

Sampson helps No. 8 DMACC trim No. 7 Eagles

Written by Jim Ecker

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Trey Sampson planned to play football at Wayne State University after he graduated from Xavier High School two years ago, but he changed his mind that summer and decided he wanted to play college basketball instead.

He picked Des Moines Area Community College over Kirkwood and Wednesday night he returned to Cedar Rapids and helped the DMACC Bears trim Kirkwood in a premier junior college basketball game at Johnson Hall.

Sampson made two pressure free throws with six seconds left in overtime to help the eighth-ranked Bears edge the seventh-ranked Eagles, 88-87, in a showdown for the ICCAC conference lead.

Sampson's two free throws gave DMACC an 88-84 lead, giving his team the space it needed to survive a 3-pointer by Kirkwood's Jordan Ashton at the buzzer.

Sampson finished with 20 points, none bigger than the two points he scored at the end.

"It was crazy, especially being here," he said. "My teammates have faith in me, we shoot them every day in practice. They just said, 'Knock them down,' so I tried to do my best."

Xaiver Coach Ryan Luehrsmann called several junior colleges after Sampson decided he wanted to play basketball instead of football.

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"I actually visited Kirkwood, and then 30 minutes after my workout I went and visited DMACC," he said. "I found my fit at DMACC."

The victory lifted DMACC to 18-4 overall and 4-1 in the league, good for first place all alone. Kirkwood fell to 16-5 and 3-2, one game off the pace in the conference.

"This is huge," said Sampson, who made four 3-pointers. "Kirkwood is one of our biggest rivals. The coaches have been stressing that all week. That was awesome."

Kirkwood led 60-51 midway through the second half, but the Eagles could not hold on.

"It's disappointing," said KCC Coach Bryan Petersen. "We had a nine-point lead in the second half. But I told the guys, this was a good college basketball game.

"It was two good teams going at it, going back and forth. It was fun to be a part of.

"We just have to find a way to do the little things better, because that's how you win those games," he said. "Against really good teams, you can't make little mistakes. Those type of teams will make you pay."

One of the "little things" that hurt Kirkwood was free throw shooting. The Eagles rank as the top foul shooting team in the country in NJCAA Division II, but they hit only 15 of 23 against DMACC and missed several crucial foul shots at critical times.

Joe Tagarelli played a monster game for Kirkwood with 24 points, 13 rebounds and five assists, but he shot only 8 for 14 at the foul line and was not feeling good about it.

"Free throws," he moaned. "We missed a lot of free throws coming down the stretch in the

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game, myself personally."

DMACC made 16 of 23 free throws - compared to 15 of 23 for Kirkwood - and that extra point made a big difference.

"We fought," said Tagarelli, a rugged 6-foot-5 sophomore. "It was a good battle. It was a classic DMACC-Kirkwood game.

"I love this type of game," he said. "It's a lot more fun than beating a team by 20 or 30. It shows what you're made of."

Ashton poured in 31 points for Kirkwood. Matt Lassen added 14 points for the Eagles.

Jon Fuqua topped DMACC with 22 points. Sampson and Paris Collins scored 20 apiece.

DMACC (88): Fuqua 9 4-4 22, Austin 4 0-2 11, Sampson 5 6-7 20, Collins 7 3-4 20, Hurdle 5 3-6 13, Epps 0 0-0 0, Benson 0 0-0 0, Newsome 0 0-0 0, DeFietas 1 0-0 2.
Totals 31 16-23 88.

KIRKWOOD (87): Singleton 2 0-0 4, Lassen 6 0-1 14, Rhodes 1 0-0 2, Ashton 11 6-6 31, Tagarelli 8 8-14 24, Lawton 2 1-2 7, Weeks 0 0-0 0, Olson 1 0-0 3, Martin 1 0-0 2, Ukah 0 0-0 0. Totals 32 15-23 87.

Halftime - Kirkwood 40, DMACC 37. 3-point goals - DMACC 10 (Sampson 4, Austin 3, Collins 3), Kirkwood 8 (Ashton 3, Lassen 2, Lawton 2, Olson 1).

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