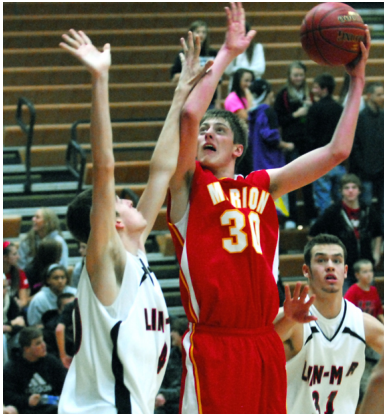


No contest in Lions-Indians scrimmage

Written by Tom Fruehling

Tuesday, 22 November 2011 01:05 - Last Updated Tuesday, 22 November 2011 10:00



Forget the fact that both teams are rebuilding with nearly new lineups. When the Marion boys crossed town for an exhibition game Monday night with Linn-Mar on the Lions' home court, it was still no contest.

Literally, since they didn't keep score.

But then no one figured it to be a rivalry for bragging rights. Linn-Mar, after all, is the reigning Class 4A state champion after a perfect 26-0 season. One ranking service tabbed last year's outfit the eighth best in the nation.

The Indians were good, too, making vast improvements as the season went on, finishing 17-8 and making it into the first round of the Class 3A state tourney.

Still, Linn-Mar's players all wear fancy matching white Nike sneakers and socks. The less-stylish Marion boys don't wear the same brand or even the same color.

"For us, it's a chance to get some game experience and get the jitters out," said Marion Coach Mike Manderscheid. "We've only had six practices, and we have almost no experienced players.

"So it's good for us to get out there, get to run up and down. We'll learn some things we need to do to get better."

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Lost from last year's Marion team are the top six players, solid performers who all played together for years: Kasey Semler, Dusty Albaugh, Dan Van Gorp, Tyler Fisher, Dylan Cronk and Austin Hardman.

"We're going to have some bumps in the road," Manderscheid said. "But we'll work hard and get better. Don't look at us now. Look at us later in the year when we're a finished product."

For Linn-Mar Coach Chris Robertson, it's more a matter of re-loading. Gone are starters Matt Bohannon, Shane Benton, Josh Montague and Ian McBrayer as well as a number of valuable subs.

He's got talented role players from last year in juniors Matt Lassen and Derik Gogg as well as fellow junior Jimmy Roth, who grew five inches over the summer into a 6-foot-4 shooter.

Oh, and there's also senior Marcus Paige, a mere prep All-American who this time next year will be playing for North Carolina.

"He's even better than most people think he is," said Robertson of the versatile floor general. "And the thing is, he makes everybody else better."

Nobody was counting, but Paige almost effortlessly hit three 3-pointers Monday night, snatched several steals, fired no-look passes to teammates for easy buckets and jammed home a monster left-handed dunk.

He also had another dunk waved off because he was whistled for double-dribble. Even the ref seemed dubious about making the call.

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"I think we'll have good depth this year," Robertson said. "And we've got a lot of good athletes. And then we've got Marcus. He's pretty special."