

Stokes sets Linn-Mar scoring record

Written by Sher Jasperse

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Perched atop the Mississippi Valley Conference with Thursday night's showdown against No. 5 Washington looming, No. 3 Linn-Mar is keeping a laser-like focus on playing as a team and staying in the win column, one game at a time.

But the Lions hit the pause button just over a minute into Tuesday night's 69-21 drubbing of Dubuque Hempstead (3-9, 1-8) to celebrate the latest accomplishment by their star player, Kiah Stokes.

With her first bucket of the game, Stokes moved past former teammate Jaime Printy to become Linn-Mar's all-time career scoring leader with 1,393 points. Printy, currently a starter for the University of Iowa women's basketball team, played at Linn-Mar from 2005-2009. Linn-Mar marked Stokes' achievement with a PA announcement, a blast from the pep band, and a standing ovation from the crowd.

Entering the game, no one was less focused on the occasion than the 6-foot-3 senior, who didn't know she was about to break Printy's record.

"It feels amazing," she said afterwards, cradling the ball that dropped in for the record. "I didn't think I was that close. When they stopped the game, that's when I found out. I'm glad that no one told me. It's more special because it was a surprise."

Following in the footsteps of someone she looked up to during her Linn-Mar career made the record especially meaningful, said Stokes, who also broke Linn-Mar's 21-year single-game scoring record with a 39-point performance on December 7.

"Jaime is an amazing player. To bypass her is definitely an honor. She was a great leader here at Linn-Mar and she's doing well at Iowa now too. She was a great role model and I always looked up to her when we were playing together."

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Linn-Mar coach Mike Brandt also took time to reflect on his association with two of the greatest players in Linn-Mar history.

“It’s outstanding to be able to be a part of coaching two kids as talented and such good people,” he said. “To have the run we’ve had in the last years, we’ve just had quality kids. They’re great leaders, outstanding kids off the court. When you have those kind of kids, it makes it a blast to come to practice every day. They’ll work hard and do whatever is asked of them. They want to get better, and the number one thing they want is for the team to win, whether or not they score, whatever they have to do. That’s rare anymore with kids that talented.”

Stokes went on to lead all scorers with 23 points and played menacing defense around the basket as Hempstead struggled to penetrate. Kailee Karr added 10 points and Mykaela Brandt nine points for the Lions (12-1, 8-1), who led 19-6 after the first period and 37-10 at the half.

Brandt said his team didn’t look past the Mustangs, but used the game as a final tune-up for Thursday’s match between the MVC’s top teams.

“Until just now we haven’t talked about Wash,” he said after the game. “We just wanted to take care of tonight. We knew they’d try to junk us, and I thought the girls executed really well in the first half moving the ball and looking to attack other ways.”

With an unusually brief two-day turnaround, his team won’t have much time to dwell on its formidable next opponent. But Brandt’s game plan was already in place.

“We know we’re going to have to play really well to get Wash over at their place,” he said. “They’re an outstanding team, very athletic, and they do a really good job at pushing the ball. We’re going to really focus on making sure they don’t take it to the basket, we want to hold their being able to drive and penetrate. We want to also make sure we take care of the ball, because they can score a lot of points in a hurry if we turn it over. And then we’ve got to really execute in the paint, take care of the ball and let Kiah go to work – and if they want to collapse down, get somebody else to step up.”

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With her record-setting night in the books, Stokes also turned her attention to her MVC foe. "It's going to be a tough game," she said. "We have to come out focused and ready to play. Anyone can win that game because we're both good teams and it will be a dogfight. If we play as well as we can, I think that we can win."

Hempstead, which was led by Megan Donohue and Stephanie Cox with six points each, plays at Waterloo East on Friday.

DUBUQUE HEMPSTEAD (21): Kluesner 0 0-0 0, Doty 0 1-2-0 1, Donohue 3 0-0 6, Graves 1 0-2 2, Van Cleave 0 1-2 1, Cox 2 2-2 6, Donovan 1 0-2 2, Dolan 0 0-0 0, Tauke 0 1-2 1, Koerperich 1 0-0 2 . Totals 8 5-12 21 .

LINN-MAR (69): Martins 0 0-0 0, Brandt 3 2-3 9, Strauel 2 2-2 6, Thrune 2 0-0 4, Karr 5 0-0 10, Cheatham 3 1-5 7, Eells 2 0-0 6, Major 1 0-0 2, Stokes 10 3-3 23, Seckman 1 0-0 2. Koelker 0 0-0 0, Olesen 0 0-0 0, Clymer 0 0-0 0, Grosvik 0 0-0 0, Sherwood 0 0-0 0. Totals 29 8-14 69

Halftime – Linn Mar 37, Dubuque Hempstead 10. 3-pointers – Linn Mar 3 (Eells – 2, Brandt), Dubuque Hempstead 0. Fouls – Linn-Mar 10, Dubuque Hempstead 13. Fouled out – none.