

Thanks to some lockdown defense, Clear Lake is headed to the Class 3A semifinals for the second straight year.

The second-ranked Lions held Waukon to three field goals and 12 points over the final three quarters en route to a 45-24 victory that concluded the first day of the 2021 tournament.

Clear Lake also struggled at times offensively, but came up with a couple of big runs to produce the breathing room it needed.

Kaitlyn VanderPloeg led the Lions with 12 points and six rebounds, while Darby Dodd added 11 points and six rebounds off the bench. Jaden Ainley had a solid line with eight points, seven rebounds, three steals and two assists.

Clear Lake won for the 11th straight time and will take a 19-1 record into the a semifinal game at 4 p.m. Thursday. The Lions, in the tournament for the fifth time in seven years, lost to Bishop Heelan in last year's semifinals.

Waukon had a couple of one-point leads in the first half before Clear Lake put together a 9-0 run spanning halftime to open a 25-17 lead. The Lions then left Waukon several opportunities to get back in it, but the Indians couldn't manage the offense they needed to make a run, missing eight of their nine shots in the third quarter and misfiring on four of their five free throws.

They did get the lead down to 25-20, but that's as close as it would get. Clear Lake scored the final seven points of the quarter to stretch the lead to 32-20, then scored nine of the first 10 points in the fourth quarter to put it out of reach at 41-21.

Margaret Wacker's 10 points led Waukon, which lost for just the second time in the last 16 games and finishes 19-5.

Clear Lake held Waukon to 27 percent shooting and outrebounded the Indians 35-21. The Lions collected 13 offensive rebounds, which led to 13 second-chance points.