

Wildcats face tall task against Bishop Miego



Louisburg senior Grant Harding splits the Fort Scott defense thanks to a screen from teammate Dalton Ribordy (31) on Saturday in the Class 4A-DI sub-state championship game. Harding will lead the Wildcats against No. 3 Bishop Miego Wednesday in the first round of the state tournament.

In its final practice before its first state tournament game in 12 years, the Louisburg boys basketball team was all smiles.

If the Wildcats had a little bit of bounce in their step, who could blame them? Normally at this time, the Wildcats have already checked in their uniforms and many of them were focused on what spring sport they were going to play.

"It is just good to have extra basketball," Louisburg senior Jayce Geiman said.

The Wildcats were loose and having fun as they prepared for what could be their biggest challenge of the season. That's not to say they didn't get work done though.

Louisburg (10-12), the No. 6 seed, has a big task at hand as they meet No. 3 seed Bishop Miego (19-3) at 8:15 p.m. on Wednesday in the Class 4A-Division I state tournament at the

Tony's Pizza Events Center in Salina. Miego has been the No. 1 ranked team in 4A-DI all season and is considered one of the better teams in the state.

Still, the fact the Wildcats are in this position for the first time since 2005 leaves them excited for the chance to play on the state's biggest stage.

"It really hasn't sunk in yet," Louisburg senior Grant Harding said. "It probably won't until we step on the court, but we are looking forward to the challenge. They are obviously a great team, so we have to go in and play our game and don't be afraid. A lot of teams lay down for them because of the name and we can't do that."

Bishop Miego, the defending state champion, has put together a strong season against a schedule that features mainly Class 5A and 6A teams. The Stags opened the season with a win over 4A-DI McPherson, who is also in the state tournament, but played higher classification teams the rest of the way until the sub-state tournament.

The Stags defeated Bonner Springs (72-32) in the first round of sub-state and then defeated the state's No. 2 ranked team – Eudora – 49-40 in the championship game. Their lone losses on the season were to Blue Valley and St. Thomas Aquinas (twice).

Louisburg played both Eudora and state-ranked Ottawa a total of four times on the season, so the Wildcats have played the state's upper-echelon teams in the past, despite losing each contest.



Senior guard Sam Guetterman pushes the ball up the floor against Fort Scott last Saturday.

"It does give us a good barometer of what we are going up against," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "Just from the limited film I have seen, Eudora played them pretty well and Eudora is one of the better teams in the state as well and hopefully we can take things that they did well and tweak them to make them work for us."

Although they have seen tough teams in the past, the Wildcats haven't faced a front line like they will see from Miego. The Stags feature a line that stands 6-foot-8, 6-8 and 6-5, which forces the Wildcats to adjust what they normally do.

"It is hard to simulate that in practice," Geiman said. "We have been practicing against six and seven guys on defense, which is really hard, so it will be a challenge. They are a really good team."

Jeremiah Robinson-Earl is of the Stags' top players as the 6-8 sophomore forward averages 14 points and nine rebounds a game to go along with three assists. He is also drawing interest from a lot of NCAA Division I schools, including Kansas.

Senior forward Francesco Badocchi (6-8) averages 15 points and six rebounds a contest. He wasn't able to play varsity at Miego until the second semester last season as he transferred from Italy, but since then he has elevated Miego's play even more. Badocchi has also drawn interest from Kansas and other D-1 programs.

"Their height is definitely the biggest challenge, especially when they run a line of 6-8, 6-7 and 6-6 or whatever they are," Nelson said. "It does significantly alter your game plan going in because we aren't going to be able to get our traditional inside looks, but I feel good with our game plan. We are just going to give them our best shot."

The Stags also feature skilled guards in Landry Weber and Semaj Ray. Weber leads the team with seven assists a contest and Ray averages close to 11 points a game. Guard Ezekiel Lopes also averages close to 11 points a game.

As for the Wildcats, Harding (6-2) has led the Wildcats in scoring most of the season. He averages 17 points a game, while Geiman (6-0) also averages 10 points a contest from the point guard position.

Senior Sam Guetterman (6-1), senior T.J. Dover (6-3) and junior Dalton Ribordy (6-2) will fill out the starting lineup, while the Wildcats also look for production from senior Jake Hill (5-9), senior Dalton Stone (6-0), junior Desmond Doles (6-1) and junior Garrett Lowry (6-4) off the bench.

Should Louisburg advance, it will play the winner of No. 2 Abilene and No. 7 Mulvane on Friday in the semifinals and will guarantee the Wildcats their first top four finish in 38 years. Louisburg has only placed at state two years, the

Wildcats took fourth in 1979 and third in 1948.

Despite facing their toughest challenge of the season, the Wildcats aren't worried about making history again, but they are looking forward to the game and their chance at playing in the state tournament.

"It will be exciting," Harding said. "I have had butterflies the last two games of sub-state, so I am sure I will for state as well. We are just going to go out there, play hard and see what happens."

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.”

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

BANNER WIN! Wildcats end drought with sub-state title



The Louisburg boys basketball team holds up its Class 4A-Division I sub-state championship trophy Saturday following its 64-52 victory over Fort Scott at Spring Hill High School. The Wildcats advanced to their first state tournament since 2005.

SPRING HILL – Two years ago, Jason Nelson had his team look up at the wall in the Louisburg High School gymnasium – more specifically – the state basketball banner.

The Wildcat head coach wanted his team to look at just how long it has been since Louisburg has been to the state tournament.

2005

Nelson hoped that would stick with his team and give them a little motivation.

“It was probably the cheesiest thing I have ever done in my life,” Nelson said. “I just wanted them to know what all this hard work was for.”

Two years later, during the team’s shoot-around just hours before they were to play for the right to go to the state tournament, Nelson had the same talk with his team.

It was a reminder of what they were playing for.

On Saturday, the Wildcats downed Fort Scott 64-52 in the championship game of the Class 4A-Division I sub-state tournament at Spring Hill High School to advance to their

first state tournament in 12 years.

In the midst of the celebration, there was one thing several players had on their minds – the banner.

“It is awesome,” Louisburg senior Jayce Geiman said. “I have never felt anything like this before. Ever since freshman year we have been focusing on getting something up on the banner because it was looking pretty bad. We were finally able to put something up there and it is great.”



Senior Grant Harding gets fouled by a Fort Scott player as he goes up for a basket Saturday.

Geiman, along with Grant Harding, Dalton Stone, T.J. Dover, Sam Guetterman, Jake Hill and Alex Seuferling, are the seven-member senior class that have stayed together since they were freshmen. Add in juniors Dalton Ribordy, Desmond Doles and Garrett Lowry, and the Wildcats have created a strong core

that has carried them through tough situations during the season and the sub-state tournament.

“We have had a lot of time together,” Dover said. “It is starting to click at the right time. We have such a great bond and we are like a bunch of brothers. We are playing good basketball at the right time and it is a lot of fun.

“It feels great to do something that Louisburg hasn’t done in a long time. It is really rewarding to see the four long years that we have put in come to fruition and hopefully the best is still yet to come.”

Coming off a win against Paola two days earlier in the first round of the tournament, where the Wildcats beat their rivals for the first time since 2012, Louisburg carried that momentum over into Saturday against Fort Scott where it ended a sub-state championship drought.

The Wildcats (10-12) did it thanks to a strong performance after halftime. Louisburg took a 27-23 lead into the locker room and wanted to bring Fort Scott out of its zone defense.



Louisburg senior Dalton Stone pulls up for a 3-pointer against Fort Scott on Saturday.

Louisburg was able to do that and move the ball around to get several easy baskets that led to a 19-6 run in the third quarter, that included a 3-pointer from Guetterman at the buzzer to put Louisburg up 18 points going into the fourth.

“We had another great game plan,” Harding said. “We knew they

were going to go zone on us most of the night and we executed great at the beginning and we were able to put together a decent lead at half. We knew if they were going to stay in that zone, that we were just going to hang back and we found the gaps and kept scoring on them.”

The Wildcats secured that double digit lead throughout the fourth quarter as they waited for the final buzzer to sound to begin celebrating.

“It is just unreal right now,” Guetterman said. “This was definitely one of our team goals at the beginning of the year was to win substate. This year with all the seniors we have and the underclassmen with experience, we knew that we could do it and it is a great feeling to finally pull it off.

“We played so well as a team in this tournament and it is awesome to be a part of. We have put in a lot of hard work and dedication over these last four years. Coach Nelson coaching us through these four years has been great as well.”



Jayce Geiman pumps his fists following the final buzzer in the Wildcats' substate championship victory over Fort Scott.

Louisburg took the lead from the opening tip and never relinquished it. The game was tied at 12-all at the end of the first quarter, but the Wildcats used an 8-2 run in the second quarter to expand its lead to eight before Fort Scott hit a shot just past half-court at the buzzer.

Harding and Geiman led Louisburg in scoring with 15 points each, while Geiman knocked down three 3-pointers and Harding pulled down a team-high nine rebounds. Dover finished with 13 points, while Ribordy had eight points and eight rebounds.

Stone added seven points, including a 3-pointer during the team's run in the second quarter, and Guetterman scored six in the win.

"It feels really good and these boys really earned it," Nelson said. "They busted their butts. They have dealt with tongue-lashings and other things from me, but they also had this end result in their minds. I am really happy for them."



T.J. Dover wins the opening tip.



Jayce Geiman moves the ball around on offense.



The Louisburg student section gets into the game



Jake Hill splits the Fort Scott defense



Senior Sam Guetterman pulls up for a 3-pointer at the end of the third quarter.



Dalton Ribordy muscles his way up for two points



Louisburg coach
Jason Nelson
instructs his
team during a
timeout.



Desmond Doles
(left) cheers
from the bench



T.J. Dover (44)
and Sam
Guetterman go out
to receive the
substate
championship
trophy.



The Wildcats will now prepare for their first state tournament game in more than decade as they earned the No. 6 seed and will face No. 3 Bishop Miege (19-3) at 8:15 p.m., on Wednesday at the Tony's Pizza Events Center (formally the Bicentennial Center).

Miege is currently the No. 1 ranked team in Class 4A-Division I and has been all season, but the Wildcats are going to make sure they enjoy this win and think about – but what else – the banner.

“We have looked at the banner all year and 2005 was the last time we have won this,” Harding said. “So it will be good to see 2017 up there for everyone to see for a long time to come.

It is an honor to be going to state and we are just going to enjoy every moment of it."

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|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| LOU | 12 | 15 | 19 | 18 – |
| 64 | | | | |
| FS | 12 | 11 | 6 | |
| 23 – 52 | | | | |

LOUISBURG (10-12): Grant Harding 15, Jayce Geiman 15, T.J. Dover 13, Dalton Ribordy 8, Dalton Stone 7, Sam Guetterman 6. Totals: 22-34 16-28 64. 3-point field goals: 5, (Geiman 3, Guetterman, Stone)

Kansas State High School Activities Association
OFFICIAL TOURNAMENT BRACKET
STATE BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT - MARCH 8-11, 2017

Tony's Plaza Event Center, Salina

BOYS CLASS 4A-DI

Manager: Jacob Potts

Teams report one hour before the first game. All official
team members are NOT permitted on the
court.



Wildcats win substate title, state bracket released



The Louisburg boys basketball team posed with their substate championship trophy following Saturday's 64-52 win over Fort Scott.

The Louisburg High School boys basketball team captured the substate tournament title Saturday when the Wildcats defeated Fort Scott 64-52.

The Wildcats (10-12) advanced to the state tournament for the first time since 2005 thanks to a big third quarter in which the Wildcats outscored Fort Scott 19-6.

Louisburg had three players score in double figures as seniors Grant Harding and Jayce Geiman each finished with 15 points, while T.J. Dover finished with 13.

The Class 4A state bracket was released this morning and the Wildcats earned the No. 6 seed and will play No. 3 Bishop Miege (19-3) at 8:15 p.m. on Wednesday.

Look for a full story on Saturday's substate title game in the near future.

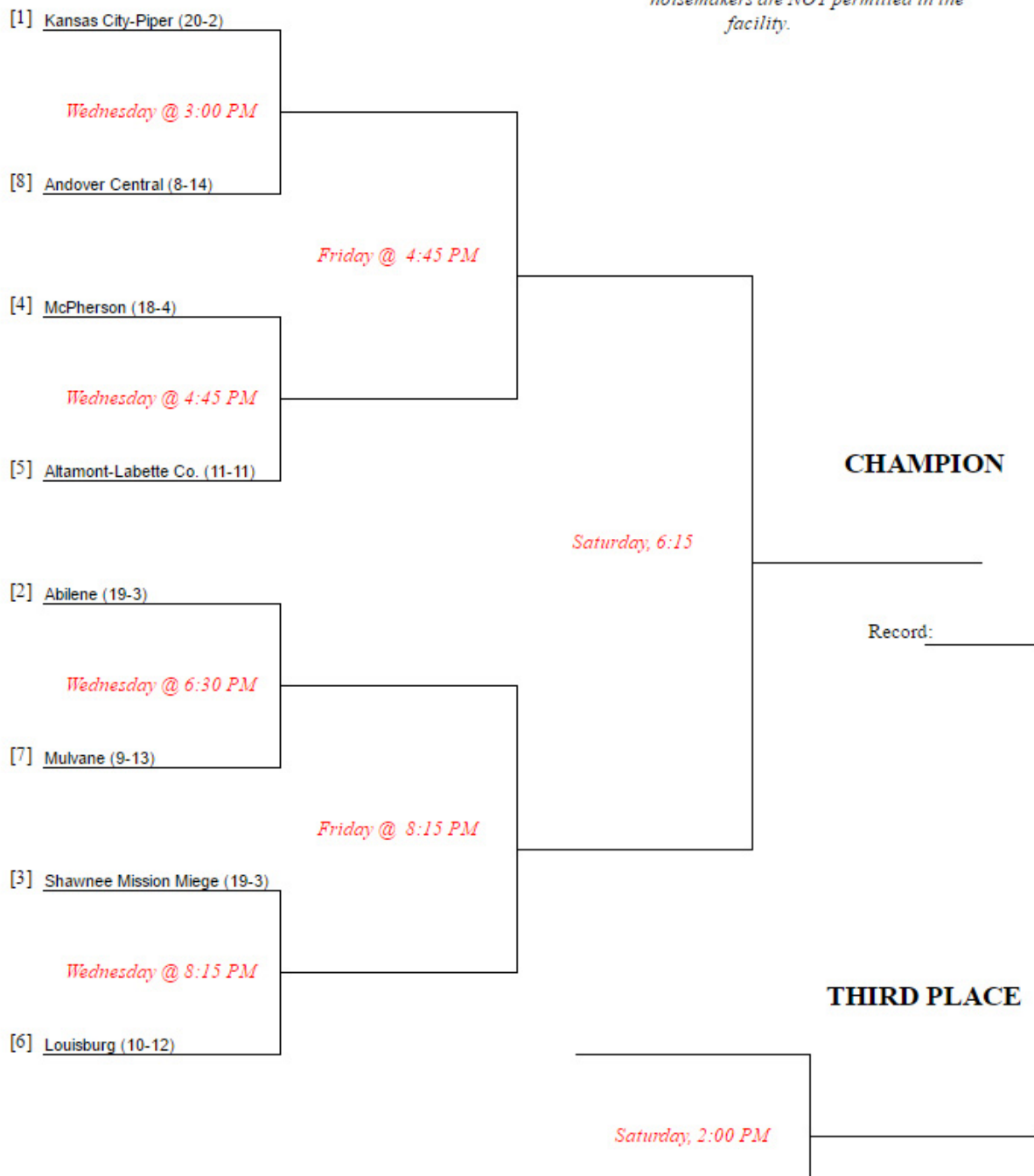
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Louisburg knocks off Paola to play for substate title



Louisburg's Jayce Geiman (3) was all smiles, as was teammate Dalton Ribordy, following Thursday's 54-44 win over Paola in the Class 4A substate semifinals at Spring Hill High School.

SPRING HILL – Louisburg exorcised a lot of demons Thursday – and it only took about six minutes.

For the first time since 2012, the Wildcats defeated Paola and picked a good time to do it. Louisburg ended the Panthers' season with a 54-44 win in semifinals of the Class 4A substate tournament at Spring Hill High School and ended a 12-game losing streak to the Panthers that dated back five years.

More importantly, the Wildcats (9-12) now find themselves one win away from a berth in the state tournament. Thursday's win gave Louisburg its first substate tournament win since 2013 and are in the substate championship game for the first time since 2010.

The Wildcats went on a 14-1 run in the final 6 minutes and 30 seconds to pull past Paola and continue their quest at a spot in the state tournament.

"It feels great," Louisburg senior Grant Harding said. "It has been a while since Louisburg has beaten Paola in general. I

know my freshman year we lost to Paola in this exact place in substate so it feels good to win this one. It has been a long time since we have been in the subsate championship game, so this definitely feels good.”

Louisburg came close in its first two meetings with Paola this season.

On both occasions, the Wildcats would have a lead late, only to see the Panthers rally for a win – including one that spoiled Louisburg’s senior night a week ago.

The Wildcats put together that big finish when they needed it most.



Louisburg senior Grant Harding drives to the basket for two points Thursday against Paola.

Paola’s Noah Bell hit a 3-pointer with just under seven

minutes left in the contest to put Paola up five points and momentum switched to the Panthers. About 15 seconds later, it all changed as Louisburg senior Sam Guetterman countered with a 3-pointer of his own to begin the run.

"Sam's three was huge," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "It got everyone going and everyone loosened up and played like the senior team that we know they can.

"We blocked out better. Defensively we were pretty locked in. It was just us being us. There was no overthinking. It was just taking advantage of the opportunities that we had."

Junior Dalton Ribordy muscled his way up through the Paola defense for two points 30 seconds later to tie the game, then senior T.J. Dover scored back-to-back baskets to put the Wildcats up three.

After a pair of Harding free throws that put Louisburg up five, it was the Wildcat defense that took over. Harding drew a charge near the basket on the next possession and also blocked a pair of Paola shots.

The Wildcats limited the Panthers' second chance opportunities and they were able to pull away after baskets from Guetterman and Harding that put Louisburg up nine with under two minutes left.

"Everyone's confidence level went up during that stretch," Guetterman said. "Everyone wanted this game really bad. I think we all came together as a team and we knew we needed to make a run here. We moved the ball, people were cutting at the right time and we all just played well in those last few minutes."



Louisburg senior T.J. Dover shoots over Paola's Tanner Moala in the Wildcats' 54-44 win.

Louisburg kept the game close despite dealing with foul trouble most of the way. Ribordy and Dover, the team's starting forwards, were saddled with two fouls in the first quarter and required the Wildcat bench to step it up with key minutes from Jake Hill, Dalton Stone and Desmond Doles.

Harding also moved inside from the perimeter, grabbed key rebounds and blocked a shot in the fourth quarter.

"We were in serious foul trouble most of the night," Nelson said. "If we were in zone, they would exploit their size and when we were in man we would foul. But everyone stepped up and helped out. Desmond gave us great minutes in the post and when we moved Grant down low and he did fantastic. His charge was huge for us as well. Everyone did a good job picking each other up."

Harding finished the game with a double-double as he was one of four Wildcats to score in double figures. He led the Wildcats with 14 points, 14 rebounds and had two blocked shots.

Guetterman finished with 11 points, with seven of those coming in the fourth quarter. Ribordy and Dover each scored 10, while Ribordy added six rebounds.

Louisburg now has a day to prepare for its substate championship opponent – Fort Scott. The No. 4 seed Tigers (6-15) upset No. 1 Spring Hill, 56-52, and Louisburg will face off with the Tigers at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday in Spring Hill.

“Fort Scott is going to be ready to go,” Nelson said. “They are well coached and they are scrappy. They put good pressure on defense from what we saw earlier. We are going to have play as well as we did in that third and fourth quarter because Fort Scott is going to be hungry.

“Our guys are ready to put in the work today. If we let them, they would probably have a sleepover and watch film all night long. They will be ready to play.”



Louisburg coach Jason Nelson gets hug from Dalton Ribordy after Louisburg's win over Paola. It was the Wildcats' first win over Paola since 2012.

The players are also excited to try and end another Louisburg drought. The Wildcats haven't advanced to the state tournament since 2005.

"No one is easy to beat and we have seen that all year in some

of the games we have been in,” Guetterman said. “We just need to come out and play hard like we did (Thursday) and hopefully we will come out with a W.”

And – hopefully for the Wildcats – another demon will be exorcised Saturday night.

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|-----------|----|---|----|------|
| LOU 54 | 16 | 6 | 10 | 22 – |
| PAO 44 | 14 | 4 | 16 | 10 – |

LOUISBURG (9-12): Grant Harding 14, Sam Guetterman 11, T.J. Dover 10, Dalton Ribordy 10, Jayce Geiman 4, Dalton Stone 3, Jake Hill 2. Totals: 21-48 9-18 54. 3-point field goals: 3, (Guetterman, Harding, Stone)

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.”

Wildcats can't overcome Paola in rivalry battle



Louisburg senior Jayce Geiman puts up shot at home Friday during the Wildcats' game with Paola. The Wildcats fell 47-42 on Senior Night as Geiman, Grant Harding, Jake Hill, Sam Guetterman, T.J. Dover, Dalton Stone and Alex Seuferling were all honored prior to the game.

For the second time this season, the Louisburg boys basketball team had rival Paola where it wanted – tied or with the lead in the fourth quarter.

And for the second time, the Wildcats couldn't quite get over the hump. This time Paola handed Louisburg a 47-42 loss on Senior Night at Louisburg High School.

Along with the loss, the Wildcats and their fans also had to say goodbye to seven seniors as they played their final home contest. Grant Harding, Jayce Geiman, Dalton Stone, Sam Guetterman, T.J. Dover, Jake Hill and Alex Seuferling all had

a chance to take the floor one last time.

"They are a group where I can bring my kids to practice if I need to and know they are in good hands," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "They are a good group of boys. The four years they have been tasked with helping change the mentality of the program. I can get knit picky on them sometimes, and they have heard it all, but these are kids that would do anything for now or in the future."

Down by two points, the Wildcats (8-12) had a chance to either tie or win the game with under a minute left and they called a timeout to set up a play.

Louisburg drew it up to go for the last shot but Guetterman lost the ball near the top of the key as the Wildcat bench thought he was fouled. Instead, it was a no call and turned into two free throws for Paola.

"That was a terrible no call on Sammy there," Nelson said. "I thought he was fouled and it hurts because I had 100 percent certainty that either Stone, Jayce or Grant were going to slide to the ball and hit it. We asked the kids to give everything they have on senior night and see what happens. For the most part we did that."



Louisburg senior Sam Guetterman puts up a shot in the lane Friday against Paola.

Louisburg built a 16-11 lead in the second quarter on a basket from junior Dalton Ribordy and a 3-pointer from Harding, but Paola battled back and eventually tied it at 18-all before halftime on a Noah Bell 3-pointer.

The lead changed hands six times and there were two ties in

the third quarter alone before Paola widened its lead to five late. Geiman knocked down a 3-pointer at the buzzer to cut the Paola lead to two.

Louisburg grabbed the lead in the fourth quarter on back-to-back baskets from Dover and another from Guetterman to go up 40-39. Bell hit a 3-pointer to give the Panthers the advantage again, before Dover tied it with another bucket.

Paola's Tanner Moala, who led all scorers with 14 points, put the Panthers up with under a minute left, which ended up being the game-winner.

"Defensively this was one of the better games we have played on the year with regard to pressuring the ball," Nelson said. "Even rebounding, we didn't give up much after the first quarter. Pressure was fantastic.

"Offensively, you see bits and pieces of it here and there. When we were running our half court sets and looking to attack, we didn't have many easy opportunities because they were sagging quite a bit inside. We were able to slide on the perimeter and get good looks, we just couldn't knock them down."

Harding was the lone Wildcat in double figures with 12 points, with nine of those coming in the first half. Guetterman and Dover each added eight points in the loss.

It won't be long before the Wildcats get another shot at the Panthers. Louisburg earned the No. 3 seed in the substate tournament and will face No. 2 Paola at 7:30 p.m., on Thursday at Spring Hill High School.

"We know them well obviously and I like Paola," Nelson said. "They have good kids and we have good kids. We play hard against each other and it is always a fun game. We have been working on some stuff in practice to use in substate, so we will see what happens."

| | | | | |
|------|---|----|----|-----|
| LOU | 7 | 11 | 16 | 8 – |
| 42 | | | | |
| PAO | 9 | 9 | 18 | 11 |
| – 47 | | | | |

LOUISBURG (8-12): Grant Harding 12, Sam Guetterman 8, T.J. Dover 8, Jayce Geiman 6, Dalton Ribordy 4, Dalton Stone 2, Jake Hill 2. Totals: 17 3-7 42. 3-point field goals: 5, (Geiman 2, Harding 2, Guetterman)

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)