

Young Lions boot Waterloo West, 8-0

Written by Jim Ecker
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The Linn-Mar girls soccer team is young, but these Lions are highly ambitious.

They reached the Class 3A state tournament last year, but lost in the first round. Now they want more. Much more.

The goal is simple.

"To get to the state championship game and win it, for sure," sophomore Jensen Sevensing remarked Wednesday night.

The fifth-ranked Lions belted Waterloo West, 8-0, in the regional semifinals Wednesday and will host Jefferson or Cedar Falls in the regional finals Monday night.

Monday's winner will advance to the state tournament in Des Moines.

"I think this year we can possibly go all the way if we step it up," said sophomore Olivia Garcia. "Yeah, we want it all. We want it."

Sevensing scored three goals and had an assist as Linn-Mar raised its record to 14-3. Garcia contributed two goals and three assists.

Freshman Claire Larson had two goals and an assist. Junior Brooke Roberts collected a goal and two assists. Sophomore Emily Menges had an assist.

All of the goals and assists were produced by underclassmen, which is not unusual for Linn-Mar. Freshmen and sophomores have scored 48 of their 61 goals this season for 79

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percent of the production.

The Lions have been highly successful despite their youth, climbing as high as No.2 in the rankings before slipping to No.5.

"I'm actually surprised," Garcia said. "I remember last year, everyone thought we weren't going to do really well and make it to state, but there we were at state."

It could happen again, but this time it wouldn't be a big surprise.

There are only three seniors on the 20-girl roster along with five freshmen, six sophomores and six juniors. Seniors Molly Brandt, Emily Soyer and Brenna Duffy usually do not start, but Sevensing said they play an important role on the team.

"The upperclassmen that we do have are really supportive and always talking to us and giving us hints and tips and just helping us out," said Sevensing.

The regional semifinal between Jefferson and Cedar Falls was postponed Wednesday and rescheduled for Thursday night. Linn-Mar will host the winner, knowing it beat the J-Hawks and Tigers by identical 2-0 scores this season.

The Lions have allowed only eight goals in 17 games and have posted 13 shutouts with star goalkeeper Rylie Frese.

"The defense just doesn't want to allow shots," said Coach Steve Dickinson, who is proud of his young team's accomplishments.

"They all play club (soccer), and therefore they're all used to playing a good, tight game," he

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said. "My job is more to organize them and let them do what they've learned to do.

"The girls want to go to the championship game," said Dickinson. "That's their goal, so that's what we're trying to work to."

Linn-Mar belted Waterloo West, 10-0, during the regular season and scored three goals in the first 7 minutes, 2 seconds of the game Wednesday to take control early. The Lions missed several chances to pad their lead in the first half and had to settle for the 3-0 edge at halftime, but they scored twice in the first 75 seconds of the second half to make it 5-0.

Linn-Mar's final goal came with just 3.5 seconds left in the match on a goal by Garcia.

Waterloo West (1-16) rarely got the ball past mid-field, making it a quiet night in goal for Frese.

Waterloo West was outscored, 133-10, this season and suffered 14 shutouts in 17 outings.

Wednesday's game was delayed 75 minutes at the start due to lightning.