

Enzugusi's goal lifts No. 4 Lions

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Linn-Mar Lions battled a few nagging injuries, a zillion nagging gnats and the Dubuque Hempstead Mustangs in the semifinals of the Class 3A substate soccer tournament at Linn-Mar Stadium Thursday evening.

The fourth-ranked Lions survived it all, 1-0.

Leroy Enzugusi got a perfect feed from Ben Johnson and scored the only goal with 33 minutes, 27 seconds left in the game.

Linn-Mar will host No. 9 Bettendorf in the substate finals Saturday at noon, with the winner advancing to the state tournament.

Daniel Luzindya and Enzugusi, two of Linn-Mar's top weapons, were never on the field at the same time Thursday as Coach Corey Brinkmeyer tried to nurse them through the game without compounding minor ailments.

The strategy worked as the Lions survived and advanced to the next round despite not being at full strength.

Brinkmeyer declined to use injuries for the lack of firepower.

"A couple of little dings," he said. "It's been a long season. It's been a good season, but it's

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starting to take a toll on the bodies a little bit.

"Our problem has been putting them in the net. We've gotten a lot of opportunities in most of our games. We just have trouble finishing."

Enzugusi, a freshman, did not have trouble finishing when he got the pass from Johnson on the right side of the goal in the second half.

"I got the ball and I saw Leroy on the back side. And I got the pass to him," said Johnson. "And he put it away."

Enzugusi had time to eyeball Hempstead goalkeeper Fredic Kalb before firing the ball into the left corner of the goal.

"That was a great ball," said Enzugusi, praising the feed from Johnson. "I had all the time in the world. So I just put it back in the net."

It was Enzugusi's eighth goal of the season.

Brinkmeyer liked the way the winning play developed.

"We got numbers up," he said. "I think we kind of caught them off-guard. We have a good ability to counter-attack, and we hadn't really done it effectively this game."

Hempstead had a couple of golden opportunities, but their shots either went over the goal or Linn-Mar senior keeper Jared Belin made the save. The Lions were fortunate on one attempt, however, when a blast by Hempstead's Bobby McCaw ripped through Belin's hands and banged off the crossbar.

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Linn-Mar beat Hempstead, 2-0, during the regular season and Thursday's victory was not easy.

"No, we knew it wouldn't be," said Brinkmeyer. "When you beat a team early on, you know they'll be gunning for you."