

Stokes, Lions crush J-Hawks again

Written by Jake Koolbeck

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Kiah Stokes and the Linn-Mar Lions beat up on the Jefferson J-Hawks for a second time this year. Same song, different verse as Stokes once again outscored the J-Hawks alone to lead the Lions to a 54-22 victory in the Class 4A regional semifinals on Saturday night at Linn-Mar.

Stokes went for 29 points, 14 rebounds and eight blocks. She broke the state record of 497 career blocks held by Jessica Nikkel, who played for Lynnville-Sully from 1995 to 1999. Stokes has 500 career blocks.

"It's pretty amazing to break a state record," Stokes said. "Hopefully, it will make it harder for the next person to beat it."

"I am very very proud of her," Linn-Mar Coach Mike Brandt said. "She deserves it."

The Lions (20-2) will face Cedar Rapids Xavier (15-7) on Tuesday night in the Jefferson gym with a trip to state on the line. The defending state champion Lions drummed Xavier twice during the regular season.

"It's going to be who comes to play," Brandt said. "It's gonna be a war with them. It always has been. I don't see it being any different on Tuesday."

Rachel Thrune added six points for the Lions.

Jefferson (8-15) was led by sophomore Taylor Jacobson with eight points. Senior Britteny Steffeny and sophomore Maddie Koolbeck each added six.

Jefferson kept it close for the first few minutes, at one point trailing only 5-4 early in the first quarter. The Lions ended the first quarter on a 13-2 run to stretch their lead to 12 after the first.

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The second quarter was all Linn-Mar as they started on a 15-0 run. Jefferson starter Rachel Broghammer picked up her fourth foul with 3:30 left in the half. She suffered what was initially diagnosed as a minor neck injury on the play and did not return.

Jacobson scored Jefferson's first basket of the second quarter with 1:12 remaining with a pair of free throws. Linn-Mar led 36-8 at halftime.

"We have to be able to score some points to stay in the game and we did not do that," Jefferson Coach Larry Niemeyer said.

The Lions shot 57 percent in the first half while holding the J-Hawks to just 9 percent. Stokes' presence in the middle contributed largely to Jefferson's shooting woes.

"She's huge," Jacobson said of the 6-foot-3 Stokes, who will play for Connecticut in college.

The Lions came out and coasted through the third quarter, building a 47-14 lead.

The fourth quarter was a formality as the Lions had the game locked up and played their second squad for the majority of the quarter. The J-Hawks slowly shuffled in their second squad.

After the game, Niemeyer said he would be back for his 49th season of being head coach next year. The J-Hawks will return three starters and a group of talented sophomores.

"I think we will have a great year because everyone will have experience," Jacobson said about next year.

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LINN-MAR (54): Mykaela Brandt 1 0-0 3, Rachel Thrune 2 2-2 6, Kailee Karr 1 1-2 3, Jenna Eells 2 0-0 5, Kiah Stokes 11 7-8 29, Leandra Martins 0 0-0 0, Sara Strauel 0 0-0 0, Madison Olesen 0 0-0 0, Shanice Cheatham 2 2-3 6, Megan Sherwood 0 0-0 0, Courtney Major 0 2-2 2, Noelle Clark 0 0-0 0, Daisey Clymer 0 0-0 0, Kelsey Koelker 0 0-0 0. Totals 18 14-17 54.

JEFFERSON (22): Kaitlyn Davidson 0 0-0 0, Ashley Madsen 0 0-0 0, Taylor Jacobson 1 6-7 8, Rachel Broghammer 0 0-0 0, Britteny Steffeny 2 2-2 6, Dani Stromert 0 2-3 2, Madison Blietz 0 0-0 0, Kieley Brathwaite 0 0-0 0, Amber Grimm 0 0-0 0, Whylie Massey 0 0-0 0, Maddie Koolbeck 2 2-6 6. Totals 5 12-18 22.

Halftime—Linn Mar 36, Jefferson 8. 3-point goals – Linn-Mar 2 (Brandt, Eells), Jefferson 0. Rebounds -- Linn-Mar 30, Jefferson 19. Turnovers – Linn-Mar 12, Jefferson 7. Total Fouls – Linn Mar 14, Jefferson 12.