

KCC women upset No.2 Illinois Central

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Kirkwood women's basketball team is nowhere to be found in the national rankings right now, but that's going to change.

The Eagles bumped off No.2 Illinois Central, 70-59, Saturday afternoon for their third victory over a top-10 team this year.

Kirkwood also has tamed No.6 Kishwaukee College and No.9 Owens Community College during its hot 6-0 start. "We can't ask for anything more," Coach Kim Muhl acknowledged.

Danielle Woolfolk, a 5-foot-3 point guard from Chicago, led the Eagles with 21 points, 5 rebounds, 4 assists and only one turnover in 32 minutes.

Mikayla Fallon, the only returning player from last year's club, hit a big 3-pointer when Illinois Central (4-2) was mounting a comeback in the second half and finished with 13 points.

Fallon said she's not surprised the young Eagles have gotten off to a good start, despite the tough schedule and new roster.

"Coach is a good coach and he knows what he's doing," she said. "He recruited some of the best girls. Yeah, I could anticipate it (a 6-0 record), but we also know it's going to be a

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struggle."

Illinois Central jumped to a quick 15-3 lead as Gabrielle Williams, a strong freshman center, scored 10 points in the opening minutes. But the Eagles adjusted their defense and got back in the game with a 21-2 run for a 24-17 advantage.

"We didn't start out like we wanted to play, but they responded to a little yelling, which is good," Muhl said. "Illinois Central came out with a lot of intensity, and we did not match it early. They were really pounding on us.

"What we tell our kids is, it's a 40-minute game. It was a good win for us."

Kirkwood had five subs on the floor during part of its comeback, a testament to the club's depth as Muhl employed 12 players. Zoe Kelso, a 5-foot-11 freshman from Rock Island, Ill., made a hustle play to help ignite the rally.

Illinois Central chopped a 58-43 deficit to 62-55 in the latter stages of the game, but Fallon nailed a big 3-pointer with just four seconds left on the shot clock to give the Eagles a 65-55 lead with 1:20 remaining.

Earlier in the game, Muhl had snapped at Fallon for not taking an open 3-pointer.

"We want her to shoot the basketball," Muhl said. "She's a good shooter. I don't know why you work at it, if you're not going to shoot. You worked all summer to become a pretty good shooter, now you don't shoot."

Fallon, a 5-foot-9 guard from East Moline, Ill., made three 3-pointers Saturday. "It's a mental thing, I guess," she said. "Coach chewed on me and I turned around and hit a big one."

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Ariel Sneed scored 10 points for Kirkwood. Cassidy Clark finished with seven points, six rebounds and three blocked shots. Kelso, Taylor Silva and Tyra Polite all scored five points off the bench. Hanna Haynes also helped the bench brigade with four points.

"Our depth is really important," Fallon noted.

Chanta Wright led Illinois Central with 20 points. Williams finished with 13 points after netting 10 in the early stages of the contest.

Kirkwood made 26 of 32 free throws (81.3 percent) and outscored the Cougars at the foul line, 26-10, in the 11-point victory.

ILLINOIS CENTRAL (59): Masters 1 0-0 3, Williams 6 1-2 13, Wright 9 1-5 20, Watkins 2 1-2 6, Jones 1 1-2 3, Davis 0 0-0 0, Gebke 0 4-4 4, Robinson 0 1-2 1, Kumer 0 0-1 0, Rodriguez 3 0-0 6, Harris 1 1-2 3, Stubblefield 0 0-0 0, Besso 0 0-0 0. Totals 23 10-20 59.

KIRKWOOD (70): Sneed 3 3-3 10, Woolfolk 6 7-8 21, Tuttle 0 0-0 0, Fallon 4 2-2 13, Clark 1 5-6 7, Silva 1 3-3 5, Polite 2 1-2 5, Larson 0 0-0 0, Haynes 1 2-3 4, Martensen 0 0-1 0, Bockholt 0 0-0 0, Kelso 1 3-4 5. Totals 19 26-32 70.

Halftime - Kirkwood 33, Illinois Central 26. 3-point goals - Illinois Central 3 (Masters 1, Wright 1, Watkins 1), Kirkwood 6 (Fallon 3, Woolfolk 2, Sneed 1). Fouled out - Gebke, Stubblefield.