

Feisty Kirkwood men knock off DMACC

Written by Jim Ecker

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Kirkwood guard Kasey Semler left Johnson Hall with a sore hand, sore toe, sore groin and a smile Thursday night.

"I'll go get some ice in a minute," he said dismissively, gladly trading a few aches and pains for a key victory.

Semler contributed 10 points, six assists and the right attitude as the Eagles defeated DMACC, 74-60, in an ICCAC conference game.

"I thought Kasey Semler brought us a little edge to the table," said Kirkwood Coach Doug Wagemester. "A couple of times I thought he was trying to force it maybe a little bit, but he was setting the tone. And that was good to see."

Kirkwood appeared to have an abundance of spirit and energy from the opening tip.

"I could kind of sense a hungrier mood tonight," said Semler, a sophomore from Marion. "We've had it in the past, we've shown flashes, but I feel like tonight we all really came together and got the job done."

Taylor Olson, the pride of Cedar Rapids Jefferson, popped in four 3-pointers and led the Eagles (12-10, 4-3) with 17 points. Devan Douglas and J.C. Fuller scored 13 points apiece, Gage Heffernen netted 11 and Kevin Hunter muscled in eight points.

It was a good win for Kirkwood, which has suffered some tough losses this season.

"Hard-fought. Balanced on the offensive end. Won the rebound battle by one," said Wagemester. "It was good."

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"I thought our guys did a good job of being ready, right off the bat," said Olson.

DMACC (13-9, 2-5) drew within 38-37 with 14 minutes left, but the Eagles began pulling away from there. Olson hit a 3-pointer to make it 41-37 and Heffernan drilled a jumper for a 43-37 advantage.

Fuller made a three-point play for a 46-39 lead midway through the second half and Semler hit a 17-footer for a 48-39 margin.

Olson hit two more 3-pointers to give Kirkwood a 58-48 lead. Fuller made two layups and Douglas made a layup on a neat pass from Semler for a 64-52 edge.

Semler hit two free throws and Olson made one foul shot for a 67-52 lead with less than two minutes to go.

Kirkwood is not accustomed to having 10 losses on Feb. 1, but the Eagles are looking forward to the stretch run.

"Everything is in play," said Wagemester. "A lot to play for."

"I think we can surprise some people," said Olson. "We have the keys to do it."

"Kasey's back at full throttle, too. I think we can match up with any team in the league and I think great things will happen."

Semler tore ligaments in the big toe on his left foot earlier in the season, suffered a broken

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hand in December that sidelined him for a month and has gotten banged on the head a few times, but he keeps bouncing back for more.

Semler thinks Kirkwood has a chance to do some big things this season and wants to be an important part of it.

"I think they're endless, as long as we keep doing what we're doing," he said. "If we can play this kind of game with this kind of winning attitude, I think we can do whatever we set our eyes on this year."

Wagemester confirmed after the game that reserve guards Najeal Young and Demetrius Butler have been dismissed from the team.

DMACC (60): Jones 3 8-9 15, Aldeman 2 1-2 7, Smith 1 2-4 4, Nazione 6 4-6 16, Asencio 0 0-0 0, Williams 1 5-6 8, Davis 4 0-1 8, Russell 1 0-0 2. Totals 18 20-28 60.

KIRKWOOD (74): Hunter 3 2-2 8, Heffernan 4 3-7 11, Olson 4 5-6 17, Douglas 5 2-2 13, Semler 2 5-6 10, Manego 0 0-0 0, Witt 0 0-0 0, Fuller 5 3-4 13, Currie 0 2-2 2, Lang 0 0-0 0. Totals 23 22-29 74.

Halftime - Kirkwood 32, DMACC 28. 3-point goals - DMACC 4 (Aldeman 2, Jones 1, Williams 1), Kirkwood 6 (Olson 4, Douglas 1, Semler 1). Fouled out - Russell. Technical foul - Douglas.