

Lady Cats battle for first victory



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Senior Megan Lemke looks to go up for a shot Tuesday in Eudora.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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| LOUISBURG | 8 | 15 |
| 2 | 15 – 37 | |

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| EUDORA | 15 | 5 |
| 6 | 8 – 34 | |

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

Lady Cats continue to grow after tourney



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"She has no fear," Lowry said of Hankinson. "The kid just wants to play. I would still like to see her do a little more

things defensively, but I am happy she hit those shots. I push her a lot as a freshman, and getting the opportunity she is, I really challenge her and she is stepping up.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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| AND. COUNTY | 13 | 15 | 10 |
| 12 – 50 | | | |

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| LOUISBURG | 10 | 12 |
| 9 | 12 – 43 | |

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

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| BURLINGTON | 11 | 12 | 11 |
| 12 – 46 | | | |

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| LOUISBURG | 12 | 2 |
| 9 | 9 – 32 | |

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

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| IOLA | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 21 – 42 | |

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| LOUISBURG | 3 | 13 |
| 10 | 11 – 37 | |

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

Wildcats respond to win tourney crown



The Louisburg boys basketball team raises the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic first place trophy into the air following Friday's 69-52 victory over Baldwin in the championship game. The Wildcats won two straight games to win the tournament.

As Mitchell McLellan gazed on the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic championship plaque following Friday's 69-52 victory over Baldwin, it was like hitting the jackpot.

For McLellan, and several other Louisburg basketball players, it was their first opportunity to actually hold a first place trophy. The Wildcats have gone through several lean years lately when it comes to wins, but they are off to a good start this year.

For the first time since 2012, the Wildcats won the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic championship and they had to earn it. After losing their first game of the tournament to Iola, which was held at Louisburg High School, the Wildcats battled back to win their next two games by an average of 17 points and were crowned champions.

"I couldn't be more pleased," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "To think about where we were after the Iola loss and to learn what we learned from that was the big thing. We learned our lesson. These boys want it and are intelligent enough to understand what they needed to.

"They were fantastic these last two games."

It concluded with a strong 17-point victory over Frontier League foe Baldwin in the championship game as Louisburg got a team-high 22 points from McLellan, who scored 16 of those points in the first half.



Louisburg junior T.J. Dover fights through two Baldwin defenders for a shot Friday during the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic.

Louisburg jumped out to a 20-11 lead at the end of the first quarter and never looked back as it pressured the Bulldogs defensively and contested most of their shots. The Wildcats held Baldwin to just 32 percent from the field.

Offensively, Louisburg was just the opposite as it shot 53 percent from the field, with many of those opportunities coming from around the basket.

"We were just ready from the opening tipoff," McLellan said. "We caught fire and we did a good job of running the court and pressing the ball. We never settled to their game, we wanted them to play our game and that is what happened. We were able to feed the ball inside and we took advantage of a lot of those close shots that we couldn't make (against Iola)."

McLellan had a big night for Louisburg. Along with game-high 22 points, he also finished with 10 rebounds to record his first double-double of the season. Five of those rebounds came on the offensive end that led to several put backs.

"He is so important for us," Nelson said of McLellan. "He finds that weak side, and as soon as the help slides over to the strong side, he is so good at sliding underneath and getting those easy buckets and it was fantastic to see."

The Wildcats (3-1) also got double digit performances from juniors T.J. Dover and Grant Harding. Dover finished with 15 points and seven rebounds, many of which came the second half. Harding added 14 points and eight rebounds in the victory.

"Everyone is on a mission to win," McLellan said. "Our program has had losing seasons every year for a very long time and we are all just tired of losing. We have that desire to win every time we step on the court.

"We took smart shots. We didn't have to force anything and we got the looks we wanted to get most of the night, which were easy short shots and we didn't settle."

To get to the championship game, not only did the Wildcats have to beat its final opponent in pool play, Burlington, but they had to do so convincingly. Since Louisburg opened tournament play on Dec. 8 with a loss to Iola, the Wildcats had to do defeat Burlington by at least 13 points to advance to the title game.

Louisburg left a little cushion on that number.

The Wildcats jumped on Burlington from the start and never let up in their 71-53 victory. Like in its championship game win, Louisburg put a 20 spot on the board in the first quarter and held a 20-8 advantage into the second.

“Eliminating turnovers and attacking the rim is what was key for us,” Nelson said. “We know that we have guys that can shoot, but why shoot a low percentage 3-pointer when we can attack the rim and exploit matchups. Our boys may not be the biggest, but there is always mismatches somewhere and it is their job to find those and exploit them and that is what we did.”



The Louisburg boys basketball team poses with its championship trophy following Friday's win over Baldwin. Members of the team are (front row, from left) Korbin Hankinson, Mitchell

McLellan, Grant Harding,
Jacob Welsh, Alex Dunn;
(back row) Dalton Ribordy,
Jayce Geiman, Sam
Guetterman, Ben Brummel,
T.J. Dover, Ben Minster and
Jake Hill.

Louisburg definitely found one as Burlington had a hard time containing Harding. The Wildcats forward exploded for a game-high 28 points and seven rebounds and Burlington didn't have an answer.

Harding also connected on four 3-pointers along with driving to the basket and getting to the free-throw line. The Louisburg junior was 8 for 8 from the line.

After Harding, the Wildcats had balanced scoring across the board. Dover finished in double figures with 10 points, while juniors Sam Guetterman, Jayce Geiman and McLellan each added eight points.

It was a big relief for Louisburg following its 54-46 loss to Iola two nights before. The Wildcats struggled offensively and trailed 24-18 at halftime.

Louisburg seemed to get some momentum back in the third quarter and even held a 36-32 lead into the fourth quarter. However, Iola outscored the Wildcats 22-10 in the final frame to get the upset.

Harding and McLellan each scored 13 points in the loss.

Louisburg will go for its first official Frontier League victory tomorrow when it travels to Eudora and hopes to get a win in its final game before the holiday break.

"The Frontier League is tough and we have to go out on a mission to win," McLellan said. "We have to come out ready to

play every night, and even if we don't win, we can't hang our heads and let it carry over. This league is no joke and every game is going to be tough."

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| BALDWIN | | 11 | 16 |
| 14 | 11 - 52 | | |

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| LOUISBURG | | 20 | 18 |
| 14 | 17 - 69 | | |

LOUISBURG (3-1): Mitchell McLellan 11-18 0-2 22; T.J. Dover 7-11 1-2 15; Grant Harding 5-8 4-4 14; Jayce Geiman 3-6 0-0 8; Sam Guetterman 2-2 1-1 5; Jacob Welsh 1-3 2-7 4; Dalton Ribordy 0-2 1-2 1. Totals: 29-55 9-20 69. 3-point field goals: 2, (Geiman 2).

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|-------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| BURLINGTON | 8 | 15 | 14 |
| 16 - 53 | | | |

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| LOUISBURG | | 20 | 17 |
| 18 | 16 - 71 | | |

LOUISBURG: Grant Harding 8-14 8-10 28; T.J. Dover 5-10 0-0 10; Sam Guetterman 4-4 0-0 8; Jayce Geiman 1-6 6-9 8; Mitchell McLellan 4-8 0-0 8; Dalton Ribordy 1-2 4-4 6; Alex Dunn 2-2 0-0 4; Jacob Welsh 0-0 2-2 2. Totals: 25-48 20-25 71. 3-point field goals: 4, (Harding 4).

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| IOLA | | 10 | 14 |
| 8 | 22 - 54 | | |

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| LOUISBURG | | 5 | 13 |
| 18 | 10 - 46 | | |

LOUISBURG: Mitchell McLellan 6-11 1-3 13; Grant Harding 5-16

3-7 13; T.J. Dover 2-5 2-7 6; Dalton Ribordy 2-4 0-0 4; Ben Minster 1-2 1-1 3; Jacob Welsh 0-1 3-4 3; Sam Guetterman 1-4 0-0 2; Alex Dunn 1-3 0-0 2. Totals: 18-49 10-22 46.

Wildcats win thriller against Pittsburg



Louisburg junior Grant Harding dunks the ball after a steal during Friday's season opener against Pittsburg in Louisburg. The Wildcats rallied from seven points down with under three minutes left to pull off a 51-50 victory.

It may have been just the season opener, but the Louisburg boys basketball team provided all the drama any fan could ask for.

There were rallies, dunks, floor burns, big defensive stops and enormous free throws all played in front of an electric crowd Friday inside the LHS gymnasium. When all was said and done, it was the Wildcats that were left standing.

Louisburg rallied from seven points down with under three minutes left in the game to outduel Pittsburg 51-50 and

provided the Wildcats with a positive start to the season.

"I love these kids so much," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "When we were down we didn't get discouraged and they all stuck together. They don't care who is on the court, they just play well together. This is a team and these kids are close and that is what makes this a special group. The effort was there the whole time and that was fantastic."

Except for the opening minutes of the game, the Wildcats found themselves behind most of the way, until they took the lead for good with a minute left in the contest. Louisburg trailed 48-41 with 2 minutes and 41 seconds remaining, then went on a 10-0 run to end the game.

The game seemed to turn the Wildcats' way when they got baskets on back-to-back steals with under two minutes left. The first one came thanks to junior Sam Guetterman and then fellow junior Grant Harding stole the ball and drove it down the floor for an uncontested dunk to cut the Pittsburg lead to just one.

Senior Mitchell McLellan came through for the Wildcats after that with a basket with 1:10 remaining, then after a Pittsburg missed free throw, calmly hit two free throws himself with 28 seconds left. It would be all the Wildcats would need.



Mitchell McLellan puts up a shot Friday against Pittsburg. The Louisburg senior scored the final four points to help the Wildcats get the win.

"Grant was outstanding and Mitchell was outstanding," Nelson said. "Mitchell will be the first one to tell you that he didn't have his best game, but when the time mattered he was there."

Louisburg (1-0) got production from up and down its bench throughout the contest.

Junior T.J. Dover led the Wildcats in scoring with 12 points as he was 6 for 9 from the field. McLellan was also in double digits with 10 points.

Harding was all over the floor for the Wildcats with nine points, including a pair of dunks, to go along with nine rebounds, five assists and three steals. Senior point guard Jacob Welsh ended with six points, two assists and two steals, while sophomore forward Dalton Ribordy had five points in his first varsity game.

"Welsh was outstanding," Nelson said. "Dalton, for his first varsity game, I really thought his defense was fantastic in the paint. Jayce (Geiman) hit a big 3-pointer down the stretch too, so a lot of guys contributed for us. We have a lot more options this season and we can go 9 to 10 players deep, while last season we could go seven or maybe eight, on a good night."

The first quarter wasn't the start Louisburg was hoping for. While they scored 14 points in the opening frame, the Wildcats gave up 23 points to Pittsburg and weren't able to get many stops on the defensive end.

After that, Louisburg clamped down on the Purple Dragons defensively and the Wildcats found themselves on the floor for countless loose balls and seemed to frustrate Pittsburg, especially in the second and fourth quarters.

The Wildcats held Pittsburg to just 27 points in the final three quarters, including just five points in the second and fourth quarters.

"Pitt can pose a lot of matchup problems," Nelson said. "They are athletic, super quick and they are a handful. The problem in the first quarter was we gave up 23 points. One of the kids' goals before the season was to hold teams to 56 points a game and we give up 23 in the first quarter.

"They knew they made some young mistakes that they shouldn't have made and came out after that and only gave up 27 points in the next three quarters. A lot of it just comes with the maturation process and having each other's back, which they clearly did."

The Wildcats return to action tonight as they host the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic all week. Louisburg will matchup with Iola at approximately 6:30 p.m. tonight and then will play Burlington at the same time Thursday.

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| PITT | 23 | 5 | 17 | 5 – |
| 50 | | | | |

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| LOU | 14 | 9 | 13 | 15 – |
| 51 | | | | |

LOUISBURG (1-0): T.J. Dover 6-9 0-0 12; Mitchell McLellan 4-9 2-2 10; Grant Harding 4-13 1-2 9; Jacob Welsh 3-6 0-1 6; Dalton Ribordy 1-3 3-4 5; Ben Minster 2-2 0-0 4; Jayce Geiman 1-5 0-0 3; Sam Guetterman 1-1 0-0 2. Totals: 22-48 6-9 51. 3-point field goals: 1, (Geiman)

Lady Cats fall to Pittsburg in opener



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

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

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

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

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

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



**Freshman Kennia Hankinson
drives the lane during**

Friday's home opener in Louisburg.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Louisburg will try for its first win at 5 p.m. tonight when it

hosts Iola in the first round of the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic. The Lady Cats will also meet Burlington at 5 p.m. on Thursday in the next round before ending the tournament Friday.

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

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

Wildcats ready to take step forward



Junior Grant Harding (right) is one of the top returning players for the Louisburg boys basketball team this season. Harding was an honorable mention all-league player last season as he nearly averaged a double-double.

It may not have been the most ideal situation for Louisburg boys basketball coach Jason Nelson last year.

The Wildcats had just three seniors, didn't have much height and had to throw a group of inexperienced sophomores into the fire of varsity action. As it turned out, the Wildcats got better as the season went on despite only finishing the season with six wins.

Now, Louisburg is hoping to take an even bigger step forward this season.

Those group of sophomores are now juniors and features a senior class that has some veteran experience and a couple newcomers as well.

"Every junior has had some sort of varsity experience and that is huge," Nelson said. "There won't be a transition period and they'll know the difference in speed, aggression and tempo between junior varsity and varsity from the beginning."

Seniors Mitchell McLellan and Jacob Welsh return to the guard spot and will lead the Wildcats, while Alex Dunn and Ben Brummel are new to the team this year. McLellan, who missed half of the season last year with a leg injury, will be one of the team's outside scoring threats.

Welsh, on the other hand, will take over the point guard duties from Corbin Wertz, an all-league player from a season ago.

"Jacob will be our point and has done a superb job of preparing for the season," Nelson said. "Mitchell is an example of why I love my job. He's always had the ability to do well, but has grown into a leader capable of rallying those around him. He's going to have a good year.

"Alex will help us around the perimeter and brings a quality aggression that is contagious. Ben hasn't played in high

school, but is a talented young man who will fill in when needed and is a fantastic teammate.”



Jacob Welsh will be relied on to run the offense this season for Louisburg.

Despite that senior leadership, the Wildcats will also look to get a lot of production out of an underclassmen. Junior Grant Harding emerged as one of Louisburg’s top players a season ago, as he has the ability to play on the wing or inside.

Harding, who was an honorable mention all-league selection last season, averaged nearly a double-double with 11 points and nine rebounds a contest.

“Getting all-league honorable mention in the Frontier League is quite a statement, let alone for a sophomore and Grant has embraced the role of emotional leader and worked hard to improve his overall game,” Nelson said. “Grant is a special talent with the ability to make those around him better while excelling himself and he’s ready for the constant challenges this brings.”

Harding, McLellan and Welsh are slated to start for the Wildcats with several others in the mix to fill the final two spots. Junior guard Jayce Geiman will look to give the

Wildcats some scoring punch from the outside and fellow junior Sam Guetterman will back up Welsh at the point guard spot.

Junior T.J. Dover and sophomore Dalton Ribordy will also see a lot of minutes at the forward spot.

"Jayce has worked as hard as any player I've seen at improving his all-around game," Nelson said. "He's always been a good spot shooter, but he's now one of our better defenders, ball handlers and has added an element of attacking the rim that has made him a good all-around player.

"Sammy is also ready to step in at the point guard or off-guard spot. T.J. learned a great deal last year about being a post in the Frontier League and is ready to take the reins in that position. Dalton is just a sophomore, but will most definitely be counted on at times and is ready for some varsity experience."

The Wildcats open their season at 7:30 p.m. Friday when they host Pittsburg. Louisburg will also the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic next week with games on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

Louisburg will also host the substate tournament this season and will be paired with Spring Hill, Paola and Fort Scott.

To start the season, however, Nelson likes what he has seen so far out of his group and is excited for what the season holds.

"Couldn't have asked for a better beginning for the first couple of weeks," Nelson said. "Every single player has been eager to learn, competitive and willing to push themselves both physically and mentally. Probably the most enjoyable part for me has been watching them push each other in practice. They're truly dedicated to making each other better through competition and at the conclusion of the competition, they understand that they're teammates with a common goal.

"Being a true believer in transparency, our players all know

where they stand with their coaching staff and have a good idea of their roles in our program.”

2015-16 LOUISBURG BOYS BASKETBALL SCHEDULE

Dec. 4
Pittsburg
7:30 p.m.

Dec. 8 Iola (Wildcat Bulldog
Classic) 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 10 Burlington (Wildcat-Bulldog
Classic) 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 11 Wildcat-Bulldog
Classic TBA

Dec. 15 at
Eudora
7:30 p.m.

Jan. 5
Ottawa
7:30 p.m.

Jan. 8 at
Baldwin
7:30 p.m.

Jan. 12 at
Frontenac
7:30 p.m.

Jan. 15 at De
Soto
7:30 p.m.

| | | |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Jan. 19 | | at Baldwin |
| Invitational | TBA | |
| Jan. 22 | | at Baldwin |
| Invitational | TBA | |
| Jan. 23 | | at Baldwin |
| Invitational | TBA | |
| Jan. 28 | | at Spring |
| Hill | | 7:30 |
| p.m. | | |
| Feb. 2 | | |
| Paola | | |
| | 7:30 p.m. | |
| Feb. 5 | | |
| Eudora | | |
| | 7:30 p.m. | |
| Feb. 12 | | at |
| Ottawa | | |
| 7:30 p.m. | | |
| Feb. 16 | | |
| Baldwin | | |
| | 7:30 p.m. | |
| Feb. 19 | | Spring |
| Hill | | |
| 7:30 p.m. | | |
| Feb. 23 | | De |
| Soto | | |
| | 7:30 p.m. | |
| Feb. 26 | at Paola | |
| | 7:30 p.m. | |

Lady Cats remain positive despite inexperience



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

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

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

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

"We have made changes to some of the things we will do

offensively and defensively based on our personnel,” Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. “I expect there will be a learning curve with these changes and with some of our inexperience. However, the upside growth and development of this group can be very good.”

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



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

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

Fellow junior Emalee Overbay, who saw time at both the varsity and junior varsity level last year, hopes to give the Lady

Cats some depth at the forward spot.

"It's great to see the continuing evolution of the program's culture," coach Lowry said. "The upperclassmen have learned from the previous year's captains how to lead through encouragement and motivation, how to be great teammates, how to be unselfish and the work ethic they must have. "

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the substate tournament.

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

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

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

2015-16 LOUISBURG GIRLS BASKETBALL SCHEDULE

Dec. 4
Pittsburg
6 p.m.

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

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

Dec. 11 Wildcat-Bulldog
Classic TBA

Dec. 15 at
Eudora
6 p.m.

Jan. 5
Ottawa
6 p.m.

Jan. 8 at
Baldwin
6 p.m.

Jan. 12 at
Frontenac 6
p.m.

Jan. 15 at De Soto
6 p.m.

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

Jan. 26 at Wellsville Top
Gun TBA

Jan. 28 at Wellsville Top
Gun TBA

Jan. 30 at Wellsville Top
Gun TBA

Feb. 2
Paola
6 p.m.

Feb. 5
Eudora
6 p.m.

Feb. 12 at
Ottawa
6 p.m.

Feb. 16 Baldwin
6 p.m.

Feb. 19 Spring

Hill
p.m.

6

Feb. 23
Soto
6 p.m.

De

Opinion: Rough patch leads to new beginning



I am just going to come right out and say it, “I’m scared.”

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

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

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

That never took place.

My bosses came into my office early that afternoon to inform me I was being let go. The job of covering Louisburg athletics was no longer mine. I packed up my things, turned in my key, went home, punched the wall a couple times and cried.

I was scared.

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

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

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

Not exactly the best way to alleviate fears.

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

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

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

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

This fall brings a lot of story lines to the Wildcat programs. The football team is looking to improve off its 3-win season a year ago and find its way back to the playoffs with a veteran group returning.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I am still scared, though.

It is that fear that drives me to do the best I can in what I do in my job and in life. I don't want what happened on that

day in January to happen again and I will do everything to make sure it doesn't.

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

I am living the American dream.

I just don't want to wake up.

Wildcats looking for leadership, identity



Louisburg's Sam Guetterman (right) and Alex Seuferling battle for a loose ball during a team scrimmage Thursday at Louisburg High School. The Wildcat basketball team concluded their week-long team camp Friday and will continue workouts throughout the summer.

It was never easy for Louisburg boys basketball coach Jason Nelson or his team last season.

The Wildcats had six wins a season ago and dealt with injury

problems most of the way. Those injuries forced younger players to play roles on the varsity level before they were ready and it all trickled down.

However, the Wildcats hope going through those rough times will pay off in a big way for this coming year. Louisburg went to work last week and held its annual team camp at the high school as they prepare for what could be an exciting season.

Louisburg will do so with two new coaches in the fold. Kyle Conley and Jason Friesen take over as assistants in the program and replace former coaches Kyle Wright and Brian Keegan who resigned their spots.

“Camp was fantastic,” Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. “We saw the evolution of our leaders and the beginning of our identity as a group. It further served as a great introduction for our new staff members for our group. We gain a great deal of knowledge and experience with our new assistant coaches and we couldn’t be more excited.”

Along with two new coaches, the Wildcats are also in the process of finding new leaders. Last season’s core of Corbin Wertz, Brady Lambeth and Nathan Moore graduated and Nelson is looking to this year’s junior class, along with seniors Mitchell McLellan and Alex Dunn to provide that departed leadership.



Louisburg boys basketball coach Jason Nelson looks on during the Wildcats' week-long camp Thursday at the high school.

According to Nelson, juniors Grant Harding, Sam Guetterman and T.J. Dover are among the others who are looking to lead what is still a young team. In fact, Nelson is looking to Harding to lead the team on and off the floor this season.

Harding was an honorable mention all-Frontier League player a season ago and is the team's top returning scorer. Harding averaged 11.1 points a game to go along with nine rebounds. He also averaged one block a contest.

"When Grant was a freshmen, we saw the potential in him," Nelson said. "When he was a sophomore, we slowly integrated him into our plans so as to allow for a slow, steady evolution. As a junior, he's ready to both lead by example and word."

The Wildcats are putting in a lot of work in the offseason. Along with their team camp, they have workouts twice a week, weights twice a week and participate in a summer league at Rockhurst University to compete against several Kansas City area high school teams.

Nelson has already seen a growth from his team in summer league action, with a lot of it coming from his junior group.

“The junior class will most definitely reap the benefits of the experience they gained last year,” Nelson said. “The Frontier League is not conducive to a ‘trial by fire’ mentality, but all of our injuries from last year forced our hand. While it was wrought with difficulties, our then sophomores did a fantastic job overall and have the knowledge to step up without suffering from learning on the go.”

Lady Cats get summer work started



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

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

what lies ahead.

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

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

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

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

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

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



Savannah Reinhart tries to dribble past Megan Roy during the final day of the team camp Friday at Louisburg High School.

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

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

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

“There are some kids that fit in pretty well,” he said. “There are some, that if they put in more work in the offseason, who knows where they can be at the start of the season. They are learning that the speed of this game is way different than where they have been. What I do like is they haven’t backed

down when going up against some of these older kids and that is nice to see.”

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

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

“When you have to work hard together, it brings you together,” Lowry said. “We don’t want to win games this summer necessarily, we want to prepare to win games this summer for when it counts.”