

## Lions boot Little Hawks at state

Written by Tom Fruehling

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DES MOINES - In their first state tournament appearance since 2008, the underdog Linn-Mar boys pounced on Iowa City High right from the start and never let up.

Neither team scored in a cat-and-mouse first half, but the Lions kept up the pressure and prevailed 3-1 Friday evening in the Class 3A opening round at the Cownie Soccer Park.

By spanking the No. 2 Little Hawks (15-3), Linn-Mar now faces top-ranked Johnston (20-0) Friday at 5 p.m. in the semifinals.

"It will be a similar situation," said an exuberant Linn-Mar Coach Corey Brinkmeyer. "We'll be the underdog. We'll get hydrated and rested."

"But we will be ready," he vowed.

Coming into the tourney ranked No. 4 at 17-3, the Lions had lost to City High 1-0 just two weeks ago.

"From that game, we knew what we had to beat them," said sophomore midfielder Devin Eby, who scored the final goal. "And we just came out and did it."

Brinkemeyer said he switched the starting lineup to include three defenders, five midfielders and two forwards.

"I wanted to clog up the middle and put more pressure on them," he explained.

"And right out of the gate, the guys came out and played so hard and so aggressive. We missed

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a couple of early opportunities, but we just hung in there."

The match had just started when leading scorer Ben Johnson barely missed by hitting the left goal post. And Hunter Wong's dead-on penalty kick was tipped over the net by the fingernails of Iowa City goalie Roman Doyle.

Sure-handed Lions keeper Jared Belin saved a sure goal at the 33-minute mark of the second half, and the Lions soon after made the first score when Wong rifled a penalty shot into the upper right-hand corner.

City High came right back with an Adam Nicholson goal that bounced off the crossbar and into the net.

For the Lions, it marked only the sixth game of the year they've been scored upon. They've allowed only eight goals all season.

Linn-Mar's second goal came with 13:30 to go when Johnson kicked in a loose ball that had been passed by Alexi Boehm, making it 2-1. Leroy Enzugusi had tipped the ball before it landed in front of Johnson.

The final goal came with three minutes to go after Daniel Luzindya sprinted the length of the field and made a sweet cross-field pass to Eby.

"I felt confident after our second goal," said Eby. "But that third goal was the clincher."