

Linn-Mar is headline maker beyond wrestling

Written by Mark Dukes

Sunday, 20 February 2011 16:34 - Last Updated Sunday, 20 February 2011 22:44



Linn-Mar High School became part of a national story last week when one of its wrestlers, Joel Northrup, defaulted to a girl in the first round of the state tournament.

Northrup's decision has been reported widely in various media outlets, starting with MSR's Jim Ecker reporting earlier in the week that it [may be a possibility](#) . When Northrup chose not to take the mat against Cassy Herkleman of Cedar Falls, it set off reports near and far, from ABC News to USA Today and from ESPN to The New York Times.

The odd set of circumstances has been debated widely, from an MSR [column by Mike Koolbeck](#) the day of the decision to others in national news outlets.

Slowly, the Northrup story will disappear from the national landscape. But headlines for the Linn-Mar athletic program continue to accumulate.

This has been quite a start to the 2010-2011 sports season for the folks at Linn-Mar. The football program had another nice season, going 8-3 and advancing to the second round of the state playoffs.

Also in the fall, the volleyball team advanced to state, losing in the first round to eventual champion Iowa City West. In the last calendar year, the boys' cross country squad and the girls' soccer team also made state.

This winter has been nothing short of sensational for the Lions. The wrestling team finished 15th in the state tournament, won a district championship, qualified eight wrestlers for state and completed a 27-6 dual meet season. The Lions will host a regional dual meet tournament Tuesday against North Scott, with the winner advancing to state.

Linn-Mar is headline maker beyond wrestling

Written by Mark Dukes

Sunday, 20 February 2011 16:34 - Last Updated Sunday, 20 February 2011 22:44

Linn-Mar's boys bowling team qualified for the state tournament Saturday with a resounding victory in the district. The Lions' pinfall of 3,598 was an incredible 319 pins more than the next-highest total in the eight districts. Linn-Mar topped Muscatine in the district by just short of 500 pins. The girls bowling team also qualified for state as an at-large team.

And the beat goes on in basketball. The boys, seeking a state record eighth straight state tournament appearance, are ranked No. 1 and undefeated in 21 games entering the substate round this week. The second-ranked girls are 21-2 and one win short of a return trip to Des Moines and a shot at consecutive Class 4A state championships.

Linn-Mar has come a long way since it opened in 1959. For years, based on enrollment, the Lions did not compete among the state's largest schools. It was a long-standing member of the East Central Iowa Conference until it was accepted into the Mississippi Valley Conference.

The district - encompassing 64 square miles of Marion, parts of Cedar Rapids, Robins and rural Linn County - has exploded over the years. It now serves about 5,000 students in eight buildings, including seven elementary schools, two middle schools and the high school. According to Iowa education documents, Linn-Mar High School is No. 9 in the state in enrollment.

A self-contained district such as Linn-Mar has some advantages. Its students progress through the Linn-Mar system. In Cedar Rapids, not all middle school students feed the same high school. This does not guarantee athletic or academic success, but it can't hurt.

While everyone else in the country got to know Linn-Mar this week because of a quirky, boy-girl wrestling situation, many of us on the local scene realize the school is a regular headline-maker. This is not the first period of success for Linn-Mar athletics and, with its ever-growing numbers, surely will not be the last.