

Fuller, Lawton pace No.11 Eagles by SCC

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 07 December 2013 20:46 - Last Updated Sunday, 08 December 2013 17:21



Kirkwood sophomore J.C. Fuller calls it simply "just a 360," but there was nothing simple about his crowd-pleasing dunk Saturday afternoon when he spun 360 degrees in mid-air and slammed the ball through the basket.

It was simply outstanding and put an exclamation point on a big victory as the 11th-ranked Eagles stung Southeastern Community College, 79-68, at Johnson Hall.

Fuller's slam came with 2:15 left in the nip-and-tuck affair and gave Kirkwood (8-3) some room to breathe at 75-63.

Ajay Lawton came up with a loose ball and fed Fuller ahead of the pack for the jam that had everyone standing on their feet.

"It was just a great defensive stop and a great pass ahead," said Fuller. "I looked back and saw I was open. I do it every day in practice, so I just did it in a game.

"I'm glad I made it and glad we got the win."

If Fuller had missed the jazzy play, he probably could have packed his bags and started walking home to Sioux City in the cold. "It's a good thing he made it," agreed Kirkwood Coach

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Bryan Petersen, weighing the risks and rewards.

The victory have the Jekyll-&-Hyde Eagles a perfect 6-0 record at home and a perfectly awful 0-3 record on the road. They've been two different clubs this season, depending on where they've played the ballgames.

Kirkwood has defeated Southeastern, Lincoln College and John Wood at Johnson Hall by a combined 57 points, but the Eagles have lost to the same three clubs on the road by a combined margin of 35 points.

"It's early in the season," said Fuller. "I think we'll get some quality road wins. We still have a long season ahead of us."



Lawton, a freshman point guard from Westfield, Ind., came off the bench to spark the Eagles with 19 points, four assists and three steals. He made five 3-pointers (out of seven attempts) and delivered in the clutch, including that feed to Fuller for the dunk.

"It's the best game I've had so far," said Lawton, who is averaging 9.9 points and hitting 43.2 percent of his 3-pointers. "I just figured today was the day to come out and play the game of basketball that I've been playing since I was young."

Lawton rushed a 3-pointer for an air-ball with 3 1/2 minutes left and Kirkwood clinging to a 68-61 lead, but he calmly hit a triple from the corner about 30 seconds later to give the Eagles a 71-61 advantage.

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"I just took my time on the next one," he said.

"We needed it and he stuck it," said Petersen. "It was a good play."

Fuller finished with 17 points, Myzeah Batie-Gaddy scored 15 despite a sore foot and Joe Tagarelli contributed 12 points and nine rebounds. Lawton played 28 minutes off the bench and gave the Eagles the lift they needed.

"Ajay off the bench sparked us big-time," said Petersen. "We knew that potential was there. As a freshman he's gone through some ups and downs, but he's handled it well. He's working hard at it."

Kirkwood shot 49.2 percent for the game (32 of 65) and committed only eight turnovers.

"It was a great team win," said Petersen. "We hadn't had a grind-it-out win yet. A lot of our wins have been by wider margins. It's nice to see our team learn how to win a tight game."

Joe Scott led Southeastern (10-4) with 17 points.

The Eagles will host Iowa Central Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. in the second game of a doubleheader. The Kirkwood women face Iowa Central in the opener at 5:30 p.m.

SOUTHEASTERN (68): Jones 2 2-3 6, Scott 4 6-6 17, Stevens 4 3-5 11, Henry 2 2-3 6, Lyon 3 1-1 7, S.Soukop 1 0-0 3, Jackson 0 1-2 1, M.Soukop 0 0-0 0, Doss 1 0-0 2, Kane 0 0-0 0, Mosen 0 0-0 0, Edwards 3 0-0 6, Ross 2 2-2 7, Ransom 1 0-0 2. Totals 23 17-22 68.

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KIRKWOOD (79): Fuller 8 0-0 17, Currie 2 1-3 5, Olson 2 0-0 5, Batie-Gaddy 5 5-5 15, Tagarelli 5 2-4 12, Lawton 7 0-0 19, Lassen 1 0-0 2, Swank 0 0-0 0, Weeks 1 0-0 2, Ward 1 0-0 2, Uwadiae 0 0-0 0. Totals 32 8-12 79.

Halftime - Kirkwood 40, Southeastern 33. 3-point goals - Southeastern 5 (Scott 3, S.Soukop 1, Ross 1), Kirkwood 7 (Lawton 5, Fuller 1, Olson 1).