

## Paige scores 31, outduels Iowa-bound Gesell

Written by Steve Allspach

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SIOUX CITY -- Close friends off the court and the fiercest of mortal enemies on, Marcus Paige and Mike Gesell were matched in basketball warfare Friday night before a crowd of nearly 7,000 in the CNOS Classic at the Tyson Events Center.

The much-anticipated duel of Linn-Mar's Paige and South Sioux City's Gesell didn't disappoint, although Paige was clearly the Goliath in the packed room, turning the tables on Gesell, the David in this one.

North Carolina recruit Paige poured in 31 points and University of Iowa signee Gesell 18.

The winning Lions won 81-62, but actually sent a large portion of the crowd to exits early, building a 73-44 advantage with just over four minutes to play. Reserves on both sides then took over.

"I'm the only guy back (from last season) and I'm out there to do whatever I can to make us better," said Paige. "We were really excited about the game because South Sioux and Mike and Austin (Groth) are so good.

"They missed a lot of shots early and we took advantage of that.

"Mike and I are good friends, but I won't talk with him until tomorrow. I know he took this pretty hard. He's going to do well at Iowa, you can count on that."

Linn-Mar's reigning Iowa Class 4A state champs came in 4-2 and SSC, winner of the last two Nebraska Class B state titles, was 6-2.

The winning Lions, fueled by the silk smooth Paige, rolled to a 45-25 halftime lead. The 6-2 point guard was nearly flawless in the first 16 minutes, making eight straight shots before his

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only miss, a long 3-pointer just before halftime. He scored 22 of Linn-Mar's first 30 points and wound up with 25 points by the break. He took just three shots in the second half and sank all three.

The 6-2 Gesell, out of sync for much of the first half, had nine points in the first half, but was just 3-for-9 from the field.

Paige, who has signed with North Carolina, is listed by some rating services as the No. 1 prep point guard in the country and others rate Gesell No. 3.

"We lost focus when we missed those early shots," said SSC Coach Terry Comstock. "We rely on the 3-pointer and they weren't falling."

Groth, a Creighton baseball recruit, missed seven shots from the arc and Gesell four.

Coach Chris Robertson's Lions were paired with a South Sioux City club that is taking on a challenging and daunting schedule this season. The two-time reigning Nebraska Class B state champs defeated Sioux City East's ranked Class 4A outfit three weeks ago and returned earlier this week from a high-powered prep gathering in the Phoenix suburb of Mesa.

In Arizona, South Sioux defeated Tucson Amphitheater (84-65) and Phoenix Pinnacle (79-76) and lost to Phoenix Corona Del Sol (82-72) and host Mountain View (73-61). In those games, Gesell tallied 34 points against Amphitheater, 37 against Pinnacle, 36 against Corona Del Sol and 17 against Mountain View.

And, the somewhat fatigued Cardinals play tonight at Norfolk, Nebraska's second-ranked Class A team (big schools) and last year's state runner-up.

Linn-Mar was playing without 6-4 junior starting guard Matt Lassen, who suffered a severe concussion in a 75-63 loss to Iowa City West on Dec. 9. Lassen just returned to school earlier

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this week, but his playing status is still up in the air according to Robertson.

"South Sioux is an excellent team, but we wanted to play aggressively and try to take away Gesell and Groth," said Robertson. "I think we did a good job of that.

"Jimmy Roth really stepped up for us with 21 points and Derik Gogg dominated the boards."

The 6-8 Gogg, a junior, hauled down 11 rebounds and SSC's Gesell and Groth (15 points) were each held to 10 points under their scoring averages.

Paige, Gesell and East's 7-foot-1 Adam Woodbury, also a University of Iowa signee, were teammates on the Iowa based Martin Brothers/All-Iowa Attack squad that took fifth in the AAU national tournament in Orlando, Fla., for 11th graders.

Linn-Mar concludes its two-day invasion of Sioux City on Saturday, tangling with Sioux City Bishop Heelan's Crusaders, winners of Iowa's Class 3A state championship.

LINN-MAR (81): Jimmy Roth 7-11 5-6 20, Andy Henry 1-2 2-2 4, Derik Gogg 4-5 2-3 10, Zach Martins 1-5 0-0 3, Marcus Paige 11-14 6-6 31, Matt Meier 1-2 2-2 4, Jon Schlotterbeck 3-3 0-0 6, Nate Dick 0-3 3-4 3, Jacob Hutchins 0-2 0-0 0, Josh Wick 0-2 0-0 0, Kyle Mortensen 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 28-50 20-23 81.

SOUTH SIOUX CITY (62): Sky Aldrich 2-4 2-4 7, Colby Bausch 0-1 0-0 0, Kaden Moore 4-5 0-1 9, Mike Gesell 7-18 4-4 18, Austin Groth 5-17 2-2 15, Nate Rogers 1-2 0-0 3, Taylor Jensen 0-0 0-0 0, Austin Stark 0-2 0-0 0, Mike Offerman 0-0 1-2 1, Jimmy Sedivy 1-1 2-2 4, Scott Manley 1-2 0-0 2, Austin Fritz 1-1 0-2 3. Totals 22-55 11-14 62.

Halftime -- Linn-Mar 45, South Sioux City 25. 3-point goals - SSC 7-22 (Groth 3-8, Aldrich 1-1, Moore 1-1, Fritz 1-1, Gesell 0-5, Bausch 0-3, Stark 0-1, Manley 0-1), LM 5-16 (Paige 3-6, Martins 1-5, Roth 1-4, Dick 0-1). Rebounds - LM 41 (Gogg 10), SSC 20 (Moore 5). Turnovers -

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LM 17, SSC 11. Total fouls - LM 15, SSC 16.