

Lions beat Wash, then ousted by Tigers

Written by Tom Fruehling
Saturday, 18 May 2013 21:40 -

The Linn-Mar boys' magical ride last year into the state team tennis tournament proved too tough to repeat this season.

While they coasted past two lesser foes to get to state in 2012, on Saturday their path was much rougher.

They did topple rival Cedar Rapids Washington, 5-2, in the morning on their home courts.

But in the afternoon at Kennedy, the Lions were manhandled by powerful Cedar Falls, 5-1.

"We knew we would have to play our absolute best tennis to beat them," Linn-Mar Coach Chris Wundram said afterward. "Cedar Falls has six or seven really high caliber players. They are really, really good."

So good, in fact, that Wundram rates them only behind undefeated defending 2A state champion Iowa City West.

"We had a chance against them," he said. "But, truthfully, it would have been very difficult to do."

The only Lion to win was No.1 singles player Brady Anderson, who also defeated Washington ace Mitch Blades in the morning round.

Against Cedar Falls' best, senior transfer James McManus, Anderson fell behind 5-2 but rallied back to take the first set 7-5.

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The Linn-Mar junior, who qualified for next week's state singles championship, trailed 4-3 in the second set but again recouped for a 6-4 victory.

"I just tried to play consistent and move the ball around," Anderson said. "We had a lot of points, but I kept grinding it out."

Wundram was pleased with his play.

"Brady is one of the best in the state, as I think he's going to prove next week," his coach said. "He plays at an even keel all the time."

Linn-Mar's No.2 singles player, Tim Paulson, lost a rough-and-tumble match to the Tigers' Roy Ju, 7-5, 6-4.

The match ended when the Lions' John Kuster took No.4 opponent Andy Wong to the third set but lost, 6-2. The two split their other games by 6-3 scores.

"As a senior, I wanted to get back to state," said Kuster, who will team with sophomore Trevor McCann in state doubles competition. "I left everything I had on the court."

Like the other Lion players, Kuster had spent almost three hours on the court in the morning. The Cedar Falls crew, meanwhile, took barely an hour to dispatch of Clinton 5-0. The Tigers dropped only seven games total in all five games.

Neither Kuster nor his teammates nor their coach, however, blamed fatigue for the loss.

"I wish I could say that was the excuse," Kuster said. "But I can't."

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He and McCann pulled out the decisive game against Washington when they skunked the Warriors' Ian Schweiger and Reid Rossberger 6-0 following a tight 7-5 first set squeaker.

Linn-Mar held a 4-2 edge going into doubles with singles victories by Anderson, Paulson, McCann and Ben Myers.

"We saw what was happening on the other courts, with close games," Kuster said. "So we thought it was up to us to finish it out."

Anderson continued his mastery over Blades, also a state singles qualifier, by beating him for the second time this season. The Warrior senior started out like a house afire, taking a 5-1 lead on the way to a 6-2 first set romp.

Anderson played with patience, though, returning most everything the powerful Blades threw at him and waiting for him to make an unforced error. Steady play won the day. Anderson took the next two sets by 6-3 margins.

"Mitch is always going to go for the big shots, the winners," Anderson said. "I was just playing defensively, trying to keep the ball deep and getting it to his backhand if I could."

"I wanted to keep the ball in play and not let him take control. And, thankfully, he started missing his shots."

Far too many of them, in fact, from Blades' perspective.

"The first set," he said, "went really well. Then I started giving away easy points."

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LINN-MAR 5, WASHINGTON 2

Singles

1. Brady Anderson (LM) def. Mitch Blades, 2-6, 6-3, 6-3
2. Tim Paulson (LM) def. Jackson Hoyt, 6-4, 3-6, 6-2
3. Trevor McCann (LM) def. Ian Schweiger, 6-1, 6-1
4. Reid Rossberger (W) def. John Kuster, 6-0, 6-3
5. Oliver Hammond (W) def. Sam Skvor, 6-2, 6-3
6. Ben Myers (LM) def. Grant Kamin, 7-5, 6-3

Doubles

McCann/Kuster (LM) def. Schweiger/Rossberger, 7-5, 6-0

CEDAR FALLS 5, LINN-MAR 1

Singles

1. Brady Anderson (LM) def. James McManus, 7-5, 6-4
2. Roy Ju (CF) def. Tim Paulson, 7-5, 6-4
3. Rex Ju (CF) def. Trevor McCann, 6-3, 6-0
4. Andy Mong (CF) def. John Kuster, 3-6, 6-3, 6-2
5. Brennan Ashwood (CF) def. Sam Skvor, 6-0, 6-1
6. Vineel Mallavarapu (CF) def. Ben Myers, 6-3, 6-3