

Three Wildcats named to all-state basketball team



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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Simpson, Buffington earn all-

League honors



Louisburg senior Madisen Simpson earned all-Frontier League first team honors after she averaged 17 points a game to go along with 55 3-pointers on the season.

The Louisburg High School girls basketball team made strides during the 2016-17 season and one of those improvements came in the win column.

The Lady Cats finished the year with 10 wins after coming off a three-win season a year ago and ended up in third place in the league standings. Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry had several players help the Lady Cats get to that mark and the Frontier League coaches recognized two of those athletes.

Senior Madisen Simpson (first team) and sophomore Carson Buffington (honorable mention) were each selected to the all-Frontier League team that was released following the state basketball tournament.

“I think like most coaches, I would like to have had more of our players recognized and for higher positions but the other coaches that vote don’t get to see all the work that specific players put in or the intangible things that specific players do for their team and teammates,” Lowry said. “With that said, there are a lot of really good players in our league.”

Simpson earned first-team honors and became the first Lady Cat to do so since Natalie Moore in 2015. Simpson, who served as

the team's point guard, was the team's leading scorer with nearly 17 points a game and knocked down 55 3-pointers on the season.

She also was 83 percent from the free-throw line and made 25 in a row at one point during the season. Simpson also knocked down six 3-pointers in a game.

Simpson was able to work her way onto the first-team after not being an all-league selection last year.



Sophomore Carson Bufflington led the Frontier League in rebounding with 11 boards a game and was selected to honorable mention all-league team.

As for Buffington, she earned honorable mention honors for the second consecutive season. She averaged a team-high 11 rebounds a game, including five offensive rebounds a contest.

She had several big rebounding nights for the Lady Cats, including a 22-rebound performance early in the season and also had 17 rebounds in their sub-state game against Spring Hill

Buffington also averaged six points and two steals a game as she was one of the team's starting forwards.

"It's hard to express just how good Madisen and Carson were this year in arguably one of the toughest leagues with so many exceptional players," Lowry said. "This season was the culmination of many years of hard work for Madisen and it was great to see that commitment recognized with first team all-league.

"Carson led the Frontier league for the second year in a row in rebounding and finished in the top 10 for the entire state and all classes. 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."

Baldwin, the league-runner up, led the way with four all-league selections. De Soto was next as it was awarded three spots. Paola, the league champion, along with Louisburg, Spring Hill and Ottawa were next with two selections each.

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE GIRLS BASKETBALL

First Team

Abby Ogle, junior, Baldwin

Mariah Grizzle, junior, De Soto

Madisen Simpson, senior, Louisburg

Kamryn Shaffer, junior, Ottawa

Matti Morgan, senior, Paola

Second Team

Julia Johnson, senior, De Soto

Ryen White, senior, Ottawa

Chandler Karr, senior, Paola

Meghan Goff, sophomore, Spring Hill

Lauren Delker, sophomore, Spring Hill

Honorable mention

Carly Lindermeier, sophomore, Baldwin

Taylor Cawley, senior, Baldwin

Kayla Kurtz, sophomore, Baldwin

Sydney Jones, senior, De Soto

Alaina Howe, junior, Eudora

Carson Buffington, sophomore, Louisburg

Lady Cats fall to Spring Hill in sub-state semis



Louisburg senior Tayler Lancaster knocks down a 3-pointer with 51 seconds left in the game to cut into the Spring Hill lead, but the Lady Cats fell 58-50 Friday in the Class 4A-Division I sub-state semifinals at Spring Hill High School.

SPRING HILL – The Louisburg girls basketball team did everything that was asked of it during the Class 4A-Division I sub-state basketball semifinal with Spring Hill.

The Lady Cats dove on the floor for loose balls, they battled for rebounds, showed hustle and came up with some big defensive stops. Despite all that, they were missing one key ingredient for a win.

Louisburg struggled offensively as it came up just short in a 58-50 loss to the Broncos on Friday at Spring Hill High School.

The loss ended the Lady Cats' season with a 10-11 record and tears filled the locker room following the game.

“Just walking out of there, I couldn't be more proud of those kids and I love all of them,” Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. “Everything I talked to them before the game about what they needed to give, how they needed to play and how they wanted to remember walking off this floor – they did it. I couldn't ask for any more than what they gave.”

The Lady Cats shot just 32 percent from the field, but despite

the missed shots, they were able to stay in the game thanks to hustle plays and they forced 13 Spring Hill turnovers.



Senior Paige Buffington drives around a pair of Spring Hill defenders Friday.

Spring Hill jumped to a 16-7 lead late in the first quarter, but senior Madisen Simpson knocked down a 3-pointer in the final seconds to cut into the Bronco lead.

Down 18-10 early in the second quarter, Louisburg went on a quick 8-0 run to tie the game after a basket from senior Paige Buffington and then sophomore Kennia Hankinson came off the bench to hit back-to-back 3-pointers.

The Broncos countered that with a 12-4 run of its own to take a 30-23 halftime lead and seven of those points came thanks to Spring Hill's Lauren Delker.

Still, the Lady Cats had another run in them as they used an 8-2 spurt in the third quarter to cut the Spring Hill lead to one. Senior Chloe Renner drove the lane for basket, Simpson hit a 3-pointer and Hankinson converted an old-fashioned 3-point play

Again, Spring Hill built its lead to nine points with five minutes left in the game, which made it difficult for Louisburg to come back from. Still, the Lady Cats gave it their best shot as senior Tayler Lancaster knocked down a 3-pointer with 51 seconds left to trim the lead to three, but they could get no closer.

"I never felt like it was too big of a deficit for us to fight back from but it was tough," Lowry said. "This group has battled all year though and have fought. It was probably a great game to watch in the stands, but again I am so proud of them."

Louisburg had three players score in double figures as Buffington, Lancaster and Hankinson each finished with 10 points in the loss, while Simpson added nine. Buffington also had three steals to lead Louisburg defensively.

The Lady Cats also got a big performance on the glass from sophomore Carson Buffington as she had a team-high 17 rebounds.



Louisburg senior Chloe Renner drives to the basket for two points Friday against Spring Hill.

Following the loss, realization began to set in for Simpson, Paige Buffington, Lancaster, Renner and Emalee Overbay as the five Lady Cats seniors had played their final game.

“I am so proud of the seniors and what they have given to our program,” Lowry said. “The things they did out there, battling through adversity, diving for loose balls and all those intangible things that they did. It is what gets to be passed on in the program. The young kids that were here watching or the ones on the bench, they get to come back next year and get to give what these guys gave.

“These seniors aren’t upset that they lost the game, they are upset because they don’t get to wear that Louisburg uniform

and play basketball next year. It will be sad to see them go.”

This season marked a successful one for the Lady Cats as they improved by seven wins off of last year’s three-win season, but it isn’t about the record for Lowry.

“It is about the process. For us, it is never about the results, it is about the process from start to finish. It is about the character things and core values and this group embodies that. They have done everything that has been asked of them and they have done it with great attitudes, they have done it with great leadership and great unselfishness. There is nothing more that you can ask out of young people.”

LOU	10	13	14	13
50				
SH	16	14	12	16
- 58				

LOUISBURG (10-11): Paige Buffington 10, Tayler Lancaster 10, Kennia Hankinson 10, Madisen Simpson 9, Carson Buffington 4, Chloe Renner 3, Isabelle Holtzen 2, Emalee Overbay 2. Totals: 17 11-22 50. 3-point field goals: 5, (Simpson 2, Hankinson 2, Lancaster)

Simpson signs with Hannibal-LaGrange



Louisburg senior Madisen Simpson signed her letter of intent Friday to play basketball for Hannibal-LaGrange University. Sitting next to Madisen are her parents Joan and Darrin Simpson. Standing is Hannibal-LaGrange coach Kelly Quigle.

Ever since she can remember, Madisen Simpson has loved to play basketball and she isn't about to stop playing any time soon.

Simpson achieved her dream to play college basketball Friday when she signed her letter of intent to play for Hannibal-LaGrange University in front of family and friends at Louisburg High School.

"I have been wanting to play college basketball since I started in first grade," Simpson said. "It is also just a weight lifted off my shoulders. Being my senior year, there are a bunch of things that you have to get through. But signing and knowing that I have a place that I am going to continue my basketball career is great and now I can focus on other things."

Some of those other things is her high school season as she, and the rest of the Lady Cats, are gearing up for the postseason later this week. Simpson is the team's leading scorer from the guard spot as Louisburg has racked up 10 wins this season after coming off a 3-win campaign last year.

It is her scoring ability that attracted Hannibal-LaGrange after Trojan coach Kelly Quigle watched her during the season

and in an NAIA showcase.



Senior guard Madisen Simpson leads Louisville in scoring this season and is excited for her next step to Hannibal-LaGrange.

“We are very excited that Madisen will be joining our team,” Quigle said in a release. “She can play multiple positions and

will be a threat from the outside.”

Simpson had several options when it came down to it. Ottawa University, Graceland and Kansas Wesleyan all recruited the Louisburg senior, but she felt more at home in Hannibal.

“I was going for the smaller campus and this one was small, but it is also a really nice campus,” she said. “We went to go watch a game and they just played as a team. It really was an easy decision, but they made it a lot easier to choose from.”

She is all also looking forward to play for her new coach, Quigle.

“(Quigle) is pretty relaxed and she just comes up and easily starts a conversation,” Simpson said. “I don’t feel too intimidated by her yet, and that could change, but she is pretty relaxed. When she talked about me coming to Hannibal she seemed super excited and that is kind of what won me over. No other coach seemed that excited about me coming to play and she changed my mind toward that.”

Playing time also intrigued Simpson as Quigle told her she has a chance to play early in her career.

“They are losing a senior point guard and a wing,” Simpson said. “She said they have a sophomore that could fill in one of those spots, so she said I could fit into that point guard spot. She sees me pushing the ball up the floor so hopefully I can work hard and do what I can.”

Simpson’s current coach knows she will be able to succeed at the next level and is excited to see what she can do.

“We’re all very proud and happy for Madisen,” Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. “She has worked very hard to get to this point to play basketball at the collegiate level. I have no doubt that Madisen will continue to have a great work ethic, be a great teammate and will emerge as a leader for their

program.”

Simpson gets military surprise on Senior Night



Louisburg senior Madisen Simpson hugs her brother, Technical Sgt. Greg Jeffery, after he surprised her during Senior Night ceremonies at Louisburg High School. Sgt. Jeffery, who is getting ready to go on a third tour of duty, will miss Madisen’s graduation in May so he wanted to surprise her during her special night.

Tears filled Madisen Simpson’s eyes to the point she could barely see.

During her senior night ceremony, Madisen looked to her left and saw a man dressed in military fatigues walking toward her. It couldn’t have been the person she thought it was – he wasn’t supposed to be there.

“It felt like a dream,” Madisen said.

It had already been an emotional day for the Louisburg High School senior. Earlier in the day Friday, Simpson fulfilled a lifelong goal when she signed to play college basketball and

shed tears of joy.

Then came her final home game, and as she was subbed out for the last time, she couldn't fight back the tears as she gave a hug to her coach Shawn Lowry and the rest of her teammates. There would be no more playing basketball on the LHS court.

More waterworks came as she walked out with her parents Darrin and Joan Simpson during Senior Night ceremonies, but there was a void. Someone special was supposed to be there.

Madisen's brother Greg Jeffery, a technical sergeant in the United States Air Force, hasn't been able to watch any of her games during her senior season and he told her he couldn't make her senior night due to training.

Sgt. Jeffery is also unable to attend her graduation in May as he is being deployed for his third tour of duty as an Air Force medic. So Madisen wasn't sure when she would see him again.

She really wished her big brother was there to share in her special moment

As it turned out – her wish came true.

The public address announcer, Damon Dennis, announced to the crowd, "We have a special message tonight sent from Madisen's brother, Technical Sergeant Greg Jeffery, who is a United States Air Force medic currently stationed at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska. Her brother wished that he could be here tonight..."

Then a long pause.

"And he is," Dennis finished.

Technical Sgt. Jeffrey walked out to a standing ovation and Madisen raced over to her brother for a long hug.



Madisen Simpson tried to fight back the tears as she raced toward her brother Greg.

“When they said they had a message from my brother, I just backed up because I broke down and I couldn’t help it,” Madisen said. “My parents actually thought I was just going to start walking out the door but I had no idea he was there. Then when Doc (Dennis) did that pause, I just kept thinking, is that it? Then when he said he was here, I just lost it. You watch those videos online where they come and surprise people and I never thought that would happen to me. It was a great surprise.”

It was a surprise that was planned out almost two months in advance when Darrin and his son were sitting out in the garage one night talking. Darrin ran the idea past Greg and he thought it would be a good idea.

“To be honest, Greg isn’t one that really likes the spotlight

very much, so I wasn't sure if he would want to do it," Darrin said. "But he thought it would be a great surprise for her so we started planning it out."

Darrin went to LHS assistant principal Darin Gagnebin and then ran it by Lowry to make sure everyone was on board with the idea.

Once they got the clearance, the two had to make Madisen as least suspicious as possible – and to do so they had to hurt her feelings a little bit.

Greg and his family had originally planned to attend Madisen's senior night game, but a week before, he sent out a group text message that told everyone his training had been moved and he wouldn't be able to make it.

"When Madisen got that she was pretty bummed – really bummed actually," Darrin said. "She is really pretty close to her brother and they have a special bond. We knew this would be a great surprise for her though, so we stuck it out."

Then came the moment as Greg watched his little sister run toward him with tears streaming down her face.

"It was pretty cool," he said. "I didn't get to see her reaction right away after the announcement, but I went back and looked at the video and it was pretty special.

"As we were walking out, I was thinking I should have put some Kleenexes in my pocket, but it was too late by that point. It was a pretty special moment for sure."



Darrin Simpson, Sgt. Greg Jeffery, Madisen Simpson and Joan Simpson share a family hug following the military surprise Friday at Louisburg High School.

Greg, who is a 2003 Louisburg High School graduate, has completed two tours of duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and will leave for his third tour shortly.

Friday was a special moment he, and the rest of his family, won't be able to forget when they are apart for six months.

"We obviously would like to see them more than we do, but once they get that occasional weekend off, we try and make it work," Madisen said. "We saw them on New Year's, but I didn't think we would be able to see him until after his deployment.

"It is a little rough. It is hard knowing that he is gone half a year and that his wife and his kids miss him. We all miss him. With us, we try to stay in contact as much as possible.

Once he gets home though, it is alright again.”

Paola hands Lady Cats loss on Senior Night



Senior Paige Buffington prepares to give coach Shawn Lowry a hug as she comes off the floor for the final time at Louisburg High School on Friday against Paola. Buffington, along with Madisen Simpson, Emalee Overbay, Tayler Lancaster and Chloe Renner, were all honored during Senior Night ceremonies.

It is never easy when the Louisburg girls basketball team faces off with rival Paola.

Going into Friday's contest in Louisburg, Paola was ranked No. 6 in Class 4A-DI and has won four consecutive Frontier League crowns. Not even an emotional senior night could stop the Panthers from getting their fifth.

Paola defeated Louisburg 52-38 to wrap up their fifth league crown, but the Lady Cats didn't go down without a fight as their five seniors laid it all out there in what was their final home game.

Madisen Simpson, Paige Buffington, Emalee Overbay, Tayler

Lancaster and Chloe Renner all said goodbye to their home fans for the final time. It was a group that helped their team to a 10-win season this year after coming off a three-win season a year ago.

“This was the first group of freshmen that I had as a head coach and to be seniors this year – they are just awesome,” Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. “I love them to death. For what they have given, what kind of leaders they become, and what kind of women they have grown into, they are special. What they have done doesn’t leave with them, it stays in the program and passed on to the next group of Lady Cats.”

Although Louisburg played with a lot of energy, it didn’t necessarily turn into points for the Lady Cats. Louisburg managed just nine first-half points but only trailed by 12 points going into halftime.

The Lady Cats (10-10) found a groove offensively in the third quarter as they scored 18 points and were able get Paola’s lead to single digits. Sophomore Kennia Hankinson was a spark off the bench late as she connected on back-to-back 3-pointers to help keep the game within reach.



Sophomore Carson Buffington tries to drive to the basket Friday against Paola.

“It was a great effort and they played with great toughness,” Lowry said of his team. “They didn’t play basketball very well with some of the things we wanted to do offensively, but that happens sometimes. I will take that toughness and effort all the time. It was a special night and everyone wanted to give a

lot, and they did. I am proud of them for that.”

Paola was able to put the game away in the fourth quarter as it ballooned its lead to 16 at one point. Panther senior Matti Morgan led all scorers with 16 points, including four 3-pointers.

Simpson led Louisburg in scoring with 13 points, while Hankinson added 10 in the loss.

Prior to the final buzzer, Lowry subbed out each senior for the last time – one by one – to let them be recognized. It was a group that left a lasting impression on their teammates.

“They are outsized, they are not the biggest, they are not the most athletic, but they play together and for each other,” Lowry said. “For where they have come from as freshmen to where they are now, it is great to see and it is so much fun to see kids develop that winning attitude. It is not just the basketball stuff, but it is seeing them mature and gaining leadership. You see them being unselfish and loving their teammates and I will take that every day of the week.”

Louisburg’s season is not over, however. The Lady Cats earned the No. 3 seed in their substate tournament and will travel to Spring Hill on Friday to face the No. 2 Broncos in a 7:30 p.m. tipoff. The winner of that game will play the winner of No. 1 Paola and No. 4 Fort Scott on Saturday.

LOU	4	5	18	11
– 38				
PAO	10	11	19	12 –
52				

LOUISBURG (10-10): Madisen Simpson 13, Kennia Hankinson 10, Emalee Overbay 6, Tayler Lancaster 3, Carson Buffington 2, Chloe Renner 2, Paige Buffington 1, Isabelle Holtzen 1.

Totals: 12 10-19 38. 3-point field goals: 4, (Hankinson 3, Lancaster)

Zone defense keys Lady Cats win over De Soto



Louisburg's Emalee Overbay (left) and Paige Buffington battles for a rebound with a De Soto player Tuesday at De Soto High School. The Lady Cats rallied from behind for a 34-31 victory.

DE SOTO – For most of the first quarter, De Soto did whatever it wanted offensively against the Louisburg girls basketball team.

De Soto scored 13 points in the first five minutes, while the Lady Cats struggled to score. Louisburg decided to change to a 2-3 zone defense to help combat a De Soto lineup with three 6-foot players.

Not only did the zone work, it changed the entire game for the Lady Cats.

Louisburg overcome an early nine-point deficit to hold on for a 34-31 victory Tuesday at De Soto High School. The Lady Cats

held De Soto to just eight points in the second and third quarters combined, which helped them get back into the game.

“It did slow them down,” Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said of the zone. “The girls really communicate in it and they don’t let down when they play in a zone. They don’t sit back in it and they are aggressive. It really helped a bunch there and the kids did their jobs. When you are playing in a zone like that, each of those girls have to do their job and they have to do it with a lot of effort and heart. I thought they did that really well.”

The win pushed the Lady Cats’ record to 10-9 on the season and also cements their spot in the Frontier League. Louisburg will finish third place in league behind state-ranked Paola and Baldwin.

All this after coming off a year where they finished with just three wins.

“It was an ugly, scrappy, sloppy game on the road and it was an important league game for where we are going to finish out,” Lowry said. “We were able to secure third place in the game, and the girls knew that going in and they wanted that. We knew it was going to be tough to come in here and play, especially with their size and some of the things they can do. Our kids just battled and they didn’t quit, especially after De Soto got up on us early on. It was a good fight.”



Senior Chloe Renner puts up a runner in the lane Tuesday in De Soto.

The Lady Cats put the effort on the defensive end when their shots weren't falling. Louisburg struggled to get into a rhythm offensively, with just 10 points in the first half, but were able to make several key baskets and free throws with the game on the line.

Down 15-10, Louisburg senior Paige Buffington opened the second half with a 3-pointer and then senior Madisen Simpson scored on a drive to the basket and was fouled. She converted the 3-point play with the free throw and gave Louisburg a 17-16 lead.

Freshman Haley Cain scored on a shot close to the basket after an assist from sophomore Kennia Hankinson to give Louisburg a

three-point advantage it wouldn't relinquish.

De Soto would tie the game late in the third, but Simpson knocked in a 3-pointer to give the Lady Cats a lead going into the fourth.

Louisburg did the job at the free-throw line in the fourth quarter as it knocked down 10 of 12 opportunities to help secure the win. However, that didn't mean there weren't some tense moments at the end of the game.

De Soto cut the lead to one with 20 seconds left off a steal, but Paige Buffington found her sister Carson on a fast break opportunity to for a score to push the lead back to three.

Louisburg gave De Soto one last opportunity as it turned the ball over on De Soto's end of the floor with two seconds left, but a De Soto 3-pointer fell short.

Despite the struggles offensively in which the Lady Cats didn't have a player score in double figures, they were able to rally together and get a key road win.

"If calls aren't going your way, or your shots aren't falling, it can get you down, but these girls move right on to the next play and it is something we have worked on since day one," Lowry said. "It is on to the next play and you can't let something shake or rattle you. They did that tonight. They are excited in that locker room right now because they did it together. There was no great standout performance, it was a team effort."

Simpson led the Lady Cats in scoring with nine points and Paige Buffington added eight. Carson Buffington and senior Emalee Overbay each had six rebounds to lead Louisburg.

Louisburg will try to end its season on a strong note as the Lady Cats will host No. 6 Paola on senior night in their final regular season game. Tipoff is set for approximately 6 p.m.

LOU	8	2	12	12
- 34				
DES	13	2	6	10
- 31				

LOUISBURG (10-9): Madisen Simpson 9, Paige Buffington 8, Carson Buffington 6, Emalee Overbay 4, Tayler Lancaster 3, Haley Cain 2, Chloe Renner 2. Totals: 8 14-20 34. 3-point field goals: 4, (P. Buffington 2, Simpson, Lancaster)

Rally falls short for Lady Cats in loss to Spring Hill



Louisburg senior Emalee Overbay stretches out for a rebound Friday at Spring Hill High School. Overbay and the Lady Cats fell 55-49

SPRING HILL – Trailing at any point in the game has never really rattled the Louisburg High School girls basketball team.

The Lady Cats have found themselves behind in several game this season, but in many of those, Louisburg always found a

way to rally.

Friday was no different.

Louisburg overcame a 14-point fourth quarter deficit on the road against Spring Hill to tie the game, but couldn't quite get over the hump in a 55-49 loss, despite putting together a 23-point fourth quarter.

"Defensively we made a little bit of an adjustment there in the fourth and we were able to pick up our intensity a little bit," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "We started battling for possessions and making them count. At the end of the day, we have to be better at our end of game situations. It is good one to learn from and we are going to be right back here in two weeks playing likely the same team."

It was a good litmus test for the Lady Cats as they will return to Spring Hill on Mar. 3 for the substate tournament and have a reasonable chance of playing the Broncos again for the right to continue their season.

After an even first quarter, Louisburg (9-9) had a tough time handling the Bronco size in the second and third quarters. Spring Hill forward's Camryn Williams and Savannah Leaton, who both stand 6-foot-1 and 6-0, respectively, scored several easy baskets.

Williams was second on the Spring Hill team with 13 points, but the Broncos also got some production from the perimeter as point guard Meghan Goff led all scorers with 16 points.

"Their size was probably the biggest factor for most of the game," Lowry said. "Again, we have to play through that and we have all year. It was a little tougher for us this time, but I thought the girls battled hard and did some good things."

Goff hit a 3-pointer shortly before halftime to give Spring Hill a 10-point lead and the Broncos maintained the double

digit lead into the fourth quarter.

It was then Louisburg started to attack the basket more and was able to get back in the game from the free-throw line. The Lady Cats hit 9 of 11 free throws in the final eight minutes.

The Lady Cats become more aggressive on both sides of the floor. With five minutes remaining, Paige Buffington connected on a 3-pointer, and then senior Emalee Overbay turned hustle into four points on one possession.

Overbay made a basket and was fouled with 4:35 left in game. She tried to convert the 3-point play from the free-throw line, however Overbay missed the shot, but got the rebound and went back up for two more points to cut the Spring Hill lead to five.

Sophomore Carson Buffington hit a basket and a pair of free throws to get it within one and senior Chloe Renner tied the game with a free throw with 2:39 remaining.

Unfortunately for Louisburg, Goff connected on back-to-back shots to push the lead back to five and the Wildcats were unable to get any closer.

Carson Buffington recorded a double-double to lead the Lady Cats with 12 points and 14 rebounds, including six offensive boards. Paige Buffington also finished with 12 points and had six rebounds and three assists.

Senior Madisen Simpson also scored in double figures with 11 points and had seven rebounds and three steals.

Louisburg has one week left of its regular season as it travels to De Soto on Tuesday before returning home Friday against rival Paola for senior night.

– 49

SH	8	18	14	15
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– 55

LOUISBURG (9-9): Paige Buffington 12, Carson Buffington 12, Madisen Simpson 11, Tayler Lancaster 4, Emalee Overbay 4, Haley Cain, Isabelle Holtzen 2, Chloe Renner 2. Totals: 14 18-24 55. 3-point field goals: 3, (P. Buffington 2, Simpson)

Lady Cats nearly pull off upset of Baldwin



Louisburg sophomore Carson Buffington backs down a Baldwin player under the basket Tuesday during the Lady Cats' home game. Louisburg came up just short against No. 7 Baldwin in a 55-52 loss.

In prior years, a near upset of a state-ranked team might have been looked at as a moral victory for the Louisburg High School girls basketball team.

However, in Tuesday's close 55-52 loss at home to No. 7-ranked Baldwin, it was viewed a bit differently.

"I am so proud of them, but the girls don't like it right

now," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "It is great to see that out of this group. It bothers them to lose on this floor, in front of our crowd. They are disappointed, but we are going to build from this."

The Lady Cats were on the verge of knocking off one of the top teams in the Frontier League thanks to their defense. Louisburg was able to hold Baldwin to just 20 first half points and took a 23-20 halftime lead.

The one player the Lady Cats weren't able to slow down was Baldwin's Abby Ogle. The Bulldog junior accounted for more than half of her team's points with a game-high 31.

Still, the Lady Cats were within striking distance in the game's final minute.

"They played fantastic," Lowry said. "I am as proud of them right now as I was when we took the floor. I knew what they were going to give tonight. We made some adjustments at practice to help slow Baldwin down and took that and implemented it in the game. We have some tough kids and they played hard."

Louisburg (9-8) found itself down five points with under three minutes left in the game, but senior Tayler Lancaster hit a 3-pointer to cut the lead to two. Sophomore Carson Buffington tied it with a shot after pulling down an offensive rebound with 1 minute and 45 seconds left.

About six seconds later, Baldwin took the lead again thanks to Ogle who hit a basket and was fouled to convert the three-point play. The Baldwin lead ballooned again to five thanks to another score from Ogle.

The Lady Cats were able to stay in the game after Baldwin missed six of its final eight free throws. Louisburg senior Madisen Simpson hit a pair of free throws with 14 seconds remaining to cut the deficit to two

Baldwin added a free throw to make it a three-point game with 12 seconds left, but the Lady Cats' attempt to tie the game came up short.

The Lady Cats fought the entire game as they used a big second quarter run to turn what was a big deficit into a halftime lead. Louisburg found itself down eight, but went on a 13-2 run to end the first half.



Louisburg senior Chloe Renner drives to the basket

Tuesday against Baldwin.

Simpson made two 3-pointers and junior Isabelle Holtzen hit another 3-pointer during the run, while senior Chloe Renner hit a pair of free throws and freshman Haley Cain made a basket after an offensive rebound shortly before halftime.

“They are finding ways together, and different kids are doing different things, to stay in games maybe when things aren’t going their way,” Lowry said. “They don’t freak out, or let down about the situation they are in, they just keep battling. They keep rebounding, they keep defending and they keep doing things offensively that they want to do.”

Louisburg extended that lead to six midway through the third quarter, before Baldwin would rally back.

Another positive for the Lady Cats is they converted 20 of 22 from the free-throw line and have shown improvement in that department as of late.

“We have to be good from the free-throw line, especially with some of the things we try to do offensively,” Lowry said. “We have made strides from the beginning of the season to where we are at now. The girls have bought in and are committed to get better. We have some younger kids who are getting better too.”

Simpson led the Lady Cats in scoring with 24 points, including four 3-pointers. Senior Paige Buffington also finished in double figures with 10 points – as she was 10-for-10 from the free-throw line.

Carson Buffington led Louisburg with 12 rebounds and Renner added eight.

Louisburg will travel to Spring Hill on Friday for what is an important game for postseason ramifications as both teams are in the same substate and could see each other in the first round. The two teams are 1-1 against each other so far this

year.

“It will be a big one to see where the league will finish out and preparing for substate,” Lowry said. “The girls will be ready.”

LOU	8	15	14	15 –
52				
BAL	10	10	18	17 –
55				

LOUISBURG (9-8): Madisen Simpson 24, Paige Buffington 10, Carson Buffington 6, Tayler Lancaster 5, Isabelle Holtzen 3, Chloe Renner 2, Haley Cain 2. Totals: 13 20-22 52. 3-point field goals: 6, (Simpson 4, Lancaster, Holtzen)

Quick start lifts Lady Cats past Ottawa



Louisburg junior Isabelle Holtzen goes up for two points during the Lady Cats' 48-34 win over Ottawa on Friday at Louisburg High School. The Lady Cats won their third straight game and are now 9-7 on the season.

The Louisburg High School girls basketball team picked a good time of the season to go on a winning streak.

With only four games left in the regular season, the Lady Cats need every win they can get when it comes to the Frontier League and substate standings. Louisburg got another big win Friday when it hosted Ottawa and pulled away for a 48-34 win.

It was the third consecutive victory for the Lady Cats as they improved their record to 9-7 on the season and are now 6-2 in the Frontier League standings – currently in third place. Louisburg also has the second-best record in its substate.

“It was definitely big for substate and league standings,” Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. “Each one is important now with substate and the end of the season getting closer and closer. With four games left, these ones at home are important for us and we take a lot of pride in these.”

The Lady Cats took a lot of pride in their defense early as Louisburg held Ottawa without a field goal and forced nine turnovers in the first quarter. Louisburg turned Ottawa over 15 times in the first half and had 11 steals for the game.

Louisburg countered that with a strong offensive start as it outscored Ottawa 18-2 in the first quarter and maintained the lead in the next three frames.

“We wanted to something a little bit different defensively and the girls did a great job with it,” Lowry said. “They executed everything that we wanted to do and it was good to see. There were a few breakdowns on some help defense stuff, but for the most part they stuck with the game plan and played really great defensively.”

Senior Paige Buffington and sophomore Carson Buffington got the Lady Cats going early as Paige hit a pair of 3-pointers

and a basket, while Carson scored six points as the two combined for 14 of the team's 18 points in the first quarter.



Senior Paige Buffington rises up for a shot Friday against Ottawa.

The Lady Cats took a 29-14 lead into halftime, and although their lead was never threatened, cooled off a little offensively in the third quarter with just four points. Louisburg picked it up back up in the fourth and secured the

14-point win.

“It is tough to play with a big lead sometimes,” Lowry said. “We try to practice with a lot of intensity, so when we get into game situations then that will carry over. Still, there is probably a little bit of letdown and mental breakdown stuff when you have a lead like that. But if your starters don’t have that, then the players off the bench need to come on and pick them up and provide that intensity. That is a real positive about the rotation that we have right now.”

Senior Madisen Simpson was the lone Lady Cat to score in double figures with 11 points to go along with three steals, while senior Chloe Renner came off the bench to give Louisburg a spark with nine points, six rebounds and three assists.

Paige and Carson Buffington finished with eight points each, while Carson pulled down a team-high nine rebounds in the win. Senior Tayler Lancaster added seven points and a pair of steals.

Ottawa’s Ryen White scored 25 of her team’s 34 points.

Louisburg returns action Tuesday when it hosts No. 7 Baldwin and then will follow it up with a road game against Spring Hill on Friday.

LOU	18	11	4	15	-
48					
OTT	2	12	6	14	
- 34					

LOUISBURG (9-7): Madisen Simpson 11, Chloe Renner 9, Paige Buffington 8, Carson Buffington 8, Tayler Lancaster 7, Kennia Hankinson 3, Isabelle Holtzen 2. Totals: 20 3-7 48. 3-point field goals: 5, (P. Buffington 2, Simpson, Lancaster, Hankinson)