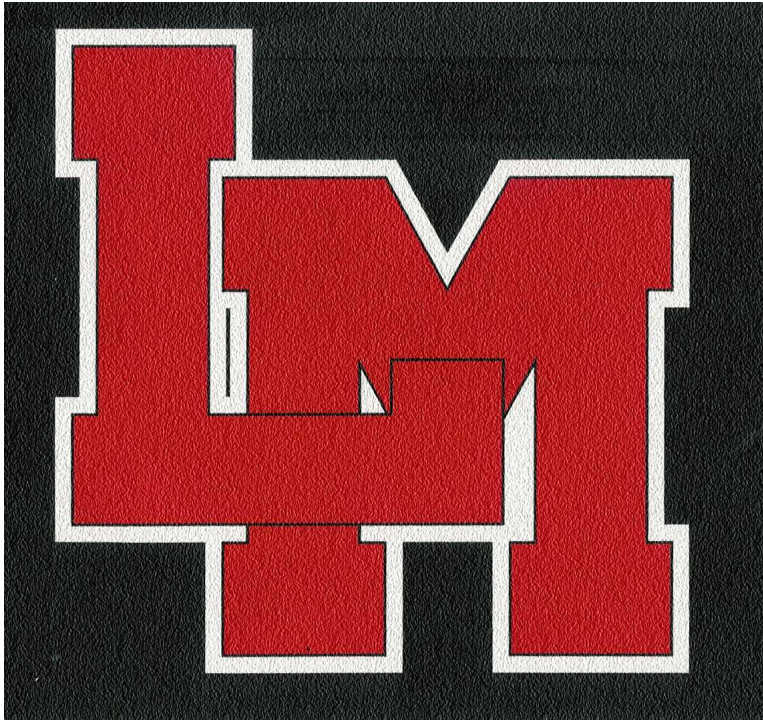


Written by

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(EDITOR'S NOTE: Third in a series of preseason Metro softball stories. Next: Marion.)

The Linn-Mar softball team is looking at another rebuilding season this year after going 12-23 last year and getting beat out in the regional semifinals by fourth-ranked Jefferson.

"I think this year is just another rebuilding year," said senior Lindsey Harms, a first team all-conference shortstop. "It's just Leandra (Martins) and me, and then we have two other juniors, so we are really young, but we are going to be better."

The Lions lost three seniors from last year's team, headlined by third team all-state third baseman Leah Beck.

"She was our best hitter and then I am the only returning outfielder, so we have a lot of holes to fill with those three missing," Martins said.

Luckily for Linn-Mar, Coach Jon Harms said he thinks they have enough young talent to help fill

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the holes left by graduation.

“We are a very young, inexperienced team, but I think there is some pretty young, talented girls for us that can step right in and play even though it’s at a varsity level,” he said. “I think the big thing is just to get them the varsity experience early and once we get that and the season gets going we will be fine and we’ll do really well.”

Although the team is young, they have a lot of returning starters from last season. Joining seniors Harms and Martins in the field with starting experience is sophomore Kelsey Duggan and freshmen twins Ellie and Maggie Rizor.

“Most of our lineup, a lot of our younger girls got some experience last year, so I think just getting through that first year is always a big thing,” Lindsey Harms said. “This year they will actually have varsity experience and they will know what it is like.”

The Lions also return their top pitcher from last season, junior Dionna Jensen who was a workhorse, pitching 143 plus innings with a team low 3.39 ERA and a team best 7-15 record.

She is joined on the pitching staff by three eighth grade pitchers, each of who Jon Harms expects to use in various situations this season although he expects Alexis Kelsey to take the second starting pitching position.

“Alexis Kelsey certainly looks like she is ready to step in and make immediate contributions,” he said.

But with so many young players, both in the field and on the mound, the Lions are trying to keep their goals short term, just trying to improve as much as possible before the season.

“Early in the year, you have girls in so many different directions with track and golf and soccer,” Jon Harms said. “It’s hard trying to get your team there to practice. When you have a young

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team and you are doing that, you can never really get caught up to speed. You never feel like you have them prepared, so that is our biggest challenge early, is just trying to feel like we are ready to go on the night of the first game.”

The Lions open the season May 25 with a doubleheader against Cedar Falls.