

## Young Lions answer season's first test

Written by Jake Koolbeck

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It was a battle, a battle with not only their opponent other but also the rough weather.

“It was a hard match. They played very hard,” Linn-Mar Coach Steve Dickinson said of his Lions. “The weather conditions didn’t make it ideal but both teams worked hard.”

With a chilly rain throughout the cool, breezy night Linn-Mar’s youthful team was able to clip 2A 12th-ranked Prairie, 1-0, Thursday night at John Wall Field.

The Linn-Mar Lions (4-0, 4-0 MVC) start seven underclassman (freshman or sophomores) and until Thursday had not faced a ranked team.

That made Prairie (5-3, 2-2) the Lions' first true test of the season. The Lions' previous three opponents had a combined record of 2-11.

“Two-thirds of our team is freshmen and sophomores so these first three games up until now have been very beneficial to figure how we can play,” Dickinson said. “Now we are starting to get into the brunt of the season. Hopefully those first three and tonight’s hard-fought win can be a good set for us to go forward on.”

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Linn Mar answered the test with some big help from its youth.



After controlling possession for a good part of the first half, Lion freshman Olivia Garcia put the Lions up 1-0 with a pretty shot lofted into the upper left corner of the net.

Aside from that one goal the quality opportunities were few and far between as the teams held each other in check in a tough defensive battle.

“We have similar molds being willing to go in and win a ball. Every ball was pretty well hard fought.” Dickinson said. “Each team probably had only three or four shots on goal so it was a good defensive battle tonight.”

The second half saw few opportunities for either team.

Prairie threatened to equalize a few times but freshman keeper Rylie Frese and the Lion defense held strong.

Linn-Mar kept the defense deep and dropped players back to prevent the Hawks' through balls. That strategy kept Prairie and UNI signee Rachel Carney off the scoreboard.

“It was more weather. We were facing into the wind and rain and we know Prairie likes to play

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through balls so we were playing a little deeper to counter the speed of the turf,” Dickinson said.

Linn Mar will look to stay perfect when they travel to Dubuque Wahlert on Tuesday.

Prairie will look to bounce back against tough Metro foe Kennedy on Tuesday.

Linn-Mar 1, Prairie 0

Goals: LM – Olivia Garcia. Assists: LM – Sarah Fathallah.