

Lions get taste of revenge at state

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES - The Linn-Mar Lions continued their "Revenge Tour" at the Class 3A state soccer tournament in Des Moines Thursday with a 2-0 victory over Dubuque Hempstead in the opening round.

That was an appetizer for Linn-Mar. Now they want a full-course meal against top-ranked Johnston in the semifinals Friday at 5 p.m.

The Linn-Mar "Revenge Tour" began several weeks ago when they defeated Iowa City High after losing to the Little Hawks earlier in the season.

The "Tour" continued Thursday against Hempstead, which whipped the Lions 3-1 during the regular season in the Mississippi Valley Conference.

Now comes Johnston, which nipped the Lions 1-0 in the state semifinals a year ago.

"I think we've got something to prove," Linn-Mar Coach Corey Brinkmeyer declared. "We know that we lost to them, we know some things didn't quite go our way.

"We've got as good a team, if not better, than we were last year," he said. "I like our chances against Johnston."

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Johnston advanced with a 4-0 victory over West Des Moines Valley in the opening round.

Linn-Mar will pit its 18-3 record against Johnston's perfect mark of 20-0, with the winner advancing to the state finals on Saturday.

"It's going to be good," said Ben Johnson, who scored the first goal for Linn-Mar Thursday in the first half. "Especially since we lost to them last year, we definitely want to get that revenge against them and take it to the finals."

Johnson knows it won't be easy, however. "I'm assuming they're a great team," he remarked, "because they're undefeated."



Daniel Luzindya, a native of the Congo who moved to Iowa a few years ago, scored the second goal for Linn-Mar in the second half. He tried to score another goal with an acrobatic scissiors kick, but the Hempstead goalie made the save.

Luzindya has scored on a scissiors kick before. "Yes, back in my country, but not here," he said. "I hope tomorrow."

Brinkmeyer liked the way his team played against Hempstead (15-3).

"I thought we played with a lot of passion and a lot of enthusiasm," he said. "I think we had something to prove, having lost to this team early on in the year. I thought we played well."

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Brinkmeyer has enjoyed taking his team on the "Revenge Tour," especially as the stakes keep getting higher.

"It's the best feeling in the world," he said. "It's so easy to motivate a team when you've lost to your opponent already.

"Just two more nights," said Brinkmeyer, looking forward to the final two rounds of the tournament.

Linn-Mar had never won a game at the state tournament until it prevailed in the opening round last year. Now the Lions can take another big step against Johnston.

"Absolutely," said Brinkmeyer. "Time for the next step. We're here to battle. Our guys battled all day, battled all season.

"Things haven't always gone our way, but I think we're a tough team to play."