

Ollinger, Finley lead Lions by J-Hawks

Written by Tom Fruehling

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When their team needed them most, Linn-Mar's two stars came out bright Friday night.

First, senior Amanda Ollinger single-handedly wiped out a fast start by the energized visitors from Cedar Rapids Jefferson.

Then, as the scrappy J-Hawks made a fourth-quarter rally to pull within three points, steady sophomore Kamryn Finley swished seven free throws down the stretch to preserve a 55-44 Lion victory.

"I started out kind of slow," said Finley, who made just one basket in the first half and another in the third quarter. "My shot wasn't falling.

"When I started driving to the hoop and getting to the line for free throws, that sort of got my confidence back."

For her part, Ollinger scored 18 of her team's 20 first-quarter points (including the first dozen in a row) to assume a lead after a make-shift starting line-up on senior night spotted the J-Hawks to a 12-0 opening spurt.

"She had a fantastic first quarter," Linn-Mar coach Jaime Brandt said. "It was special to start those five seniors. But Amanda really took over when she came in and gave us a spark when we needed it."

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Ollinger made just one basket and three free throws the rest of the way but made her presence felt with 23 points, 12 rebounds and six steals.

"She brought a lot of energy when she came in off the bench," Jefferson coach Jason Edwards said. "Most of her points came off rebounds.

"But I thought we did a good job once we started to put a body on her on make it tougher."

Despite the 20-5 run the Lions reeled off to get back in the game, Jefferson ended the half with an 8-0 streak of its own to knot things at 29-all at intermission.

Senior Erin Kuba ignited the Jefferson comeback with a long 3-pointer followed immediately by a steal and a layup. As a sub, she had 10 points and led her team with six rebounds.

"Erin played a great game," Edwards said. "And I thought all of the girls played hard and played together."

Junior Kennedy "Big Cat" Dighton led the J-Hawks with 15 points, but had only two points in the second half.

Ollinger with 23 and Finley with 15 were the only Lions in double figures.

"I thought our defense was great tonight," Brandt said. "And we played really hard and really smart.

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“In the past, we’ve sometimes struggled mentally. But tonight we didn’t get rattled. We were a lot more focused and just pushing forward.”

For the night, Jefferson (8-9, 6-4) shot 38 percent from the field (18 for 47) and made both of its free throws. The J-Hawks committed 15 fouls and made 12 turnovers.

The Class 5A 10th ranked Lions (13-4, 8-2) shot 37 percent (17 for 46) and made 16 of 22 free throws. They had just nine fouls and seven turnovers.

Linn-Mar led in rebounds, 26-22.

JEFFERSON (44): Kitterman 1 0-0 2, Guy 1 0-0 2, Wise 0 0-0 0, Dighton 6 0-0 15, Emily Oler 3 2-2 6, Donner 2 0-0 4, Melton 0 0-0 0, Kuba 4 0-0 10, Erica Oler 1 0-0 3. Totals 18 2-2 44.

LINN-MAR (55): Larson 0 0-0 0, Lorenz 0 0-0 0, Noggle 0 0-0 0, Glanz 0 0-0 0, Fensterman 0 0-0 0, Johnson 1 0-0 3, Akers 1 0-0 2, Frese 3 0-1 6, Lancial 0 3-4 3, Murphy 1 0-0 3, Spies 0 0-0 0, Finley 3 7-10 15, Ollinger 8 6-7 23. Totals 17 16-22 55.

Halftime – Jefferson 29, Linn-Mar 29. 3-point goals –Jefferson 6 (Dighton 3, Kuba 2, Erica Oler 1), Linn-Mar 5 (Finley 2, Ollinger 1, Johnson 1, Murphy 1).