

Kirkwood suffers bloody loss to John Wood

Written by Jim Ecker

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Taylor Olson will do just about anything to help Kirkwood Community College win a basketball game.

He'll even swallow his own blood.

Olson was hit in the mouth during Wednesday night's game against John Wood Community College at Johnson Hall and suffered some internal bleeding, but the game was tied and there wasn't time for full medical treatment with a little more than 3 minutes left.

Kirkwood called a timeout with 3:09 remaining and Olson did what he had to do. He grabbed a cup of water and gulped it down -- blood and all.

"It was getting pretty bloody in there, but I didn't want to come out of the game so I had to tough it up," said Olson, a freshman from Cedar Rapids Jefferson. "I was going to hide that blood as long as I could, even if I had to swallow it."

Needless to say, the bloody mess did not taste real good.

"No, not at all," he said.

Olson made a series of clutch plays -- before and after getting hit in the mouth -- but it wasn't enough to help Kirkwood escape with a victory.

Michel Roy hit a driving layup with 3.9 seconds left to snap a 54-54 tie and give John Wood a

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gritty 56-54 victory.

Olson finished with eight points, five rebounds and five assists. He did all his scoring in the second half at key moments in the game.

His first basket gave Kirkwood a 30-28 lead early in the second half. He gave the Eagles a 46-45 edge with 6:24 left with his second basket, then tied the game at 52-52 with 3:32 left at about the same time he got hit in the kisser.

Olson had time to catch his breath (and swallow his blood) during a timeout a few seconds later, then delivered in the clutch again. His two free throws with 22.4 seconds remaining pulled the Eagles into a 54-54 deadlock, but that was the end.

Roy scored on a clean drive and Kirkwood threw the inbounds pass away to fall to 7-6 for the campaign.

"If you had told me we'd hold them to 56 in our own gym, I would say we would have won," Coach Doug Wagemester remarked. "But it's not the case."

Kirkwood committed 21 turnovers and shot just 20 of 52 (38.5 percent) for the game. "Too many empty possessions," said Wagemester.

Olson is a pass-first point guard, but he needed to look for his own points Wednesday night. Kasey Semler, a starting guard from Marion, has a broken right hand and will be sidelined for about a month.

Shaun Manego, a backup point guard, suffered a bloody head injury with 14:23 left Wednesday and did not return to the game. Manego had a big lump on his right eyebrow and needed stitches.

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Olson knew he had to alter his game a little without Semler and Manego available.

"This year I haven't been that aggressive early in the year, and especially with Kasey out I have to become more aggressive," he said. "I knew we had to score, so I just tried to be aggressive."

Kirkwood never got into a smooth offensive flow against the Blazers (10-3).

"That was a tough one," said Wagemester. "They don't give you anything. You have to earn everything, and we gave them some things."

John Wood won the rebounding battle, 37-31, and the visitors from Quincy, Ill., also attempted nine more free throws than the Eagles. "If you're not shooting the ball and you're not getting to the foul line, how are you going to score?," Wagemester asked rhetorically.

"We've got to find a core of seven or eight guys that we know what we're going to get night-in and night-out. We don't have that yet," he said.

Najeal Young led Kirkwood with 12 points. J.C. Fuller scored 11 points and Gage Heffernan finished with 10.

Daris Porter led John Wood with 16 points. Kourtlin Jackson scored 14.

It was John Wood's second victory over the Eagles this season. The Blazers defeated Kirkwood, 70-56, on Nov. 6.

JOHN WOOD (56): Roy 4 1-4 9, Lane 2 3-5 7, Jackson 6 2-4 14, Hamilton 0 0-0 0, Porter 6 4-4

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16, White 0 1-2 1, Goodwin 0 0-0 0, Tisdell 1 0-0 2, Foster 2 2-2 6, Burton 0 1-2 1. Totals 21 14-23 56.

KIRKWOOD (54): Hunter 0 0-0 0, Heffernan 3 3-4 10, Fuller 4 3-4 11, Olson 3 2-2 8, Douglas 2 2-2 7, Young 5 2-2 12, Butler 0 0-0 0, Manego 0 0-0 0, Witt 0 0-0 0, Currie 1 0-0 2, Lang 2 0-0 4. Totals 20 12-14 54.

Halftime - Kirkwood 26, John Wood 24. 3-point goals - John Wood none, Kirkwood 2 (Heffernan 1, Douglas 1).

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