

Hoover grads click for Kirkwood

Written by Jim Ecker

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The boys basketball program at Des Moines Hoover has been a crucial pipeline for the



Kirkwood Eagles in recent years.

First there was Chris King, an all-conference guard who graduated from Kirkwood last year. There's Doug Wilson, an All-American center for the Eagles last season and the top player this year. And now there's Devonte Thedford, a promising freshman guard.

Thedford made his first start for Kirkwood Saturday and helped the Eagles come zooming out of the gates in an impressive 110-45 victory over Black Hawk College at Johnson Hall.

Thedford scored 10 quick points as the Eagles raced to a 25-6 lead with strong moves to the basket to help set the tone for the 65-point blowout.

King, Wilson and Thedford were teammates at Des Moines Hoover when Thedford was a freshman. They reached the semifinals of the Class 4A state tournament that year and they all ultimately signed with Kirkwood.

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"Yeah, those were my guys," said Thedford, a 6-foot-2 combo guard who loves to attack the basket.

Thedford and Wilson, just a year apart in school, were especially close at Hoover.

"We were cool in high school," said Thedford. "We'd hang out and stuff like that all the time. I'd go over to his house and he'd go over to mine."

Wilson helped steer his buddy to Kirkwood.

"He did help me," said Thedford. "After my visit, he was asking me what I was thinking of doing. I was telling him and we had a decent conversation about where I should go. I think I ended up committing a week later."

Wilson is averaging 20.1 points and 9.3 rebounds this season, but did not have to carry a heavy load Saturday and finished with eight points on 4-for-4 shooting and seven rebounds.

Thedford finished with 15 points, four assists and three rebounds. He shot 6-for-9 from the field and made all three of his free throws.

Kirkwood Coach Bryan Petersen keeps going back to Hoover and keeps finding good players.

"They have a great program over there," he said. "They win a bunch of games every year. Coach (Courtney) Henderson is a great guy. I trust what he says about his players. They've worked out well."

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"It's not rocket science," said Petersen. "Keep going to what works."

Kirkwood scored the first 11 points of the ballgame and owned a 17-2 lead after five minutes with a full-scale blitz. Black Hawk Coach Darren Bizarri called two timeouts in the first four minutes, but the visitors were helpless to stem the tide.

Connor Kasperbauer scored nine points for Kirkwood in the 25-6 getaway in the first half and finished with 12 points for the game. The Eagles led 53-17 at halftime and never took their feet off the gas, scoring another 57 points in the second half.

Allante Pickens scorched the nets with six 3-pointers and led the fifth-ranked Eagles (8-1) with 22 points and six assists. Kyle Arrington contributed 13 points and eight rebounds off the bench. Griffen Clark scored 12 points.

Kirkwood came out flying.

"Usually the first half we come out so slow and we have to pick our energy back up," said Thedford. "I think today we came out and punched them in the mouth real fast. We kept at it the whole 40 minutes."

Petersen tweaked his starting lineup due to a minor disciplinary issue, giving Thedford a chance to shine early instead of coming off the bench. "I was just ready to do," he said. "The opportunity came, so I just had to take advantage of it."

Petersen is not sure if Thedford will start again Wednesday in the conference opener at Iowa Central, but he liked the way the new lineup clicked against Black Hawk with Thedford on the floor.

"He did a good job getting in the paint and attacking," said Petersen. "That's what he has to do for us."

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"He's one of our best attacking guards and I'm really happy with the way he started the game for us. And defensively he did good things early in the game too."

Kirkwood made 42 of 62 shots for an eye-popping 67.7 percent. The Eagles were 13 of 21 on 3-pointers for 61.9 percent.

"I was really pleased," said Petersen. "We had 29 assists, which might be a school record. So that was really cool to see."

"Obviously we made shots, but I really like how unselfish they were. And we were pretty dialed in the first five minutes and set the tone for the rest of the game."

Isaiah Lasenby scored eight points for Black Hawk (3-6). The visitors shot 24.3 percent from the floor with 17 for 70.

BLACK HAWK (45): Maris 1 0-0 3, Trumbull 0 0-0 0, Lasenby 4 0-0 8, Washington 2 0-0 6, Landwehr 3 1-1 7, Bizarri 0 0-0 0, Lightfoot 2 0-0 4, Randle 1 2-2 4, Morgan 0 0-0 0, Pauley 1 0-0 2, Henseler 0 0-0 0, Wolf 1 4-4 6, Turner 2 0-0 4, Vargas 0 1-2 1. Totals 17 8-9 45.

KIRKWOOD (110): Pickens 6 4-4 22, Thedford 6 3-3 15, Kasperbauer 4 0-0 12, Wilson 4 0-0 8, Appel 1 0-0 2, Sims 0 0-2 0, Washington 0 0-1 0, Sartorius 0 0-0 0, Dee 3 0-2 7, Clark 5 0-0 12, Stephenson 1 0-0 3, Biernacki 3 1-2 7, Gosnell 3 2-2 9, Arrington 5 3-5 13. Totals 42 13-21 110.

Halftime - Kirkwood 53, Black Hawk 17. 3-point goals - Black Hawk 3 (Washington 2, Maris 1), Kirkwood 13 (Pickens 6, Kasperbauer 2, Clark 2, Dee 1, Stephenson 1, Gosnell 1).