

Enzugusi's OT goal sends Lions to state

Written by Mike Condon

Saturday, 31 May 2014 17:29 - Last Updated Saturday, 31 May 2014 17:41

It was one of those soccer matches where you were worried if you were a Linn-Mar supporter.

The No. 4 Lions dominated much of the action in Saturday's Class 3A substate final with No. 9 Bettendorf at Linn-Mar Stadium. Linn-Mar had several chances to score in regulation, but found itself heading to overtime in a scoreless tie with the Bulldogs.

"It crept into my head a little bit," admitted Lions Coach Corey Brinkmeyer. "I certainly had faith in the guys and they've proven me right much of the time."

That faith was rewarded early in the first 10-minute overtime when freshman Leroy Enzugusi took a feed from Bobby Charlton at the top of the penalty box and put the ball past Bettendorf keeper Michael Lintz 3:28 into extra time, giving the Lions a 1-0 victory and the school's first state tournament appearance since 2008.

Linn-Mar (17-3) is seeded fifth at state and will play in the state quarterfinals Thursday at the Cownie Soccer Complex in Des Moines against No. 4 seed Iowa City High at 5:10 p.m. The Little Hawks beat the Lions, 1-0, in a regular-season game two weeks ago. Bettendorf finishes at 14-5.

The winning goal was the second of the postseason for Enzugusi. He scored the Lions' goal in Thursday's 1-0 substate semifinal win over Dubuque Hempstead.

It was a rough road to the game-winner for the Linn-Mar freshman on Saturday. He had a goal wiped off the board on an offside call, then was sent off after getting a yellow card for an

Enzugusi's OT goal sends Lions to state

Written by Mike Condon

Saturday, 31 May 2014 17:29 - Last Updated Saturday, 31 May 2014 17:41

intentional hand ball after it initially looked like he had scored again.

Then in the second half, Enzugusi fired it past Lintz but the shot hit teammate Daniel Luzindya before reaching the net, keeping the game scoreless.

"We had our chances," Brinkmeyer admitted. "Fortunately, we kept the pressure on."

There was no stopping Enzugusi on the game-winner. He used his speed to elude the Bettendorf defense to get into scoring position.

"Bobby had the ball in the middle of the field and I was yelling and screaming for it," Enzugusi said. "He played me through. It was a great ball in and all I had to do was finish."

That set off a wild celebration on the field with Enzugusi on the bottom of the pile.

Bettendorf did not have many chances to score, but when they had two prime opportunities, one in each half, senior keeper Jared Belin was up to the task. He turned away each attempt to record his school-record 15th shutout of the season.

"I had to think quick on my feet a couple of times out there today," Belin said. "You have to make sure you are always sharp, especially on a warm day like today."

Brinkmeyer said Bettendorf did not do anything the Lions did not expect. The Bulldogs are a physical team and tried to outmuscle Linn-Mar. The solution was a simple one.

"We used our speed and moved the ball to stay away from them," Brinkmeyer said. "The guys bought into what we've been working on all year. They really did a good job of moving the ball around."

Enzugusi's OT goal sends Lions to state

Written by Mike Condon

Saturday, 31 May 2014 17:29 - Last Updated Saturday, 31 May 2014 17:41

Enzugusi was happy for Belin and the other seniors, Kyle Shiley, Brian Allsup, Jason Gringrich, Kevin Simons and Darrin Eby.

"I've got three more years, but this was their last chance to go to state," he said. "They have been great leaders for us and it is great for them to finish at state."

Belin said it was one thing for the Lions to have state as a goal entering the season, but it did not mean anything until Saturday.

"We all thought we could (end up at state)," he said. "This was definitely not the way I was expecting it to end, in overtime, but, hey, it's a win and we're going to state."