

## **Lassen resting at home; sidelined at least 5 weeks**

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 14 December 2011 23:22 - Last Updated Wednesday, 14 December 2011 23:23

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Ron and Susie Lassen were enjoying the Linn-Mar High School basketball game last Friday night when they were quickly - and nervously - summoned to the court.

Their son, Matt, had taken a nasty spill under the basket and was lying on the floor, not moving. Thus began a traumatic journey that was eased somewhat when Matt was released from the hospital Tuesday after suffering a concussion, a seizure, bleeding on the brain and swelling.

He will not attend school again until after the holiday break and will not play basketball again until late January, if at all this season. But he's home, resting as comfortably as possible.

"He's feeling stronger every day," Ron Lassen said Wednesday. "Other than a pretty good headache - and even that has really lessened - you wouldn't know there was anything wrong with him. He's a little worn down."

Matt left the Linn-Mar gym on a stretcher and was taken to St. Luke's Hospital in Cedar Rapids Friday night. A few hours later he was transported to the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, where he spent several days in the Intensive Care Unit.

"The first 12 hours or so, it seems like there was nothing but bad news," Ron Lassen said. "When we got down to St. Luke's, one of the first things they did was a CAT Scan and they found some bleeding on the brain, so they said you need to see a neurosurgeon right away."

"Well, that's not words you want to hear, and there wasn't a neurosurgeon available in Cedar Rapids. So they sent us down to the 'U' - put us in an ambulance and sent us down there."

They took another CAT Scan Saturday morning at the University of Iowa hospital.

"The bleeding had gotten worse and there was swelling on the brain," Ron Lassen said. "So

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right away they sent us up into intensive care, and we spent a couple of days in intensive care."

Matt was given medication for the swelling and began to improve.

"Things started to turn into good news from there," Ron Lassen said. "It stabilized within 24 hours or so. They tell us that's what they're watching for. You're not going to necessarily see it get better, but it's really good news that it wasn't getting worse.

"The swelling wasn't increasing, the bleeding - the spot of blood - was staying the same size."

The family is happy to be home in Marion, where Matt can rest and his parents can watch carefully over him. Nobody knows what's going to happen in the future. The doctors aren't saying.

"They don't really want to talk much past the next step," Ron Lassen said. "It can go in so many different directions.

"The next step is, they're going to re-assess in five weeks. He's still on some anti-seizure medication. With the bleeding in the brain, they're worried about more seizures.

"He only had the one seizure - the one he had on the court. He never had another one. Of course, they had him on medication, so it's hard to say if that prevented another one.

"Out of that re-assessment it could go any direction - the best news of he's good to go, or it could be we have to set another milestone out there for re-assessment."

Matt is not allowed to have any physical activity.

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"He can't go back to school until after the break. They don't want him to concentrate or take tests for awhile," Ron Lassen said. "They gave us a whole list of symptoms to watch for."

Matt received constant attention in the hospital, especially at the beginning.

"His first 24 hours in the hospital, they were giving him a neurological assessment every hour. Checking his vitals, asking him some questions, having him do some physical coordination," Ron Lassen said. "He's passed all of them right from the start."

"Then they backed it off to every two hours. He was glad to get home where he could sleep more than two hours without going through the little tests."

Matt would follow a finger with his eyes, touch his nose, move his feet, put his legs up and answer questions. "Do you know where you're at? What day is it? Who's president? Just general questions like that," Ron Lassen said.

Ron and Susie Lassen were sitting in the Linn-Mar bleachers at the same end of the floor where the accident occurred. Matt tried to take a charge from an Iowa City West player, there was contact and he fell to the floor, hitting his head. No foul was called and the play continued, and Linn-Mar teammate Marcus Paige accidentally fell on top of Matt and he hit his head on the court a second time.

Linn-Mar trainer Jill Hendricks, athletic director Scott Mahmens and basketball coach Chris Robertson rushed to Matt's side and quickly summoned the Lassens from the stands. An ambulance was called within the first minute.

"He was awake when we got down there," Ron Lassen said. "He was going in and out, though (of consciousness). We'd be talking to him, yelling at him a little bit, trying to get him to wake up. You could see it in his eyes. He would focus on one of our faces and we'd talk to him."

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"He'd try to get up, he'd try to sit up. Of course, Jill was trying to stabilize his neck, so we'd lay him back down and then his eyes would roll back in his head and he'd go back out. He went through that a few times, waiting for the ambulance to get there."

Matt does not remember any of that.

"He says he remembers the game, he remembers setting up to take the charge," Ron Lassen said. "The next thing he remembers, he was in the ambulance."

The Linn-Mar gym was quiet while Matt was being treated on the floor. Everyone was anxious, worried.

"It was a hard thing for us, obviously," Ron Lassen said. "He looked so vulnerable down there. You feel horrible, obviously."

Ron Lassen said he's seen thousands of basketball games as a player, coach and spectator. Usually a player gets knocked down and gets back up, but not this time. This time they needed a stretcher and an ambulance, because the player had a serious head injury.

"I've never seen that happen," said Lassen, who was an assistant coach at Linn-Mar at one time. "There's pileups under the basket all the time, and everyone gets up and dusts themselves off and plays. It's just such a freak thing. And when you think that it happened to your kid, it's a hard one to swallow."

Jill Hendricks, the Linn-Mar trainer, joined the Lassens at the University of Iowa hospital at 3 a.m. Saturday, even though she had duties at the school a few hours later. There was a steady stream of visitors during the weekend, wanting to check on Matt and pay their respects.

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Linn-Mar players and coaches, Iowa City West players, Iowa City West Coach Steve Bergman, Cedar Rapids Jefferson Coach Stu Ordman, some of Matt's AAU teammates from the Barnstormers, Iowa Hawkeye Josh Oglesby and others stopped to visit. The Lassens received numerous phone calls and messages of support.

An assistant coach from the University of Albany (N.Y.) called Friday night, just a few hours after the accident, to check on Matt, who has committed to play at Albany. Ron Lassen doesn't know how the Albany coach knew about the accident so quickly.

"The outpouring of support has just been overwhelming," he said. "Susie and I and Matt really appreciate it."

Matt Lassen, only a junior, committed to Albany last Wednesday, two days before the accident. "It was such a great week," Ron Lassen said. "Right until the game Friday night."

The doctors have not said anything about Matt's future in basketball. They might know more in five weeks. "They've been very cautious, not to say anything," Ron remarked.

The Lassens plan to take Matt's recovery one cautious step at a time.

"Basketball is the least of the worries right now," Ron Lassen said.