

Unselfish Lions make substate finals

Written by Tom Fruehling

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The mantra heard over and over in practice the past week obviously got into the heads of the Linn-Mar boys basketball players.

"Ball movement, ball movement, ball movement," explained Lions sharpshooter Jared Printy. "That's what the coaches preached, and that was the game plan. Move the ball and find the open guy."

They performed it to perfection Friday night on their home court in a 79-63 Class 4A substate semifinal win over Waterloo East.

Riding an eight-game winning streak, the 10th-ranked Lions (17-5) will face No. 7 Cedar Falls (18-4) at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday at the U.S. Cellular Center in the Substate 3 final.

By flipping the ball in and out and from side to side, the Lions were like pinball wizards.

In the opening four minutes alone, their passing magic resulted in four wide-open 3-pointers and a 12-2 lead that immediately set the Trojans back on their heels. Shooting from one corner and then the other, Jordan Bohannon popped one in, Riley Murphy hit two in a row and Printy followed suit.

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“That was the idea, to find the shooters,” said emerging superstar Beau Klostermann. “And we’ve got a lot of shooters.”

With 24 of their first-half points coming from eight 3-pointers, the Lions were able to withstand a second-quarter surge by Waterloo East and still maintain a 36-29 lead at intermission.

After being down 29-8 at one point, the Trojans (12-12) put on a 21-7 run and closed the half with eight straight points.

“They’re a tough, resilient team,” Printy pointed out. “We figured they’d punch back. But we were able to hold them off.”

When the senior transfer from Washington drilled his fifth 3-pointer early in the third quarter, it put the Lions up by 10 and East seemed to run out steam.

Thanks to some long-range bombs by 5-foot-8 guard Averee Clark (whose 15 points all came from behind the arc) and the inside muscle of 6-foot-6 Isaiah Wade, Waterloo did close the gap to as few as eight points. But after Wade stole a pass and proceeded to slam a sure dunk high off the rim at the 2:00 minute mark in the game, it was all but over.

“He’s a load,” Linn-Mar coach Chris Robertson said of the behemoth Trojan center who scored 14 of his team-high 18 points in the second half. “But I thought we doubled him pretty well.”

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After a difficult battle, the Lions made it to the substate finals. The contest with six teams, including the Lions, was held at the University of Northern Iowa. The Lions, who were the only team from the state to make it to the finals, were defeated by the team from Washington State. The Lions' coach, Tom Fruehling, said that his team played well, but they were out of sync in the second half. He said that his team will be back next year and will be ready to compete for the state championship.