

Lions light up Little Hawks

Written by Tom Fruehling

Saturday, 05 February 2011 23:32 - Last Updated Sunday, 06 February 2011 15:02

The continuous clock couldn't come soon enough for the Iowa City High boys Saturday night in the Linn-Mar gym.

They couldn't shoot worth a whoop, and the top-ranked Lions (17-0, 12-0 MVC) couldn't miss.

Just 24 hours after posting their first win of the season, the Little Hawks (1-16, 1-11) lost last night 70-36 in a mismatch that was decided long before the merciful final buzzer.

The rout started in the second quarter, when Linn-Mar poured in one lay-up after another, with some jumpers thrown in, to take a 32-point halftime lead.

In the period, the Lions scored 30 points while holding City High to one tip-in basket and four free throws.

Unsung Lion power forward Ian McBrayer said it was a simple strategy.

"We just listened to Coach (Chris Robertson). He told us at the break to pick it up and play with more intensity, to lock it down. That's what we did."

It was way more than the Little Hawks could handle.

"That second quarter was a case of two total opposites," said City High Coach Adam Loria. "We couldn't hit a shot. And they were so efficient on offense, it was just incredible.

"Things got away from us pretty quickly."

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Robertson said he was much more pleased with his team's start Saturday than he was in a sluggish showing the night before in a 52-33 win over Xavier.

"I thought we came out sharp right from the very beginning. We were attacking more, moving better and setting up screens and cuts," he said. "And then, in the second quarter, we came out and pressured them. We wanted to speed up the game and get points off of our press. Offensively, we really got things going."

McBrayer scored seven points in the opening stanza, while superstar teammates Matt Bohannon and Marcus Paige each had six, as the Lions took a 22-14 lead.

The normally bruising Little Hawks, who beat Prairie 51-45 on Friday, were short-handed to begin with 6-foot-6 post Aaron Johnson out sick against Linn-Mar. Then, barely four minutes into the game, leading scorer and rebounder Cortez Barfield picked up his second foul and had to sit for much of the half.

"That really hurt us on the glass," Loria said. "And we missed a lot of short ones early on."

But he acknowledged that the way Linn-Mar was clicking on all cylinders, it was only a matter of time before the game got out of hand.

Lion guard Shane Benton, who totaled 10 points after going scoreless the night before, upped the score to 57-20 on a driving lay-up and free throw with 5:40 left in the third quarter to set the clock in non-stop motion.

"We were finding open lanes and getting good passes all night," Benton explained about his team's stellar offensive execution.

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City High Coach Loria saw all he needed to see.

"This is the best Linn-Mar team they've ever had, and they've had a lot of good ones," he said. "They have the whole package. They're big and physical, and they really get after you defensively. They can shoot inside or outside.

"There's not a lot they can't do. They're a great, great team."

IOWA CITY HIGH (36): Lonnie Chester 0 4-7 4, Jeremy Johnson 1 2-2 4, Andrew McNulty 2 1-2 6, Ronald Thompson 0 1-2 1, Tony Perry 2 0-0 5, Cortez Barfield 3 2-3 8, Grant Simpson 0 0-0 0, Andrew Hein 0 0-0 0, Levi Powell-Littler 1 0-0 2, Ryan Duncan 0 0-0 0, Josh Powell-Littler 2 1-2 6, Ryan Young 0 0-0 0. Totals 11 11-18 36.

LINN-MAR (70): Shane Benton 4 2-2 10, Marcus Paige 7 0-0 14, Matt Bohannon 5 3-3 15, Ian McBrayer 4 1-1 9, Josh Montague 1 2-2 4, Josh Malone 0 0-0 0, Michael Thul 0 0-0 0, Nick Soyer 1 0-0 3, Matthew Lassen 4 0-0 10, Mason Krusie 1 1-2 3, Nate Johnson 1 0-0 2, Braxton Lancial 0 0-0 0, Nick Gentzler 0 0-0 0, Derik Gogg 0 0-0 0, Jon Kitelinger 0 0-0 0, Andy Henry 0 0-0 0, Alex Holland 0 0-0 0. Totals 28 9-10 70.

Halftime – Linn-Mar 52, City High 20. 3-point goals – City High 3 (Josh Powell-Littler, McNulty, Perry), Linn-Mar 5 (Lassen 2, Bohannon 2, Soyer). Total fouls – City High 12, Linn-Mar 16.