

Linn-Mar girls trim Warriors

Written by Tom Fruehling

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In the end, it was a game of hot-potato.

After a mad scramble in the closing seconds with the ball changing hands several times, Linn-Mar sophomore Lexi Frese was the last one to touch it with 1.5 seconds to go.

She then sank one of two free throws and with it sank Washington's last hope of a desperation homecourt comeback from a disastrous 15-point first quarter deficit.

"In my head, I knew they were not going to go away," said Linn-Mar Coach Jaime (Printy) Brandt, cool as a cucumber after the 41-39 squeaker for her team. "I'm just proud of my girls for finishing it out."

She admitted, though, that it was a real nail-biter right to the end.

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After trailing 18-3 and then 24-12 at halftime, the Warriors held the Lions to just one 3-pointer in the third quarter and went into the fourth period tied at 27. Linn-Mar regrouped and held a 39-34 edge with a minute to go.

But on a night when the sixth-ranked Lions made just 10 of 28 free throws, they clanked eight of their next nine chances from the line to nearly snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

When rugged Washington senior Kandis O'Donnell, a workhorse all night despite playing on a severely sprained ankle, converted on an old-fashioned three-point play with 11.6 seconds left, her team was back by just 40-39.

Then came the frantic finish.

Normally steady Linn-Mar senior Olivia Montague, the scoring leader with 17 thanks to four clutch 3-pointers, was fouled with 10.2 on the clock.

"That's what I practice for," she said later. "To have the ball in my hands with the game on the line. But I think the nerves got to me."

She missed both free throws.

But Frese, who had just re-entered the game, saved the day by grabbing the rebound and throwing it back to Montague. The two of them took turns losing the ball and stealing it back again over the next nine seconds until Frese sealed the deal by sinking the second of two free throws.

"I just did not want us to lose our streak," Frese said on Linn-Mar's 5-0 start (4-0 MVC) in Brandt's maiden season as head after an illustrious playing career both at Linn-Mar and at Iowa. "When I went after the ball,

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I was thinking that we're not going to go down easily."

For his part, veteran Washington Coach Frank Howell said he could hardly ask anything more of his young squad after bouncing back from their horrible start. The Warriors (2-3, 1-3 MVC) made eight turnovers in the first quarter alone and 26 in the game.

With a rash of butterfingers of their own in a sloopy third quarter, Linn-Mar ended up with 29 miscues.

Washington was out-rebounded 45-25, with just one offensive board all night to the Lions' 18.

"We got off to another slow start," Howell said. "But once we simplified our offense, they played with a lot more energy and got back into it."



Brandt said she was pleased with both her team's offensive and defensive effort in the first half, though she acknowledged they seemed to get "rattled" in the third quarter when Washington upped the pressure in its man-to-man press.

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"In the fourth quarter we were able to calm down, be more composed and more patient," she noted. "We played more of our game."

Brandt shook her head, however, on the bushel of missed opportunities at the charity stripe.

"We need to work on that," she stressed. "We have worked on it, but sometimes it's hard given the amount of practice time we have. It's not like it was at Iowa."

LINN-MAR (41) – Lexi Frese 2 1-2 5, Brittney Lancial 0 1-21, Olivia Montague 5 3-9 17, Nikita Sharma 3 2-4 8, Kamryn Finley 3 1-5 8, Alie Akers 0 0-0 0, Megan Murphy 0 0-0 0, Claire Larson 0 0-0 0, Lannie Nietert 02-6 2. Totals 13 10-28 41.

WASHINGTON (39) – Joniqua Clark 3 1-2 8, Allie Semrau 1 0-02, Anne Visser 2 0-1 5, Courtney Squires 1 0-1 2, Kandis O'Donnell 2 8-11 12, Daris Corey 0 0-0 0, Brittany Hoeger 0 2-2 2, Lily Hartman 1 0-0 2, Alanna Arrington 0 0-0 0, Payton Bruner 2 0-0 4, Jessi Puk 1 0-0 2, Emily Oler 0 0-00, Jayla Johnson 0 0-0 0, Brittany Cullen 0 0-0 0. Totals 13 11-17 39.

Halftime - Linn-Mar 24, Washington 12. 3-point goals – Linn-Mar 5 (Montague 4, Finley 1), Washington 2 (Clark 1, Visser 1). Total fouls – Linn-Mar 18, Washington 21. Fouled out – Clark.