

Paige scores 24 to lead Lions past Heelan

Written by Steve Allspach

Saturday, 07 January 2012 23:15 - Last Updated Sunday, 08 January 2012 23:43

SIOUX CITY -- Linn-Mar survived a scare, rallying from a 30-20 deficit in the third quarter to defeat Sioux City Bishop Heelan, 49-46, Saturday night in the CNOS Foundation Basketball Classic at the Tyson Events Center.

Linn-Mar, ranked ninth in Class 4A, improved to 6-2. Class 3A No. 5 Heelan, the winner of Iowa Class 3A state titles the last three years, slipped to 7-2.

As usual, North Carolina recruit Marcus Paige paced Linn-Mar, tallying 24 points, handing out seven assists and grabbing four rebounds. Paige had 31 points Friday night in Linn-Mar's 81-62 win over South Sioux City, Neb.

"After our game with South Sioux City Friday our legs we're a little wobbly, but we had the grit to keep battling when we got behind," said Paige. "Heelan had a great game plan and you know they're a great team. You don't win three straight state championships if you're not.

"They dominated a little inside, but their guard, Shane Graves is a terrific little player. I don't know what they list him at (5-foot-10), but he's shorter than that and plays far bigger than he is.

"My job is to help make our experienced guys better and I think we're all getting that done. Winning twice here was important.

"I was a freshman in this event four years ago and we lost to Heelan so it was some revenge."

In the first half, Paige scored 13 points, two after a steal and dunk, and accounted for all but three of his team's points as Heelan took a surprising 23-16 lead.

"We got everybody involved in the second half and that was important," said Linn-Mar Coach Chris Robertson. "Marcus kind of took over when we made our comeback."

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Linn-Mar took its first lead of the game at 35-32 on a 3-pointer by Paige late in the third quarter, but Heelan wouldn't go away and the Lions clung to a 37-36 advantage after three stanzas.

Linn-Mar edged ahead 44-36 in the fourth, but a driving layup by Graves made it 48-44 with 49 seconds to play. Another Graves drive with 13 seconds left made it 49-46 and after Paige missed a free throw with 10 seconds to go, a long 25-foot attempt by Graves at the buzzer missed the mark.

"Marcus Paige is special," Heelan Coach Tom Betz said. "I don't know any other adjective to describe him. I thought our guys did a fairly decent job on him defensively.

"What happens down the road with this team is what is important."

Graves led Heelan with 13 points. Paige was the only Lion to reach double figures.

Heelan had lost only to fifth-ranked Class 4A Sioux City East, which lost Saturday night to Minnetonka Hopkins 97-74 at the Target Center in Minneapolis.

In chewing up South Sioux Friday, the Lions limited their opponent to 32 percent shooting and held University of Iowa signee Mike Gesell to 18 points, 10 below his average.

BISHOP HEELAN (46): Kyle Heaton 4-13 2-2 10, Keaton Slaughter 2-3 2-2 6, Bryce Sweeney 2-6 0-0 4, Shane Graves 6-15 0-0 13, Connor Spears 0-3 0-0 0, Cameron Farrell 2-5 2-4 8, Baylor Bestgen 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 18-45 5-8 46.

LINN-MAR (49): Andy Henry, 2-6 2-2 6, Jimmy Roth 1-4 1-2 3, Derik Gogg 3-5 0-2 6, Marcus Paige 8-19 4-5 24, Zach Martins 1-2 0-0 2, Matt Meier 3-4 1-2 7, Jon Schlotterbeck 0-0 0-0 0, Nate Dick 0-1 1-2 1. Totals 18-41 9-15 49.

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Halftime -- Bishop Heelan 23, Linn-Mar 16. 3-point goals - Heelan 5-8 (Graves 1, Farrell 2), LM 4-17 (Paige 4-9, Dick 0-1, Martins 0-2, Henry 0-2, Roth 0-3). Rebounds - Heelan 25 (Sweeney 5, Graves 4). LM 24 (Henry 5, Paige 4). Turnovers - Heelan 17, LM 9. Total fouls - Heelan 16, Linn-Mar 11.