

Leaner Eagles sail by Clarke JV

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Kirkwood men's basketball team will be a much leaner group for the rest of the season with the loss of five reserves during the holiday break.

The Eagles could be a much meaner group as well, in terms of making a run for a second straight national title.

The 16th-ranked Eagles sailed by the Clarke junior varsity, 129-52, in a tuneup at Johnson Hall Tuesday night in their first game with a trimmer roster.

Coach Bryan Petersen had only 10 players in uniform Tuesday and seven of them scored in double figures. Chris King led the way with 23 points with five 3-pointers.

Derrick Howard, Darius Rice, Darias Oliver, Kameron Moore and Shawn Foxbrennen have left the club since the end of the first semester. Most of them were fairly deep reserves, and the 10 guys who are left are the 10 who will decide Kirkwood's fate this year.

Petersen thinks a leaner roster could be good for the club after trying to hammer a 15-man team into a cohesive unit.

"That was something we were really struggling with the first semester," he said. "We didn't have a lot of defined roles, and now we've got that with our numbers going down a little bit.

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"I think it can be a good thing," he said. "It definitely makes the team a little closer."

Al'Tavius Jackson scored 19 points for Kirkwood (10-3). Ethan Meeker netted 17 points, Da'Rion King 14, Byron Harp 13, Shakur Triplett 12 and Elijah Henry 12.

Miles Wentzien, Kaliph Fagan and Carlo Marble combined for another 19 points for the Eagles in the blowout. Harp collected 10 assists to finish with a double-double.

The Eagles passed the ball well and finished with 29 assists on 51 baskets, consistently making an extra pass to an open shooter.

"We were really focused on that and our offense being more efficient," said Petersen. "A lot of that had to do with our spacing and making the right pass."

"We always talk about great shots, not good ones with one more pass. Guys are buying into that."



Kirkwood has two more non-conference games at Illinois Central this Saturday and then home with Marshalltown next Wednesday. The Eagles will begin the conference campaign at second-ranked Southwestern on Saturday, Jan. 14.

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Petersen led Kirkwood to the national title last year and knows what it takes to make a long run in the postseason tournament. He's not ready to predict similar results this year.

"It's really hard to say right now," he remarked. "I still feel this team has the capability of doing those things. But with this group it's day by day."

CLARKE JV (52): B.Walker 5 2-3 12, Philpot 3 0-0 8, Johnson 4 1-1 10, S.Walker 2 0-2 6, Sutton 1 0-0 2, Hawthorne 1 0-0 2, Douphin 0 0-0 0, Schneider 1 0-0 3, Lange 3 0-0 9. Totals 20 3-6 52.

KIRKWOOD (129): Triplett 5 2-2 12, Harp 5 2-2 13, Wentzien 4 0-0 9, Meeker 7 0-0 17, C.King 8 2-2 23, Jackson 8 1-1 19, Fagan 1 3-5 5, Marble 1 2-2 5, Henry 6 0-0 12, D.King 6 2-2 14. Totals 51 14-16 129.

Halftime - Kirkwood 63, Clarke JV 34. 3-point goals - Clarke JV 9 (Lange 3, Philpot 2, S.Walker 2, Johnson 1, Schneider 1), Kirkwood 13 (C.King 5, Meeker 3, Jackson 2, Harp 1, Wentzien 1, Marble 1).