

Johnson lifts Lions by Wash in 2 OT

Written by Mike Condon

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Linn-Mar's Ben Johnson was bloodied to be sure.

But he was far from deterred by a cut over his left eye suffered in the first half of Saturday's Class 3A boys soccer substate final with Washington at Linn-Mar Stadium.

The senior forward came back after having his wound repaired, his head wrapped by a bandage. Johnson and his Lion teammates were stymied through regulation time and the first overtime by a stingy Warrior defense.

Then just 22 seconds into the second 10-minute overtime Johnson took a slick feed from Leroy Enzugusi and fired it past Washington all-state keeper Gunnar Lenzen to send Linn-Mar back to the state tournament for a second straight year with a 1-0 victory.

No. 4 Linn-Mar (17-3) will meet Dubuque Hempstead (15-2) in the opening round of the state tournament Thursday at 5:15 p.m. at the Cownie Soccer Complex in Des Moines. Hempstead defeated the Lions, 3-1, in the regular season.

Washington closes its season at 9-9.

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Johnson spent a portion of the first half in the training room getting treatment after he collided with a Warrior player going for a header

"It was a 50-50 ball," he said. "I went up and felt something sharp and then when I came down there was blood on my face. Winning makes it hurt not quite as much."

The winning goal came just after the kickoff of the second overtime. Enzugusi picked off a Warrior pass just past midfield and used his quickness to elude two Washington defenders. Johnson was flying up the field on his left.

"I was able to get through a couple of people," Enzugusi said. "Ben was there and I hit him and he really clutched it up for us."

"Going over the top wasn't working (because the Lions were against the wind) so I just tried to get past them keeping the ball on the ground. I saw Ben making a beautiful run and I got it to him. He's given me way more passes so it felt great to hit him."

For Johnson, it was a matter of simply reacting to the play.

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