

No. 14 Eagles soar by Marshalltown

Written by Jim Ecker

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If you loved the way the Kirkwood Eagles played last season on their way to the national title, you had to enjoy what you saw at Johnson Hall Wednesday night.

Kirkwood Coach Bryan Petersen certainly did.

The 14th-ranked Eagles played a terrific first half and rolled by Marshalltown, 100-80, in a non-conference affair.

Kirkwood (12-3) jumped to a quick 14-0 lead in the first four minutes and led 54-31 at halftime with a near-flawless performance. The score was 30-9 midway through the first half.

"Probably the best basketball we've played all year," said Petersen.

The Eagles trimmed Marshalltown on the road, 78-75, in November, but the rematch was a blowout from start to finish.

Kirkwood opened 27-point leads in both halves and Marshalltown (13-6) never got closer than 20 points in the last 25 minutes of the game.

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Marshalltown outscored the Eagles 49-46 in the second half, but most of that came in the latter stages of the game.

"We played really good in the first half, but we kind of let up in the second half," said point guard Chris King, who led Kirkwood with 21 points and six assists. "We could have come out with a bigger win, but it was a good win overall."

The Eagles excelled in all aspects of the game with their passing, shooting, ballhandling and rebounding. They committed only eight turnovers in the fast-paced affair, shot 54.7 percent from the field and won the rebounding battle, 34-25.

Kirkwood had shown flashes of good basketball this season, but the Eagles appeared to recapture the form that catapulted them to the national crown last March.

"That's how I felt too," said Petersen. "That's what I told the group: This is kind of what we envisioned when we put the team together. This is how we wanted to play. So it was really good to see."

Kaliph Fagan scored 19 points in 19 minutes off the bench. Miles Wentzien contributed 13 points, Ethan Meeker had 12, Shakur Triplett notched 11 and Al'Tavius Jackson had 10.

King, a quick 6-foot red-shirt freshman from Des Moines Hoover, began his college career at Northwest Missouri State last season but transferred to Kirkwood at mid-year.

He practiced with the Eagles during the second semester last season, working against All-American point guard Hunter Rhodes and Byron Harp on a daily basis and preparing for this year.

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