

Luke Appel has spent too much time on the disabled list this season for the Kirkwood Eagles.

First he rolled his ankle and missed two games early in the year, then he suffered a freak injury in the weight room a few weeks ago and missed three more outings.

Appel returned Wednesday night and scored 20 points as the 16th-ranked Eagles topped Marshalltown, 89-73, in a non-conference game at Johnson Hall.

Appel stopped by the trainer's room after the contest for them to examine the tip of his ring finger on his left hand, which is his shooting hand. He's lucky the entire finger is still there.

"I dropped a weight and broke my finger in the weight room," he explained. "It cracked my finger straight in half. You could see the bone.

"I almost amputated my finger," he said.

When he dropped the 45-pound plate, his finger got caught underneath. It's still bent out of shape and discolored, but he felt good enough to play.

First the ankle, then the finger.

"It was kind of one thing after another," he said. "I just have to stay healthy now."

Appel, a 6-foot-8 sophomore from Marshalltown, averaged 9.7 points last season and helped Kirkwood win the NJCAA Division II national title. He's averaging 16 points this year, even though he's missed five of the first 10 games.

"Luke gives us so much with his leadership and his IQ," said new Kirkwood Coach Tim Sandquist. "He really stretches the floor. I thought Luke played really, really well tonight for not having played in about two weeks."

The Eagles (7-3) defeated Marshalltown (4-9) for the second time this season, but it wasn't easy. Marshalltown pulled within 61-55 in the second half, but Griff Clark hit three straight 3-pointers to make it 67-59, 70-59 and 73-59 and lift the Eagles out of danger.

"I don't know if we were on our 'A' game tonight in some respects, but we found ways to win," said Sandquist. "We found ways to get shots, we found ways to score.



"It wasn't an easy game, by any means, but I'm proud of our team for staying together."

Devonte Thedford finished with 15 points, nine assists and five rebounds. Gacoby Jones contributed 14 points. Clark finished with 12 markers with four triples. Appel grabbed seven

rebounds.

Kirkwood played shorthanded again with DJ Purnell, Connor Kasperbauer, Jamal Stephenson and Brady Sartorius all nursing injuries. Kasperbauer has not played this season after helping the Eagles win the national title last year, but Sandquist said all four players are close to getting on the court again.

"It's always the next man up," said Sandquist. "Our depth is really good. When a guy is called on to play more minutes, he can do that successfully and it impacts our team in a way that allows us to win basketball games."

Appel likes the way the Eagles are putting the pieces together.

"I think we're going to be good again, once everybody gets healthy," he said. "The chemistry is coming together, just like it did last year. As long as we get close and trust each other, I think we can make another run at it."

Jaylin Scott scored 28 points for Marshalltown with seven 3-pointers.

MARSHALLTOWN (73): Caleb Jacobs 4-13 3-4 11, Jaylin Scott 10-16 1-3 28, Eric Amandio 5-12 2-4 13, Jacob Smith 0-0 0-0 0, Sunday Arou 2-2 1-4 5, Myles Broadie 0-0 0-0 0, Quavon Blackwood 0-0 0-0 0, Derrick Paige 3-5 0-0 6, Odessey Keeling 3-9 1-1 8, Craig Philip 1-2 0-0 2. Totals 28-59 8-16 73.

KIRKWOOD (89): Seybian Sims 3-3 2-3 8, Devonte Thedford 7-13 1-2 15, Luke Appel 6-12 6-8 20, Gacoby Jones 5-10 2-2 14, Griffen Clark 4-9 0-0 12, Chris Burnell 3-10 0-0 8, Jalen Taylor 2-3 0-0 6, Owen Coburn 1-1 0-0 2, Niko Gosnell 2-2 0-1 4. Totals 33-63 11-16 89.

Halftime - Kirkwood 44, Marshalltown 35. 3-point goals - Marshalltown 9-17 (Scott 7-11, Amandio 1-2, Keeling 1-2, Jacobs 0-1, Paige 0-1), Kirkwood 12-31 (Clark 4-9, Taylor 2-3,

Appel 2-5, Burnell 2-5, Jones 2-6, Thedford 0-3).