

Paige scores 34 in loss to Illinois club

Written by Michael Schmidt
Saturday, 28 January 2012 21:42 -

DUBUQUE -- Linn-Mar's Marcus Paige and Benet (Ill.) Academy's Sean O'Mara went shot-for-shot, putting on a terrific scoring battle for a mostly neutral crowd at the Wendy's/American Trust Basketball Classic at Loras College Saturday.

In the end, it was O'Mara's squad that came away with a 56-50 victory over the Lions.

Paige, a North Carolina recruit, scored 34 of Linn-Mar's 50 points. Paige's performance came just 24 hours after scoring a school-record 46 points in Linn-Mar's comeback victory Friday against Prairie.

Not to be outdone, the 6-foot-8 sophomore O'Mara tallied 30 of his team's 56. O'Mara is receiving interest from Notre Dame, Illinois and Iowa, according to ESPN.com.

"It was great. (Benet) is a great program and a great team. I thought we represented ourselves well. We got down early, but we were able to sneak back into the game a little bit," Linn-Mar Coach Chris Robertson said.

Benet fed O'Mara early and often, capitalizing on the absence of Linn-Mar center Derik Gogg. Gogg hurt his shooting hand (left) against Prairie.

"Of all nights, it was a bad night not to have our big guy," Robertson said. "He could have played, but we thought the conference games were more important than (Saturday) was."

O'Mara showed nice touch around the basket, and he displayed a variety of post moves. O'Mara enjoyed the challenge of playing Paige and Linn-Mar (11-3).

"He's really good, obviously," O'Mara said. "Any time we play a player like that, we need to hold them to lower scoring. We just contested every shot that he took."

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Benet led by as many as 11 points in the first half before Paige came to life. Paige scored 12 of his 16 first-half points in the second quarter, bringing the Lions to within a point at the break.

Paige recorded a steal and a layup off the first possession of the second half to give Linn-Mar its only lead, 27-26.

"It's hard to watch a player like Marcus Paige and not be in awe," Benet Coach Gene Heidkamp said.

Paige hit a trio of 3-pointers in the third quarter, but Benet was able to maintain its lead. Joe Schuessler's 3-pointer with 3:46 left in regulation gave Benet a 49-44 lead.

"I was just trying to get something going for my team," Paige said. "I was able to get loose. They did a good job defensively in the first half, so I got a little more aggressive in the second half."

The Redwings then went into the four corners, cognizant of the fact that Linn-Mar had only four team fouls. The Lions weren't able to record their seventh team foul until there was 1:14 left, and the game was in Benet's favor by that point.

On the injury front, Robertson said he expects guard Matt Lassen to return within a week. Lassen has been practicing, and Robertson said he's taking his status "day-by-day."

BENET ACADEMY (56): Joe Schuessler 3 1-2 9, Bobby Wehrli 3 0-0 8, Griffin Hanekamp 0 0-0 0, Pat McInerney 3 0-0 7, Sean O'Mara 12 6-6 30, Jack Toner 0 0-0 0, Matt Clements 1 0-0 2, Nick Mankowski 0 0-0 0, Jack Euritt 0 0-0 0. Totals 22 7-8 56.

LINN-MAR (50): Zach Martins 0 0-0 0, Marcus Paige 12 5-6 34, Jimmy Roth 2 0-0 5, Andy Henry 1 2-2 4, Jon Schlotterback 2 0-0 4, Matt Meier 0 1-2 1, Jacob Hutchins 0 0-0 0, Nick

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Mankowski 1 0-0 2. Totals 18 8-10 50.

Halftime – Benet Academy 26, Linn-Mar 25. 3-point goals – Benet 5 (Schuessler 2, Wehrli 2, McInerney), Linn-Mar 6 (Paige 5, Roth). Total fouls – Benet 16, Linn-Mar 13. Fouled out – Schlotterback.