

No. 1 Lions head into holidays with 6-0 mark

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 18 December 2010 00:00 - Last Updated Friday, 31 December 2010 23:22

The Linn-Mar Lions can take a deep breathe, study for final exams next week and enjoy the holidays.

They've earned it.

The Lions are ranked No.1 in the state, they've got a perfect 6-0 record and they expect Shane Benton to recover from mononucleosis soon.

The Lions don't play again until Jan. 4, so they have 2 1/2 weeks to enjoy life before basketball gets serious again. Linn-Mar got a stiff test from Mount Pleasant Saturday night (Dec. 18) before posting a 65-52 victory as part of "Rivalry Saturday" at the U.S. Cellular Center.

"We'll work on some fundamental things and put our feet up for a few days," Coach Chris Robertson said. "I don't know if the No.1 ranking is deserved or means anything right now, but to be 6-and-0 is what we wanted to be. We have to keep getting better."

Benton, a 6-foot-3 senior who has signed with North Dakota, missed his fourth straight game with mono, but the Lions displayed their depth with Michael Thul and Mason Krusie in key roles. Thul helped at point guard, giving Marcus Paige a chance to play the wing, and Krusie hit a big 3-pointer for a 50-42 lead.

Thul, a 5-10 senior, subbed at point guard last season when Paige had mono, so he's accustomed to running the club when needed.

"He's very unselfish, very heady," Robertson said. "Marcus has said numerous times that he really likes playing with Michael.

"It gives us another ballhandler, it gives us another guy that can defend the point once in a

No. 1 Lions head into holidays with 6-0 mark

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 18 December 2010 00:00 - Last Updated Friday, 31 December 2010 23:22

while. It allows Marcus to take a break on the floor rather than having to come out."

Mount Pleasant reached the semifinals of the Class 3A state tournament last year and returned all its key players from a team that won 22 games, making this the marquee matchup on "Rivalry Saturday." Linn-Mar reached the semifinals of the Class 4A tournament in 2010, and both clubs traded blows during an entertaining first half.

The Lions led by just five points, 45-40, entering the final period before pulling away.

"That's a good team. We expected that," Robertson said. "They weren't going to be intimidated by us, and that was evident early."

Josh Montague scored seven points in the fourth quarter to help Linn-Mar grab a 55-47 advantage. Thul hit a free throw and Matt Bohannon completed a three-point play, giving the Lions a 59-47 spread with 63 seconds to go.

Bohannon led Linn-Mar with 17 points. Paige scored 15 points, Montague 14 and Ian McBrayer 11.

Scott Hahn topped Mount Pleasant (5-2) with 18 points.

Jim.Ecker@MetroSportsReport.com

MOUNT PLEASANT (52): E. Hahn 2 0-0 6, S. Hahn 5 5-6 18, Marshall 3 0-0 6, Krieger-Coble 5 0-0 10, Cotton 1 0-1 2, Ashton 0 2-2 2, Vandenberg 1 2-2 4, Lyon 1 2-5 4. Totals 18 11-16 52.

LINN-MAR (65): Thul 1 1-2 3, Lassen 0 0-0 0, Krusie 2 0-0 5, Paige 3 8-10 15, Bohannon 6 4-5 17, McBrayer 5 0-0 11, Montague 3 8-10 14, Gogg 0 0-0 0. Totals 20 21-27 65.

No. 1 Lions head into holidays with 6-0 mark

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 18 December 2010 00:00 - Last Updated Friday, 31 December 2010 23:22

Halftime — Linn-Mar 31, Mount Pleasant 29. 3-point goals — Mount Pleasant 5 (S. Hahn 3, E. Hahn 2), Linn-Mar 4 (McBrayer 1, Bohannon 1, Paige 1, Krusie 1). Fouled out — Krieger-Coble, Cotton. Technical foul — Linn-Mar bench.