

The difference between the No. 1 team in the country and the No. 5 team was a whopping 38 points Friday night.

The top-ranked Kirkwood women's basketball team walloped fifth-ranked Parkland, 78-40, in the opening round of the Kirkwood Classic at Johnson Hall with stifling defense and a deep bench.

The Eagles punished Parkland, 20-2, in the second quarter and built a pair of 45-point leads in the second half.

"I think we wore them down," said Kirkwood Coach Kim Muhl. "They were getting looks, but they were just too tired to shoot them."

Muhl used a 10-player rotation in the first half while building a commanding 36-11 cushion at intermission. All told, 13 players got into the game and everyone scored.

"I like how we played," said Muhl. "Our defense was really good in the first half."

Parkland shot 3-for-26 in the first half for a paltry 15.4 percent and finished 11-of-55 for 20 percent.



Meanwhile, Kirkwood sank 33-of-67 shots in the game and finished at 49.3 percent. The Eagles killed Parkland on the backboards, 46-26, and had 23 assists on 33 baskets.

Muhl said the offense is going to take awhile to reach its full potential, even though the Eagles looked good Friday.

We're still searching," he said, "but we've got a lot of weapons. We're really interchangeable this year, so we do a lot of different things with match-ups.

"We're pretty athletic," he said. "And long."

Megan Axcell topped a balanced attack with 16 points and seven rebounds in 20 minutes. Leah Robinson contributed 11 points and eight rebounds in 21 minutes off the bench. Awal Ajak popped in a pair of 3-pointers to begin the game and scored 10 points.

Point guards Tay Wilson and Niaja Taylor combined for 14 rebounds, 12 assists and only two turnovers while leading the fast-paced offense.

Kirkwood (2-1) faces 18th-ranked Illinois Central in the second round of the tournament Saturday at 3 p.m. Illinois Central topped Iowa Central, 60-51, in the other first-round game Friday.

PARKLAND (40): Ziliak 0 1-2 1, DeLuca 2 0-0 4, Dooley 4 1-2 12, Tapscott 1 4-4 6, Brouwer 1 4-4 6, Babcock 1 1-2 3, Cole 0 1-2 1, Thomas 0 0-0 0, Mathis 1 2-6 5, Cox 1 0-0 2. Totals 11 14-22 40.

KIRKWOOD (78): Wilson 2 0-1 4, Puok 2 0-0 5, Axcell 6 2-2 16, Ajak 4 0-0 10, Usher 1 0-0 3, Jenkins 2 0-0 4, Brown 1 0-1 2, Hurst 2 0-0 4, Taylor 1 0-0 2, Robinson 5 1-2 11, Mullinnix 1 0-0 3, Mensen 3 1-2 7, Wooldridge 3 0-0 7. Totals 33 4-8 78.

Halftime - Kirkwood 36, Parkland 11. 3-point goals - Parkland 4 (Dooley 3, Mathis 1), Kirkwood 8 (Axcell 2, Ajak 2, Puok 1, Usher 1, Mullinnix 1, Wooldridge 1).