

DES MOINES -- Kiah Stokes ended her remarkable high school career in tears Friday afternoon.

She fouled out, Linn-Mar lost in overtime and her dream of winning back-to-back state titles evaporated.

Iowa City West rallied from a 14-point deficit and trimmed the second-ranked Lions, 65-58, in the semifinals of the Class 4A tournament at Wells Fargo Arena.

Stokes saved Linn-Mar with a 3-pointer with five seconds left in regulation -- just the second 3-pointer of her All-American career -- but she fouled out with 2:19 left in overtime and the Lions did not score a single point in her absence.

Stokes sat on the bench after the game ended, wiping away the tears, and was still sobbing more than 15 minutes later.

"I love my teammates," she said between sobs.

Stokes ended her prep career with incredible numbers. She scored 1,704 points, grabbed 1,239 rebounds and blocked 515 shots. She set school records in all three categories, set a state mark for blocked shots and finished fourth in state history in rebounds.

"Quite a ride," said Linn-Mar Coach Mike Brandt.

Linn-Mar jumped to a quick 18-4 lead in the first quarter and looked like it might bury the jittery Women of Troy, but Iowa City West settled down, forced turnovers, began making shots and outscored the Lions 24-8 in the second quarter.

It was a tossup from there.

"We could have played better, we could have defended better, we could have not missed so many layups and easy shots," said Stokes, who did not excuse herself from those problems. "We could have done everything better, but now we can't do anything about it."

Iowa City West (23-2) will face No.1 Des Moines East (25-0) in the championship game Saturday night.

Stokes finished with 22 points, 18 rebounds and five blocked shots, but she made only 7 of 15 shots -- well below her norm of 70.1 percent -- and missed buckets she normally makes.

Iowa City West Coach B.J. Mayer thought his team made it too easy for Stokes early, but that changed.

"We started making life more difficult for Kiah," he said. "She still got some touches, but we usually had two or three kids around her the whole time. We had to have somebody else beat us, and thank goodness nobody else did."

Linn-Mar trailed, 56-53, in the final seconds of the fourth period, needing a 3-pointer to force overtime. Stokes had the ball at the top of the key and looked for a shooter, but nobody was open.

Stokes turned and fired a line-drive, more in desperation than anything else, but it went straight in for three points and a 56-56 tie. It was just the second 3-pointer of her high school career and her first this season.

"I knew she could make it," said Brandt. "We end most of our practices with that play, just to have it in our back pocket if we need it."

Kailee Karr scored the first basket of overtime to give Linn-Mar a 58-56 lead, but Stokes was living dangerously with four fouls. Sure enough, disaster struck.

Shelly Stumpff shot for Iowa City West, the ball went in the basket and the referee blew his whistle. There did not appear to be significant contact, but the ref said the foul was on "4-0" and that meant the end for No.40 for Linn-Mar.

Stokes walked briskly to the bench and sat down. "If that's what they called, they must have seen something," she said.

Stumpff missed her free throw, leaving the game tied 58-58, but Iowa City West grabbed the rebound and got another chance, resulting in an easy basket by Shahana Williams for a 60-58 lead.

Nothing went right for the Lions (22-3) from there. They missed all their shots, including three air-balls on 3-pointers, could not hang onto rebounds and ultimately had to foul, which led to five free throws by the Women of Troy in the final minute.

"They looked like they wanted to win this game more," said Stokes. "They had more fight. At times we couldn't match that, and that's what lost the game for us."

Stokes played 101 games for Linn-Mar in her career and doubts she ever fouled out before. "Maybe in AAU," she said.

Stokes wasn't the only Linn-Mar player in tears. Kailee Karr and Jenna Eells, fellow seniors, were also battling their emotions after the loss ended their careers.

"A big part of my brain is telling me how proud I am of my team," said Karr, red-eyed. "This is an incredible, incredible group."

Linn-Mar compiled a gaudy 94-7 record the past four years with Stokes on the varsity. She averaged 7.4 points as a freshman, 15.6 as a sophomore, 19.5 as a junior and 25.0 this season.

She averaged 16.8 points, 12.3 rebounds and 5.1 blocks for her career. The Lions reached the semifinals of the state tournament in 2008, 2009 and 2011 and won the title in 2010.

"My high school career was great," she said. "I mean, a lot of teams don't get to go to state, and I got to go four years and at least make it to the semifinals each year.

"I love my teammates," she said. "I couldn't have done it without them."

Stokes is the heavy favorite to be named Iowa Miss Basketball when the award is announced Tuesday. She'll play in the McDonald's All-American Game in Chicago later this month and head to the University of Connecticut this summer for her college career.

Ally Disterhoft led Iowa City West with 17 points. Tatum Klein scored 12 points and Mckenzie Piper netted 10. Piper's maternal grandfather is Bill Logan, a member of the Fab 5 at the University of Iowa in the 1950s, and she wears his uniform number 31.

Karr scored 12 points for Linn-Mar and Mykaela Brandt netted 11.

Iowa City West is a good 3-point shooting team, but both clubs hit five 3-pointers Friday. The difference in the ballgame came in other departments.

The Women of Troy destroyed Linn-Mar in bench points (19-4), outscored the Lions at the foul line (16-7) and had five fewer turnovers (12 compared to 17).

The biggest factor, of course, was Stokes fouling out in overtime.

"Not that it was over at that time," said Mayer, "but it sure helps when Kiah is not in there."

IOWA CITY WEST (65): Ally Disterhoft 5 6-8 17, Brianna Sturtz 1 0-0 3, Shelly Stumpff 3 3-5 9, Jessica Shull 2 2-2 7, Mckenzie Piper 4 1-2 10, Shahana Williams 1 1-2 3, Tatum Klein 4 3-4 12, Paige Yoder 2 0-0 4. Totals 22 16-23 65.

LINN-MAR (58): Mykaela Brandt 5 0-0 11, Rachel Thrune 2 0-0 4, Kailee Karr 5 0-0 12, Jenna Eells 2 0-0 5, Kiah Stokes 7 7-10 22, Leandra Martins 0 0-0 0, Shanice Cheatham 2 0-0 4, Courtney Major 0 0-1 0. Totals 23 7-11 58.

Halftime -- Iowa City West 32, Linn-Mar 28. 3-point goals -- Iowa City West 5 (Disterhoft, Sturtz, Shull, Piper, Klein), Linn-Mar 5 (Karr 2, Brandt, Eells, Stokes). Fouled out -- Stokes, Brandt.