

Taylor Olson finds new home at Kirkwood

Written by Jim Ecker

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Taylor Olson thought about living at home this year while he played basketball at Kirkwood Community College, but then he had second thoughts.

"I was going to live at home, but everybody else was on campus so I decided to be with the team," he said Friday night.

It looks like he's quickly found a new home with the Eagles.

Olson started at point guard for Kirkwood in its scrimmage against Coe College at Johnson Hall Friday and looked especially sharp with his passing and ballhandling.

Olson averaged 18.4 points last season as a senior at Cedar Rapids Jefferson and made second team all-state, but he's never considered himself a big scorer.

"My senior year I had to take on more of a scoring role," he said. "I've always been able to see the court. I like passing. I'd rather get an assist than score.

"So here at the college level, I feel like that's what the point guard should do, especially with the guys we have. We have finishers."

Olson sprained his ankle and suffered torn ligaments shortly before school began in August and got a late start with the team, but he looked good against the Kohawks with a series of crisp passes that led to easy buckets.

On several of his assists, he looked one way to fool the defense and fired the ball in another direction for layups.

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"He was terrific tonight," Kirkwood Coach Doug Wagemester said. "That was the best he's played. He showed another gear.

"I think he's going to be a key, especially as young as we are in the backcourt. He adds some maturity at the point spot. There's a presence about him.

"He's a quiet soldier," Wagemester said. "He's a quiet take-care-of-his business guy. We're excited for him. He's doing the right things."

Wagemester has told Olson to run the ballclub and not worry about his scoring.

"That's why he recruited me, to run the team," Olson said. "And I'm trying to do that the best I can."

Olson helped Jefferson make three straight trips to the Class 4A state tournament in 2010, 2011 and 2012. Jarrod Uthoff was the star in 2010 and 2011, but Olson became the go-to guy for the J-Hawks last season after Uthoff graduated.

Olson tried to lure Uthoff to Kirkwood after Uthoff decided to leave Wisconsin after one year, but Uthoff had other ideas and enrolled at Iowa.

"I was talking to him," Olson said. "He didn't really want to go the juco route. I'm happy for him at Iowa. I think he'll do well there."

Kirkwood started five Iowa high school products Friday night with Olson (Jefferson), J.C. Fuller (Sioux City East), Matt Tiby (Urbandale), Gage Heffernan (Dubuque Hempstead) and Devan Douglas (Clinton). Kasey Semler, a Marion High School graduate, was the first man off the bench.

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Fuller played on the same team with 7-foot center Adam Woodbury at Sioux City East last season. Fuller led East in scoring at 17.5 points. Woodbury, now a freshman at Iowa, averaged 17.0 points on that club.

Kirkwood finished with a 27-5 record last season and appears to have the ingredients for another strong club. The Eagles have 15 players on their roster and all 15 can play the game.

Olson likes being surrounded by this much talent.

"I'm liking it a lot," he said. "I like being able to feed guys and they can finish. It's a lot different than high school.

"The passes are different," he explained. "You can throw it up and people are going to get it. It's fun. I'm excited about the team."

Kirkwood will open the season next Friday against the William Penn JV at the Indian Hills Classic in Ottumwa.