No. 3 Lions trimmed by No. 10 Tigers in OT

Written by Jim Ecker
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CEDAR FALLS - James Harrington finally beat Marcus Paige and the Linn-Mar Lions Tuesday night. By a point.

Harrington made a free throw with 1.9 seconds remaining to lift No. 10 Cedar Falls by the third-ranked Lions, 64-63, in overtime in a Mississippi Valley Conference fracas.

Harrington and Paige are two of the premier point guards in the state and their friendly rivalry came down to the final play.

"Every year we played them, they beat us," Harrington said after scoring a game-high 24 points. "So senior year, it feels good to win."

The game was tied, 63-63, when Harrington used a pick to shed Paige and drive to the basket. Linn-Mar defenders Jimmy Roth and Andy Henry converged on Harrington to prevent a layup, but Roth was called for a foul.

Harrington swished his first free throw to break the tie, then missed his second shot on purpose to start the clock, rather than letting Linn-Mar take the ball out of bounds. Henry grabbed the rebound but had no time to fire a desperation shot.

"Harrington is really good. He's as good as anyone we're going to play," Linn-Mar Coach Chris Robertson remarked. "Unfortunately he shot the free throws to win it, but that's the way it goes."

Harrington and Paige guarded each other most of the night. It was an even battle for nearly 36 minutes, until Harrington hit his free throw to end the contest.

"He's a good player. It's a good matchup between me and him," said Paige, who scored 22 points. "We have a lot of similarities. He anticipates well, and he's become a very good

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offensive player the last couple of years at Cedar Falls.

"It's always good to match up against somebody comparable to you in skill and athleticism."

Harrington, a state sprint champion, has accepted a scholarship to run track at Alabama. Paige, who led Linn-Mar to the state basketball title last March, has accepted a scholarship to play hoops at North Carolina next year.

"You're talking about a kid that we're going to watch on ESPN for the next four years at North Carolina," Cedar Falls Coach Tom Bardal said. "And then to see James, an athlete that's been offered Division I scholarships in track, football and basketball ...

"Yeah, it's exciting and it's fun, but it wasn't that much fun to see him (Paige) make all those 3's."

Paige hit three triples, including one with 55 seconds left in overtime to tie the game 63-63. Cedar Falls killed the clock, then called a timeout with 9.8 seconds left to plot its final play and get the ball to Harrington.

Linn-Mar (2-2, 0-2) hit four 3-pointers and grabbed an early 16-5 lead, but Cedar Falls (2-1, 2-0) switched from a zone defense to man-to-man and pulled within 28-26 at halftime.

The Lions spurted to a 41-32 lead in the third quarter on a series of plays by Roth, a junior who finished with a career-high 17 points, but the Tigers clawed back again.

Harrington tied the game, 54-54, with a sweet jumper. Paige hit two free throws with 1:48 left in regulation for a 56-54 lead, but Kalehl Brown tied the game for Cedar Falls at 56-56 with a layup with 90 seconds remaining.

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Both teams missed chances to win the game in regulation.

The game got physical in the fourth quarter when two different Cedar Falls players appeared to foul Henry on purpose with rough tactics. The referees called common fouls, but refused to call flagrant fouls that would have resulted in technical free throws.

"The explanation I got I don't think was acceptable," said Robertson, who lodged a strong complaint with the officials and was told to sit down. "I wouldn't mind sending that (film of the fouls) and having people look at that and tell me what correct is.

"The kid (Henry) doesn't have the ball and they just bail through him. If that's not an intentional foul I guess I don't know what is."

Robertson thought the fouls against Henry were too rough and uncalled for. Neither foul resulted in free throws, because Linn-Mar was not in a bonus situation.

"It's not within the game," Robertson said of the hard fouls. "Nothing good can come of that. I didn't think that was right."

It was the same officiating crew of Joe Breakenridge, Mark Guenther and Randy Druvenga that worked Linn-Mar's game against Iowa City West last Friday when Linn-Mar junior Matt Lassen was knocked to the floor and hit his head on the court. No foul was called, and Lassen hit his head on the floor a second time as play continued and Paige accidentally landed on top of him.

[Lassen spent four days in hospitals before being released Tuesday and sent home to rest](#) .

Zach Martins replaced Lassen in the starting lineup against Cedar Falls and scored eight points, with two early 3-pointers. Roth played a strong game, but the rest of the team's production was sporadic.

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"I thought Jimmy played really well," Robertson said. "He just gets better and better. I thought he did a lot of really good things tonight on both ends. He rebounded, he defended, he hit some big shots.

"We need more guys to step up," Robertson said. "Right now a lot of guys are watching Marcus. That's kind of what we talked about in there (the locker room).

"We just need to learn how to win. All five guys that are out there need to do it together. We're not quite there."

Paige is the only returning starter from last year's state championship team.

"It's early. It was only our fourth game," Paige said. "We lost our entire rotation with the exception of myself (from last year). It's really going to take some time for us to figure out our roles and learn how to be a tough team at the end of games and learn how to win."

Caleb Konieczny scored 16 points for Cedar Falls, all in the second half after collecting three fouls in the first half. He hit several key shots for the Tigers, including three 3-pointers.

LINN-MAR (63): Jimmy Roth 6 4-5 17, Andy Henry 2 1-5 5, Derik Gogg 1 0-0 2, Zach Martins 3 0-0 8, Marcus Paige 7 5-6 22, Jon Schlotterback 2 0-0 4, Nate Dick 2 0-0 4, Matt Meier 0 1-2 1. Totals 23 11-18 63.

CEDAR FALLS (64): Caleb Konieczny 6 1-2 16, Kalund Brown 1 0-0 2, Isaac Boettger 5 0-6 10, Kalehl Brown 4 1-2 9, James Harrington 9 5-6 24, Riley Gardner 0 0-0 0, Brandon Bardal 1 0-0 3. Totals 26 7-16 64.

Halftime - Linn-Mar 28, Cedar Falls 26. Regulation - Linn-Mar 56, Cedar Falls 56. 3-point goals -

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Linn-Mar 6 (Paige 3, Martins 2, Roth 1), Cedar Falls 5 (Konieczny 3, Harrington 1, Bardal 1).
Technical foul - Kalund Brown. Fouled out - Kalund Brown.