

No. 5 Lions clipped by No. 4 West

Written by Pat Harty

Friday, 16 January 2015 23:34 - Last Updated Saturday, 17 January 2015 07:33



IOWA CITY – Even in defeat, Linn-Mar girls basketball coach Jaime Brandt learned something positive about her team Friday.

It doesn't quit.

The fifth-ranked Lions fell to fourth-ranked Iowa City West, 51-42, in a Mississippi Valley Conference game that was on the verge of becoming a rout early in the third quarter.

West scored the first six points after halftime, expanding its lead to 45-28 less than two minutes into the third quarter. The visiting Lions then trimmed the deficit to nine points on three occasions, but could get no closer while falling to 10-2 on the season.

"I told them we could have very easily let this one go and get blown out by 25," said Brandt, a former standout guard for Linn-Mar and the University of Iowa. "We were down by 17 I think in the (third) and lost by single digits.

"That just shows that our girls never give up and I'm proud of them for that. We battled hard and we'll learn from it and move on."

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The Lions made only 5-of-21 field goal attempts during the first half, which ended with West leading 27-14.

All-state junior forward Amanda Ollinger, who transferred to Linn-Mar from Jefferson this month, missed all five of her field-goal attempts in the first half and was just 2-for-11 from the field overall. The University of Iowa recruit scored only six points while being blanketed by two and three defenders.

“We did a really good job defensively,” said senior forward Mikaela Morgan, who led West with 13 points. “We knew what they wanted to do, get it into Ollinger. So we had a lot of help off her. And then we’ve been practicing close-outs to get out to those shooters.”



Brandt, who played basketball as Jaime Printy, knew it would take some time for Ollinger to adjust to her new teammates. However, Brandt refused to use that as an excuse for Friday’s loss.

“I think it will be an adjustment any time you add somebody new,” Brandt said. “But that wasn’t our deal at all. I don’t think that affected us tonight. We’ll just continue to get better as the year goes on.”

Brandt praised West for using its aggressiveness on defense to seize the momentum. The Women of Troy improved to 12-0 overall.

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"I think we let their pressure get us a little more than we should have," Brandt said. "We made some bad decisions at crucial times. I give it to West. They played a really good game tonight."

Senior guard Olivia Montague led Linn-Mar with 11 points and hit three 3-point baskets. Her third trey of the game cut the lead to 39-28 after three quarters. The Lions crept to within nine points three times in the fourth quarter, including the final score.

Montague was pleased that her team kept competing despite facing a significant deficit and despite being slowed by some physical ailments.

"I think the first half we came out a little bit on our heels, but I think in the second half we were definitely more in sync," Montague said. "Not that it's an excuse by any means, but we've been struggling a little bit with sickness. But we really bounced back tonight from what we had."

"The main thing is we had a lot of heart tonight," she said. "We could have easily let the game go. But we fought back and we finished the game within single digits. And I can't wait to hopefully face them again."

Montague is also eager to keep playing with the 6-foot-2 Ollinger, who has earned all-state accolades in basketball and volleyball.

"With any team it's going to be an adjustment getting in sync with a new person," Montague said. "It takes time. We've only been playing with her for a few weeks. But it's gradually getting better and better as time goes on."

LINN-MAR (42): Frese 1 1-3 3, Lancial 3 0-0 7, Montague 40-0 11, Sharma 2 2-3 6, Finley 1 2-2 4, Ollinger 2 2-2 6, Nietert 1 0-0 2, Larson 1 0-0 3, Murphy 0 0-0 0, Noggle 0 0-0 0. Totals 15 7-10 42.

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WEST (51): Craig 2 2-5 6, Morgan 4 3-7 13, Tauchen 4 0-0 8, Lozano-Dobbs 1 0-0 3, Tafolla 3 4-4 11, Cook 2 0-0 5, Harder 1 0-0 2, Saunders 1 0-2 3.
Totals 18 9-18 51.

Halftime – West 27, Linn-Mar 14. 3-point goals – Linn-Mar 5 (Montague 3, Lancial 1, Larson 1), West 6 (Morgan 2, Lozano-Dobbs 1, Tafolla 1, Cook 1, Saunders 1).