

Rally comes up short for Lady Cats



Louisburg sophomore Madisen Simpson drives around an Ottawa player in the Lady Cats' 60-51 loss Friday on homecoming.

For the first 23 minutes, the Louisburg girls basketball team couldn't seem to get in any kind of rhythm during Friday's homecoming contest against Ottawa.

The Lady Cats eventually found it, and for the final nine minutes, turned a 21-point deficit to just five, but couldn't get over the hump in a 60-51 loss to the Cyclones. Louisburg came close to pulling off an improbable comeback.

"It was good to see the girls battle back, especially being down 21, but we have to be smarter at this point in the season," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "We had four days to prepare for Ottawa and defensively we were just out of position. The homecoming game is always filled with distractions and other things, so I am sure that was part of it, but we have to be more focused."

The game started to slip away from the Lady Cats (9-7) in the third quarter as Ottawa went on a 14-3 run to build a 47-26 lead with just under a minute left. Louisburg built some momentum when Natalie Moore hit two free throws and then a 3-pointer at the buzzer to make it a 15-point deficit.



Louisburg junior Natalie Moore drives past an Ottawa player to the basket Friday in Louisburg. Moore finished with 27 points in the 60-51 loss

Moore, who finished with a game-high 27 points, scored 14 of those points in the fourth quarter to help bring Louisburg back. She hit a runner in the lane to cut it to 53-48 with 1 minute and 28 seconds left in the game.

Louisburg couldn't get the stops it needed in the final minute and was forced to foul. Ottawa's Corie Fischer hit the final seven free throws to keep the Lady Cats at bay.

Lady Cat senior Kirstin Lowry also hit a big 3-pointer during the run and finished in double figures with 12 points.

To get the rally started, Louisburg junior Megan Lemke dove on the floor late in the third quarter for a loose ball and forced an Ottawa turnover which seemed to give the Lady Cats

new life.

"I think Megan's play there really woke us up a little bit," coach Lowry said. "It was a great hustle play and was a springboard into getting that rally going. It is those plays that can change a game and it did in our case."

Louisburg had to deal with foul problems early as forward Kallie O'Keefe picked up two fouls with three minutes left in the first quarter and Moore picked up two fouls in the second.

Ottawa gave the Lady Cats fits in the first three quarters from all over the floor. Fischer and Brette Moore each finished with 16 points for the game.

However, Cyclone freshman Kamryn Shaffer provided the biggest impact as she scored 18 points, including four 3-pointers.

"The fact was Ottawa was on fire for a while and just made shots," coach Lowry said. "For the freshman to come in and hit four 3s was big for them plus Fischer and Moore are always good players. I talked to those two before the game and I just wanted to let them know how much I appreciated them because I have watched them the last six or seven years and watched them grow. I try to do that with a lot of the seniors in the league."

Louisburg will try and rebound from the loss Tuesday when it hosts Baldwin. Tipoff is set for approximately 6 p.m.

LOUISBURG		8	9
15	19 - 51		
OTTAWA		14	12
21	13 - 60		

LOUISBURG (9-7): Natalie Moore 27, Kirstin Lowry 12, Megan Lemke 6, Madisen Simpson 5, Kallie O'Keefe 1. Totals 19 8-13

51. 3-point field goals: 5, (Moore 2, Lowry 2, Simpson)

State-ranked Eudora rolls past Louisburg



Louisburg senior Brady Lambeth and the Wildcats couldn't keep up with Eudora on Friday in a 77-34 loss. Lambeth finished with nine points.

EUDORA – For the second straight game, the Louisburg boys' basketball team faced off with a state tournament team from a year ago and had to do so with two starters on the bench with injuries.

Eudora, the No. 5 ranked team in Class 4A-Division I, had the Wildcats' number from the opening tip Friday as the Cardinals took care of Louisburg 77-34 in Eudora. Earlier in the week, the Wildcats fell to Paola on the road as well.

The Wildcats (4-11) were without starters Corbin Wertz and Mitchell McLellan again due to injury. McLellan is out for the season with a broken leg, while the Wildcats hope to have Wertz back soon from a leg injury.

“When you’re as inexperienced as us, to play without two starters is a tremendous negative and we knew without Corbin and Mitchell finding points would be tough,” Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said.

It was difficult, especially early as Eudora put together a huge run to outscore Louisburg 29-2 in the first quarter and the Wildcats were never able to recover.

Eudora sophomore Mitchell Ballock, one of the top players in the state, put on a show in front of his home crowd as he finished with a game-high 25 points, including six 3-pointers.

“The resiliency of our boys was commendable,” Nelson said. “Playing in Eudora, against a state ranked team, with the best player in the state is a daunting task for the most seasoned of varsity players. We consistently had three [or] four sophomores on the court and despite the slow start for us and lightening quick start for them, the boys never backed down.

“In the near future, when we look back at our improvement, I suspect that this game will be watershed for us. Our sophomores played in a high intensity, hostile environment and despite the score, they never backed down.”

One of those sophomores, Grant Harding, led the Wildcats in scoring for the second straight game with 10 points to go along with six rebounds. Senior Brady Lambeth added nine points for the Wildcats, while fellow senior Nathan Moore led the team with eight rebounds.

The Wildcats will try and rebound this Friday when they host Ottawa for homecoming. Louisburg also expects to have Wertz and his 20-plus points per game back in the lineup.

“Our boys are awaiting Corbin’s return with open arms and we are all eagerly anticipating his return,” Nelson said. “I know he’s tired of listening to our staff on the bench.”

Tipoff is set for approximately 7:30 p.m.

LOUISBURG		2	12
11	9 - 34		
EUDORA		29	18
21	9 - 77		

LOUISBURG (4-11): Grant Harding 5-10 0-2 10; Brady Lambeth 4-8 0-1 9; Jacob Welsh 2-6 2-2 6; T.J. Dover 2-5 1-2 5; Sam Guetterman 1-4 0-0 3; Nathan Moore 0-1 3-4 3. Totals: 14-39 6-11 34. 3-point field goals: 2, (Guetterman, Lambeth)

Lady Cats pull away from Eudora



Louisburg guard Kirstin Lowry was one of three Lady Cat players in double figures Friday in Eudora. Lowry scored 16 points in the 59-40 victory.

EUDORA – There was some worry about how the Louisburg girls basketball team would react to a tough loss earlier in the

week to rival Paola.

After a shaky first half Friday at Eudora, the Lady Cats shot down any doubt about how they would bounce back. Louisburg took control against Eudora in the second half on its way to a 59-40 victory.

It was the fifth victory in the last six games for Louisburg after it started its season with a 4-5 record in its first nine games. The Lady Cats are now 9-6 overall.

"I am always a little concerned about a game following one in which the kids gave so much," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said of the Paola game earlier in the week. "However, our seniors did a good job of leading and setting the tone for us in the second half against Eudora."

The three seniors certainly did their part as they combined for 50 of the 59 points as each player made an impact on different parts of the floor.

Point guard Natalie Moore had her way with the Eudora defense as she finished with a game-high 24 points to go along with eight rebounds, three assists and three steals. Moore did a lot of damage from the free-throw line as she knocked down 12-of-15 attempts.

Guard Kirstin Lowry made an impact from beyond the arch as she totaled 16 points, including two 3-pointers. Forward Kallie O'Keefe worked hard underneath the basket as she nearly ended up with a double-double with 10 points and nine rebounds and also added two steals.

Offensively, the Lady Cats got off to a strong start as they scored 17 first-quarter points, but went into a lull in the second quarter and took just a 28-22 lead into halftime.

"Our level of energy and intensity wasn't what it has been at the beginning of the game," coach Lowry said. "In the first

half we seemed to be doing just enough to compete and weren't as disciplined as we needed to be."

The Lady Cats got the message in the second half as they outscored Eudora 31-18 in the final two quarters. Louisburg did so because of its work at the free-throw line as it converted 19-of-25 attempts.

Free throws have been up and down for the Lady Cats this season and is a vital part to their success.

"We continue to put a lot of work in on getting better at the free-throw line," coach Lowry said. "Because of how we play, we expect to get to the line a lot and it's crucial that we finish."

Next up for Louisburg is a home matchup with Ottawa at 6 p.m. this Friday and it will try to avenge a loss earlier in the season. It is also homecoming for the Lady Cats.

"Homecoming week is a fun and exciting week for the kids," coach Lowry said. "However, when it comes to preparing there are a lot of distractions so it will be important that we have good practices as we make our final push."

LOUISBURG		17	11
15	16 - 59		
EUDORA		10	12
8	10 - 40		

LOUISBURG (9-6): Natalie Moore 6-14 12-15 24; Kirstin Lowry 7-13 0-1 16; Kallie O'Keefe 4-7 2-2 10; Madisen Simpson 0-4 4-4 4; Emalee Overbay 2-3 0-0 4; Paige Buffington 0-3 1-2 1. Totals: 19-45 19-25 59. 3-point field goals: 2, (Lowry 2)

Upset-minded Lady Cats come up short



PAOLA – Scoring just two points in a quarter against the No. 2 ranked team in Class 4A-Division I, on its home floor no less, usually means blowout city.

Instead, the Louisburg girls basketball team nearly put together the upset of the season. The Lady Cats had undefeated Paola down with 5 minutes left in the contest, but couldn't hold on in a 51-39 loss Tuesday in Paola.

The Lady Cats took the lead with 5 minutes and 29 seconds left in the contest on a pair of Natalie Moore free throws, but Paola answered with a 17-4 run to end the game, with many of those points coming at the free-throw line late.

Even with the loss, Louisburg (8-6) knows it will get a chance to see Paola one, if not two more times before the end of the season.

“To be honest, yes it was a loss and we don't like to lose, but at the same time this was big for our girls,” Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. “They needed to get the confidence that we can play with teams like Paola and we did. It really helps us take that next step and hopefully we can keep building on this.”

It was a sluggish start for both teams as the first four minutes of the game was scoreless and was littered with turnovers on both sides. Paola found a little rhythm to take a 7-0 lead and Louisburg just missed getting shutout of the frame but Moore hit a runner with 20 seconds left.

The basket seemed to carry over into the second quarter as the Lady Cats outscored Paola 17-9 and took a 19-16 lead into halftime. Louisburg took advantage of some Paola foul problems and charged back.



Andy Brown /
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Louisburg sophomore guard Madisen Simpson drives to the basket on Feb. 3 against Paola. The Lady Cats fell to No. 2 Paola 51-39. (Top) Louisburg junior Megan Lemke battles for a rebound in Paola.

Senior Kirstin Lowry connected on two 3-pointers, including one that tied the game, while senior Kallie O'Keefe tied the game again on a basket with 1:33 left in the game. Moore and O'Keefe each hit free throws down the stretch to give the Lady

Cats the halftime lead.

"I think both teams were playing hard at first, even though it was a little sloppy, but I think both were just feeling each other out," coach Lowry said. "We made a nice run in the second quarter and felt pretty good at halftime. Even when we were down early, it was good to see the girls battle back and feel like they can play with Paola."

The third quarter went back and forth, but the Lady Cats seemed to seize the momentum heading into the fourth when Kirstin Lowry knocked down another 3-pointer to put Louisburg up 31-29 with under 10 seconds left.

However, Paola's Taylor Williams took the ball down the floor, scored, was fouled and converted the 3-point play with 1 second left to put the Panthers back up by one.

Moore hit four straight free throws in the fourth quarter to give the Lady Cats the lead at 35-34, but Paola would take control after that. Moore led the Lady Cats in scoring with 16 points to go along with six rebounds and was 8-for-10 from the free-throw line.

Kirstin Lowry also finished in double figures for the Lady Cats with 13 points. O'Keefe added six points, but also pulled down a team-high 12 rebounds against a big Panther front line.

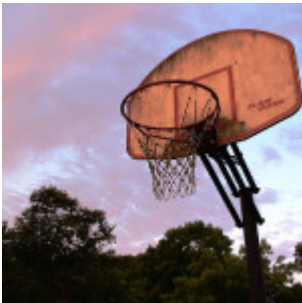
"I thought Kallie really battled in there and played smart," coach Lowry said. "She was going up against some big girls and she did well. She was very aggressive, which was good to see."

LOUISBURG	2	17	12	8	- 39
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PAOLA		7	9	16	19 - 51
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LOUISBURG (8-6): Natalie Moore 4-13 8-10 16; Kirstin Lowry 4-11 2-2 13; Kallie O'Keefe 3-14 2-5 6; Megan Lemke 2-3 0-0 4. Totals: 12-35 12-21 39. 3-point field goals: 3, (Lowry 3)

Welcome to Louisburg Sports Zone!



Leave it to a children's movie to solve all of life's problems – well, at least my problems anyway.

It was a movie that led me to create the Louisburg Sports Zone website and start my own action photo business to coincide with it.

Before I get to that, let me take you back to seven years ago when I arrived in a small quaint town called Louisburg. It was a town I was familiar with as I grew up in Paola, but I never envisioned myself coming back to Miami County to raise a family.

Coming out of college, my goal was to make it big one day by getting a job at a large, daily newspaper and become a beat writer for a college team or professional team. I knew with hard work and practice that I could get there one day.

Well, two kids later and my priorities quickly changed – for the better. After stops at newspapers in Leavenworth and

Atchison, my wife Jennifer and I wanted to move closer to family and when a newspaper job in the county opened up, I was offered the job and took it.

After I was hired, my family and I bought a house in Louisburg and decided to make this our home. The place where we were going to raise our two kids, that eventually became three several years later, was a place we fell in love with.

Louisburg was our home, and at the same time, covering Louisburg athletics became my responsibility and one I didn't take lightly. Living in the same town I worked in was a first for me.

I got the chance to get to know the community and they got the chance to know me through my articles. I was lucky enough to cover Louisburg High School's first state football championship in 2010 and several other state title runs in other sports.

Getting a chance to know the kids, coaches and parents was something I will never forget. Unfortunately, all that ended for me a month ago when I was let go from my responsibility of writing about Louisburg sports.

I honestly didn't know what to do. It was my life for seven years and then all of a sudden I was going to have to find something else to do, something I probably wasn't going to like.

Trying to figure things out, I remember watching an animated movie called Big Hero 6 with my kids. It talked about when a problem arises, and you can't figure out a solution, try looking at it from a different angle.

So, ladies and gentleman, Louisburg Sports Zone is my different angle.

This site gives me the opportunity and privilege to write

about athletic achievements in the area and continue doing what I love to do. It is a free service that I provide to you and one I hope you appreciate.

Hopefully, down the road, not too far, businesses in the area will want to advertise here so that this can grow into something even bigger. For those who want to buy photos from events I cover, they can visit louisburgsportszone.smugmug.com and search through what I hope becomes several galleries.

I plan on covering athletic events at Louisburg High School and Louisburg Middle School, along with elementary-age activities. This page is going to be updated on a regular basis to give you the most up-to-date sports news and you won't have to wait 5 days or even a week to read about it.

Oh, and did I mention...IT IS FREE!!

I just want to say a big "Thank you" to my family for all the support and encouragement they have given me. I want to thank all the members of community who reached out to me on Twitter, Facebook or just picked up the phone during what was a difficult time in my life.

Also, I want to give a big shout out to Mr. Kenneth Sweeney, a senior at Louisburg High School who helped design this site for me and was there to answer all my weird questions. I appreciate everything and all the hard work you put into it.

When I moved here seven years ago, I figured I was never going to make it "big." I couldn't have been more wrong. I have definitely hit it big and this community is the reason why.

Lady Cats capture tourney title



Seniors Natalie Moore, Kirstin Lowry and Kallie O'Keefe have been putting the Louisburg girls basketball team on their backs for most of the season.

Friday's championship game of the Louisburg Invitational was no different as each player came through at the right time. All three seniors played vital roles in the 47-41 victory over St. James Academy to win back-to-back tournament titles. The Lady Cats have now won their home tournament championship three of the last four seasons.

"It is really big for this group of girls," Louisburg coach Shawn Lowry said. "They stepped up when they needed to and the whole team really did some good things. We knew St. James was a good team and we are going to have to play hard and smart and I thought we did that for the most part."

Moore got things started in the first quarter as she scored 12 of her team-high 21 points in the frame.

Sophomore Madisen Simpson opened the quarter with a 3-pointer that banked in, then Moore followed with 12 straight points, 10 of which came from the free-throw line. She finished the game 13-for-18 from the charity stripe.

The Lady Cats (8-5) took a 15-6 lead into the second quarter and were able to overcome a taller and bigger St. James team in the process.

With wins over Osawatomie and Shawnee Mission North to start the tournament, the Lady Cats have now won three straight and are hoping they are turning the corner on their season.

“Our team chemistry is so much better now than what it was,” Moore said. “It was good before, but we are working a lot better as a team. The underclassmen are feeding off what the seniors are doing right now and it was a really good week for us.”



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Louisburg senior Natalie Moore drives to the basket for two points during the Jan 30 championship game of the Louisburg Invitational.

St. James made things interesting in the second quarter as it outscored Louisburg 16-7 to tie the game at 22-all at halftime. It left a nasty taste in the Lady Cats' mouth.

So when the team ventured to the locker room, they got a nice talking to from the coach.

“We basically got our (rear end) chewed and we needed it, especially me,” Kirstin Lowry said. “We basically gave away

our momentum in that second quarter and we weren't playing hard. I know I took it to heart and we played a lot harder in the second half."

Coach Lowry just had a simple message for the team.

"I just asked them how they wanted to be remembered," coach Lowry said. "We gave them the game back in the second quarter and we weren't playing well. I challenged them and they responded like good teams do and I couldn't be prouder of them."

Kirstin definitely responded as she scored all 10 of her points in the third quarter to help give Louisburg a slim 35-30 lead going into the fourth quarter. It also opened the door for O'Keefe to shine at the most crucial time.

The game, which was tied at 37-all with under five minutes remaining, turned when O'Keefe scored five straight points. The biggest play came when she drove the length of the floor after a rebound, made the basket, was fouled and converted the three-point play.

That five-point lead was enough and St. James wasn't able to recover. O'Keefe finished with seven points, but also added nine rebounds in the winning effort. Junior Megan Lemke also had six rebounds.

"I am just ecstatic," O'Keefe said. "It is great to be able to win this in our senior year and we are playing well right now. It is a good feeling that is for sure."

LOUISBURG	15	7	13
12 - 44			
ST. JAMES	6 16	8	11 -
41			

LOUISBURG (8-5): Natalie Moore 4-12 13-18 21; Kirstin Lowry 4-10 0-1 10; Kallie O'Keefe 3-7 1-2 7; Madisen Simpson 1-9 0-0 3; Paige Buffington 0-2 3-4 3; Megan Lemke 1-2 0-0 2. Totals: 13-42 18-27 47. 3-point field goals: 3, (Lowry 2, Simpson)

Louisburg downs Shawnee Mission North

On Jan. 29, Louisburg faced off with Shawnee Mission North in the second game of pool play in the Louisburg Invitational and came away with an easy 55-33 victory.

Natalie Moore came up big for the Lady Cats again as she finished with a game-high 26 points to go along with five rebounds. Sophomore Paige Buffington finished just outside of double figures with nine points and had four assists.

Kallie O'Keefe added eight points and seven rebounds and Kirstin Lowry added six rebounds in the win.

The game was tied at 9-all in the first quarter and the Lady Cats took a 23-17 lead at halftime. Louisburg pulled away even further as it outscored Shawnee Mission North 13-6 in the third quarter to pull away.

LOUISBURG		9		14		13
	19	-	55			

SM NORTH	9		8		6		10	-	33
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LOUISBURG: Natalie Moore 8-12 9-11 26; Paige Buffington 2-6 4-5 9; Kallie O'Keefe 3-5 2-4 8; Madisen Simpson 2-7 0-0 6; Megan Lemke 0-2 2-2 2; Kirstin Lowry 1-9 0-0 2; Emalee Overbay 1-3 0-2 2. Totals: 17-44 17-24 55. 3-point field goals: 4, (Simpson 2, Moore, Buffington)

Lady Cats roll Osawatomie

The first game of the Louisburg Invitational didn't provide much drama for the Lady Cats as they cruised to a 60-23 victory over Osawatomie to open pool play.

Junior Megan Lemke had one of her best games of the season as she finished with a team-high 12 points and Kirstin Lowry added 11 points in the victory.

"I will tell you what, Megan Lemke really played hard in that win over St. James and really the whole tournament," coach Lowry said. "We asked her to guard some bigger girls in the post and she did a great job with that. She was relentless in there."

Sophomore Madisen Simpson finished with eight points.

Wildcats fall short at Paola





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Louisburg guard Sam Guetterman goes up for a shot Tuesday in Paola.

PAOLA – Louisburg boys basketball coach Jason Nelson was disgusted when he looked down at his bench.

It wasn't the fact that he was disgusted at his team, but more so that he had two players not suited up that could have helped the Wildcats on Tuesday in Paola.

Starting point guard Corbin Wertz, who is the team's leading scorer and an all-Frontier League player, along with starting wing Mitchell McLellan both sat out with injuries and the Wildcats couldn't keep up with the bigger, faster Panthers in a 61-42 loss.

"There was 29 points a game sitting on the bench with me," Nelson said. "We were outsized, like we are most nights, so that hurt a little bit. We still have to play better though."

After a competitive first quarter, the Wildcats just couldn't stay with the Panthers in the second. Paola put on a press defense, forced 17 turnovers for the game, which led to some

easy baskets. At the same time, Louisburg struggled from the field.

Paola outscored Louisburg 28-9 in the second quarter to pull away from the Wildcats for good. The Wildcats stayed with Paola in the first quarter and trailed just 16-10.

“I think the problem was we came out a little too timid,” Nelson said. “We didn’t do the things that we work on in practice and that we have done all year. We didn’t do a good job of moving without the ball and we didn’t rotate and get back on defense.”

Sophomore forwards Grant Harding and T.J. Dover gave the Wildcats the bulk of the scoring. Harding and Dover each finished with 13 points, while Harding pulled down seven rebounds.

Senior Nathan Moore finished with nine points and Ben Minster came off the bench to lead Louisburg with 10 rebounds.

Louisburg (4-10) contained the Panthers’ runs in the second half and even brought its fans to its feet when Dover nailed a shot from near halfcourt to beat the buzzer in the third quarter. The Wildcats just couldn’t come up with enough offense to get back in the game – it was still sitting on the bench in street clothes.

“Hopefully we can get Corbin back soon, but we are just taking it easy right now with him,” Nelson said. “We actually did do a better job of making better decisions and playing better in the second half, which was good to see.”

The Wildcats will try and rebound when they travel to Eudora on Friday for another Frontier League matchup. Tipoff is set for approximately 7:30 p.m.

13 10 – 42

PAOLA 16 28
14 3 – 61

LOUISBURG (4-10): Grant Harding 5-13 2-3 13; T.J. Dover 6-11 0-2 13; Nathan Moore 4-7 0-0 9; Ben Minster 2-2 0-0 4; Sam Guetterman 1-4 0-0 2; Brady Lambeth 1-1 0-0 2; Jacob Welsh 1-5 0-0 2. Totals: 20-45 2-5 42. 3-point field goals: 3, (Moore, Harding, Dover)