

Lions snare 1st soccer title in history

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES - The Linn-Mar Lions lingered on the championship field at the Cownie Soccer Park for more than 30 minutes Saturday evening, posing for pictures and hugging everyone in sight.

It took 30 years since the start of the program for Linn-Mar High School to capture its first state title in boys soccer and nobody wanted to leave the scene after a remarkable three-day run through some of the best soccer teams in Iowa.

The Lions blanked Ankeny Centennial, 2-0, in the championship game of the Class 3A state tournament Saturday with talent, guts and a little luck.

"We've been building for it for a couple of years," said Jack Ramsey, named the captain of the all-tournament team. "Our seniors are a great group and we all really meshed together.

"We just clicked," he said.

Linn-Mar entered the tournament as the No. 5 seed in the eight-team event, but they slew the No. 4 seed (Hempstead), the No. 1 seed (Johnston) and the No. 2 seed (Centennial) on consecutive days.

The Lions turned out to be a special team and finished the season with a 20-3 record.

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"We've been working since November. It seems like forever," said Linn-Mar goalie Phil Adams, who made his second sensational save on a penalty kick in two days.

"We've been working and we knew from Day 1, when we came together to start running and getting back in shape that this was going to be a special year. We knew that we were going to be a team to be reckoned with, because we just worked hard every single day, day in and day out."



Linn-Mar took a 1-0 lead in the first half on an "own goal" when a Centennial player accident knocked the ball into his own goal with his head. The play began with a free kick by Alexy Boehm, who was credited with an assist.

The Lions made it 2-0 on a goal by Leroy Enzugusi with 6:39 left in the first half. Adams made his diving save on the PK by Centennial's Kenan Smajlovic with 2:13 left in the half and the Lions felt confident of their chances at intermission.

"Once we got the 2-0 lead at halftime, I think we really started to feel it was a reality," said Linn-Mar Coach Corey Brinkmeyer.

Brinkmeyer passed all the credit for the state title to his players.

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"It's them, it's not me," he remarked. "I just let them do what they're good at.

"They're fast, they enjoy being around each other. They have good touch, they have great athletic ability all over the field. And they showed a ton of heart this season."

The Xavier Saints won the Class 2A state title on Field 9 at Cownie Park Saturday afternoon, then Linn-Mar followed suit in the Class 3A finals on the same field Saturday evening.

"This is great for the Metro area, this is great for the Mississippi Valley Conference," said Brinkmeyer. "We know how hard it is to get wins (in the MVC).

"Having two out of three state champions from the MVC and from the Cedar Rapids Metro area says a lot about where the power in soccer is."

It also said a lot about Linn-Mar.

"We love each other," said Enzugusi. "Everyone on the team hangs out with each other. Everyone is a big family."

Adams, Enzugusi and Ben Johnson joined Ramsey on the all-tournament team.