

Rizor's injury looms large for Lions

Written by Jake Koolbeck

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Linn-Mar comes in to the 2012 season after finishing 17-25 in 2011 and ending its season with a one-sided loss in a regional semifinal to Muscatine. Like many Metro teams, the Lions will be moving up to newly formed Class 5A.

Linn-Mar returns a majority of its team from last year, including the entire pitching staff and its top three hitters.

Sophomore twins Maggie and Ellie Rizor led the team last year, but Ellie will miss all but the first couple of weeks due to an upcoming surgery for a torn labrum in her shoulder. With Ellie sidelined look for juniors Kelsey Duggan and Kortlan Ollinger to pick up the slack.

Key Losses:

The Linn-Mar losses are very few, but the most devastating is from Ellie Rizor's injury and not from graduation.

"It is a huge loss," Coach Jon Harms said. Rizor's absence takes 8 home runs, 24 RBIs, 46 hits and 33 runs out of a lineup in need of all the production it can get.

Linn-Mar also lost experienced players Lindsey Harms and Leandra Martins. The pair combined for 55 hits, 33 runs, and 29 RBIs.

Key Returning Players:

Linn-Mar brings back the majority of its team. The pitching staff should benefit greatly from another year's experience as Senior Dionna Jensen (4-12, 5.50 ERA) will look to lead a youthful group in the circle. The Lions had three eighth grade pitchers last season, headlined by Alexis Kelsey (5-3, 3.16). Kelsey missed the early part of the 2011 season and a full season from her

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should boost the Lion pitching.

Maggie Rizor (.357, 35 RBIs, 40 hits, 4 HR) leads a group of solid hitters returning to the Linn-Mar line up. Duggan (.357), Ollinger (.347), Kelsey (.339, 4 HR, 15 RBI) and Jensen (.342) bring back experience and hits to what should be an improving offensive attack.

Outlook:

Linn-Mar is young but experienced. "We have experience. The girls know what varsity is about," Harms said.

The Lions' bats should continue to improve, but the loss of Ellie Rizor will hurt this group. Rizor leaves a gap in the offense that will need to be filled. There is enough talent. The question is if everyone can step up and do it.

The Lions' pitching had its struggles last year but should be the best it has been since DI pitcher Jaye Hutchinson graduated in 2008. With all four pitchers returning plus a pair of eighth graders, Maddy Rine and Hanson, joining them there are arms aplenty for Coach Harms. "We have to be consistent," Harms said on his pitching staff.

"At this point we are way ahead of where we had been last year," Harms said.

Linn-Mar should be at least a 500 team, but a trip to Fort Dodge doesn't seem likely. Harms said we should find out about his team early in the season.

"The girls are very excited," Harms said. "We have been good in the second half of the last few seasons. We need to get off to a better start. It is our every intention to be better."

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