

Ollinger sparks No. 10 Lions with defense

Written by Jim Ecker

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Amanda Ollinger can have a big impact on a basketball game even when she's not shooting well from the floor.

She proved it Saturday night.

Ollinger made six steals and sparked Linn-Mar with her defense as the 10th-ranked Lions put the clamps on Muscatine, 49-29, in a non-conference game in the Linn-Mar gym.

Ollinger scored a game-high 20 points but shot only 7-for-19 from the field, including 1-for-6 on 3-pointers. The all-state forward got a lot of her points with her defense and steals.

"I've been working on it. Hard," said Ollinger, who has signed with Iowa. "I think you have to be in really great shape to do it. I've learned that."

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"It's more of a mental thing, I've figured out."

Linn-Mar Coach Jaime Brandt kept Ollinger on the floor for more than 28 straight minutes without a rest before pulling the 6-foot-1 senior with 3:12 left in the game and the Lions leading by 24 points. Even though Ollinger was not shooting well, her mere presence on the floor was a big advantage for the home team.

"She's just so big and long and athletic," said Brandt. "She kind of changes the game defensively."

"She's a tremendous player. We all kind of know that."

Ollinger did a good job of reading Muscatine's passes and making quick moves to intercept the ball.

"You have to be able to anticipate it without being out of control," she explained. "It's a really fine line that you have to try and balance."

Ollinger scored 30 points in a victory over Waterloo East Tuesday night and is averaging 25 per game, despite not shooting well Saturday.

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"I'm not too worried about it," she said about her shooting. "It's still early in the year. Our team played tremendous. I thought the intensity on defense really helped us.

"It's just one of those nights. You just have to keep shooting. Hopefully I'll get back into it. I knew my shot wasn't going on. I knew I had to try and get points some other way."

Ollinger transferred from Jefferson to Linn-Mar in the middle of the season last year, making it tough for everyone to adjust on the fly with a prominent new player on the club.



"It's a lot different," she said. "I'm just so much more comfortable. I have better chemistry with my teammates because I've played with them longer and got to know them more off the court. It's just been great so far. I really love it."

A year ago, Ollinger was still trying to learn everyone's name while the games were in progress.

"It took me a little bit," she admitted.

Kamryn Finley, a sophomore who already has scholarship offers from Drake and Northern

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Iowa, got into early foul trouble and finished with 10 points for Linn-Mar. Finley had a fairly quiet game, but the 5-foot-8 guard showed why she's garnered so much attention already.

"She's one of the most competitive girls I've ever met, which I love about her," said Brandt. "She's got that quick first step. She's been working on her '3' a lot this year, too."

Brandt enjoyed the victory.

"It was definitely a good one for us," she said. "Muscatine is a good team. They're kind of young, but they have some good shooters and the big girl inside (6-foot-1 Erin Oppel) is really good. They move the ball well.

"I thought that was a really good win for us," said Brandt. "I thought we played a lot better the second half and were a lot more intense the second half. We didn't shoot the ball very well, and that happens. But our defense was outstanding."

Macey Rogers scored 10 points for Muscatine (0-2).

MUSCATINE (29): Rusch 0 0-0 0, Miller 0 0-2 0, Butler 0 0-0 0, Rogers 3 3-4 10, Wagg 0 0-0 0, White 1 0-0 2, Hepker 1 0-0 2, Estabrook 0 0-0 0, Doyle 1 0-0 2, Torres 2 1-1 6, Oppel 2 3-4 7. Totals 10 7-13 29.

LINN-MAR (49): Simons 0 0-0 0, Lorenz 0 0-0 0, Johnson 1 0-0 2, Noggle 0 0-0 0, Akers 2 0-4 4, Frese 1 0-0 2, Lancial 3 0-0 6, Glanz 0 1-2 1, Murphy 0 0-0 0, Spies 2 0-0 4, Finley 4 1-1 10, Larson 0 0-1 0, Ollinger 7 5-8 20. Totals 20 7-12 49.

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Halftime - Linn-Mar 21, Muscatine 13. 3-point goals - Muscatine 2 (Rogers 1, Torres 1), Linn-Mar 2 (Finley 1, Ollinger 1).