

Lions 21-0!!!

Written by Tom Fruehling

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With their two big men still on the bench with injuries, the Linn-Mar boys sent their 10 seniors off with a bang on Senior Night Thursday in the regular season final by pounding Dubuque Wahlert, 71-50.

The win gave the 4A top-ranked Lions (21-0, 16-0 MVC) their second consecutive undefeated conference season. In the last three years, they are 47-1 in the Mississippi Valley, the only blemish coming two years ago against Cedar Falls.

"That's a great accomplishment," said Linn-Mar Coach Chris Robertson. "I couldn't be happier for our seniors to go out with a win."

Next up is a home game next Friday night against Xavier or Ottumwa as substate tournament play begins.

Robertson said of his two senior stalwarts, 6-foot-6 Ian McBrayer should be ready to suit up. He's been hobbled by a groin injury.

The good news for 6-foot-7 post man Josh Montague is that he will not face surgery for a strained ligament. Robertson said he's in therapy now and might be back in a couple of weeks if the team continues winning.

In their absence, however, Linn-Mar may have found an able substitute Thursday night in 6-foot-7 sophomore string-bean Derrick Gogg. He came off the bench and more than held his own against the shorter but far bulkier Wahlert crew around the basket.

The rail-thin Gogg scored eight points but also clogged up the middle on defense and battled for rebounds.

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"Derek played really well," Roberston said. "We play better in man-to-man than zone, and with him in there we were able to pressure more."

For a change, Lions long-range gunner Matt Bohannon had an off-night shooting, missing his first eight 3-point attempts before finally connecting with two minutes to go in the game.

"They wanted us to shoot from the outside," said Bohannon, who scored 30 against Jefferson Tuesday night. "I was having kind of a rough night, but when we started to go inside we got better shots and pulled away."

Despite scoring below his 16.8 average with 11 points, he and fellow senior Shane Benton picked up the slack on the boards. Benton also put up 13 points, including three treys.

Left-handed floor magician Marcus Paige, a junior who came in as a reserve on Senior Night, once again showed he can do almost anything he wants on the floor. While he uncharacteristically missed a few floaters he normally sinks, he still scored a game-high 23 points and said his primary focus was dishing off to teammates.

He turned the ball over just once as the primary playmaker. For good measure, though, he scored once on a two-handed backwards dunk and another on a dipsy-doodle driving lay-up.

Paige also turned what had been a tenuous four-point lead at halftime into an 11-point cushion going into the final period with a 3-point buzzer beater from the corner. But, on Senior Night, it was fitting that the final bucket came from first-time starter Braxton Lancial on a twisting drive with time running out.

For the Golden Eagles (15-6, 11-5 MVC), senior guard Aaron Schueller was pretty much a one-man gang with 17 points on four 3-pointers.

DUBUQUE WAHLERT (50): Aaron Schueller 6 1-2 17, Riley McCarron 3 1-3 9, Jacob May 1

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2-2 5, Ryan Ernst 4 4-5 12, Riley DeSanti 1 0-0 2, Daniel Sisler 0 0-0 0, Josh Tranel 0 1-2 1, Michael Francis 2 0-0 4, Peter Burgmeier 0 0-0 0, Aaron Holmes 0 0-0 0, Jonathan Moore 0 0-0 0, Nathan Burks 0 0-0 0, Michael Kann 0 0-0 0, Samuel Koenig 0 0-0 0, Brady Williams 0 0-0 0. Totals 17 9-14 50.

LINN-MAR (71): Shane Benton 5 0-0 13, Marcus Paige 8 5-6 23, Matt Bohannon 3 4-5 11, Michael Thul 0 0-0 0, Nick Soyer 2 0-0 5, Matthew Lassen 0 0-0 0, Mason Krusie 3 0-0 8, Nate Johnson 0 0-0 0, Braxton Lancial 1 0-0 2, Nick Gentzler 0 1-2 1, Derik Gogg 3 2-2 8, Totals 25 12-15 71.

Halftime – Linn-Mar 30, Wahlert 26. 3-point goals – Wahlert 7 (Schueller 4, McCarron 2, May), Linn-Mar 9 (Benton 3, Krusie 2, Paige 2, Soyer, Bohannon). Total fouls – Wahlert 14, Linn-Mar 14.