

Chris King did not change any diapers for the young Kirkwood Eagles Wednesday night, but he did everything else with an impressive performance at Johnson Hall.

King poured in 31 points as the 14th-ranked Eagles topped John Wood Community College, 79-64.

King, a 6-foot point guard from Des Moines, popped in four 3-pointers, made strong drives to the basket and rescued the Eagles after a 21-point lead had shrunk to five points in the second half.

He scored 10 points during an 11-2 run as Kirkwood raised its advantage to 60-46 and took it home from there.

There are 12 new players at Kirkwood this season and it's been King's job to help Coach Bryan Petersen mold a cohesive unit.

"These guys are coming to work every day, so it's not really that hard to lead them," King remarked.

The Eagles opened a pair of 21-point leads in the first half at 35-14 and 41-20, but John Wood pulled within 49-44 early in the second half and forced Kirkwood to call a pair of timeouts.

That's when King took over the game with 10 points in a little more than four minutes to make it a 14-point bulge again.

"I'm just trying to take what the defense is giving me," he said. "My teammates were setting screens and getting me open."

King also made some pretty passes, grabbed rebounds and buckled down on defense.



"He was really good," said Petersen. "When he's locked in and focused, he's one of the best players in the country.

"He doesn't need to score 30, but just having that same mentality every single day, that was good to see."

King has received an NCAA Division I scholarship offer from Chicago State, which competes in the WAC, and he's also talking to other schools.

For now, he's trying to lead the Eagles by example.

"I'm learning to be a leader, each and every day," he said. "Just being consistent and sticking to the process here, telling these guys that he (Petersen) knows what he's talking about and he knows how to get it done."

Kirkwood got off to a fast start despite battling some foul problems.

"We came out with intensity and helping each other on defense, just trying to get defensive stops," said King. "We knew we'd make our runs on offense."

Petersen saw it the same way.

"I thought we came out with some urgency defensively," the coach said. "It's probably the best start we've had all year.

"I thought our starters did a nice job of setting the tone. That led to some easy buckets early."

Petersen said the Eagles "lost our edge" when John Wood rallied, but King & Co. fixed the problems before it was too late.

Tajen Ross scored 10 points for Kirkwood (4-1). Aziz Fadika led John Wood (2-3) with 16 points.

JOHN WOOD (64): Sailem 1 2-2 4, Schlotzhauer 3 4-4 11, Easter 2 1-1 5, Whiteman 2 0-0 6, Dahl 2 2-2 6, Fadika 5 6-10 16, Cramsey 1 2-3 4, Wolfmeyer 0 0-0 0, Miller 2 0-0 4, Gadeke 0 0-0 0, Oduocha 2 4-9 8. Totals 21 19-29 64.

KIRKWOOD (79): Stansbury 0 3-4 3, Marble 2 1-2 5, Ross 3 2-2 10, King 9 9-10 31, Wilson 3 0-0 6, Kale 3 0-0 7, Small 1 2-2 5, Taylor 0 2-2 2, Johnson 2 1-2 5, Storey 0 0-0 0, Arrington 2

0-0 5. Totals 25 20-24 79.

Halftime - Kirkwood 45, John Wood 31. 3-point goals - John Wood 3 (Whiteman 2, Scholtzhauer 1), Kirkwood 9 (King 4, Ross 2, Kale 1, Small 1, Arrington 1).