

No. 5 Lions blank No .6 Warriors

Written by Mike Condon

Thursday, 01 May 2014 21:06 - Last Updated Friday, 02 May 2014 05:22



It was a match that had Linn-Mar senior goalie Jared Belin a little worried at the half.

Belin and the Lions controlled much of the play during the first half of Thursday night's showdown with Cedar Rapids Washington at Linn-Mar Stadium.

Linn-Mar may have dominated the possession time in the match, but it was a scoreless draw at the break.

"It's pretty nerve-wracking as a goalkeeper," Belin said. "Once we got that first goal, I felt a little better."

Linn-Mar got a goal from junior Jared Slagle five minutes into the second half and junior Ben Johnson added an insurance tally in the final minute to give the Lions a 2-0 victory.

Linn-Mar, ranked No.5 in Class 3A, moves to 10-1 with the victory. Washington, ranked sixth, falls to 6-3.

"That seems to be our MO right now," Belin said. "We've won three 2-0 games in a row where we haven't scored in the first half. We'd like to score in the first half, but I guess that is just the way the game works."

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Coach Corey Brinkmeyer was happy with the way Linn-Mar possessed the ball, but was quick to point out that the Lions are far from a finished product.

“We’re really good at possessing,” Brinkmeyer said. “We’re not always great in the final third. We can get to the final third but sometimes we just slow down too much.”

There was nothing slow about Linn-Mar’s play in the final third on its first goal. Junior Brian Allsup won a battle for a 50-50 ball and chipped it ahead, where Slagle was able to outrace Warrior keeper Gunnar Lenzen to the ball and chip it into the open net.

“(Slagle) made a fantastic play on the ball,” Brinkmeyer said. “Jared somehow had the determination to somehow control it and make the touch for the goal.”

The Warriors did increase the pressure in the second half. Seniors Jacob Bjornsen and Michael Eken started to control the ball in the midfield and were able to send teammates off towards the net.

Linn-Mar was whistled for several fouls within the 25, but Washington was never able to put any sustained pressure on Belin, who posted his eighth shutout of the season. That is two shy of the school record set by Clark Anderson in 2004.

Belin, who will play next year in college for Briar Cliff, is one of just five seniors on a youthful yet talented Lions roster. He is quick to credit the play of fellow 12th graders Jason Gingrich and Darrin Eby, along with sophomores Jordan Webb, Alexy Boehm and Jack Ramsey.

“Our defenders have been outstanding all year,” Belin said. “They’ve made it a lot easier for me. I haven’t had to make many tough saves.”

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Although he said the Lions have areas in need of improvement, Brinkmeyer was pleased with the result, especially against a quality opponent.

“Certainly I am pleased with the win,” he said, “I’m pleased with the way we played at times. There are a few things every game we can improve on. As long as we keep improving, we’re going to be tough to deal with.”