

Uhlir nets 30 as Lions top Cougars

Written by Jim Ecker

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Linn-Mar High School has featured some outstanding 3-point shooters in recent years with Jason Bohannon and Marcus Paige topping the list.

Nic Uhlir is making a serious bid to join them.

Uhlir popped in a career-best seven 3-pointers Tuesday night and poured in 30 points as the Lions clipped No.10 Kennedy, 70-64, in a Mississippi Valley Conference battle at Linn-Mar.

Jason Bohannon, one of the best 3-point shooters in state history, holds the Linn-Mar record with eight triples in one game during the 2005-06 campaign. Paige made seven triples two years ago and is now tied for second place with Uhlir.

"He can shoot it," marveled Linn-Mar Coach Chris Robertson. "And the thing I like about Nic is, he can miss two or three and he's still going to shoot the fourth or fifth. That's what makes a great shooter. He knows that's his role."

Uhlir, a slender 6-foot junior, leads the Mississippi Valley Conference with 45 3-pointers. He made five treys in the first half to help Linn-Mar grab a 35-22 lead at intermission, then drilled a huge 3-pointer to snap a 61-61 tie after Kennedy had roared back from a 15-point hole and taken a four-point lead.

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Uhlir made six 3-pointers in a pair of games this season, but never seven before torching the Cougars.

"A lot of confidence," he said about his hot streak. "Seeing the ball go in really helps. It's just feeling good."

The Lions (10-6, 8-3) have a pair of terrific 3-point shooters with Uhlir and Jordan Bohannon (Jason's younger brother). The Cougars (12-4, 8-3) limited Bohannon to one 3-pointer and a fairly quiet 15 points, but Kennedy Coach Jon McKowen took little solace in that.

"The other one sticks out too much," said McKowen, nodding at Uhlir.

"We didn't do a good enough job, obviously, recognizing the shooter after he hit a couple," the coach said. "We got there a step late a lot of times and it cost us a lot of points."

Linn-Mar soared to a 33-18 lead in the second quarter, but Kennedy came out firing in the third period and quickly pulled within 40-37 behind a pair of 3-pointers by Cole Murdock and five straight points by John Bardsley.

The Cougars took a 52-51 lead on a bucket by Bryton Heisler and grabbed a 61-57 edge on a 3-pointer by Murdock with 4:04 left in the game, forcing Linn-Mar to call a timeout.

"We had to re-gather the troops a little bit," said Robertson.

Jon Schlotterback made two free throws to pull the Lions within 61-59, then Bohannon dribbled behind his back to escape defenders and hit a floater to tie the game 61-61.

Drew Heitland missed two foul shots for Kennedy and Robertson called another timeout. Uhlir

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got a screen, caught a pass from Bohannon and drained a long 3-pointer - his seventh and final one of the game - for the 64-61 lead.

Ryan Schmidt gave Linn-Mar a 66-61 lead, but Bardsley responded with a 3-pointer to pull Kennedy within 66-64 with 38 seconds left.

Bohannon made two free throws, Kennedy missed two shots and Bohannon hit two more free throws with 29 seconds left to make it 70-64 and finish the scoring.

"It was a lot of fun out there," said Uhlir. "We played really well the first half and came out a little slow the second half, but we were able to pull it out at the end."

By topping Kennedy, the Lions have defeated all the other Class 4A basketball teams in the Metro this year with victories over Jefferson, Prairie, Xavier, Washington and the Cougars.

"That's something we wanted to do at the beginning of the year and we did it," said Uhlir.

Bardsley, a 6-foot-3 senior who missed several weeks this season with a broken hand, sparked Kennedy with 18 points off the bench. He scored 16 of those points in the second half as the Cougars stormed back into contention.

A.J. Carter scored 16 points for Kennedy.

The Cougars and Lions will meet in a rematch Feb. 14 at Kennedy.

KENNEDY (64): Daniels 2 0-0 5, Carter 7 2-4 16, Jacobus 1 0-1 2, Bardsley 7 2-2 18, Murdock 3 0-0 9, Heisler 1 2-2 4, Holzer 1 0-0 2, Manning 0 0-0 0, Heitland 4 0-3 8. Totals 26 6-12 64.

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LINN-MAR (70): Uhlir 11 1-1 30, Murphy 0 0-0 0, Noble 0 0-1 0, Brennecke 1 0-0 2, Bohannon 5 4-4 15, Larson 0 2-2 2, Schlotterback 1 5-5 7, Halupnik 3 0-0 8, Schmidt 1 1-2 3, Brandt 1 1-2 3. Totals 23 14-17 70.

Halftime - Linn-Mar 35, Kennedy 22. 3-point goals - Kennedy 6 (Murdock 3, Bardsley 2, Daniels 1), Linn-Mar 10 (Uhlir 7, Halupnik 2, Bohannon 1). Fouled out - Schlotterback. Technical foul - Schlotterback.