

J-Hawk girls run and gun past Linn-Mar

Written by Tom Fruehling
Saturday, 08 December 2012 00:12

The Jefferson girls are once again the runnin,' gunnin' J-Hawks.

Decimated by injuries last season, Jefferson's five senior regulars are all back at full speed.

And unlike a year ago they have some underclassmen to come off the bench to spell the starters.

"We've got a lot of fast girls on the team," said mile-a-minute talker and speedster Rachel Broghammer, also a star on the track team. "We figure we can use that to our advantage. We can get down the court before the other team sets up. And we've all got fresh legs for a change."

In a fast-paced up-and-down-the-floor home game Friday night, the newly energized J-Hawks ran Linn-Mar out of the J-Hawk gym in an entertaining 69-56 victory.

"It was fun," said Jefferson sharpshooter Kaitlyn Davidson, who popped in three 3-pointers among her 19 points. "We try to speed the game up and get a lot of transition points. It's great. We love playing that kind of game."

Spirited first-year Coach Jason Edwards said the running game starts on the defensive end.

"I think this was our first time all year we've played really hard defensively for all four quarters. We put a lot of pressure on the ball, anticipated the passes and got of deflections and steals," he said.

Then, as he constantly exhorted his greyhounds on the court, "Run, run, run."

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Linn-Mar Coach Michael Brandt said turnovers (along with a lot of late clutch Jefferson free throws) was key to the game. His Lions uncharacteristically lost the ball 25 times, as opposed to 17 for the victors.

“We simply can’t turn the ball over that many times,” Brandt said. “We’ve got to take care of the ball better.

“We missed a lot of opportunities because of our own mistakes.”

He acknowledged that the Jefferson full-court pressing defense seemed to befuddle his team much of the night.

“But even when we got the ball over half-court, we didn’t gain anything. We didn’t attack the basket and take advantage of our opportunities.”

Linn-Mar also failed to capitalize on its height advantage, losing the rebounding edge to the quicker, peskier J-Hawks by a 28-24 margin.

Broghammer, who made only two baskets but was a demon the boards after loose balls, led her team with eight boards. Savvy little point guard Dani Stromert snuck in for seven rebounds.

“I thought we picked up the intensity right from the start of the game,” said the sturdy 5-foot-5 playmaker. “And we kept it up the whole way.”

In more ways than one, it was a game of runs.

With Davidson, Taylor Jacobson and Maddie Koolbeck all knocking down 3-pointers, the J-Hawks used a 10-0 spurt to take a 15-8 early lead.

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The Lions cashed in on 3-point bombs by Mykaela Brandt and Jenna Harms to tie it at 20, but Jefferson came back to lead by five at the intermission.

Linn-Mar suffered a four-minute drought in the third quarter, while the J-Hawks reeled off another 10-1 run to go ahead by 15.

Even so, said Coach Edwards, "I knew they had some good shooters."

Indeed, the Lions let loose a barrage of threes in a valiant fourth-quarter comeback effort. Brandt hit two more within 12 seconds while Sara Strauel and Courtney Major also connected also connected from long range, accounting for 12 points in barely a minute's time.

"I was getting a little nervous," Edwards admitted.

Saving the J-Hawks was Koolbeck, who hit six straight free throws on her way to 19 points.

"We kept our poise," said a relieved Jefferson coach afterward, "and hit the shots when we had to. I think the girls put forth their best effort."

Jefferson improved to 3-4 overall and 2-2 in the Mississippi Valley Conference. Linn-Mar fell to 2-4, 1-2.

LINN-MAR (56): Mykaela Brandt 3 1-4 10, Sara Strauel 5 3-4 14, Kristen Eiles 2 1-2 7, Courtney Major 4 1-2 11, Alexis Libenguth 2 0-0 4, Taylor Robertson 0 0-1 0, Hannah Yearling 0 3-4 3, Jenna Harms 1 0-0 3, Aryn Jones 2 0-0 4, Emily Makinster 0 0-0 0. Totals 19 9-17 56.

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JEFFERSON (69): Kaitlyn Davidson 7 2-3 19, Dani Stromert 0 5-7 5, Taylor Jacobson 4 4-6 13, Rachel Broghammer 2 0-0 4, Maddie Koolbeck 6 6-6 19, Maddy Blietz 0 0-0 0, Kieleley Brathwaite 0 2-2 2, Amanda Ollinger 2 3-5 7. Totals 21 22-29 69.

Halftime - Jefferson 33, Linn-Mar 28. 3-point goals - Linn-Mar 9 (Brandt 3, Eiles 2, Major 2, Strauel, Harms), Jefferson 5 (Davidson 3, Jacobson, Koolbeck). Total fouls - Linn-Mar 21, Jefferson 19. Fouled out - Yearling.