

## Tomaszewski boosts No. 7 Eagles

Written by Jim Ecker

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Natalie Tomaszewski looked a little timid and confused at the beginning of the season for the Kirkwood women's basketball team, but she's blossomed into an important player for the Eagles now.

Tomaszewski gave the seventh-ranked Eagles a nice boost off the bench Saturday in an 81-47 victory over Iowa Lakes in an ICCAC Conference game at Johnson Hall.

Tomaszewski collected 12 points, six rebounds, two blocks, two steals and one assist in perhaps her best all-around game of the season.

The 6-foot-3 freshman from Shorewood, Wis., was not in the rotation earlier this season, but she's moved to the forefront following a season-ending injury to starting center Ashley Tull.

"I think in the beginning, I took it like 'Maybe this isn't for me,'" she said. "As I went through the season, I became more positive about the situation."

Tomaszewski has developed into a productive player for Kirkwood, which is locked in a tight battle with second-ranked NIACC for the conference title. She's scored 13, 12 and 12 points in three of the last six games and is more assertive on the floor.

"As Coach says, effort really shows," she remarked. "I think I've picked my effort up extremely well, and it shows on and off the court."

"My energy has picked up. I think I've developed into a better player, mentally and physically."

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Kirkwood needed a boost in the first half when its other post players - Mackenzie Jenkins, Paige Bradford and Leah Robinson - all picked up two fouls in the first quarter. Tomaszewski responded by scoring 11 points in 12 minutes to help the Eagles pull away to a 46-25 lead at halftime.

"Natalie came in and did a nice job for us," said Coach Kim Muhl. "She's a skilled big kid. She has a knack to score the ball.

"She's gotten a little stronger, which has helped her," he said. "I think she knows she's going to play some now. She's had good practices, too."

Tomaszewski shot 5 for 7 from the field and canned a 3-pointer with a soft touch from the field. "I've always had that," she said. "I was always a shooter in high school."

Tomaszewski said she tried to be a good teammate on the bench earlier in the season. "And if I got a chance to play, I'm going to go in there and try my hardest."

The Eagles lost a good player when Tull suffered a knee injury, but now they've found another one with Tomaszewski. "I knew I had to step it up and become a good player," she said.

The victory on Sophomore Day raised Kirkwood's records to 22-6 overall and 12-1 in the conference, good for a half-game lead over NIACC in the league standings. NIACC (11-1) did not play Saturday.

The Eagles got a huge boost from their reserves all day, with the bench players outscoring the Kirkwood starters 48-33 and outscoring Iowa Lakes 48-47.

Amara Lipsey and Brianna Mensen scored 10 points apiece for Kirkwood. Johanna Myers hit three 3-pointers and scored nine points. Ju Gaston also had nine points and Robinson netted eight.

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Breanna Wendland scored 16 points for Iowa Lakes (20-7, 8-5).

**IOWA LAKES (47):** Wendland 3 9-10 16, Smith 1 3-4 6, Hagedorn 2 3-4 8, Rehse 1 0-0 3, Coleman 0 3-4 3, Hayden 0 2-2 2, Reynolds 1 1-2 3, Pacheco 1 0-0 3, O'Donnell 1 1-4 3. Totals 10 22-30 47.

**KIRKWOOD (81):** Bradford 2 0-0 4, Jenkins 3 0-0 6, Lipsey 4 0-0 10, Hurst 3 0-2 6, Mullinnix 2 1-2 7, Gaston 3 1-3 9, Kennedy 0 0-0 0, Myers 3 0-0 9, Tomaszewski 5 1-2 12, Robinson 3 2-2 8, Mensen 5 0-0 10. Totals 33 5-11 81.

Halftime - Kirkwood 46, Iowa Lakes 25. 3-point goals - Iowa Lakes 5 (Wendland 1, Smith 1, Hagedorn 1, Rehse 1, Pacheco 1), Kirkwood 10 (Myers 3, Lipsey 2, Mullinnix 2, Gaston 2, Tomaszewski 1).