

Harding signs to play basketball at Hesston College



Louisburg High School senior Grant Harding signed his letter of intent on May 2 to play basketball at Hesston College. Sitting next to Grant are his parents Dotty and Ken Harding. Standing (from left) is former Louisburg head coach Jason Nelson, brother and assistant coach Drew Harding and Hesston coach Dustin Galyon.

It has been quite a year for Grant Harding.

The Louisburg High School senior helped the Wildcat basketball team to their first state tournament in 12 years, he led them in scoring and rebounding and was rewarded for those accomplishments with first team all-Frontier League honors.

Now Harding is ready to take the next step in achieving a dream.

On May 2, Harding signed his letter of intent in front of family and friends at LHS to play basketball at Hesston College.

"I am very excited to play basketball at the next level," Harding said. "(Hesston) has been talking to me since December and called me during Christmas break for the first time. They have always seemed like a good option to me and the Hesston program is a very respectable program and a very good team. I

am very excited to finally know where I am going next year.”

Hesston College, which is two-year school located in Hesston, Kan., has had a successful men’s basketball program in recent years, including two years ago when the Larks earned a spot in the junior college national tournament in 2015.

Hesston Coach Dustin Galyon hopes Harding can be one of the pieces that can help get the Larks back on the national stage in the near future.

“I am super excited to have Grant be a part of the Hesston College basketball family,” Galyon said. “We are excited for the role he will play on our team – a team that has been nationally ranked three out of the last five years.

“We think Grant can be an impact guy for us as a freshman and that is saying a lot. There is a great responsibility that comes with that. We think his best basketball is ahead of him. After watching him play, working him out and talking with coach (Jason Nelson), we think he has the chance to be a full-ride kid at the Division II level or higher after he is done with us.”

Playing at a high level has always been a goal for Harding, but he also wanted to get a chance to play right away. Harding feels Hesston helps him in both regards.



Grant Harding, who averaged 17 points a game for the Wildcats, is excited about the opportunity to play at Hesston.

"It is even more exciting to know that after the first two years, I will still have plenty of opportunities to play college ball somewhere – maybe even more than what I had this time around," Harding said. "Through high school, I have always played three sports, but it is exciting to only play basketball for the next couple years and get better at basketball and staying in basketball shape. It has always been a big adjustment from sport to sport every year."

Harding, who averaged 17 points and eight rebounds a game for the Wildcats last season, had a few options to play at the college level, but it was Hesston that stood out following his official visit to the school.

“When I went for my visit, I met all the players and they all seemed like great guys,” Harding said. “I had a chance to sit down with all of them and they are all extremely nice. A lot of them are very talented. Coach is a great guy and I know he cares for his players and he has won a lot of games. The whole thing seemed to plan out like I wanted it to do.”

Harding is also ready to take the next step in the academic world as well. While in college, Harding plans to major in secondary education with an emphasis in history.

“Hesston is not just a great fit for him from a basketball perspective, I think it is a great fit off the floor as well,” Galyon said. “He will receive a private education and transfer to anywhere in the country. Hesston is not the typical 2-year school as we have kids from 35 states and 19 countries. He fits the academic piece to that as well and we are a Christian college.

“Grant is going to be challenged on the basketball floor, he is going to be challenged in the classroom, and he is going to be challenged as a young man in his faith. We are seriously excited to have him a part of our program.”

Three schools to join Frontier League



Three schools have accepted invitations, or will soon, to join the Frontier League for the 2018-19 season and beyond.

Piper, Bonner Springs and Tonganoxie will be leaving their current home – the Kaw Valley League – to join the Frontier after all three were offered spots during a meeting in early April.

Their addition will now bring the Frontier League to 10 members, along with Louisburg, Paola, Ottawa, Spring Hill, De Soto, Baldwin and Eudora. The trio of schools made presentations to the current Frontier League members for admittance due to the fact the Kaw Valley is in the process of breaking up. Current member Bishop Ward is leaving the league next school year, which leaves them at six.

Piper quickly accepted the invitation following a vote of its board of education and is looking forward to joining the Frontier.

“We are extremely excited to get into a league with like-size schools and competition levels,” Piper High School activities director Doug Key said. “We believe Piper High School is good fit for the league due to the competition level in all activities and will match up well. We have played all current schools in various activities and felt like this would be a positive move for the future.

“Being in a league with various size schools and us being the smallest wasn’t going to be optimal. We are still are competitive in many areas, but we needed to secure a more balanced future. We feel like being in the middle, size-wise, will keep us competitive for years to come.”

According to this year’s classification numbers, Piper has a current enrollment of 601 students. Turner is the Kaw Valley’s biggest school with 1,114 students, followed by Lansing (910), Bonner Springs (758), Basehor-Linwood (710) and Tonganoxie (618).

Bonner Springs, Piper and Tonganoxie compare to other Frontier League programs. De Soto is the biggest school in the league with 854 students, followed by Ottawa (709), Spring Hill (699), Paola (612), Louisburg (563), Eudora (471) and Baldwin (410).

Bonner Springs' board of education also approved the move to the Frontier League and Bonner Springs High School principal Rick Moulin echoed Key's statement.

"We have competed against teams in the Frontier League the past several years," Moulin said. "The schools in the Frontier League are a lot like Bonner Springs – we are competitive and value sportsmanship. The teams in the Frontier League are similar in size to Bonner Springs, which will be a great gauge for us as we try to compete at the highest level possible in 4A. Bonner Springs is a small town community, with great community support, much like the schools in the Frontier League.

"We are excited to be joining with Piper and Tonganoxie. We hope to continue to be able to compete against Basehor-Linwood, Lansing and Turner. I have a lot of respect for their schools and their programs. Ultimately, the Frontier League was a better fit for our students and our community."

Tonganoxie hasn't officially accepted the invitation, but it is just waiting for its board of education to approve the move during its May 8 meeting. At that point, according to Tonganoxie High School principal Mark Farrar, it will immediately send letter accepting the invite.

"We are very excited to join the Frontier League," Farrar said. "This new partnership will be very good for our students as well as our community. Joining the Frontier League will provide some great opportunities for our students from an athletic and activities standpoint. Tonganoxie mirrors many of the activities that most or all Frontier League schools offer.

We see it as a league that will be a good fit for many years to come.

“One of the things that I think gets overlooked is the idea that a strong league doesn’t just offer opportunities on a playing field, but it also offers a chance for kids to network and make lifelong connections with students from all across the league. The Frontier League is a strong and stable league and we believe that it can advance the overall mission of what we want to do at Tonganoxie.”

Louisburg High School activities director Darin Gagnebin now believes the league is healthier than ever.

“By adding teams to our league, it solidifies our league numbers for years to come ensuring that we, as a league, will remain strong and competitive whether schools decide to leave or stay,” Gagnebin said. “We could have been in a situation in which the Frontier League could have dwindled to four or five schools, but instead we will be stronger at 10 teams, if all teams decided to stay.

That situation came about in March when it was reported by the Tonganoxie Mirror that Kaw Valley League member Lansing wanted to create a larger league that would have contained all or some combinations of Lansing, Blue Valley Southwest, De Soto, Leavenworth, Bonner Springs, Basehor-Linwood, Tonganoxie, Ottawa, Piper, Spring Hill, Turner and Topeka schools Seaman, Shawnee Heights and Topeka West.

A meeting was held between all the schools to look at possibilities of building a stronger league that would rebuild the current Kaw Valley that has Lansing, Turner, Piper, Bonner Springs, Tonganoxie and Basehor-Linwood.

The Frontier League responded with meetings of its own shortly after to discuss each member’s happiness in the league after De Soto, Spring Hill and Ottawa attended the March meeting with Lansing.

De Soto mentioned needing more competition at the sub-varsity level since it has a growing enrollment and looked at the possibility of playing in a league with bigger schools since it has made the jump to Class 5A.

Spring Hill's enrollment also looks to make that jump in three to four years, while Ottawa's enrollment usually hovers around the line between 4A and 5A. Still, all three schools stated during league meetings they were happy in their current position, with De Soto and Spring Hill stating they might need to make a move due to increasing enrollment numbers.

Faced with the possibility of losing at least two members, the Frontier invited Kaw Valley members to make presentations to join the league in order to fill those spots. Piper, Tonganoxie and Bonner Springs all made presentations and the Frontier League principals all offered invitations shortly after.

At this point, it appears the league is going to move forward with 10 members as no school has stated their desire to leave the Frontier – however, it doesn't mean it can't happen in the near future.

"I cannot speak for other schools in the Frontier League about their desire to stay or to leave," Gagnebin said. "I know some are considering their options and will do what they believe is in the best interest of their school, and I would support them in whatever they decide. I do believe though whatever they decide, with the addition of these new schools to our league, the Frontier League will remain solid in numbers and will continue to be one of the most competitive leagues in Class 4A.

"I believe the three schools that chose to petition our league for membership will be a great fit for the Frontier League. They offer all sports and activities that are currently offered by the league at all levels. Their enrollments, though

larger than Louisburg, will put them in the middle to upper middle in size within the league.”

The league schedule will also look different beginning with the 2018-19 season, as there will no longer be a double round-robin schedule in certain sports and not every school will play each other in football.

“The biggest challenge will be league scheduling,” Gagnebin said. “Although it will change how we schedule things as a league, most league schools already have some or all of these schools on some of their athletic schedules already. It could increase the amount of non-league games we have to go out and find in some sports, since with 10 teams you can no longer play a double-round-robin schedule as we have currently, due to the amount of games allowed by KSHSAA.

“This is both good and bad, meaning, it could increase travel and some expense, but it allows us greater flexibility in the schedule to play other teams outside the league as well. One negative will be in football. With 10 teams, we will not be able to play every team in the league as we do now. As stated before though, solidifying the league as far as numbers go and increasing the competitiveness of the league are also positives.”

Frontier League shakeup could happen soon



In a few months – or even weeks – the Frontier League as it currently stands could have a different look.

Since March, meetings have gone on within member schools of the Frontier League and Kaw Valley League to discuss possible realignment of both leagues.

The Frontier League currently has seven members – Louisburg, Paola, Spring Hill, De Soto, Ottawa, Baldwin and Eudora – and a meeting between the schools took place on March 28 to discuss where each school stood as far as their happiness in the league.

Brian Biermann, superintendent of USD 416, and Louisburg High School athletic director Darin Gagnebin attended the meeting on Louisburg's behalf and both relayed the fact that every school stated they were happy with the way the league is currently set up, but a couple schools came to the realization the Frontier League might not be able to offer what they are looking for.

De Soto and Spring Hill currently have growing enrollment numbers are interested in playing Class 5A competition. De Soto moved up to 5A this school year and Spring Hill will look to make the jump in the coming years with its larger enrollment. The rest of the schools all compete in Class 4A.

Both schools stated they would like more competition at the sub-varsity level that schools like Louisburg, Baldwin and Eudora cannot provide. Competing in a mainly 5A league would relieve some of those problems.

"De Soto said they will probably open next year with 950 kids

and they would grow by 100 the year after that,” Biermann said. “They are happy in the Frontier, but they feel like they need 5A competition and they feel like it could hurt them in football with seedings and tie-breakers. They could potentially get penalized by competing in a mainly 4A league.

“Spring Hill wants to be proactive. Their growth is coming. Their classes in the middle school are pretty good size. They won’t grow a lot next year, but they will in the next few years.”

What started the meetings is due to the fact that the Kaw Valley League is looking to rework their situation or create a brand new look altogether. The Kaw Valley currently has seven schools in Lansing, Turner, Bonner Springs, Tonganoxie, Piper, Bishop Ward and Basehor-Linwood, but one member – Bishop Ward – is leaving for a new league beginning next school year.

According to report in March from the *Tonganoxie Mirror*, Lansing wants to create a larger league that would contain all or some combinations of Lansing, Blue Valley Southwest, De Soto, Leavenworth, Bonner Springs, Basehor-Linwood, Tonganoxie, Ottawa, Piper, Spring Hill, Turner and Topeka schools Seaman, Shawnee Heights and Topeka West.

Many of those schools are either in Class 5A already or are close based on enrollment numbers. The idea of competing against bigger competition is intriguing to De Soto, Spring Hill – and possibly Ottawa – the three largest schools in the Frontier League.

An idea was thrown around of creating a league of two divisions between the Kaw Valley and Frontier. One division would be 5A schools and the other would be 4A.

“We visited with our board of education and we are not in favor of a mega-league,” Biermann said. “That has been talked about – having a league of 5A and 4A schools. We don’t want to invite new 5A schools. We are ok with Spring Hill and De Soto

staying in the league, even though they are growing, but we don't want to invite other 5A schools or have a mega league so they can have better competition.

"Our stance is if De Soto and Spring Hill feel like they need 5A competition and leave, then they can work towards that and we can work on filling those spots with 4A schools."

Both Biermann and Gagnebin feel like the Frontier League needs to be proactive as changes could be made sooner rather than later.

"We aren't panicking as a league as much as the Kaw Valley schools are because they know they are headed for a break up," Gagnebin said. "We could easily stay with the seven schools we have. Pretty soon, De Soto will have close to 1,000 kids. It is more on them if they want to be in our league, and if they are happy, by all means stay. We are not saying they have to leave, but they have to do best what is for their school, and if this league isn't the best option for you, then you have to look elsewhere."

Due to the fact De Soto and Spring Hill could be moving on, the Frontier is being proactive and inviting some members of the Kaw Valley League to come make presentations at a meeting Wednesday to see if they would be a fit in the Frontier.

According to Biermann, Tonganoxie, Piper, Bonner Springs and Basehor-Linwood High Schools will all make presentations at the meeting and then schools from both the Kaw Valley and the Frontier will meet to discuss options at a later date.

"I led the (March 28) meeting and I wanted to make sure everyone was as honest and open as possible," Biermann said. "There were no hurt feelings. Collectively we don't want a mega-league, no additional 5A schools and that is firm from us, Paola, Baldwin and Eudora. Spring Hill and De Soto left the meeting, I think, that they need to start looking for potential 5A competition."

"The easy fix would be for De Soto and Spring Hill to join the bigger league and we take someone like Tonganoxie and Piper to replace them. Every school said they loved the Frontier League and competition, but it is time there has to be some conversations. The biggest thing is we don't have three baseball, softball or soccer teams to schedule, but De Soto and Spring Hill want that. We can't field C teams in some cases."

The leagues are on a sort of a time crunch. With football reclassifications and scheduling beginning this October for the next two years, it would be the best case scenario to get the reshuffling done before then so they can schedule for the 2018-19 season and beyond according to Gagnebin.

The Louisburg activities director also believes keeping the right number of teams is also imperative for a healthy league.

"We want to maintain the integrity of our league, whether that is with seven or even eight schools," Gagnebin said. "We want to maintain that number. Nine is a scheduling nightmare, and if you only have six teams, you are opening up a can of worms where if you leave an open spot, then the state could come in and assign certain schools to us that aren't a good fit."

"I don't necessarily want them to leave the league, but we need to be told if they are. I am more afraid of them leaving our league than them staying in our league. I am not afraid of the competition we face with them. We can compete with them in all the sports, but I am more afraid of us dropping from a seven to a five-team league."

However, one hiccup remains. The Frontier League bylaws state that a member school must give two years notice before leaving the league.

"If the dominoes start falling fast, the league could pass a bylaw amendment to allow for movement for De Soto or whoever, which is something I think they will have to do," Gagnebin

said. "Not much is happening now, but when it does it is going to happen quick. You better be ready to move with it and have a plan in place or you could be stuck on the outside."

Nelson resigns as head boys basketball coach



Jason Nelson spent the last four years as the Louisburg High School boys basketball head coach, but after leading the Wildcats to their first state tournament since 2005, Nelson resigned from the position last week.

Jason Nelson walked off the state tournament floor in Salina a month ago following a loss to Bishop Miege.

He had just taken the Louisburg boys basketball team to their first state tournament since 2005 and wrapped up his best season as the Louisburg head coach. It was a good year for him and his Wildcat group.

Despite the success, Nelson won't be on the sideline next season as he resigned his post as the Wildcat head coach last week, citing family reasons. Although Nelson considers his team a family of sorts, it is his family at home that needs more of his attention.

"It is never easy to step away on your own accord," Nelson said. "I was joking with some people that it would have been easier had I been fired. My rationale for stepping aside is my kids and family – nothing more and nothing less. My sons are both super active in different sports and Michelle and I assume it's only going to get worse (with regard to their schedule) as they get older.

"As wonderful as my basketball boys and building administration are, the well-being of Micah, Jonah and my family is paramount. It has been one of the most difficult decisions I've had to make. I love the coaching job and with the support I received from within my building, it really was one of the most memorable aspects of my career."

Nelson was the Wildcat head coach for four years and was previously an assistant for one year. Although Nelson created several memories during the run to the state tournament this season, it is his senior classes that have left a lasting impression on him.

"State was obviously a great memory for me and the program," Nelson said. "I will never forget that. But my favorite memories are every senior night I have been a part of. You've got kids who've worked their tails off for four years and they get one chance for the game to be about them – not the league, not the substate, not the crowd, but them. Every single senior I've had the honor to coach has left their mark on our program and been responsible for where we've gotten during my tenure.

"When I took the job, my building administration gave me their goals for the program. We hit them and were working on our own, and while we weren't finished writing our own book, life happens. That's the real testament to the players in our program. They've never been about their own stats or objectives. They've always held the fact that they represent their school and community close and it manifested itself in the constant, tangible improvement we've experienced."

Nelson created a special bond with his players, one that allowed him to bring his two boys – Micah and Jonah – around the team. He has watched the players interact with his kids and it created a family atmosphere around the program.

“Micah is 7 and Jonah is 4,” Nelson said. “My kids are better people for having been around the LHS basketball team and I don’t think that’s the norm for all. I took the job when Jonah was just born and so much of who he is at this point is because of the quality of our boys. It sounds selfish, but what I’ll miss the most is how the players loved my boys. I have countless instances of this and many of them are my most treasured memories.

“My kids not withstanding, I’ll truly miss the competitive nature of the game. I’ve always loved competition and basketball is the most team oriented, competitive sport there is. It’s fast, never goes as anticipated and while personnel is as always paramount, basketball is the one sport that teamwork usually overcomes individual successes. Basketball is the apex of team sports and I’ll miss the hell out of the pregame, in game and postgame coaching.”

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.

Harding, Geiman named to all-

League team



Louisburg senior Grant Harding was selected to all-Frontier League first team after he averaged 17 points a game this season to lead the Wildcats in scoring to go along with eight rebounds a contest.

Fresh off its first state tournament appearance since 2005, honors are starting to come in for the Louisburg High School boys basketball team.

Shortly following the state tournament, the all-Frontier League teams were released and two Wildcats earned spots among the league's best.

Senior Grant Harding earned first team all-league honors, while fellow senior Jayce Geiman was selected to the honorable mention team in a league filled with senior-laden squads.

"If I had my way, all 12 boys would have made all league," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "As usual, our league was loaded, so any representation be it first team, second team or honorable mention was a fantastic honor. It was hard to argue with the all-league when you look at the final product, but any coach would want to have as much representation as possible."

Harding is Louisburg's first all-league first team selection since Garrett Griffin in 2012 and has been on the all-league list for the last three years. Harding was an honorable

mention as a sophomore and made the second team his junior season.

He was among the leading scorers in the Frontier League as he averaged nearly a double-double. Harding scored 17 points and grabbed eight rebounds a game.

Harding joins first-team that includes Eudora's Mitchell Ballock, a Creighton commit, the Ottawa duo of Isaac McCullough and Perry Carroll along with Spring Hill's Trey Heinrich.



Senior Jayce Geiman was named to the honorable mention all-Frontier League team after averaging 10 points a game this season.

"We haven't had a first team selection since Garrett and we've

had some quality players come through since then, which shows the strength of the league,” Nelson said. “When Grant can be represented with Ballock, McCullough, Heinrich and Perry Carroll, it speaks volumes about his season, his legacy and the impact he had on league.”

As for Geiman, he was selected to the all-league team for the first time and the Louisburg point guard finished the season in double-figure scoring. Geiman averaged 10 points a game to go along with four assists.

“Jayce put together a fantastic season and definitely left his mark on our program especially given that we had him run the point guard spot for us this year out of necessity and he ended up being a top 3 point guard in our league,” Nelson said. “Couldn’t be more proud of all our guys.”

Eudora, which tied for the league title with Ottawa, led the way with four selections. Ottawa, Paola and Spring Hill each had three selections. It was also a team filled with seniors as only three of the 17 all-league players were underclassmen.

ALL-FRONTIER LEAGUE BOYS BASKETBALL

First Team

Mitchell Ballock, senior, Eudora

Isaac McCullough, senior, Ottawa

Perry Carroll, senior, Ottawa

Grant Harding, senior, Louisburg

Trey Heinrich, senior, Spring Hill

Second Team

Tanner Moala, senior, Paola

Noah Wilson, senior, De Soto

Hayden Brown, senior, Eudora

Brandon Wilkes, junior, Paola

Brennen Feedback, sophomore, Spring Hill

Honorable mention

Devion Bethea, junior, Ottawa

Tanner Jackman, senior, Baldwin

Jordan Hoston, senior, Spring Hill

Noah Bell, senior, Paola

David Hornberger, senior, Eudora

Ryan Verbanic, senior, Eudora

Jayce Geiman, senior, Louisburg

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

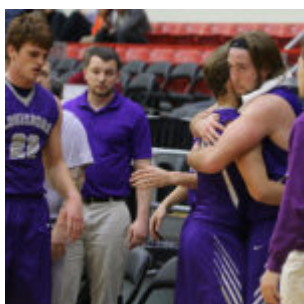
Kayla Kurtz, sophomore, Baldwin

Sydney Jones, senior, De Soto

Alaina Howe, junior, Eudora

Carson Buffington, sophomore, Louisburg

Bishop Miege ends Wildcats' run in state tourney



Louisburg senior T.J. Dover gives a hug to teammate Jake Hill

as he was taken out of the game for the final time with teammate Grant Harding (22) and others Wednesday in the Class 4A-DI state basketball tournament in Salina.

SALINA – One by one, the Louisburg players walked out of the locker room and into the halls of the Tony's Pizza Events Center.

As each player came around the corner, they were greeted with roaring cheers and applause from parents and fans who made the trek to Salina to watch the Wildcats play in the Class 4A-Division I state tournament.

It was the type of celebration normally reserved for a victory, but this was different.

The Wildcats just came off an 81-47 loss in the first round Wednesday to Bishop Miege, the No. 1 ranked team in the state and overwhelming favorite to win the tournament. Their season was over.

Instead of moping, however, the fans who made the trip hung around to give the players one final ovation for a season that resulted in a state tournament appearance for the first time in 12 years. They did it also to say thank you to the seven-member senior class of T.J. Dover, Grant Harding, Jayce Geiman, Dalton Stone, Jake Hill, Sam Guetterman and Alex Seuferling, who all played their final game as a Wildcat.

"To have a group of seniors come like this is pretty special," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "I decided to coach because of the group of players that we have and the students in general. They are all great kids.

"This season was definitely worthwhile. We got to state and that is something. We wanted a different draw, but we fought,

clawed and did everything we could to pull out a win.”



Grant Harding lays the ball up for two points Wednesday during the Class 4A-DI state tournament in Salina.

Louisburg (10-13) faced an uphill battle from the start as it had to go up against a Bishop Miege front line that stood 6-foot-8, 6-8 and 6-5. The Stags were also able to score in transition and use their speed and athleticism to make it difficult on the Wildcats.

That front line of Francesco Badocchi, Jeremiah Robinson-Earl and Joseph Gleason each scored in double figures for Bishop Miege and Badocchi led the way with 15 points.

“It was what it was,” Nelson said. “There were a couple things where we could have executed better or moved without the ball

better, but it is one thing to do it well in practice and then another to go out there and see 6-8, 6-8 and 6-7 or however tall they are. It is tough. Our kids weren't intimidated, but there might have been a little 'Wow' factor actually going up against them.

"We had good position, we would block out but what can we do when it is 6-3 versus 6-8? They could jump over us without making contact, even if we are falling back into them. Our kids did what our kids do, they fought and scrapped and I am so proud of them."

Harding led Louisburg in scoring with 17 points and was the lone Wildcat to score in double figures. Geiman and Dover were next with six points each.

Junior Dalton Ribordy led Louisburg with six rebounds and Guetterman added five points and five rebounds.

Bishop Miego (20-3) outscored the Wildcats 27-11 in the first quarter as the Stags used their length and athleticism to their advantage. Miego then held Louisburg to two second quarter points and took a 37-13 halftime lead.

With the game out of reach in the fourth quarter, Nelson took out his starters for the final time for them to be recognized. That gave the bench players a chance to get some time as Brayden Gage knocked down a 3-pointer and Seuferling – a seldom used senior – got in the scorebook as he knocked down a 3-pointer at the buzzer.



Senior Alex Seuferling rises up for a 3-pointer against Bishop Miege on Wednesday in Salina.

“I think we gave up four points trying to get him that shot,” Nelson joked. “But seriously, Alex is such a vital part of the team. He comes in and grinds every single day and gets on Jayce on defense and never lets up. We could have told him to guard on of their 6-8 kids and he would have done it without asking a question. All of our players are like that.”

Despite the loss, it was a successful season for the Wildcats as they defeated their rival – Paola – for the first time since 2012 in substate and then advanced to their first state tournament since 2005.

They became just the 10th team in Louisburg history to earn a spot in the state tournament since it all started in 1912.

“We got to put something on the banner and my kids are going to get to come to school and look at that every day,” Nelson said. “That means a lot and I am so proud of them.”

LOU	11	2	11	23 –
47				
BM	27	10	24	20 –
81				

LOUISBURG (10-13): Grant Harding 17, Jayce Geiman 6, T.J. Dover 6, Sam Guetterman 5, Alex Seuferling 3, Dalton Stone 3, Brayden Gage 3, Dalton Ribordy 2, Jake Hill 2. Totals: 17-54 4-7 47. 3-point field goals: 9, (Harding 3, Geiman 2, Guetterman, Stone, Seuferling, Gage)





Wildcats face tall task against Bishop Miege



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 Miege 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 Miege (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. Miege 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 Miege, 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.”

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)