

Woolfolk sparks No.2 Eagles, 85-78

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 10 December 2013 23:04 -

Danielle Woolfolk is usually the shortest player on the basketball floor at 5-foot-3, but she may have the biggest heart and the greatest love of the game.

Woolfolk shook off a back injury and sparked No.2 Kirkwood past No.17 Iowa Central Tuesday night, 85-78, with 20 points, eight rebounds, four assists and two steals at Johnson Hall.

Woolfolk collided with a teammate near the end of the first half and suffered a nasty fall, sending her to the training room for repairs and a heating pad on her sore back. She returned for the second half and did not miss a beat.

"I was in pain, but I had to play through it," she said. "I had to get back rolling. I don't want to lose. I don't want to let my team down."

Woolfolk, a sophomore from Chicago, displayed all facets of her game with fearless drives to the basket, 3-point shots, clever passes and those eight rebounds.

Woolfolk scored 10 points in the first three minutes of the game to point the Eagles (10-1, 1-0) in the right direction in the opening game of the ICCAC season.

"Coach is always telling me I have to come out and bring a spark to the team," she said. "I guess that has to be me, because I want to win and I want to make it far (in the national tournament). We've got everything on the team to make it."

Woolfolk set the tone and her teammates joined the fun. Kirkwood's five starters accounted for 43 points and the reserves accounted for 42. "It was a great win," said Kirkwood Coach Kim Muhl. "Our kids are pretty resilient. They keep playing and busting their butt. They get a little upset sometimes, but that's just youth."

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Hanna Haynes, a 6-foot-2 freshman, contributed 12 points and nine rebounds for the Eagles in 17 minutes off the bench. She hit several key shots in the final minutes after Iowa Central (9-2, 0-1) had chopped a 17-point deficit to just six points.

Ariel Sneed finished with 11 points and seven rebounds. Taylor Silva, the backup point guard behind Woolfolk and occasionally her running mate in the backcourt, made several clutch plays and finished with nine points.

Ten Eagles scored, 11 grabbed rebounds, eight had assists and seven had steals in an all-around team effort. Muhl liked the way he was able to use different combinations and get good results.

"That's starting to be a better mix now," he said. "It's getting used to combinations and who can do what. It takes awhile to get a mix, to get a chemistry out there.

"Sometimes you have to keep subbing until you find it. But they did a nice job."

Kirkwood found the right answers at the right times. Iowa Central pulled within 64-57 with a 3-point barrage, but Mikayla Fallon hit a 3-pointer for the Eagles to make it 67-57.

Iowa Central made it 67-60, but Silva countered with a triple to make it 70-60. The visitors pulled within 71-65, but Silva hit a layup and Haynes scored inside to restore a 10-point lead at 75-65.

Iowa Central drew within 79-72 with two minutes left, but Haynes scored with an offensive rebound. Iowa Central made it a seven-point game again at 81-74, but Haynes answered with two free throws with 1:20 left to make it 83-74.

"Kids stepped up. Hit shots," said Muhl. "Like I told them, you have to trust each other. And it takes awhile to do that at our level."

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The second-ranked Eagles will play at third-ranked NIACC on Saturday afternoon in a battle of ICCAC powers.

IOWA CENTRAL (78): Oja 51-3 15, Doyle 1 4-4 7, Dentlinger 5 2-2 13, Koyamainavure 6 5-7 18, Harvey 5 0-0 14, Ray 2 0-0 6, Lentsch 0 0-0 0, Binion 1 0-0 3, Diew 1 0-0 2. Totals 26 12-16 78.

KIRKWOOD (85): Sneed 5 0-1 11, Woolfolk 8 1-4 20, Tuttle 1 1-3 3, Fallon 2 0-2 5, Clark 2 0-0 4, Silva 3 1-2 9, Polite 3 1-3 8, Larson 2 1-2 6, Haynes 4 4-4 12, Martensen 0 0-0 0, Bockholt 0 0-0 0, Kelso 3 1-4 7. Totals 33 10-25 85.

Halftime - Kirkwood 45, Iowa Central 32. 3-point goals - Iowa Central 14 (Oja 4, Harvey 4, Ray 2, Doyle 1, Dentlinger 1, Koyamainavure 1, Binion 1), Kirkwood 9 (Woolfolk 3, Silva 2, Sneed 1, Fallon 1, Polite 1, Larson 1). Fouled out - Doyle.