good, and we do have some that are still learning, but they are learning from some great upperclassmen.”

The game didn’t get off to the start the Lady Cats had hoped as Frontenac scored the first five points of the game to take a quick lead, but the Louisburg defense quickly changed that around.

Louisburg went on a 15-3 run in which it didn’t allow a field goal. Buffington hit two 3-pointers during the run and Melton got it started with a 3-pointer of her own. Gassman and Holtzen each added baskets to help give Louisburg a 19-13 lead going into the second quarter.

The Lady Cats built a 14-point lead midway through the second and eventually led 35-26 at halftime.

Frontenac made a mini-run to start the third quarter and trimmed the Lady Cat lead to five, but Louisburg went on a 9-2 run to end the frame and took back its 14-point advantage.

The Raiders were able to crawl back and get within four with two minutes left in the game, but the Lady Cats took advantage of their free-throw opportunities down the stretch to hold on.

“We weren’t very good that first three minutes of the third quarter, but with all that being said, they never got too low and they didn’t get too high either,” Lowry said. “They were level throughout and did the things that I was asked them to

do.”

Louisburg will try for its second straight win Friday when it travels to De Soto. Varsity is set to tipoff at approximately 6 p.m.

LOU	19	16	15	14 –
64				

FRON	13	13	10	20 – 56
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LOUISBURG (4-4): Bailey Belcher 14, Isabelle Holtzen 13, Carson Buffington 12, Carlee Gassman 12, Haley Cain 6, Alyse Moore 4, Madilyn Melton 3. Totals: 25-70 9-21 64. 3-point field goals: 5, (Buffington 2, Belcher, Gassman, Melton).

Louisburg girls fall to No. 1 team in state



Louisburg senior Bailey Belcher drives around a Baldwin player to the basket during Thursday home game against Baldwin. The Lady Cats fell to Baldwin, 72-42. Baldwin is currently ranked No. 1 in Class 4A-Division II.

In its first game back from the holiday break, Louisburg girls basketball coach Shawn Lowry figured his team would have a little rust.

It certainly didn't help that the Lady Cats had to go up against the No. 1 team in Class 4A-Division II.

Louisburg hosted Baldwin on Thursday and the Bulldogs put up a performance worthy of their ranking as they handed Louisburg 72-42 loss.

"They are obviously a very good basketball team, and well-deserving of their ranking," Lowry said of Baldwin. "At the same time, we have to do more. We can do more and we are capable of that. We talked to the girls about what a great opportunity and challenge this was going to be for us. We also talked about playing through adversity against the No. 1 team in Division II. We are on a journey, and this is part of a process, and we are going to get better from this."

The two teams were in a close game midway through the first quarter before Baldwin went on an 11-1 run to take a 25-12 lead going into the second quarter. The Bulldogs employed a full-court press against Louisburg and didn't allow the Lady Cats to get in a rhythm.

Baldwin eventually took a 49-22 lead at halftime, but Louisburg didn't back down and made a little run in the second half. The Lady Cats opened the third quarter on an 8-0 run to cut the lead down to 19, but couldn't get any closer.

"The start of the third quarter is one of the most important parts of the game," Lowry said. "I think the girls took to heart about what I said at halftime. I love seeing that from the girls, but at the same time, as the game went on we just got wore down and it is what it is."

Although the Lady Cats fell short, Lowry liked the effort he saw from his players. Senior Isabelle Holtzen and Madilyn

Melton each finished with a team-high 11 points and senior Bailey Belcher added seven points and five rebounds.

Junior forward Carson Buffington also recorded six points and a team-high seven rebounds in the loss.

“It was the first game after break, so that added a little more difficulty to it,” Lowry said. “Some of the individual effort was really good and I was extremely proud of some individuals. Collectively, though, we have to do more. I thought Isabelle, Carson, Bailey and Haley (Cain) gave every ounce they had. They never quit. Even with a minute left in the game, you saw players like Isabelle dive on the floor for loose balls and I was really glad to see that.”



Louisburg freshman Madilyn Melton battles Baldwin's Reilly Stewart for position Thursday in Louisburg.

Melton tied for a team-high 11 points.

Junior Kayla Kurtz led Baldwin in scoring with 20 points and senior Abby Ogle added 16 points in the win. Ogle also scored her 1,000th career point against Louisburg.

"She has been a really nice player since she was a freshman and it is finally nice now that she is a senior," Lowry said. "They have a lot of good upperclassmen and (Baldwin coach) Bob (Martin) and his crew and have done a really nice job and have for many years."

Louisburg will try and get back on track Tuesday when it travels to Frontenac. The Lady Cats will also hit the road later in the week when they go to De Soto on Friday.

LOU	12	10	17	3 –
42				
BAL	25	24	18	5 –
72				

LOUISBURG (3-4): Isabelle Holtzen 11, Madilyn Melton 11, Bailey Belcher 7, Carson Buffington 6, Megan Foote 4, Haley Cain 2, Alyse Moore 1. Totals: 13-43 11-17 42. 3-point field goals: 5, (Melton 2, Belcher, Buffington, Holtzen).

OPINION: 2017 was a banner

year for Louisburg



Having the opportunity to cover Louisburg High School athletics, for what has been almost 10 years now, I have seen a lot of different highs and lows.

I have been lucky enough to cover state championship teams and watched several athletes perform at the highest level. However, this last year has to be one for the record books when it comes to success at Louisburg High School.

For Wildcat athletics, 2017 was a banner year for many reasons.

Louisburg qualified for the state tournament in three different sports – volleyball, girls soccer and boys basketball – and the first two each placed in the top four.

The volleyball team was just a point away from winning the school's first state title after the Lady Cats finished second to defending state champion Rose Hill, and tied for the best finish in school history.

The Wildcat girls soccer team qualified for the state semifinals in just its second year of existence and suffered a heartbreaking 1-0 loss in the semifinals to eventually take fourth overall.

In boys basketball, the Wildcats qualified for the state tournament for the first time in 12 years despite getting knocked out in the first round by defending state champion Bishop Miege.

Most schools would love to have that success with their athletic programs, but for Louisburg, that was just the tip of the iceberg. As special as the seasons were for those three programs, the Wildcats also thrived in a few other sports.

Louisburg's cross country program, which has been around for 19 years, had the best season in its history – by far. Not only did the Wildcats have three state medalists for the first time ever, but it had a year that featured the school's first female league champion in Trinity Moore and the best league finish by a male, Wyatt Reece, who took second.

Tim Smith continued the Wildcat success as he became the school's first regional cross country champion, and Moore, Reece and Smith each went on to win a state medal. Moore and Smith also set school records for the fastest time.

The Wildcats also qualified the girls team for the first time in school history as Moore, Carlee Gassman, Reilly Alexander, Isabelle Holtzen, Kaitlyn Lewer, Payton Shaffer and Emily Williams took third at regionals and eventually 10th at state.

The Wildcat wrestling team tied a program best by qualifying eight for the state tournament and came back with a medal by Ryan Adams, who finished sixth.

Louisburg's track and field team persevered and qualified for state in 10 events and had two regional champions in Quinn Rigney and Chris Williams. Isabelle Holtzen and T.J. Dover each brought home their first state track medals.

The boys soccer team was one goal away from making its second consecutive trip to the state semifinals, but their run was halted by a loss to McPherson in state quarterfinals. Still, the Wildcats won a regional title, which was the seventh in team history.

Freshman Calvin Dillon led the Wildcat golf team this past year and recorded the program's first state medal in more than

decade as he took 10th overall.

All these things and more I described in detail when releasing my top 10 stories of the year and what a year it was.

Obviously, I haven't had a chance to look through all the results, but I can't imagine a more successful year for LHS when you are talking about athletics. There may have been years in the 70s, 80s and 90s that I don't know about, but I find it hard to imagine one that tops 2017.

Sure, the 2010-11 school year featured two state championship teams in football and boys track and field and that was a fantastic time to be Wildcat, but as far as calendar years go, 2017 was one to remember.

Even outside the sports world, Louisburg High School put together many great accomplishments as the Wildcat Marching Band was selected to participate in the Tournament of Roses Parade and put on a great show for the nation on New Year's Day.

Then in October, the FFA Food Science team of Hallie Hutsell, Faith Seuferling, Addie Katzer and Hattie Harris won a national championship, while Hutsell and Seuferling placed second and third in the nation, respectively.

I don't get a lot of opportunities to cover programs or groups outside the sports world, but these are fantastic accomplishments and deserved to be recognized.

For me, 2017 was a whirlwind. It seemed around every corner, school history was being made and there aren't many schools around the state that can boast about the successes Louisburg has experienced.

It was an honor for me to cover many of these historic runs in Wildcat history and I hope you all realize how lucky you have it. Louisburg is a school filled with great coaches who care

about the student athletes.

Believe me, I know how fortunate I am to be able to be a part of something special and this place is it. If 2018 is half of what 2017 was, it will be a fun ride.

I can't wait for what 2018 has in store and hopefully you all will follow along to see what these Wildcats can accomplish.

Lady Cats get win over Ottawa before holiday break



Senior Mikayla Quinn goes up for two of her nine points Tuesday during Louisburg's home contest against Ottawa. The Lady Cats rolled to a 64-37 victory to even their record at 3-3 on the year.

The Louisburg High School girls basketball team got it exactly what it needed before taking some time off during the holiday break – a victory.

After losing in overtime last week to Eudora, the Lady Cats rebounded in a big way as they controlled Ottawa from the opening tip Tuesday and never looked back in a 64-37 win at Louisburg High School.

The victory evened the Lady Cats' record at 3-3 and was important as they wrap up the first part of their season.

"After letting one slip away from us against Eudora, we had a week to prepare and the girls worked hard to get ready for this," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "It was at home, and our last game before break and it is always tough with it being finals week. The girls were really focused though, and they were really focused in practice and I thought it carried over into the game."

Focus certainly wasn't a problem for Louisburg as it dominated almost every aspect of the game and it started on the defensive end. Louisburg forced 23 Ottawa turnovers, a lot of which turned into transition points and easy baskets on the other end.

The Lady Cat offense took a big step forward Tuesday as it bounced back from just scoring 37 points in a loss against Eudora.

"It just shows that we can get out and run the floor," Lowry said. "We have some things that we want to work on over break with that, but we were good offensively. It was a good collective effort from everyone and I thought it was good to get the win."

"Defensively, I still see some breakdown stuff, but we are working hard and the effort is good because we care about being good for each other. We still need to clean up some stuff on the defensive end, but I like our effort and how hard the girls are playing."

Louisburg got a nice boost off the bench from Madilyn Melton. The freshman forward scored a team-high 14 points, including three 3-pointers and had six rebounds. Senior Bailey Belcher also finished in double figures with 12.



Sophomore Haley Cain puts up a shot over two Ottawa defenders Tuesday.

Seniors Isabelle Holtzen and Mikayla Quinn each added nine points in the win and junior Carson Buffington just missed out on a double-double with eight points and 11 rebounds.

The outcome of the game never seemed in doubt as the Lady Cats opened the game on a 16-6 run, and after an evenly-played second quarter, led 31-21 at halftime.

Ottawa would get no closer as Louisburg put the game away in the third quarter as the Lady Cats outscored the Cyclones 17-4 in the frame and never looked back.

The big lead allowed Lowry to play young bench players at several different points throughout the contest.

“That is what you hope for as a program is that you can get girls experience that are on the sophomore and freshman

levels,” Lowry said. “I talk to them all the time in practice about making sure they are doing the things to put themselves in position when it is their time to be on the floor. They have taken it to heart. Those young players are going to make those young player mistakes, but their effort is really good and they are starting to figure out that toughness piece.”

Louisburg will open the 2018 part of the schedule on Jan. 4 when it hosts Baldwin at 6 p.m. The Bulldogs are currently the No. 1-ranked team in Class 4A-Division II.

LOU	16	15	17	16 –
64				
OTT	6	15	4	13
– 37				

LOUISBURG (3-3): Madilyn Melton 14, Bailey Belcher 12, Isabelle Holtzen 9, Mikayla Quinn 9, Carson Buffington 8, Haley Cain 4, Carlee Gassman 4, Alyse Moore 3, Reilly Ratliff-Becher 1. Totals: 17 12-24 64. 3-point field goals: 6, (Melton 3, Buffington, Holtzen, Quinn)

Lady Cats fall to Eudora in overtime



Louisburg guard Carlee Gassman dribbles into the lane Tuesday during the Lady Cats' contest against Eudora in their Frontier League opener at Eudora High School.

EUDORA – Following its league opener, the Louisburg girls basketball team walked off the floor at Eudora High School knowing it let a victory slip through its fingers.

The Lady Cats had a lead late, went into overtime, but came up short in a 46-37 loss to Eudora, in a game that was plagued by foul trouble and turnovers. It was a combination they weren't able to overcome.

As disappointing as the loss was for the Lady Cats, they plan to use this setback as a positive moving forward in what is a long season ahead.

"They care and they want to do the right things," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "Their effort continues to be good, but there is a lot of things that we have to clean up. There are a lot of things we have to get better at, and collectively our mental toughness has to get better.

"It was very soft in many aspects, whether it was our passing, our cuts, catching the ball or our play around the rim. There was a lot of soft play for us and we will fix that."

Louisburg was able to get up and down the floor in the first quarter and those transition points helped the Lady Cats jump out to a 13-8 lead. Their offense slowed down a little bit in the second quarter, but still took a 19-14 halftime advantage.

Foul trouble and turnovers caught up with the Lady Cats in the third quarter as starting point guard Carlee Gassman and forward Carson Buffington each picked up their fourth foul and had to sit for several minutes. Louisburg also committed seven turnovers in the period, which took the Lady Cats out of what they wanted to do offensively.

Eudora was able to use its zone defense to keep Louisburg out of the middle and limit its scoring chances as the Cardinals outscored Louisburg 15-7 in the third.

"We like to attack the rim, but if you push the ball in the open court then they can't set their zone up," Lowry said. "We didn't do a very good job of pushing the ball or running the floor. Once they got set in their zone, it was a challenge for us to get into some things and our passing just wasn't very good."

The Lady Cats (2-3) were able to tie the game early in the fourth on baskets from Haley Cain and Gassman, and then took a 34-32 advantage on a bucket from Buffington with four minutes left.



Senior guard Isabelle Holtzen grabs a rebound Tuesday at Eudora.

Eudora scored the next two to go back on top before Gassman tied the game on an assist from Cain with a minute left. Both teams had a chance to take the lead at the end of regulation, but their attempts fell short.

In the overtime, the Cardinals scored six straight points, while starters Gassman and Isabelle Holtzen fouled out, leaving the Lady Cats short-handed.

Cain led the Lady Cats as she finished with 12 points, six rebounds and three steals. Holtzen also scored in double figures with 10 points to go along with three steals.

Buffington led the Lady Cats with 11 rebounds and freshman Madilyn Melton recorded seven. Senior Bailey Belcher led Louisville's defense with four steals.

Louisburg will try and get back on the winning track Tuesday in its final game before the holiday break. The Lady Cats will host Ottawa at 6 p.m.

“We are going to be ready to play,” Lowry said. “We have a week off and it is not easy having a week of practice from a loss to our next game, especially since this is our last game before break. We are going to work really hard to get some of this stuff fixed.”

LOU	13	6	7
10	1 – 37		
EUD	8	6	15
7	10 – 46		

LOUISBURG (2-3): Haley Cain 12, Isabelle Holtzen 10, Bailey Belcher 6, Carlee Gassman 6, Carson Buffington 2, Madilyn Melton 1. Totals: 16-44 5-12 37. 3-point field goals: none

Rebounding lifts Lady Cats to win over Anderson County



Louisburg junior Carson Buffington leads a fast break down the floor Friday against Anderson County in the final game of the

Wildcat-Bulldog Classic at Baldwin High School. Buffington pulled down a team-high 20 rebounds in the Lady Cats' 54-32 win.

BALDWIN CITY – The shooting percentage may not be where he wants it yet, the execution wasn't always there either, but Louisburg girls head coach Shawn Lowry couldn't help but smile.

His team showed him exactly what he wanted to see.

The Lady Cats' effort and aggressiveness was in midseason form Friday during the final game of the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic against Anderson County and it showed on the glass. Louisburg pulled down 42 rebounds, including 20 on the offensive end, that led to a 54-32 victory over the Bulldogs at Baldwin High School.

Louisburg finished the tournament with a 1-2 record after it opened with losses to a pair of state-ranked teams in Burlington and Baldwin.

"We knew those two games against Burlington and Baldwin would be challenging and tough games," Lowry said. "We just wanted to come out against Anderson County and be physical and aggressive. We wanted to set the tone and the girls took that to heart. Our rebounding was really good, but we are still making a lot of mistakes as a young team. At the same time, that is great to do with a win."

At the heart of those rebounding numbers was Carson Buffington. The Louisburg junior forward pulled down a game-high 20 rebounds to go along with her seven points and four steals.

Buffington was all over the floor for the Lady Cats as she created several second chance opportunities with her nine

offensive rebounds.

“No one can coach that and no one can tell her to do that – it is just what she does,” Lowry said. “I have officials that are coming over and talking to me saying ‘That No. 4 (Buffington) is a beast and she is what – like 5-7?’ She plays like she is 6-2. That is someone who hasn’t seen her play before.

“It is crazy, but it is all about want-to. It is nothing other than she wants to rebound more than anyone else and wants to get to that ball more than anyone else. It is special.”



Freshman Alyse Moore battles for a loose ball on the floor Friday against Anderson County.

Buffington’s willingness to rebound has seemed to rub off on the rest of her teammate as the rest of the Lady Cats are constantly fighting for rebounds or loose balls.

Senior guard Bailey Belcher is a prime example as she was next on the team with six rebounds to go along with a team-high 14 points. Point guard Carlee Gassman and freshman forward Alyse Moore each had four rebounds, while Moore finished seven points off the bench and Gassman added four assists.

Isabelle Holtzen, who battled foul trouble in the first half, responded well in the second half as she finished with nine points to go along with a pair of assists and two steals. Sophomore Haley Cain added eight points and three rebounds in the win.

"I am seeing our guards crash the boards more and I thought Holtzen and Belcher really rebounded well," Lowry said. "Haley is starting to get into her own rebounding and Alyse Moore comes in off the bench as a freshman and she has some of the same characteristics that Carson had as a freshman about how she sees and reads the ball. It is neat that Alyse, and the rest of the younger girls, get to see Carson play and that will just help them later."

Louisburg (2-2) struggled offensively early on as Anderson County took an 11-8 lead, but the Lady Cats closed out the first quarter on a 9-0 run to grab a 17-11 advantage.

It was all Louisburg in the second quarter as it outscored Anderson County 17-7. The Lady Cats' defense also came up big as it held Anderson County to just 10 points in the second and third quarters combined.

"Defensively we did some things that helped us do some things offensively," Lowry said. "It gave us that attacking mentality. Our shooting percentage is not where we want it to be yet, and we are not doing some things the way we need to, but our effort and toughness is really good. That is probably what I am most proud of right now.

"Our effort never changed and our toughness didn't change no matter who we were playing in this tournament. The other stuff

we can continue to work on, but those are things that I would be really concerned if we weren't doing that."

Louisburg will try and make it back-to-back wins Tuesday when it travels to Eudora for its Frontier League opener. Tipoff is set for approximately 6 p.m.

LOU	17	17	7	13 –
54				
AC	11	7	3	
11 – 32				

LOUISBURG (2-2): Bailey Belcher 14, Isabelle Holtzen 9, Haley Cain 8, Carson Buffington 7, Alyse Moore 7, Madilyn Melton 4, Mikayla Quinn 3, Carlee Gassman 2. Totals: 20 8-13 54. 3-point field goals: 2, (Holtzen, Quinn).

Lady Cats fall to back-to-back state-ranked teams



Louisburg junior Haley Cain puts up a shot in the lane Tuesday against Baldwin in the second round of the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic at Baldwin High School. The Lady Cats fell 62-31 to the Bulldogs, who are ranked No. 5 in the state.

BALDWIN CITY – Not even a full week into the season, the Louisburg High School girls basketball team wrapped up what might be its toughest two games of the year.

After getting a season opening victory Friday against Pittsburg, the Lady Cats opened the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic with back-to-back games against a pair of state-ranked opponents.

On Monday, Louisburg faced off with Burlington, which is the No. 4 team in Class 4A-DII and then had to meet Baldwin, the No. 5 squad in 4A-DII, the following day.

For a team with just one returning starter from a year ago, it was a tall task for the Lady Cats as they fell to Burlington, 76-46, and then lost to Baldwin, 62-31, on Tuesday. Despite the setbacks, Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry believes his team can learn from this experience.

“I think it’s very beneficial for our young team to play some of these top caliber teams early in the season as we are learning and growing,” Lowry said “It provides a great platform to develop the type of toughness we want to play with. I am confident this group of girls will continue to improve throughout the season as they gain experience and confidence.”

Against Burlington, the Lady Cats got a big game from their two team captains. Junior Carson Buffington recorded her second straight double-double with 16 points and 10 rebounds, to go along with four steals.

Senior Isabelle Holtzen also scored in double figures with 10 points to go along with seven assists and six rebounds. Freshman Madilyn Melton scored nine points and had five rebounds, while senior Bailey Belcher pulled down six boards.

Despite that, the Lady Cats just couldn't slow down Burlington as it scored 45 first half points on its way to a 45-21 halftime advantage.

It was the same type of start Tuesday against Baldwin. The Bulldogs used pressure defense and 3-point shooting to take a 36-17 lead at halftime. Baldwin hit 10 3-pointers on the night to pull away from the Lady Cats.

"Burlington and Baldwin are very good teams that are well deserving of their current state rankings," Lowry said. "Both teams returned some very talented players from last year and are well coached. We expected these to be very competitive games and I was proud of how our girls responded."

Holtzen and Buffington once again led the Lady Cats on both ends of the floor. Holtzen responded with a team-high 11 points, while Buffington added nine points and a team-high 18 rebounds.

Sophomore Haley Cain was also a factor on the glass for Louisburg as she was second on the team with 10 rebounds.

"Through these first few games, Carson and Isabelle have been great leaders and unselfish in their play," Lowry said. "Haley, Bailey and Carlee (Gassman) have and continue to gain valuable experience and are getting more confident with each outing. We have some younger players that are beginning to see they can compete at this level and how they can contribute to the team's success"

Louisburg will try and end the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic with a win Friday when it travels back to Baldwin for a matchup with Anderson County. Tipoff is set for 7 p.m.

BUR	22	23	15	16 –
76				

LOUISBURG (1-2): Carson Buffington 16, Isabelle Holtzen 10, Madilyn Melton 9, Carlee Gassman 5, Haley Cain 3, Bailey Belcher 2, Alyse Moore 1. Totals: 15-52 7-16 46. 3-point field goals: 3, (Buffington 2, Gassman)

LOU	8	9	8	6
– 31				

BAL	22	14	14	12 –
62				

LOUISBURG: Isabelle Holtzen 11, Carson Buffington 9, Bailey Belcher 5, Haley Cain 4. Totals: 10-45 7-18 31. 3-point field goals: 4, (Holtzen 2, Buffington, Belcher)

Lady Cats hold on to win season opener over Pittsburg



Louisburg junior Carson Buffington (right) and Isabelle Holtzen battle a Pittsburg player for a loose ball Friday in Louisburg during the Lady Cats' season opener. Louisburg defeated Pittsburg 46-43.

In its first game after losing four starters from a year ago, there were times where Louisburg High School girls basketball team looked like a seasoned club.

The Lady Cats jumped out to a double digit lead in the first half thanks to an offensive burst against Pittsburg on Friday in their season opener.

Then came the second half where both teams filled up the stat sheet with turnovers.

"I kept asking the official, 'This has to be the first game, right?'" Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "It was, and those are some things you expect from a young team first team out."

However, the Lady Cats accomplished something a lot of others didn't expect – a victory. Despite a late charge from the Class 5A school, Louisburg held on for a 46-43 win and got its season off on the right foot.

"It felt so good," junior Carson Buffington said. "I know there are a lot of people out there who are doubting us, but it felt so good to prove that we can do it and that we are actually a pretty good team."

Buffington, the team's lone returning starter, couldn't have asked for a better start to her season as she was three steals shy of a triple-double. She finished with a team-high 12 points and 13 rebounds to go along with seven steals.

Louisburg's other team captain, senior Isabelle Holtzen, rose to the occasion as well as she added seven points, six rebounds, four assists, two steals and two blocks.

As a team, the Lady Cats forced 25 turnovers that included 14 steals and four blocked shots. Defensively, Louisburg held Pittsburg to 28 points through three quarters.

"The defense did play well at times, but we have a lot of stuff to work on rotation wise," Lowry said. "Our veterans in Carson and Isabelle really stepped up at different times for us and we are going to learn a lot from this win."

The Lady Cats (1-0) got help from several other players as well.



Louisburg freshman Madilyn Melton goes up for two of her nine points Friday against Pittsburg.

Freshman Madilyn Melton came off the bench to score nine points in her first varsity game and added seven rebounds. Sophomore Haley Cain scored seven points, while senior Bailey Belcher made her varsity debut and scored seven points as well. Sophomore point guard Carlee Gassman added four points.

"It was great to get a win, at home, and in our season opener," Lowry said. "We had a great crowd and a great student

section and it was a lot of fun. For what we are right now, we learned so much throughout this game and grew up so much. Then watching film on their mistakes is going to be so awesome for them and understanding their responsibilities.”

Louisburg got off to a quick start as it took an 8-2 lead on baskets from Belcher, Gassman and a 3-pointer from Buffington, who knocked down three in the game. Pittsburg eventually whittled the lead down to one, before Cain hit a jumper at the buzzer to give Louisburg momentum into the second quarter.

The Lady Cat built their lead to start the second as they went on a 10-1 run that was keyed by a pair of 3-pointers from Holtzen. Melton ended the run with a steal and score to put Louisburg up 10 points and took a 32-23 lead at halftime.

“Everyone played really well and stepped up,” Buffington said. “It is amazing to see how far we have come since we started practice two weeks ago.”

Both teams took a step back in the third quarter as the defenses took over as Louisburg and Pittsburg combined to commit 21 turnovers during the eight minute stretch.



Point guard Carlee Gassman puts up a shot in the lane Friday in the Lady Cats' win over Pittsburg.

"The first half was good offensively, but we knew that team over there (Pittsburg) is a good team and they are well coached and that it was going to be a battle in the second half," Lowry said. "It was a sloppy, slow third quarter and it probably wasn't a lot of fun to watch."

Louisburg held a 42-30 lead with four minutes left in the contest, before Pittsburg turned up the pressure and forced the Lady Cats into eight turnovers. The Purple Dragons whittled the Lady Cats' lead down to three, but Louisburg wouldn't let them get any closer.

"They persevered and they were tough through adversity," Lowry said of his team. "They did the things that you hope for as a coach and that you constantly talk to them about and it is up

to them to pull through. They were faced with adversity and making a lot of mistakes that a young, immature team will make, but they got through it and came together.”

The schedule doesn’t get easier for the Lady Cats this week as they take part in the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic at Baldwin High School. Louisburg will face Burlington today and will play Baldwin tomorrow before finishing up with Anderson County on Friday. Burlington and Baldwin are both ranked in the top 10 in Class 4A-Division II.

“This is the last year for the tournament, so the girls are looking forward to playing in it one more time,” Lowry said. “Burlington is always well-coached and a really good team that returns a lot from last year. They do a lot of things that we will have to prepare for. Baldwin is one of the best teams in 4A and Anderson County is always a scrappy team, so it should be a fun tournament.”

LOU	14	18	6	8 –
46				
PITT	11	12	5	15
– 43				

LOUISBURG (1-0): Carson Buffington 4-7 1-2 12; Madilyn Melton 2-7 4-6 9; Bailey Belcher 3-13 1-4 7; Haley Cain 3-10 1-6 7; Isabelle Holtzen 2-6 1-3 7; Carlee Gassman 1-7 2-5 4. Totals: 15-54 10-26 46. 3-point field goals: 6, (Buffington 3, Holtzen 2, Melton).