

No. 4 Eagles pull away from Blackhawks

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Kirkwood Eagles played only one good quarter of basketball Wednesday night, but it was good enough to collect an important victory.

The fourth-ranked Eagles came alive in the fourth quarter and finally subdued Southeastern, 65-50, in an ICCAC women's basketball game at Johnson Hall.

The victory lifted Kirkwood to 17-4 overall and 4-0 in the league. The Blackhawks fell to 14-6 overall and 2-2 in the conference.

The Eagles trailed, 39-37, late in the third quarter before they finally got untracked. Cyerra Hutchins hit a 3-pointer to give Kirkwood a 40-39 edge, then Rylee Voss scored for the Eagles to make it 42-39 heading into the fourth period.

Kirkwood popped in the first 10 points of the final stanza, finishing a decisive 15-0 spurt that gave them a comfortable lead at 52-39. The Eagles outscored Southeastern 23-11 in the final 10 minutes to take command.

Kirkwood opened an 18-point lead late in the game before settling for the 15-point victory.

"It wasn't pretty," said Kirkwood Coach Kim Muhl. "I don't think they were ready to play. They had no energy level. They looked for excuses, and they can't do that."

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A.J. Downs, Kirkwood's top point guard and floor leader, missed another game with a calf injury, which may have knocked the club off-balance for much of the game. Downs might play Saturday at Iowa Central, but she was strictly a spectator Wednesday night.

Hutchins said the Eagles missed Downs on the floor.

"A.J. is our starting point guard, so she brings a lot of energy, pushing it up the floor," she said.



Kirkwood missed a string of open shots and had a few breakdowns on defense before the 15-0 spurt finally put the game in the victory column.

"Cyerra hit a shot and we got some stops," said Muhl. "We came down and hit another shot."

Harris made a layup to give Kirkwood a 44-39 advantage, then Hutchins hit another 3-pointer to make it 47-39. Mesha Wheatly followed with another triple to make it 50-39, then Harris made two free throws for a 52-39 advantage.

The 15-0 spurt took about four minutes and turned the game around. "A couple of shots went in and everyone just tagged along," said Hutchins of the key stretch.

Muhl did not hide his displeasure with his team's overall performance in the locker room.

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"He said we were really down, and that coming out tonight we had no energy," Hutchins related. "We were lazy on defense. He said we were looking around, 'Who's going to hit a shot? Who's going to hit a shot? Who's going to step up?'"

Caitlin Sudduth led Kirkwood with 14 points, 3 rebounds, 3 assists and 3 steals. Hutchins finished with 12 points, 8 rebounds and 3 assists despite being slowed by illness. Madison Wood collected 11 points, 5 rebounds and 3 blocked shots.

Voss gave Kirkwood a spark off the bench with 6 points, 4 blocked shots and 3 assists in nine minutes. Arianna Dampier provided a lift off the bench with nine points.

Chunita Brackett led Southeastern with 15 points.

SOUTHEASTERN (50): Williams 1 6-6 8, Henry 1 0-0 2, Brackett 5 2-2 15, Lozano-Dobbs 2 4-4 8, Thompson 2 2-2 7, Salas 1 0-0 2, Castillo 0 0-0 0, Hugins 2 0-0 6, Hubbs 1 0-0 2. Totals 15 14-14 50.

KIRKWOOD (65): Harris 1 2-3 4, Miles 2 0-0 6, Sudduth 5 2-2 14, Hutchins 4 1-2 12, Wood 2 7-10 11, Wheatly 1 0-0 3, Oberman 0 0-0 0, Voss 3 0-0 6, Dampier 3 1-2 9, Jennings 0 0-0 0. Totals 21 13-19 65.

Halftime - Kirkwood 29, Southeastern 25. 3-point goals - Southeastern 6 (Brackett 3, Hugins 2, Thompson 1), Kirkwood 10 (Hutchins 3, Miles 2, Sudduth 2, Dampier 2, Wheatly 1).