

Lady Cats leave it all on floor against Baldwin



Louisburg guard Isabelle Holtzen goes up for a shot during Friday's road contest against Baldwin. The Lady Cats fell 66-35 to the Bulldogs.

BALDWIN CITY – As Shawn Lowry walked out of the locker room following Friday's game with Baldwin, he had a grin from ear to ear.

He couldn't stop smiling.

By looking at him, no one could tell that his Louisburg girls basketball team had just lost 66-35 to the Bulldogs. No, it wasn't about the score to Lowry or to the rest of his players.

It was about what the Lady Cats left on the court – nothing.

"Score isn't even really an issue for me," Lowry said. "For what they gave, I will take that any time, any day and with any team that I coach. I couldn't have asked for them to give any more than what they just did. I loved it."

Whether it was early in the game, or in the final seconds of their 31-point loss at Baldwin High School, the Lady Cats made Baldwin work for every point. With the game already out of reach in the fourth quarter, the Louisburg players found

themselves on the floor for loose balls, going after rebounds – trying anything they could to get something positive to go their way.

The Lady Cats (1-6) also battled foul problems most of the game and had to go deep in their bench on several occasions. Those players did the same thing the starters did – they made things uncomfortable for Baldwin at times.



Senior Megan Roy gets on the floor for a loose ball during Friday's contest with Baldwin at Baldwin High School.

Baldwin also did the same for Louisburg as the Lady Cats had to go up against a full-court press most of the night.

"That is one of the better pressure teams we will probably face this year," Lowry said. "They are very quick and athletic. I saw Baldwin play earlier this year and they give everyone a hard time. We got a little wore down at the end, and foul trouble hurt us a little bit, but for what those kids gave, especially the younger ones and even the younger, younger ones. It was awesome."

It wasn't the best of starts for the Lady Cats as Baldwin displayed their athleticism early and they jumped out to a 9-0

lead two minutes into the contest. Louisburg didn't back down, however, as it went on a mini 7-0 run of its own to cut the lead to two on a 3-pointer from Kennia Hankinson and baskets from Madisen Simpson and Isabelle Holtzen.

Baldwin brought the lead back out to 11 going into the second quarter and the Lady Cats had to deal with foul problems as starter Emalee Overbay had three fouls in the first quarter and three other players had two each.

Megan Lemke, Holtzen and Hankinson would also pick up their third foul in the second quarter and the Lady Cats were forced to go to their younger players as freshmen Julianne Finley and Bailey Kern each saw time, along with sophomore guard Lexie Reece.

Still, by the time halftime came around, the Lady Cats found themselves down just nine points.

"I will tell you this, everyone that sat up there and watched that game is talking about how tough those kids are," Lowry said. "I just told the girls how proud I am of what they just gave. They never backed down and never quit playing. We were pressured the entire game, up until the last minute, which is fine by us. We showed a lot of toughness out there."

A lot that toughness came in the rebounding department and from freshman Carson Buffington. The Louisburg forward pulled down a team-high 11 rebounds to go along with seven points and two steals.

Simpson led Louisburg in scoring with nine points, while Holtzen added seven points in the loss.

"This group is not done working and they showed that," Lowry said. "That is what I love about this group. Carson Buffington is rebounding the ball like crazy and we are getting to balls that no one else wants to get after. It is really fun to coach that."

Baldwin started to pull away from the Lady Cats in the third quarter as it went on an 11-2 run to take a 14-point lead going into the third quarter. Louisburg also lost starter Paige Buffington with an ankle and knee injury in the second half.

The Lady Cats continued to fight, but a deeper Baldwin team pulled away in the fourth quarter. Still, Louisburg gave it everything it had until the final buzzer.

“They had nothing left,” Lowry said. “It was great to see and I will take that any day of the week. They showed me a lot out there.”

Louisburg tries to get back on track tonight when it travels to Frontenac. Tipoff is set for 6 p.m.

LOUISBURG		11	11
8	5 – 35		
BALDWIN		22	9
18	17 – 66		

LOUISBURG (1-6): Madisen Simpson 4-10 0-2 9; Carson Buffington 3-10 1-4 7; Isabelle Holtzen 2-7 3-6 7; Kennia Hankinson 1-11 0-0 3; Lexie Reece 1-1 1-2 3; Paige Buffington 1-4 0-1 2; Megan Roy 1-3 0-2 2; Emalee Overbay 1-4 0-2 2. Totals: 14-55 5-23 35. 3-point field goals: 2, (Hankinson, Simpson)

Lady Cats nearly get second

win in a row



Junior Emalee Overbay dives onto the floor for a loose ball Tuesday against Ottawa at Louisburg High School. The Lady Cats came close to their second win in a row, but fell 41-36.

The Louisburg girls basketball team may have come up short in a 41-36 loss to Ottawa on Tuesday at Louisburg High School, but the Lady Cats took another step forward in their development.

Louisburg nearly pulled off its second straight victory of the season, but foul trouble and missed shots late hurt the Lady Cats' chances in their first game back from the holiday break.

"We are growing, the kids are developing and buying in to what we want to do," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "They like each other, care about each other and it is fun to be around. It is not always like that with other teams, especially when freshmen are playing at the varsity level, but I think that speaks to our leadership and they care about each other like that."

The Lady Cats (1-5) faced adversity from the start as they trailed 13-4 early in the second quarter. Louisburg's offense picked up in a hurry as it scored 12 points in the final six minutes of the first half.

Junior Madisen Simpson and freshman Kennia Hankinson each connected on 3-pointers and the Lady Cats eventually cut the Ottawa lead to three points after a basket from Emalee Overbay.

Louisburg continued to put the pressure on the Cyclones as it opened the third quarter with an 8-0 run. Baskets from sophomore Isabelle Holtzen, senior Megan Lemke and Simpson put Louisburg up 25-23 with 2 minutes and 50 seconds left in the quarter.



Senior Megan Lemke goes up for a shot during Tuesday' contest against Ottawa in Louisburg.

The lead changed hands five times after that before Ottawa took a two-point lead going into the final quarter.

The offense came thanks to their defense as the Lady Cats made it difficult on Ottawa. They forced 17 Cyclone turnovers in the final three quarters, including eight in the fourth quarter alone.

"It started with how we play on the defensive end," Lowry

said. "We got on the floor for some loose balls and we got some rebounds offensively that was just effort and 'want to' stuff. We talked about that at halftime and they took it to heart. That is what I like about these girls is we talk about doing stuff that is going to be hard and give a lot of effort and they go out and do it."

Foul trouble began to creep in for Louisburg as starting forwards Carson Buffington and Overbay each fouled out early in the fourth quarter. Ottawa took advantage as it built a six-point lead early on, but both teams would struggle offensively, until Louisburg made one final run.

Simpson hit a 3-pointer with 1:15 left and Paige Buffington connected on a 3-pointer as well to cut the lead to two with 40 seconds remaining. Louisburg was forced to foul and Ottawa connected on three free throws to close out the game.

Simpson scored a team-high 14 points to lead the Lady Cats and Paige Buffington finished with seven on the night. Lemke led the team with 10 rebounds.

"I thought Megan Lemke played really well, especially defensively," Lowry said. "I think she had 10 boards tonight on top of that. She just gives and gives and she doesn't come out of the game much, and I thought she gave a lot.

"Kennia came in and did a nice job and Isabelle came in and was working her tail off out there. Our younger kids are learning, and it is tough right now, but we are getting better."

Louisburg will try and get back on track Friday when it travels to Baldwin. The Lady Cats will be on the road for the rest of the month and won't return home until their Feb. 2 meeting with Paola.

LOUISBURG		4	12
13	7 – 36		
OTTAWA		11	10
10	10 – 41		

LOUISBURG (1-5): Madisen Simpson 14, Paige Buffington 7, Isabelle Holtzen 4, Megan Lemke 4, Kennia Hankinson 3, Carson Buffington 2, Emalee Overbay 2. Totals 14 4-6 36. 3-point field goals: 4, (Simpson 2, P. Buffington, Hankinson)

Lady Cats battle for first victory



Freshman Carson Buffington battles for a rebound with two Eudora players Tuesday in Eudora. Buffington and the Lady Cats won their first game of the season 37-34, and in the process, Buffington grabbed a team-high 17 rebounds.

The Louisburg girls basketball team gave itself an early Christmas present of sorts Tuesday in Eudora.

It was one the Lady Cats had at the top of the list for a while now – their first win.

Thanks to a big fourth quarter rally, the Lady Cats defeated Eudora 37-34 to ensure their first victory of the season and it gives them a little life heading into the Christmas break after going winless in their first four games.

“Look at us compared to last year and there are a lot of similarities between the two teams,” Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. “Now, maybe not with wins and losses, but we have kids that are growing and that is what I have said from the start. What I am really proud about is the way so many different kids stepped up at different times. It wasn’t one person doing something unbelievable, it was all of them doing their jobs.”

The Lady Cats (1-4) did have several players come through at key moments of the contest, but maybe none bigger than Madisen Simpson. The Louisburg junior, who started the first four games of the season, came off the bench this time around and gave the Lady Cats a big spark – especially in the fourth quarter.

Down 27-22 with four minutes left in the contest, Simpson hit a pair of 3-pointers and a jumper to give Louisburg a one-point lead with just under three minutes left.



Senior Megan Lemke

looks to go up for a shot Tuesday in Eudora.

Sophomore Isabelle Holtzen then stole a Eudora pass and took it down the court herself for the layup and put Louisburg up 32-29.

"I just do it for the team because they mean a lot to me," Simpson said. "It motivated me to come off the bench, but anything I can do for my team I will definitely do it."

Louisburg also came through at the free-throw line in the final seconds. Freshman Kennia Hankinson, senior Megan Lemke and Simpson all made free throws to close the game out.

The Lady Cats also got several second chance opportunities thanks to their work on the boards. Louisburg pulled down 30 rebounds for the game and freshman Carson Buffington had 17 of those by herself.

"I can't remember anything like that," Lowry said of Buffington's performance. "Some of the ones I really don't know how she got to them, but really it was all about effort and wanting the ball more than the other team."

It was a struggle defensively early for the Lady Cats as Eudora got several open looks on its way to a 15-8 lead after the first quarter. Louisburg would tighten down and allow just 19 points in the final three quarters combined to stay in the game.

Louisburg fought its way back in the game when Simpson hit a 3-pointer, her first of three for the night, with under a minute remaining in the first half and the Lady Cats took 20-all tie into halftime.

After a slow start offensively to the second half, which saw Louisburg manage only two points, the Lady Cats heated up in the second half and scored 15 points in the final four minutes

to pull away.

"What I told them at halftime is how they play in the second half is the taste you have in your mouth the next two weeks," Lowry said. "They took that to heart. We get to build off this now and when we get to practice, the girls are going to do things they haven't done before. It was big for us."

Simpson finished the game with a team-high 15 points, while Holtzen and junior Paige Buffington were next with six points each.

Now the Lady Cats will focus their efforts on to getting better over the break. Louisburg will host Ottawa on Jan. 5.

"Our effort was absolutely amazing tonight," Simpson said. "We never gave up, even when we were down, we never gave up as a team."

LOUISBURG		8	15
2	15 – 37		
EUDORA		15	5
6	8 – 34		

LOUISBURG (1-4): Madisen Simpson 5-13 1-2 15; Isabelle Holtzen 3-7 0-0 6; Paige Buffington 2-7 0-0 6; Megan Lemke 1-7 3-4 5; Carson Buffington 1-5 1-2 3; Kennia Hankinson 0-1 2-4 2. Totals: 12-43 7-12 37. 3-point field goals: 5, (Simpson 3, P. Buffington 2)

Lady Cats continue to grow after tourney



Louisburg freshman Kennia Hankinson (middle) gets some help on a loose ball from teammate Carson Buffington during Friday's fifth-place game of the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic in Louisburg. The Lady Cats fell 50-43.

Many teams that finished a tournament without a win would have left feeling defeated and frustrated.

For the Louisburg girls basketball team, the feeling was completely the opposite. Sure, the Lady Cats would have liked to win a game or two during last week's Wildcat-Bulldog Classic, but they are looking for more than just wins this early in the season – they want to see progress.

That was something they did accomplish as the young Lady Cat team nearly picked up two victories during the tournament and were tested in some tight situations, including a 50-43 loss to Anderson County on Friday in the fifth-place game.

"It is about getting them as much confidence as possible right now," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "We are getting game experience and more kids are understanding more parts of the game and it is slowing down for them. You see some freshmen that are starting to pick up parts, granted they still have a

ways to go, but they are picking up things and the effort is there.”

One of those freshmen, Kennia Hankinson, helped bring the Lady Cats back in the fourth quarter. Louisburg found itself down 10 points with 3 minutes and 20 seconds left in the game when Hankinson hit two 3-pointers in less than two minutes, and after a pair of Isabelle Holtzen free throws, cut Anderson County’s lead to two.

Anderson County would hit five free throws in the final minute to help secure the win, but Lowry liked what he saw from his freshman.

“She has no fear,” Lowry said of Hankinson. “The kid just wants to play. I would still like to see her do a little more things defensively, but I am happy she hit those shots. I push her a lot as a freshman, and getting the opportunity she is, I really challenge her and she is stepping up.

“It wasn’t just those shots, she tried to take two charges, an even though she didn’t get the calls, she put herself in position to be unselfish for her team and I am most proud of that.”

Junior Paige Buffington provided the Lady Cats (0-4) with a lot of big baskets as she scored a team-high 14 points and had five rebounds. Fellow junior Madisen Simpson had 11 points and also pulled down five rebounds.



Junior Emalee Overbay goes up for a rebound against Anderson County on Friday.

Junior Emalee Overbay led the Lady Cats on the glass as she had a team-high eight rebounds and freshman Carson Buffington added seven.

Coach Lowry was proud to see his team battle back when the Lady Cats found themselves in dire straits.

“Those are experiences that these group of players haven’t been through yet,” he said. “That is great for them to be in that spot. To see them during the timeout, see them battle back and they are starting to come together and trust each other. It is great to see.”

Louisburg got off to a good start in its second game of the tournament Thursday when it faced off with Burlington. The Lady Cats had a one point lead after the first quarter, but Burlington’s pressure got to them at times and they fell 46-32.

Holtzen, a sophomore, and Simpson led the Lady Cats with seven points each and senior Megan Lemke added six in the loss. Carson Buffington had a team-high seven rebounds.

"It was a great experience to play in a preseason tournament like this and to play against teams like Burlington, who likes to pressure," Lowry said. "It is good for us to work on that because we are going to get pressured a lot this year. I thought we handled it fairly well."

In the tournament opener on Dec. 8, Louisburg faced off with Iola and had the lead four different times in the final quarter before falling 42-37.

The Lady Cats led 26-21 to start the fourth quarter before Iola went on 7-0 run to take a two point lead. Simpson hit a 3-pointer and a pair of free throws to give the Lady Cats a 33-32 lead back.

Paige Buffington added another basket with 2 minutes remaining to give Louisburg another small lead, but Iola ended the quarter on an 8-2 run to pull away.

Simpson led the Lady Cats in scoring with 15 points, while Lemke and Paige Buffington each added six points. Carson Buffington pulled down a team-high nine rebounds.

Louisburg returns to action tonight for its first official Frontier League contest. The Lady Cats will travel to Eudora for a 6 p.m. tipoff in hopes to get their first win.

AND. COUNTY	13	15	10
12 - 50			
LOUISBURG		10	12
9	12 - 43		

LOUISBURG (0-4): Paige Buffington 4-10 4-7 14; Madisen Simpson 1-4 3-6 11; Kennia Hankinson 2-6 2-2 8; Isabelle Holtzen 0-3 4-10 4; Haven Turner 1-1 0-0 2; Emalee Overbay 0-4 2-4 2; Megan Lemke 0-8 1-2 1; Lexie Reece 0-2 1-2 1. Totals: 11-47 15-30 43. 3-point field goals: 6, (Simpson 3, Hankinson 2,

Buffington).

BURLINGTON	11	12	11
12 – 46			

LOUISBURG	12	2
9 9 – 32		

LOUISBURG: Madisen Simpson 2-16 2-4 7; Isabelle Holtzen 3-7 1-5 7; Megan Lemke 3-5 0-1 6; Carson Buffington 2-7 0-0 4; Emalee Overbay 1-4 2-4 4; Kennia Hankinson 1-1 0-0 2; Ryan Caldwell 1-1 0-0 2. Totals: 13-51 5-14 32. 3-point field goals: 1, (Simpson)

IOLA	6	7
8 21 – 42		

LOUISBURG	3	13
10 11 – 37		

LOUISBURG: Madisen Simpson 5-13 3-4 15; Megan Lemke 1-3 3-4 6; Paige Buffington 3-11 0-0 6; Emalee Overbay 1-5 3-5 5; Isabelle Holtzen 2-8 0-2 4; Ryan Caldwell 0-0 1-2 1. Totals: 12-43 10-17 37. 3-point field goals: 3, (Simpson 2, Lemke).

Lady Cats fall to Pittsburg in opener



Louisburg junior Madisen Simpson drives toward the basket Friday during the Lady Cats' season opener against Pittsburg in Louisburg. The Lady Cats fell 43-20 and will take part in the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic this week.

Shawn Lowry knew it wasn't going to be easy and all he had to do was look at his starting lineup.

The Louisburg girls basketball coach started two freshmen, Carson Buffington and Kennia Hankinson, on Friday against Class 5A Pittsburg and had just three players back who saw significant varsity time from a year ago. Lowry knows this process is going to take time.

Despite the Lady Cats' 43-20 home loss to the Purple Dragons, Lowry saw a lot of positives from his team in their season opener.

"I am just so proud of our effort and our toughness," Lowry said. "These kids right now are in the same spirit and attitude that they were before the game started, which I love. They could be in there with their heads down, but they know they busted their tail out there. I couldn't have asked for more."

The Lady Cats (0-1) were in the game early as the hung around with the Purple Dragons in the first quarter. Louisburg trailed 10-4 before junior Madisen Simpson connected on a 3-pointer, but Pittsburg answered with a basket to take a 12-7

lead into the second quarter.



Freshman Kennia Hankinson drives the lane during Friday's home opener in Louisburg.

In the frame, both teams had problems finding the basket as Pittsburg was responsible for the only five points scored in the second quarter and had a 17-7 halftime lead.

The Purple Dragons used a full-court press most of the night, which made it difficult for the Lady Cats to get in a rhythm. Pittsburg took advantage of that in the third quarter as it outscored Louisburg 19-4 and pulled away for a 32-11 advantage.

Although the Lady Cats faced a large deficit, Lowry didn't see his team give in and watched them compete until the end.

"I think that is part of the way we have worked with them," Lowry said. "We told them this is going to be tough and they challenge each other. When things get tough, we don't react to all the highs and lows and they did that. It is not easy for young kids to do. They were playing just as hard in the fourth quarter as they were in the first and that is great to see."

Junior Paige Buffington and Simpson each finished with six

points to lead the Lady Cats as each connected on a pair of 3-pointers. Freshman Carson Buffington was next on the team with three points.

"It is game one, but some other kids are going to have to step up and play more down the road," Lowry said. "I thought Carson Buffington was really good for her first high school varsity game. I think she will get better and stronger as the year goes on.

"Our growth potential is really high. This group is so coachable. They work their tails off and they give us everything and they will get better as the year goes on."

Louisburg will try for its first win at 5 p.m. tonight when it hosts Iola in the first round of the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic. The Lady Cats will also meet Burlington at 5 p.m. on Thursday in the next round before ending the tournament Friday.

PITT	12	5	19	7 –
43				
LOU	7	0	4	9
– 20				

LOUISBURG (0-1): Paige Buffington 6, Madisen Simpson 6, Carson Buffington 3, Megan Lemke 2, Kennia Hankinson 2, Isabelle Holtzen 1. 3-point field goals: 4, (P. Buffington 2, Simpson 2)

Lady Cats remain positive despite inexperience



Louisburg senior Megan Lemke (10) is one of two seniors on the Lady Cats basketball team this season as they will take the floor with a young roster.

Advancing to the substate championship game and finishing the season with 11 wins a year ago, the Louisburg girls basketball team had its fair share of success.

The Lady Cats had a lot of that success due to strong senior leadership and those seniors also provided a bulk of the scoring and rebounding. With that, Louisburg now has to replace an all-state point guard in Natalie Moore, an all-league shooting guard in Kirstin Lowry and the team's leading rebounder in Kallie O'Keefe.

It isn't an easy task for this year's version of the Lady Cats, and they will have to do some things differently on both ends of the floor, but they are looking forward to the challenge.

"We have made changes to some of the things we will do offensively and defensively based on our personnel," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "I expect there will be a learning curve with these changes and with some of our inexperience.

However, the upside growth and development of this group can be very good.”

This group includes just two seniors, one of which is new to the team this season. Senior Megan Lemke, a returning starter, brings a veteran presence to the team underneath the basket as she saw a lot of playing time a season ago. New to the team is senior Megan Roy, who also hopes to give the team a lift at forward.



Junior Paige Buffington (right) is one of five Lady Cats who saw significant varsity time a season ago.

Louisburg also returns a pair of junior guards in Madisen Simpson and Paige Buffington, who each started at different times a season ago and are both threats to score from the outside.

Fellow junior Emalee Overbay, who saw time at both the varsity and junior varsity level last year, hopes to give the Lady Cats some depth at the forward spot.

“It’s great to see the continuing evolution of the program’s

culture,” coach Lowry said. “The upperclassmen have learned from the previous year’s captains how to lead through encouragement and motivation, how to be great teammates, how to be unselfish and the work ethic they must have. “

The Lady Cats will also ask sophomores Isabelle Holtzen and Sarah Wilson to contribute from the guard and forward spot, respectively. Louisburg might also have some freshmen see varsity time this season as its numbers are down.

Louisburg has 19 players out for basketball this season, six of those players are in the junior and senior class, combined. The Lady Cats have seven freshmen and six sophomores on the roster.

“The girls have worked hard in preparing for the upcoming season,” coach Lowry said. “Our team leaders have helped foster an environment that is competitive and positive with their work ethic and attitudes.

“As with each year, we stress the importance of competing hard on every play and every rep. The development of our mentality to always out-work and out-hustle will be key for our team this year. Many of the younger players will have the opportunity to gain valuable game experience this season.”

The Lady Cats will also play a difficult schedule in the Frontier League. Louisburg will face league favorites Paola and Baldwin a combined four times, if not more.

Paola is ranked No. 9 in the preseason in Class 4A Division I, while Baldwin is No. 1 in Class 4A Division II.

Louisburg will also no longer hold its annual tournament in January and will instead participate in the Top Gun Tournament in Wellsville. One bonus, however, is the Lady Cats will host the substate tournament.

“The Frontier League is always very strong and has some of the

best coaches in the state,” coach Lowry said. “The girls understand what they must all give in order to be successful. Most important for me is the way in which we play – with great effort, unselfish play and with character.”

The Lady Cats will get their season started Friday when they host Pittsburg. Tipoff is set for 6 p.m.

Next week, Louisburg will host the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic and will play Iola and Burlington on Tuesday and Thursday, respectively.

2015-16 LOUISBURG GIRLS BASKETBALL SCHEDULE

Dec. 4
Pittsburg
6 p.m.

Dec. 8 Iola (Wildcat-Bulldog
Classic) 5 p.m.

Dec. 10 Burlington (Wildcat-Bulldog
Classic) 5 p.m.

Dec. 11 Wildcat-Bulldog
Classic TBA

Dec. 15 at
Eudora
6 p.m

Jan. 5
Ottawa
6 p.m.

Jan. 8 at
Baldwin
6 p.m.

Jan. 12 at
Frontenac 6
p.m.

Jan. 15 at De Soto
6 p.m.

Jan. 20 at Spring
Hill 7:30
p.m.

Jan. 26 at Wellsville Top
Gun TBA

Jan. 28 at Wellsville Top
Gun TBA

Jan. 30 at Wellsville Top
Gun TBA

Feb. 2
Paola
6 p.m.

Feb. 5
Eudora
6 p.m.

Feb. 12 at
Ottawa
6 p.m.

Feb. 16 Baldwin
6 p.m.

Feb. 19 Spring
Hill 6
p.m.

Feb. 23 De

Soto

6 p.m.

Opinion: Rough patch leads to new beginning



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

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

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

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

That never took place.

My bosses came into my office early that afternoon to inform me I was being let go. The job of covering Louisburg athletics was no longer mine. I packed up my things, turned in my key,

went home, punched the wall a couple times and cried.

I was scared.

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

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

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

Not exactly the best way to alleviate fears.

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

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

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

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

This fall brings a lot of story lines to the Wildcat programs. The football team is looking to improve off its 3-win season a

year ago and find its way back to the playoffs with a veteran group returning.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I am still scared, though.

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

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

I am living the American dream.

I just don't want to wake up.

Lady Cats get summer work started



Louisburg High School girls basketball coach Shawn Lowry speaks to his team Friday at the conclusion of their week-long team camp. Lowry hopes this summer will help build leadership and team chemistry.

The season may be more than six months away, but the Louisburg High School girls basketball team is already preparing for what lies ahead.

Just two weeks after school was let out, the Lady Cats hit the hardwood for a week-long team camp last week in an effort to get better fundamentally and get their competition level back up to where it needs to be.

The Lady Cats were ready to get back to work and will try and replace three senior starters from a season ago. Louisburg had to say goodbye to all-Frontier League players Natalie Moore and Kirstin Lowry, along with the team's best post player in Kallie O'Keefe.

Although they will have to make up for the production of those three players, Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry believes his team has gotten off to a good start.

"It has been a good week," Lowry said. "We have had some good leadership. We lost some really good leadership last year and that was one of the things those three seniors that we lost left behind. They showed these guys how to be leaders."

Senior Megan Lemke returns as one of the team leaders, along with juniors Madisen Simpson, Paige Buffington and Emalee Overbay. All four players saw significant varsity time last season and coach Lowry also had a new addition to the camp in senior Megan Roy, who also provided leadership.

It was those players who helped the incoming freshmen and underclassmen understand what their coach is looking for.



Savannah Reinhart tries to dribble past Megan Roy

**during the final day of the
team camp Friday at
Louisburg High School.**

"Team camp week is really about an indoctrination of culture and mentality," Lowry said. "That is what is most important. It is important to learn how to compete hard every day, especially for the younger kids and the older kids setting that example and shaping our team identity. That is the main thing we want to accomplish.

"This week also gives me a chance to see which kids have done some work before the summer and which ones haven't. There have been quite a few kids that have done some work and that is really great to see coming in to start."

Lowry likes what he has seen out of his returning players so far, but he has also been impressed with the nine freshmen that took part in the team camp.

"There are some kids that fit in pretty well," he said. "There are some, that if they put in more work in the offseason, who knows where they can be at the start of the season. They are learning that the speed of this game is way different than where they have been. What I do like is they haven't backed down when going up against some of these older kids and that is nice to see."

Along with the team camp, the Lady Cats will have a busy summer. They have a weights session twice a week and also have open gym workouts two days a week.

The varsity players will also compete in tournaments throughout the summer at Piper in Kansas City, along with stops in Girard and Emporia. The younger players will participate in a league throughout the summer that will be held at Baker University in Baldwin City.

"When you have to work hard together, it brings you together,"

Lowry said. "We don't want to win games this summer necessarily, we want to prepare to win games this summer for when it counts."

Girls basketball announces awards



Louisburg seniors (from left) Kallie O'Keefe, Natalie Moore and Kirstin Lowry were all smiles Wednesday during the team's postseason awards banquet at Louisburg High School. All three players were recognized for their postseason honors

It was a bittersweet moment for the Louisburg girls basketball team Wednesday when it held its annual postseason banquet at Louisburg High School.

The team came together to relive some good memories from its 11-11 season and talk about the improvement the Lady Cats made from the start of the season till the end. However, it also meant saying goodbye to a few players.

Seniors Natalie Moore, Kirstin Lowry and Kallie O'Keefe were recognized for their achievements, not only this season, but

for what they have accomplished in their four years. This season, the Lady Cats won their home invitational and advanced to the substate championship game for the second straight year.

"They have shown these younger kids what the expectations of this program are," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "They have shown them how to lead, the character we expect and how to play. They will all three be missed."

Coach Lowry revealed all of the postseason honors to his team, in which all of them went to the three seniors.

Moore was named first team all-Frontier League, was second team all-state in Class 4A by Sports I Kansas. She also received honorable mention all-state honors from The Wichita Eagle and The Topeka Capital-Journal.

She was also the Co-Player of the Year and first team on the Tri-County Spotlight squad. She finished her career with 898 points.

Moore averaged 17.4 points a game and also made a living at the free-throw line. Moore had 204 free-throw attempts on the season and made 73 percent.

She also averaged 5.5 rebounds a game to go along with 4.6 assists. She had 27 steals on the year and shot 44 percent from the floor.

Kirstin Lowry was also honored as she was a second team all-Frontier League and was also second team Tri-County Spotlight. Lowry was second on the team in scoring at nine points a game and shot better than 40 percent from behind the 3-point line.

O'Keefe, who averaged eight points and seven rebounds a game, also earned second team all-Tri County Spotlight.

Members of the Lady Cats who earned varsity letters are:

Seniors: Natalie Moore, Kirstin Lowry and Kallie O'Keefe

Juniors: Megan Lemke

Sophomores: Zoie Gilliland, Paige Buffington, Emalee Overbay and Madisen Simpson

Freshman: Isabelle Holtzen and Sarah Wilson

Moore, Lowry named to all-league team



Louisburg senior Natalie Moore was named to the all-Frontier League first team for the second year in a row. Moore was joined by teammate Kirstin Lowry, who earned second team honors.

According to the Frontier League coaches, the Louisburg girls basketball team has two of the best players in a league that featured two state runner-up teams.

Louisburg senior Natalie Moore was one of the league's top scorers and she was recognized for it. For the second year in a row, Moore was named to the all-league first team and was

joined by one of her senior teammates.

Kirstin Lowry was named to the all-Frontier League second team as she was one of the top 3-point threats in the league. Lowry was an honorable mention a season ago.

“Natalie and Kirstin were really great leaders for our team in the offseason and during the season,” Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. “They always set the tone with how hard they worked and the positive, encouraging attitudes they brought every day.

“I think most coaches would always like more representation, particularly with players that may not fill up a stat sheet but are really good defensively or play unselfish. However, our league had an exceptional senior class this year.”



Louisburg senior Kirstin Lowry was recently selected to the all-Frontier League second team.

Baldwin, the Class 4A-Division II state runner-up, led the

league with five selections. Paola, the Class 4A-Division I state runner-up, finished with four.

Joining Moore on the first team was Ottawa's Corie Fischer, De Soto's Megan Bonar, Paola's Morgan Laudan and Baldwin's Maddie Ogle.

Teams had a hard time keeping Moore, the Lady Cats' point guard, out of the lane as she averaged 17.4 points a game and also made a living at the free-throw line. Moore had 204 free-throw attempts on the season and made 73 percent.

Moore also averaged 5.5 rebounds a game to go along with 4.6 assists. She also had 27 steals on the year and shot 44 percent from the floor.

"It's hard to express just how good Natalie was this year in arguably one of the toughest leagues in a 4A class with so many exceptional players," coach Lowry said. "This season was the culmination of so many years of hard work for Nat and we were very fortunate to get to share in this journey."

Kirstin Lowry was second on the Lady Cats in scoring. She averaged nine points a game and shot over 40 percent from behind the 3-point line.

The Louisburg senior was one of the team's better defenders and also had the opportunity to have her dad as the head coach the last two seasons.

"Kirstin had a very good year shooting the ball from behind the 3-point line, but I'm most proud of her defensive effort and the passion she played with," coach Lowry said.

"You'd be hard pressed to find one player that would want to have traded places with Kirstin all these years with me as her coach. I am amazed how she handled everything and I am so proud of the strong young lady she has grown into and the great values she has."

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE GIRLS BASKETBALL

FIRST TEAM

Corie Fischer, Ottawa, senior

Megan Bonar, De Soto, senior

Morgan Laudan, Paola, junior

Natalie Moore, Louisburg, senior

Maddie Ogle, Baldwin, senior

SECOND TEAM

Brette Moore, Ottawa, senior

Tiana Moala, Paola, senior

Lyndsee Johnson, Paola, senior

Kirstin Lowry, Louisburg, senior

Tori Marshall, De Soto, senior

HONORABLE MENTION

Corey Valentine, Baldwin, senior

Madeline Neufeld, Baldwin, junior

Makaila Garcia, Eudora, senior

Taylor Williams, Paola, junior

Alexia Stein, Baldwin, senior

Kyna Smith, Baldwin, junior