

Wildcats suffer setback against Pittsburg



Louisburg senior T.J. Dover goes up for a basket Friday during the Wildcats' season opener at Pittsburg High School. Dover finished with a team-high 14 points in Louisburg 53-46 loss.

PITTSBURG – There are many things coaches can simulate in practice to prepare their team for when the season starts.

Athleticism isn't one of them.

That was on full display Friday when the Louisburg boys basketball team traveled to Pittsburg for its season opener. The Purple Dragons caused havoc on the perimeter and it took a while for the Wildcats to settle in.

By then, the Wildcats didn't have enough time to overcome a first half deficit and went on to fall to Pittsburg 53-46. Despite the loss, the Wildcats still left Pittsburg with a good frame of mind.

"I thought our teamwork was fantastic," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "When we had the opportunity to run our two-man game, we did a really good job with that. Pittsburg is just faster than what we can show in practice, but we just have to have that mentality. The boys played their tails off. They were the SEK champs last year and we played them at their place. We knew it would be tough, but we had our chances."

Defensively, the Wildcats held the Purple Dragons on first shot opportunities, but Pittsburg was quicker to the ball on missed shots as it had 12 second-chance points in the first half which helped them jump out to a double digit lead in the second quarter.

Louisburg took an early 6-3 lead after a dunk from senior Grant Harding, but the Purple Dragons responded and Pittsburg took a 14-11 lead after the first period.



Senior Grant Harding dunks the ball during the first quarter Friday in Pittsburg.

Wildcat senior Sam Guetterman cut it to one point with a reverse layup to start the second quarter, but from there Pittsburg went on a 9-2 run that was stopped on baskets from seniors T.J. Dover and Jayce Geiman. Pittsburg went into

halftime with a 27-19 advantage.

Pittsburg also caused havoc on the Louisburg perimeter as it forced 11 first half turnovers, including eight in the second period.

"They put perimeter pressure on us really, really well," Nelson said. "Looking back, and it is something we emphasize, we give up 12-14 second chance points and that is your ball game right there. Even despite their pressure, we exploited their weaknesses in the post on occasion. There are still so many good things to look back on, and if we can get a couple of those shots to fall that almost went in, then it might have been a little different."

The Wildcats calmed down in the second half and had just two turnovers the rest of the game. Louisburg stayed in the game from the free-throw line as it converted 7 of 8 opportunities in the third quarter, including six consecutive from juniors Ben Minster and Dalton Ribordy. Louisburg was 13-for-16 for the contest.

Dover, who scored a game-high 14 points, had eight of those in the final quarter to keep the Wildcats in it. Harding was next on the team with nine points.

Although they are still looking for that first win, the Wildcats have positives to build on.

"In my four years here, this is the best defensive rotation we have had," Nelson said. "Pittsburg is a fast team and we played man defense most of the night. Our rotations were great and there are good things to take from this. We would have liked to get a win, but it is equally important to take our lumps, learn from them and be ready for the tournament."

That tournament begins today when Louisburg travels to Burlington for the first round of the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic. The Wildcats will face Burlington tonight and then will turn

around and play Baldwin on Tuesday. It will all wrap up with one final game Friday.

LOU	11	8	14	13 –
		46		
PIT	14	13	14	12
		– 53		

LOUISBURG (0-1): T.J. Dover 14, Grant Harding 9, Jayce Geiman 7, Sam Guetterman 6, Dalton Ribordy 5, Ben Minster 5. Totals 17-40 13-16 46. 3-point field goals: 1, (Geiman)

Lady Cats fall to Pittsburg in season opener



Louisburg senior Emalee Overbay stretches out for a rebound Friday during the Lady Cats' season opener at Pittsburg High School. Overbay finished with seven rebounds in a 51-35 loss.

PITTSBURG – It went up against a bigger school on its home floor, but the Louisburg girls basketball team didn't back down.

The Lady Cats traveled to Pittsburg for their home opener Friday and stayed with the Purple Dragons for much of the

contest, but Pittsburg used a couple different runs to pull away for a 51-35 win over Louisburg.

Both teams got out and ran, especially in the first half, which made for a back-and-forth contest for much of the night.

"I liked it," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "At this point, with this being the first game out against a good 5A team who will probably win their league, I thought we did OK. This is a tough place to play. We work hard enough though that we can play any style of play."

Louisburg made things difficult on Pittsburg early as it took a one-point lead when sophomore Carson Buffington got an offensive rebound put back to give the Lady Cats a 12-11 lead. Down 13-12 to start the second quarter, Paige Buffington connected on a 3-pointer to give Louisburg the lead right back.

The game was tied again with six minutes left in the second quarter when senior Madisen Simpson hit a jump shot to give Louisburg a two-point lead again. It was there where Pittsburg went on an 11-2 run toward the end of the first half.

Senior Tayler Lancaster knocked down a 3-pointer and Simpson hit a basket to cut the Pittsburg lead to four with 33 seconds left in the first half, but Louisburg could get no closer.

The Lady Cats had a chance to get back in the game at the free-throw line, but couldn't convert as they were 5-for-17 for the game.

"I think Pittsburg might have been a little shocked that we were playing that tough early," Lowry said. "We have a lot of stuff to shore up like free throws and stuff around the basket, but it is all fixable."

"You can't leave free throws on the table, especially against a team like this. It also starts to build upon itself. If you

aren't hitting those, then the score starts to spread out a little bit, it starts to affect your other shooting too."



Louisburg senior guard Tayler Lancaster finished the game with a team-high 11 points.

Lancaster led Louisburg in scoring with 11 points, while Paige Buffington and Simpson each finished with eight points.

Carson Buffington added seven points in the loss, but that wasn't where she made the most impact. Carson pulled down a career-high 18 rebounds, eclipsing her previous high of 17 rebounds last season.

"Carson takes a great deal of pride in doing something that very few want to give the kind of effort that is required," Lowry said.

Pittsburg's Taylor Muff also proved to be a difficult matchup as the 5-foot-11 forward brought the ball up the floor, drove the basket and hit baskets from all over the floor. Muff, who has signed with Northern Colorado to play volleyball, is a state track champion.

Louisburg senior Emalee Overbay drew the challenge of guarding Muff for most of the night and did her job as she, and the rest of the Lady Cats, held her to 13 points.

"She is a really good player," Lowry said of Muff. "She is one of the best players that we will get a chance to see this year. But I thought Emalee did a good job on her. Emalee is a good defender, she is physical and she limited her a little bit. I thought a lot of our individual efforts were good. Pittsburg has some good guards and I thought Madisen, Paige, Tayler and Isabelle (Holtzen) all did good things defensively."

Pittsburg pulled away in the third quarter as it opened the frame on a 12-2 run and built a 15-point lead late. Louisburg struggled to find an offensive rhythm in the second half as it scored just 11 points in the two quarters combined.

"The first couple minutes of the second half was just a stalemate," Lowry said. "Both teams were trying to find some rhythm in that first quarter and we just couldn't. That is something we are going to have to fix. Last year, we weren't a very good third quarter team and that is going to have to change. We have to play well in the third quarter. We can't play a decent half and then come out flat."

Louisburg will have a busy week ahead of itself this week as it competes in the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic in Burlington. The Lady Cats will play Burlington, the No. 4 in Class 4A-Division II, tonight and then face No. 8 Baldwin (4A-DII) on Tuesday. The tournament will wrap up with games Friday.

"It is going to be fun," Lowry said of the tournament. "They

have worked their tails off in practice and they are just happy to be on the court playing someone. We are going to be playing two ranked teams back to back in Burlington and Baldwin and the girls are ready to go play them. That is what I like about this group is they are tough kids.”

LOU	12	12	5	6 –
		35		
PITT	13	17	12	9 –
		51		

LOUISBURG (0-1): Tayler Lancaster 11, Madisen Simpson 8, Paige Buffington 8, Carson Buffington 7, Haley Cain 1. Totals: 12-55 5-17 35. 3-point field goals: 6, (Lancaster 3, P. Buffington 2, Simpson)

Senior class to guide Wildcat basketball



Louisburg’s Jayce Geiman is one of seven Wildcat seniors for the 2016-17 season, and those players will be looked upon to guide the team as they try and bounce back from a rough finish a year ago.

Once the final buzzer sounded on the 2015-16 season, members of Louisburg boys basketball team were ready to put it behind them.

It was a season that got off to such promise after the Wildcats won six of their first nine games, but it ended with 12 straight losses through a rugged Frontier League schedule. The players plan on using that experience to fuel them for the upcoming season that tips off Friday.

"Absolutely we learned from it," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "I think they learned how to deal with adversity, given how much existed. It would have been easy for them to hang their heads when the injuries came, or we ran in to a juggernaut of an opponent, but they learned from it and will use it as motivation this year."

The Wildcats will feature a roster of predominantly upperclassmen, which includes seven seniors and two juniors that saw significant varsity minutes a season ago.

"This is the first time since I've been here that we've had a team dominated by upperclassmen and it has been fantastic thus far," Nelson said. "It is through our upperclassmen that our entire program will evolve. They've demonstrated the right way to play, focused on becoming fundamentally sound and competed with one another in an effort to not only improve themselves, but also their brothers in the program."

One of those players was considered among the best in the Frontier League a season ago in Grant Harding. The Wildcats senior returns after he earned second team all-league honors, and was also named to the honorable mention all-state team after he averaged 16 points and eight rebounds a game last year.

Harding will play a key role in the Wildcats' offense this season as fellow seniors Sam Guetterman, Jayce Geiman, T.J. Dover and junior Dalton Ribordy will start along with him to

begin the season.

“(Grant) wants to be one of the best to have played at Louisburg High School and knows how much dedication it takes,” Nelson said. “He’s definitely stepped up his training over the summer working on his few areas for improvement. He’s vital to our team success, not just as a scoring threat, but also defensively and distributing the ball and making those around him better.

“This group loves to play together, the coaches love to coach them and while Grant will be counted on, it will be no different than in past years. Our best games have always been when he, T.J., Sammy, Jayce, Jake (Hill) and others have been working as one.”



Louisburg senior Grant Harding returns this year after he averaged 16 points and eight rebounds a season ago as a second-team all-league player.

Although the Wildcats might not be as tall as some of their opponents, as Dover (6-foot-3, 250 pounds) and Ribordy (6-2, 200) will give them some scoring and rebounding options down low along with junior Garrett Lowry (6-4, 295).

Seniors Jake Hill, Dalton Stone, Alex Seuferling, along with

juniors Ben Minster and Desmond Doles, will give the Wildcats a lot of production off the bench.

"This is the best our rotation has been in my time here, given that we have multiple 'true' posts," Nelson said. "In past years, we've had to play guys out of position occasionally, but this year, with TJ back, Dalton ready to break out and Garrett Lowry evolving, we can finally have a front court and back court rotation which will further facilitate everything. With Grant, Sammy and Jayce, expected to play a lot, Jake, Ben, Dalton Stone, Desmond, and Alex will also fit in to our rotation as needed and all offer different strengths that we'll look to exploit as we progress."

It will be a tough schedule for the Wildcats as they compete in a tough Frontier League that includes four combined games against No. 4 Ottawa and No. 8 Eudora, who are both ranked in Class 4A-Division I. Also in there are tough games against rival Paola, who qualified for the state tournament last season.

"Our league will once again be one of the best in the state," Nelson said. "There's not an easy game on the schedule, but that's to the benefit of this group, especially the upperclassmen. They've seen it for 3-plus years and know the kind of dedication and talent it takes to do well in this league and look forward to the challenges it presents."

Louisburg will tipoff its season Friday when it travels to Pittsburg for a 7:30 p.m. start. The Wildcats will then travel to Burlington next week for three games in the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic.

Lady Cats ready to build off last season



Louisburg's Madisen Simpson is one of five seniors on the Lady Cats basketball team this season as those players look to lead Louisburg starting Friday when they travel to Pittsburg in their season opener.

The Louisburg High School girls basketball team took more than its fair share of lumps from a season ago.

Louisburg featured a lineup of underclassmen, with little varsity experience and low numbers forced a lot of freshmen and sophomores into big spots for the Lady Cats. All that equaled to just a three-win season, but this year they hope those experiences turn into positives.

The Lady Cats return all but one starter from a season ago, and with that, have a strong five-member senior class to help lead the way through what is a difficult Frontier League schedule.

"Last season was good from the perspective that this group never wavered from the process in how they prepared or what they gave in games," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "They have carried that same mentality into this preseason and it has shaped the team's identity."

That identity is a hard-working group that goes after every

loose ball and rebound, finds themselves in the right spots on offense and is aggressive on defense.

It is the senior class of Madisen Simpson, Paige Buffington and Emalee Overbay that helped shape that identity a season ago and they have joined up with a pair of new seniors – Tayler Lancaster and Chloe Renner – to continue the same type of play.

All five seniors figure to play big minutes for the Lady Cats this season as Lancaster will join Simpson and Buffington at the guard spot, while Renner will help out Overbay in the post.

“Paige, Madisen and Emalee will have been in the program for all four years,” Lowry said. “They have each grown so much in that time and have really matured into good leaders. They embrace the process, they are great teammates and have a great deal of pride in their program.

“Chloe and Tayler are a great fit and have both made an immediate impact to our team by their work ethic and discipline in learning their offensive and defensive responsibilities.”



Sophomore Carson Buffington led the Frontier League in rebounding a season ago and looks to do the same this year.

The Lady Cats also return their top post player from last season in sophomore Carson Buffington. As a freshman, Buffington led the Frontier League with 11 rebounds a game, which earned her honorable mention all-league and all-state accolades.

Junior guard Isabelle Holtzen also figures to see playing time for the Lady Cats after logging several varsity minutes as a sophomore. That group of seven players could also expand as the season goes on.

"We should have a good rotation with those players," Lowry said. "There are also some juniors, sophomores and freshmen that I expect to contribute in various roles this season.

"I would say our strengths at this point are our senior leadership, returning some experienced players that understand how we want to play and that our players are unselfish in everything they give."

The schedule doesn't get any easier for the Lady Cats as it features a round robin with their fellow Frontier League teams, including state-ranked squads in No. 2 Paola (4A-Division I) and No. 8 Baldwin (4A-Division II).

However, the fact the Lady Cats return all but one starter from a season ago should help them navigate through some rough waters.

"It is definitely a positive to return most of the players in this year's sophomore, junior and senior classes," Lowry said. "We were able to get right into the core of our work and allowed for more intense competition.

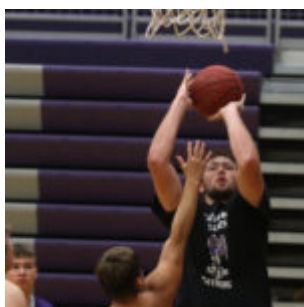
"The Frontier League will again have some of the best 4A and 5A teams. In addition to a very strong league, we have the opportunity to play some non-conference and tournament games against some very good, ranked teams. With all this said, I trust in our players to give great effort and compete with great pride every time we take the floor against these teams."

Louisburg opens its season Friday when it travels to Pittsburg for a 6 p.m. tipoff. It is a game the players have been waiting for since the end of last season.

“The girls have worked hard in preparing for the upcoming season,” Lowry said. “Our seniors have helped foster an environment that is competitive and positive with their work ethic and attitudes. As with each year, we stress the importance of competing hard on every rep and every play.

“The girls are always anxious to start playing games after the preseason conditioning work and three weeks of practice.”

Experience dominates Wildcat basketball camp



Senior T.J. Dover goes up for a turnaround jumper during Louisburg’s intrasquad scrimmage July 15 on the final day of the Wildcats’ team camp. Louisburg will return six seniors that saw varsity time a season ago.

It has been a different kind of summer for the Louisburg boys basketball team.

Wildcat head coach Jason Nelson had taken his team to a summer league at Rockhurst in Kansas City, Mo., the last three seasons in order to work on their game and become more comfortable working together.

Nelson still wanted to stress that continuity, but decided to change things up a bit. He kept his team back in Louisburg and took part in scrimmages with Osawatomie High School along with open gym workouts.

"The summer league provided many opportunities for them to play to the expectations of the staff, however, this year we are fortunate enough to be able to focus on perfecting our program, and not our style of play, which is a testament to our boys progress," Nelson said. "We played two controlled scrimmages against Osawatomie and I couldn't be more pleased with the outcomes. We didn't keep score, but really were able to focus on our half court sets and transition in a controlled atmosphere in which (Osawatomie) coach (Chris) Pitts and myself could stop and 'coach' when needed.

"Perhaps the best aspect of the scrimmages aside from our tangible improvements was that we were able to play with many different rotations."



Grant Harding drives the lane for a shot during the team's final day of camp on July 15.

Those results of that offseason work came together for the Wildcat team camp. The camp, which started on July 11, brought the team together for five consecutive days in order to work

on basics, but also to help bring along the younger players.

Nelson also brought back a couple Louisburg High Schools alums as former players David Embers and Garrett Griffin each attended the camp sessions to help out.

"First and foremost, camp provides a 'bridge' between middle school and high school for our incoming freshmen," Nelson said. "It gives them the opportunity to see what our program is about, the dedication our older boys put into the program and that our ultimate goal is to be a credible team in one of, if not the best league in the state. We focused more on fundamentals with the younger guys and the older guys worked on refining some of the things we need to do better this year.

"It was fantastic to have David and Garrett there to assist. The boys respect both of them and their presence lends itself to a program mentality, not just a team."

The Wildcats have a senior-heavy roster for the upcoming season and that experience hopes to lend to a successful 2016-17 season. Senior Grant Harding, an all-Frontier League and all-state player, returns as the team's top scorer.

Guards Jayce Geiman, Sam Guetterman, Jake Hill, Korbin Hankinson and forward T.J. Dover are the other seniors who hope to get Louisburg closer to the top of the league standings.

Louisburg got off to a good start last season as it won six of its first nine games, but struggled down the stretch as the Wildcats lost their remaining games to finish with a 6-15 record. Nelson hopes that rough stretch propelled his team to get better in the offseason.

"If adversity makes a group stronger, than this group of seniors ought to be the strongest in the state," Nelson joked. "In all seriousness, I feel like this squad is far better in terms of both their individual and team skill set. They all

went through the excruciating adversity last year and came to summer ready to improve and I couldn't be happier or more proud of them.

"For the first time in my tenure, we have multiple kids playing AAU ball, working on their games individually when the time permits by shooting, dribbling, etc., and I feel some of this can be attributed to the roller coaster of emotions that last year provided."

Lady Cats bring program together at team camp



Isabelle Holtzen drives to the basket and tries to get up a shot while being defended by Paige Buffington on Friday during the team's scrimmage on the final day of camp.

Walking onto the floor with so many young players last season, the Louisburg girls basketball team sometimes had its back against the wall before the game even started most nights.

The Lady Cats had a lot of inexperience, low numbers and were forced to play a lot of underclassmen. That resulted in a three win season, but they found a lot of positives in the process.

Whether it was watching underclassmen grow, playing state-ranked teams close or coming together as a team, Louisburg has plenty of things to build off of and it started last week.

Coach Shawn Lowry held his week-long team camp as 29 high school players took part in sessions from 8 to 9:30 every morning. Lowry also held a middle school session all week, along with a fourth through sixth grade portion for three days and a first through third grade mini-camp last Thursday.



Carson Buffington (4) goes up for a shot while being defended by teammate Julianne Finley on Friday during the team's scrimmage.

In all, Lowry had 110 campers fill the Louisburg High School gymnasium in what was a busy week of basketball.

"It was a really good week of camp at all levels," Lowry said. "From the first minute of camp, our upperclassmen set the tone with great attitudes, great effort and great leadership. With the number of girls returning to play from last season's team, we were able to get right into a lot of our offensive and defensive team work."

Lowry also tried something different this season as he invited all the campers from fourth grade on up to participate in a scrimmage-like atmosphere in front of their parents Friday on the final day of camp.

The camp ended with a feast of pizza and cookies, but more importantly, Lowry wanted to bring everyone together to experience what life as Lady Cat basketball players is all about.

"It is important that we create excitement and pride for those that have been Lady Cats, those that are currently Lady Cats and those that will someday be a Lady Cat," Lowry said. "It was great to see the older girls cheering and high-fiving the younger girls. It was nice to see all the parents that came to watch and afterwards seeing the high school girls hanging out with many of the younger girls."

Even though the camp is over, the Lady Cat players still have a lot of work in front them. They will have open gym workouts twice a week through mid-July and the players also have weight sessions twice a week.

Louisburg will also compete in a summer league in Shawnee Mission for the next month.

Still, Lowry believes the team camp was a great way to kickoff the summer for his players and he likes what he has seen thus far.

"For us team camp is primarily about establishing our program's culture and shaping our team's identity," Lowry said. "We find out who are leaders will be because they are pushed to the forefront as the week progresses. We also find out what younger players will compete.

"We have several girls returning that gained some very good experience last season. As part of that experience they know what kind of effort they have to give, what kind of teammate

they have to be and they have more confidence and trust in each other.”

Harding named to all-league, state teams



Louisburg junior Grant Harding had a good season for the Wildcat basketball team and he was recently selected to the all-Frontier League second team and was also named as an honorable mention all-state player by the Topeka Capital-Journal and Wichita Eagle.

Throughout the season, Grant Harding was a big focus for the opposition when it came to stopping the Louisburg boys basketball team.

Opposing teams knew Harding was going to get the ball and that he was a big part of the Wildcat offense. All that attention didn't seem to slow the Louisburg junior much and the rest of the Frontier League coaches took notice.

The all-Frontier League basketball team was recently released and Harding earned second team honors after a breakout season. Harding averaged 16 points a game to lead Louisburg and also

averaged eight rebounds and three assists a contest.

“In our league, which I feel is the best in all of 4A, as a group, to get recognized at all is a huge honor,” Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. “Being recognized as one of the top 10 players in the league is even more of an honor and I couldn’t be more proud of him. His hard work and dedication to the sport he loves is paying off and that’s one of the greatest aspects of coaching.”

Harding was also recently recognized outside of the league. He earned all-state honors as he was named to the Class 4A-Division I honorable mention team by the Topeka Capital-Journal and Wichita Eagle.

Paola and Eudora, which each earned state tournament bids, led the way with three all-league selections as did Spring Hill.

2016 All-Frontier League Boys Basketball Team

First team: Justin Criddle, sr., Paola; Austin Downing, sr., Eudora; Isaac McCullough, jr., Ottawa; Mason McDow, sr., Paola; Ivan Hughes, sr., Spring Hill.

Second team: Perry Carroll, jr., Ottawa; Brian Tolefree, sr., Eudora; Grant Harding, jr., Louisburg; Jomain Rouser, sr., Eudora; Alex Wilson, sr., Paola.

Honorable mention: Jackson Barth, sr., Baldwin; Trey Heinrich, jr., Spring Hill; Jacob Jennings, sr., De Soto; Jacob Hodge, jr., Spring Hill; Jayce Dighans, soph., Baldwin.

Buffington earns postseason honors



Louisburg High School freshman Carson Buffington dives on the floor for a loose ball during a game earlier this season. Buffington led the Frontier League with 11 rebounds a contest and earned honorable mention all-league and all-state honors.

It was just her first year of varsity basketball, but Carson Buffington seemed to make quite an impression on the rest of the Frontier League coaches.

The Louisburg forward did a lot of the dirty work for the Lady Cats this season and the coaches made sure she was rewarded for it. Buffington earned a spot on the all-Frontier League basketball team as an honorable mention when the team was released last week.

Buffington was the lone selection for the Lady Cats after they finished with a 3-18 record, but she had a season to remember. As a freshman, she led the league in rebounding with 11 boards a game to go along with four points and two steals a contest.

“Carson takes a great deal of pride and gives exceptional effort in rebounding the ball on both ends of the floor,” Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. “She does many of those things coaches ask of their players when it comes to effort,

hustle, character and being unselfish.

“She is the first one on the floor for a loose ball. She is a great teammate, always positive and encouraging, and I expect her to develop into a good leader for her team this offseason.”

The honors didn't stop there, however.

Buffington also earned all-state honors as she was named to the Class 4A-Division I honorable mention team by the Topeka Capital-Journal.

As for the rest of the all-league team, Paola, which finished as a state runner-up, led the way with four all-league selections. Baldwin, which made the state tournament in Class 4A-Division II, also had four selections.

2016 All-Frontier League Girls Basketball Team

First team: Morgan Laudan, senior, Paola; Kyna Smith, sr., Baldwin; Matti Morgan, jr., Paola; Maddie Neufeld, sr., Baldwin; Kamryn Shaffer, soph., Ottawa.

Second team: Mariah Grizzle, soph., De Soto; Julia Johnson, jr., De Soto; Kristen Saucerman, sr., De Soto; Abby Ogle, soph., Baldwin; Taylor Williams, sr., Paola.

Honorable mention: Lauren Delker, fr., Spring Hill; Carson Buffington, fr., Louisburg; Meghan Goff, fr., Spring Hill; Taylor Cawley, jr., Baldwin; Brynn Ferguson, sr., Ottawa; Chandler Karr, jr., Paola.

Paola AD proposes bill to help classification issue



Last October, Paola activities director Jeff Hines went to a Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) regional meeting to get updates on classification issues.

Six months later, Hines found himself in Topeka, in front of the Kansas Senate Education Committee to talk about a bill that could change the way schools are classified.

On Thursday, Hines sat in front of the committee to discuss Senate Bill 464 – a bill that he proposed with guidance of Sen. Caryn Tyson.

Statute 72-130 establishes specific guidelines pertaining to the organizational structure and functions of KSHSAA. Senate Bill 464 would change one part of the statute and strike the line which allows schools to be classified only by student enrollment.

“The total number of students in schools is a great starting point for classifying them,” Hines said. “It makes sense that the largest schools should play the largest schools and the smallest schools should play the smallest schools, but there are other things that need to be considered.”

For several months, KSHSAA has had a classification committee discuss different ways to have a competitive balance with its member schools. They came up with ideas of reducing the number of classifications or changing the number of schools in a

division.

"There were no other factors being considered and that bothered me," Hines said, "All that would do was reshuffle the schools just a little bit but we would have the same problem."

The problem for the committee was its hands were tied thanks to the wording in Statute 72-130 that specifically states schools can only be classified by enrollment numbers and nothing else.

So Hines went to work and helped create Senate Bill 464, which does not give a specific solution to the problem, but rather would take wording out of the statute to allow KSHSAA to figure out how to classify schools on its own.

Hines gave a 15 minute testimony in front of the committee and then answered questions from the committee members for more than 30 minutes afterward. Before the hearing, Hines received support from every member in the Frontier League, Pioneer League and all but two schools in the Kaw Valley League, as those two didn't respond before the hearing.

Following Hines' testimony, Sen. Vicki Schmidt, R-Topeka, had concerns as to why KSHSAA did not come in front of the committee itself to ask for changes.

Hines informed the committee that it would be redundant for KSHSAA to endorse the plan, because if approved, member schools would still have to vote on it. He believes Bill 464 would let KSHSAA come up with a system and let schools improve it, instead of the legislature.

"KSHSAA wants to be neutral because this proposal would affect different schools in different ways," Hines said. "It could be very beneficial to some schools and others may not like it because they might have to move up a class. So, why should KSHSAA have to pick sides in it and pit member against member? It doesn't have to be that way in my opinion."

“Yes, a school that has to move up a classification might not like it, but is it the best thing overall for the association? They can’t look themselves in the mirror and say ‘No, this isn’t the right thing to do?’

A major problem for some member schools in KSHSAA is they do not believe it is competitively equal the way it is currently structured.

“I am not a believer in participation medals,” Hines said. “If they are kindergartners, sure, but when you start playing, part of being successful later in life is learning how to compete. We all competed for a job when you have gone in for an interview and that is good. You need to have that skillset and I am not saying that we need to give more trophies out and give everyone a shot, but I just want a system in place that is equitable for all so that some don’t have an unfair advantage at the expense of the rest and I think that is what is happening.”

One of the problems is the lack of balance between championships won between public and private high schools. Hines did research and presented numbers at the hearing at the number of state championships won between private and public schools from 2004 to 2014.

Here is what he found.

- Private schools make up slightly less than 8 percent of the KSHSAA membership.
- Private schools have won slightly less than 32 percent of the state championships.
- Based on membership percentage, private schools should only win approximately 8 percent of the titles, not nearly 32 percent.
- Private schools are winning four times more state titles than should be expected based on their memberships.
- Private schools are nine times more likely to win five

or more state titles than their public school peers.

"In that period of time, I looked for who has won five or more state titles," Hines said. "That is a difficult feat. You look at Paola's history and we have won like seven and Louisburg has won three in 100-plus years. During those 10 years, 37 percent of those private schools won five or more during that time and public schools had 4 percent win five or more. Private schools are nine times more likely to become a dynasty or a successful program with strong tradition. You tell me how we are all the same?"

Another problem they are facing is schools with a high percentage of low socioeconomic status (SCS) students, cannot compete against fellow schools in their own classification in many activities, including football.

"There is a whole bunch of schools in the Kansas City, Kansas school district that are 6A or 5A that have no business competing against those really hard schools," Hines said. "They don't have resources, they don't have the students, there is no interest and they have all those things working against them and I feel bad for those kids. Who wants to trot out against some of those bigger schools and know you are going to get your ears boxed in? That is not fun. Moreover, it is not challenging for the kids those schools are playing against."

Hines believes competition is important when it comes to the growth of the student athlete and it is beneficial for the school and its community.

"Not only what it does for grades, but for what it does for the human spirit," Hines said.

"When I was the FFA advisor in Paola, we won 10 state championships in nine years and you could tell the interest by the students and the community went through the roof. You can say the same thing about Louisburg and what Jim Morgan does

with his FFA kids. People flock to success.

“Naturally, when they are there they feel better about themselves, they want to work harder in the classroom to stay eligible and kids that want to stay involved are going to be more successful in life. It is all about having the chance to be successful.”

During Hines’ testimony in front of the Senate Education Committee, not all of the legislatures seemed open to the idea. Molly Baumgardner, R-Louisburg, asked Hines if he would be willing to relinquish state funding if the legislature agrees to release oversight of how KSHSAA classifies schools.

“If we relinquished the funding behind it, (high school activities) would disappear,” Hines said at the hearing.

No action was taken following the hearing, but the committee chairman spent 15 minutes with him and Tyson to help them strategize on what to do next.

One option is to amend the bill to include more specifics that could include a multiplier or a separate division for private schools and a low SCS school de-multiplier.

Another option, Hines said, would be to have the classification committee draft a letter to the Senate Education Committee that states they would like to study these other factors as part of a proposal for revamping the classification system, but not until they feel the legislature is open to changing the law.

Whatever decision comes next, however, Hines wants it to be decided by multiple people within KSHSAA on how to proceed.

“I don’t feel comfortable making that change because I feel a committee needs to do the work,” Hines said. “I shouldn’t be doing it, nor should 11 legislators, you need more. We should let the classification committee work on it and hopefully we

can get some things accomplished.

“The only way to allow this to happen is to remove the barrier in place that exists due to the state statute.”

Wildcats fall to Paola in substate tourney



Louisburg's Ben Minster dives to the floor to try and get a loose ball away from Paola's Tanner Moala on Friday during the Wildcats' substate tournament game at Louisburg High School. Louisburg saw its season come to an end with a 58-34 loss.

It wasn't the most pleasant finish to the season for the Louisburg boys basketball team and that end came Friday.

During the Class 4A-Division I substate tournament at Louisburg High School, the Wildcats met No. 1 seed Paola in the opening round and gave the Panthers a close game through three quarters. Louisburg couldn't hold on, however, as it fell to the eventual substate champion, 58-34.

The Wildcats (6-15), who won six of their first nine games to start the year, went winless the rest of the way, including

several close losses down the stretch. Although the season didn't end on a high note, Louisburg coach Jason Nelson believes his team grew in a lot of different areas.

"There were probably two games we should have won during that stretch without question and it would be a lot different," Nelson said. "This is probably the best 4A league in the state, especially when you look at the upper echelon of teams.

"We had some season goals that we strove to meet. We wanted to keep teams at 60 points or less a game on average and we matched that. We wanted to outrebound teams and I think we were close there, which is a testament to our kids because we are undersized compared to most of the other schools. The turnover number was good, we just had a hard time finding consistency on offense."



Louisburg senior Jacob Welsh drives past Paola's Blain Ohlmeier during Friday's substate game in Louisburg.

Offense was hard to come by for Louisburg again Friday, but the Wildcats found themselves up against a Paola front line that stands 6-7, 6-7 and 6-5. Louisburg also went up against an aggressive perimeter defense that made it difficult to score from the outside.

Although the offense wasn't clicking, the Wildcat defense slowed Paola down, especially in the second and third quarters to keep the game close.

"You just look at Paola's kids, they are just huge, well-coached and good," Nelson said. "Our kids battled and did what we asked them to do. We emphasized blocking out just because they are so massive, and we could have done a little better job early, but to our credit they cleaned it up. We got the looks we wanted, we slowed them down offensively and they took the shots we wanted them to take. I couldn't be prouder of our kids."

Paola opened the game on a 17-3 run to get out to a double-digit lead early. To start the second quarter, Louisburg got two baskets from Korbin Hankinson and another from Ben Minster to cut the Paola lead to 10.

The Panthers then went on a mini 8-0 run to push their lead to 18 points shortly before halftime. Louisburg's Jayce Geiman hit a 3-pointer with a minute left in the first half, but Paola still held a 29-14 lead at half.

T.J. Dover hit a basket to cut the Paola lead to 13 early in the third quarter, but it would be as close as the Wildcats would get.

Dover led the Wildcats in scoring with eight points as eight different players scored for Louisburg. Grant Harding and Hankinson each finished with six points for the Wildcats.

LOUISBURG	5	9
11	9 – 34	
PAOLA	17	12
11	18 – 58	

LOUISBURG (6-15): T.J. Dover 8, Grant Harding 6, Korbin

Hankinson 6, Jayce Geiman 4, Jacob Welsh 4, Ben Minster 2,
Dalton Ribordy 2, Sam Guetterman 2. 3-point field goals: 2,
(Harding, Geiman)