

No. 3 Lions find focus in time to beat East

Written by Jake Koolbeck

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The third-ranked Linn-Mar Lions needed a big fourth quarter to escape the visiting Waterloo East Trojans, 71- 58, in a Mississippi Valley Conference boys basketball game Tuesday night at Linn-Mar.

"I thought it was (good) but once we started playing it wasn't," Robertson said of his team's focus. "We couldn't practice cause of the weather yesterday. They were sharper; hopefully, it is a lesson for us."

After trailing almost the whole first half the Lions were able to battle back in the third quarter and went into the final eight minutes all square at 50-50.

The Lions quickly took control in the fourth quarter as junior Jimmy Roth hit three 3-pointers to spark a 13-2 run and put the Lions in control for good.

"Coach and Marcus (Paige) told me to keep shooting," Roth said. "My teammates found me when I was open. I shot with confidence and they went in."

The game started fast and furious as both teams pushed the ball and knocked down long jumpers.

North Carolina bound Paige hit two step back 3s, but East went 4 of 5 from distance as they shot themselves to a 24-19 lead.

East keep control of the game in the second quarter, but couldn't manage to extend its lead as Paige and the Lions matched them basket for basket.

Behind hot shooting from behind the arc, East was able to shock the Linn-Mar faithful and take a 39-34 lead over the Lions at halftime.

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“Coming in we knew we had to be focused on defense. We can’t give up 39 in a half,” Paige said. “Coach gave us a friendly reminder at halftime and we held them under 20 in the second (half).”

“It was the most disappointing part of the first half, us not defending,” Robertson added. “We didn’t change anything in the second half we were just more focused.”

The Lions came out of the locker room with a renewed focus and went on a 12-5 run, sparked by junior Zach Martins' pair of treys, early in the third to take their first lead since early in the first quarter.

“It gave us a huge lift, especially later (in the game),” Paige said of guys stepping up to hit shots. “When Zach and Jimmy hit shots we are very tough to contain offensively.”

The Trojans lost hot-handed Desmond VanArsdale to a hand injury in the third quarter and the teams battled back and forth before going in to the final quarter all even.

“He was tough to defend, especially in the first half. We did better in the second,” Robertson said of VanArsdale. “You hate to see a player injured. It probably hurt them a little.”

The Lions owned the final quarter as they finished strong.

Paige led all scorers with 22 points. Roth and Martins joined Paige in double digits with 14 and 13 points, respectively.

The Lions were still without Matt Lassen who is easing his way back into practice.

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“He can’t do full contact yet but we are starting to get him to do more,” Robertson said. “It would be really nice to get him back for the stretch run.”

Sophomore Daeton Hoskins led the Trojans with 13 points.

The Lions host Cedar Rapids Prairie in a boy/girl varsity doubleheader Friday night that starts at 6 p.m.

WATERLOO EAST (58): Corshandous Love 4 1-1 9, Russell Jones 3 4-4 10, Arkell Todd 3 0-0 9, Desmond VanArsdale 5 0-0 12, Daeton Hoskins 5 0-1 13, Martavius Robinson 0 0-0 0, Andrew McGrane 2 1-1 5. Totals 22 6-7 58.

LINN-MAR (71): Zach Martins 5 1-2 13, Marcus Paige 8 4-4 22, Jimmy Roth 5 1-2 14, Andy Henry 4 0-0 8, Derik Gogg 2 0-0 4, Matt Meier 0 0-0 0, Jon Schlotterback 1 2-2 4, Nate Dick 2 2-2 6. Totals 27 10-12 71.

Halftime – Waterloo East 39, Linn-Mar 34. 3-point goals – Linn-Mar 7 (Martins 2, Paige 2, Roth 3), Waterloo East 8 (Todd 3, VanArsdale 2, Hoskins 3). Total Fouls – Linn-Mar 9, Waterloo East 14.