

Garcia's hat trick sends Lions to state

Written by Steve Gravelle
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"Wasn't that an exciting game?" Steve Dickinson, head coach of Linn-Mar's girls' soccer team, asked as his team celebrated on the field Monday night, players taking turns posing with the banner marking their advance to this week's Class 3A state tournament.

The Lions' 5-2 win over Cedar Falls was exciting entertainment, and for much of the match closer than the final result. Linn-Mar didn't lead until early in the second half, but sophomore Olivia Garcia's hat trick proved the difference.

"When it's an important game, I feel like my intensity picks up," Garcia said. "We wanted this really bad, but we were really confident going into this game."

The first half saw the teams trade goals, Cedar Falls' Mariam Bartlett opening the scoring in the eighth minute. Garcia answered five minutes later, taking the ball nearly the length of the field and placing it neatly past Tigers keeper Sophie Perez.

Cedar Falls' Carley Cross scored with 7:16 left, converting a rebound off Linn-Mar keeper Rylie Frese's block of a shot.

It was Garcia again at 6:41, with an assist from Brooke Roberts.

The second half's scoring was all Linn-Mar's: Jensen Sevensen at 28:48, Kayla Kvach at 13:51, and Garcia again at 4:41 past Perez, who was drawn well out of her goal.

"I noticed she was staying up more, but she's a good keeper," Garcia said.

"Jensen worked very hard," said Dickinson. "She carried the ball probably 40 yards with people on top of her, and finished."

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Linn-Mar, No. 5 in the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union's season-ending poll, defeated unranked Cedar Falls 2-0 earlier in the season.

"They definitely gave us some trouble in the corners, so we need to work on that," said Sevensing.

Linn-Mar, 15-3-0, opens state play Thursday against Waukee at 5:45 p.m. Cedar Falls ends its season at 12-6-0.

"We played a very tough schedule," said Dickinson. "(Now) we work for two days and go down (to Des Moines) and enjoy ourselves."

"We'll keep it going," said Garcia.