

Linn-Mar zones out Wahlert, 47-41

Written by Don Taylor

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An aggressive zone defense provided Linn-Mar with a 20-9 first half run and a 47-41 victory over Dubuque Wahlert in a Mississippi Valley Conference girls basketball game Friday night.

Linn-Mar (3-1, 1-1) trailed by as many as nine points in the early going at home against the Golden Eagles. Coach Michael Brandt switched to a physical zone defense that forced Wahlert out of the lane and into an ineffective perimeter offense.

The zone turned the game around and supplied the spark the 14th-ranked Lions needed for the victory.

"We emphasized being more physical tonight and our zone defense was very active and disruptive," Brandt said. "It seemed to be the difference-maker tonight."

Linn-Mar made it a point to go hard to the basket in the second half and went to the foul line 15 times. When the Lions weren't fouled they popped the ball back out for three 3-point baskets.

The Lions made only one two-point basket in the second half. The strategy put Wahlert in serious foul trouble.

Shanice Cheatham led the Lions with 14 points, with eight points coming at the charity stripe. She was also the primary force in holding all-conference player Claire Till to 11 points.

"We worked hard as a team to stop her (Till) and with a lot of help defense we slowed her down," Cheatham said. "And then on the other end we just kept taking it to the basket and making them foul us. It worked."

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Courtney Major contributed 13 points for Linn-Mar by hitting three 3-point shots to provide the outside threat to go with the inside action.

“Those inside screens just set the shot up and I just need to have the confidence to shoot and trust them to go in,” said Major.

“We are learning at a fast pace right now,” said Brandt. “We have to grow up quickly and improve with each game. We got a nice spark from the zone and also from the play of Hannah Yearling, who came off the bench and gave us some good play. We are getting better as we go.”

Tessa Leytem led the Golden Eagles (2-1, 1-1) with 14 points to go with Till's 11. Both players fouled out in the fourth quarter.

Linn-Mar turns right around and hosts Mount Vernon Saturday at 5 pm.

DUBUQUE WAHLERT (41): Till 4 2-2 11, Walker 3 1-2 7, Leytem 5 2-2 14, Smith 1 1-2 4, Schmitt 2 0-0 5, Ochs 0 0-0 0, Lent 0 0-0 0. Totals 15 6-8 41.

LINN-MAR (47): Brandt 0 6-8 6, Strauel 1 0-0 2, Thrune 2 0-0 5, Cheatham 3 8-13 14, Major 4 2-2 13, Yearling 3 0-3 7, Libenguth 0 0-2 0, Eiles 0 0-0 0. Totals 13 16-28 47.

Halftime — Linn-Mar 28, Wahlert 22. 3-point goals — Wahlert 5 (Till 1, Leytem 2, Smith 1, Schmitt 1); Linn-Mar 5 (Major 3, Thrune 1, Yearling 1). Fouled out - Till, Leytem.