

No. 9 Eagles take care of Ellsworth

Written by Mike Condon

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Bryan Petersen left Johnson Hall Wednesday night pleased, but far from satisfied.

Petersen's Kirkwood basketball team won its third straight game, downing ICCAC foe Ellsworth, 82-61, keeping the No. 9 Eagles (18-3, 4-1) hot on the trail of Southwestern in the conference standings.

The Eagles didn't play their best game in an 85-74 loss to Southwestern on Jan. 16 in Creston. Now they have rebounded with three solid wins.

"Even with the three wins we still have a long way to go," Petersen said. "Tonight, I don't think we played extremely well, but I think our guys have learned (from the Southwestern loss) and have bounced back at the same time. You have to do that in conference play.

"Obviously, we were frustrated by that loss down there at Southwestern," he continued. "We've still got a long way to go and the guys have done a good job of getting things back together."

In Wednesday's win, Kirkwood turned to its defense to stymie the Panthers (10-10, 1-4).

"Our defense was really strong tonight," said sophomore guard Hunter Rhodes. "We knew they

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had that No. 1 (Iowa City West graduate Myzeah Batie-Gaddy) and he's a really good player.

"We thought if we could limit him, we could really hold down the rest of their players," continued Rhodes. "He scored a lot (a game-high 26 points), but he needed a lot of shots to get there."



Batie-Gaddy was pretty much the show for Ellsworth on offense, whereas the Eagles, as they have done throughout the season, relied on depth and balance to take control in the second half.

"Our defense was pretty solid," Petersen said. "Our biggest problem was rebounding because they are a good offensive rebounding team, but overall I was pleased, holding them to 31 percent shooting (19-of-61) was probably one of our better defensive efforts."

Center Da'Rion King was limited to just 15 minutes because of foul trouble, but still managed to lead the team with eight rebounds. With King having to sit, other players stepped up.

"What makes our group special is that we have back-ups who can come in," Petersen said. "Some nights, they might be better than our starters."

"(King) got in a little foul trouble, but I thought Josh Meier came in and gave us some good minutes and I thought Elijah Henry did a good job

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too with the run of time he got in the first half."

No Eagle played more than 28 minutes. Cristen Wilson came off the bench to lead the offense with 19 points in 23 minutes. He also grabbed seven rebounds. Rhodes added 16 points and Josh Bartlett had 11 in just 15 minutes.

"It was great to see so many guys come in and contribute," Rhodes said. "That is going to make us even better as we get closer to the end of the season."

Looming on Feb. 13 is a rematch with Southwestern in a game that could decide the league title and the top seed in the postseason conference tournament.

The Eagles have three league games, two on the road, before the Spartans visit.

"We have a lot of basketball to play between now and then," Petersen said. "All I am really looking ahead to is tomorrow when we practice and have another chance to get a little better.

"But I have no doubt we will be ready to go when we do see Southwestern again."

ELLSWORTH (61): Trey 0 0-0 0, Batie-Gaddy 9 4-4 26, Fuller 2 2-2 7, Johnson 2 0-0 4, Caster 0 0-0 0, Thok 0 0-0 0, Evans 0 5-7 5, Deng 3 1-2 9, Harrington 3 3-6 10, Leavy 0 0-0 0, O'Large 0 0-0 0. Totals: 1 9 15-21 61.

KIRKWOOD (82): Bartlett 4 0-0 11, Rhodes 3 7-9 16, Richards 1 1-4 6, Jackson 3 0-1 6, Harp 1 1-2 4, Fagan 2 2-2 6, Olson 0 2-2 2, Meier 0 2-2 2, Wilson 7 4-5 19, Henry 1 2-2 4, Triplett 0 0-0 0, King 2 2-4 6.

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Totals: 25 23-33 82.

Halftime - Kirkwood 33, Ellsworth 24. 3-point goals - Ellsworth 8 (Batie-Gaddy 4, Deng 2, Fuller, Harrington), Kirkwood 9 (Bartlett 3, Rhodes 3, Richards, Wilson, Harp). Total fouls - Ellsworth 24, Kirkwood 20. Fouled out - Batie-Gaddy. Technical fouls - none.