

New role for Stokes as Lions top Ballard

Written by Jim Ecker

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Kiah Stokes and Ballard star Taylor Greenfield are planning a vacation to the Dominican Republic this spring, but the two friends did not share any travel stories Saturday.

In fact, Stokes made life difficult for Greenfield in the 7th Annual Rivalry Saturday at the U.S. Cellular Center.

Stokes abandoned her normal defensive post near the basket and guarded Greenfield on the perimeter, an unusual and somewhat uncomfortable spot for the 6-foot-3 center from Linn-Mar. She handled her new assignment superbly.

Stokes stopped Greenfield when it counted to help Linn-Mar defeat Ballard, 50-40, in a battle of highly ranked teams.

Greenfield, a 6-foot-2 guard, scored 22 points, but did little damage while Stokes was guarding her in the second half. Stokes, a 6-foot-3 center, turned the game around with her defensive effort against the Ballard star.

"She was able to make me alter what I wanted to do," Greenfield said. "Before I was just driving it and taking pullup jump shots. I can't do that when she's standing there. I thought she did a really good job of making me change my game."

Linn-Mar Coach Mike Brandt used smaller, quicker defenders on Greenfield for a good portion of the game, but abandoned that plan when Greenfield kept scoring over the shorter Lions.

"I knew in my mind if Kiah wasn't in foul trouble I was going to give it a shot," said Brandt. "We were going to put our biggest (player) against their biggest and see what happens."

It was a close game until Stokes put the clamps on Greenfield in the second half.

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"She's a great player, so I knew it was going to be tough," said Stokes. "I played pretty good defense and tried to make it hard for her to shoot."

Greenfield finished only 8-for-23 from the field, including 2-for-9 on 3-pointers. "I was very proud of Kiah," said Brandt. "Very good job of D-ing it up."

Linn-Mar, ranked No.2 in Class 4A, raised its overall record to 15-1. Ballard, ranked No.1 in Class 3A, suffered its first loss and fell to 15-1.

Greenfield has signed to play college basketball at Stanford and tried to steer Stokes to the West Coast as well before the Linn-Mar star picked Connecticut. "Now that I'm going to UConn we're kind of enemies," joked Stokes.

Stokes was a stranger in a strange land for much of the second half, guarding Greenfield 20 to 25 feet from the basket.

"Usually I stand in the lane and block shots," she said. "I think I played pretty well with very little practice. It's different, I'll tell you that."

Brandt figures Stokes needs to get used to playing defense away from the basket.

"I've told her before, she's going to have to guard people like that next year (in college) so you might as well start now," he said. "She did an outstanding job of not going for fakes and just sitting down and playing good defense and using those long arms."

Stokes scored only 10 points, well below her average of 25.2 per game, but she got seven of those points in the fourth quarter to help Linn-Mar pull away. The Lions ended up with balanced scoring as Kailee Karr netted 14 points, Mykaela Brandt 11 and Jenna Eells 11.

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"I think that's good," said Stokes. "It shows that we're not just a one-man team. I love it when the team doesn't have to rely on me."

Stokes played all 32 minutes, grabbed 16 rebounds and blocked five shots. Greenfield also finished with a double-double with 22 points and 10 rebounds.

BALLARD (40): McVicker 0 0-0 0, Jensen 1 1-1 3, Roberts 0 0-0 0, Greenfield 8 4-4 22, Jamison 0 0-0 0, Carr 0 0-0 0, Sage 3 0-0 9, Hall 2 0-2 4, Ahrenholtz 1 0-2 2. Totals 15 5-9 40.

LINN-MAR (50): Brandt 2 7-10 11, Thrune 1 0-0 2, Karr 4 4-6 14, Eells 3 2-2 11, Stokes 4 2-5 10, Martins 0 0-0 0, Cheatham 0 2-2 2. Totals 14 17-25 50.

Halftime -- Linn-Mar 23, Ballard 20. 3-point goals -- Ballard 5 (Sage 3, Greenfield 2), Linn-Mar 5 (Eells 3, Karr 2).