

## Eagles clinch home date with forfeit

Written by Mike Koolbeck

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The Kirkwood men's basketball team clinched a first-round home game in next week's conference tournament without even bouncing a ball Wednesday.

The Eagles (17-12, 8-5) received a forfeit from Southwestern Community College (14-14, 6-7).

The game was to be the nightcap of a women/men doubleheader between the schools. The women's game will be played as scheduled at 5:30 p.m.

The "win" clinched a first-round conference tournament home date for the Eagles next Tuesday against an opponent to be determined. Kirkwood is in third place in the Iowa Community College Athletic Conference, and still has a shot at finishing second.

Kirkwood men's basketball coach and athletic director Doug Wagemester said Southwestern informed him they would not be able to field a team for Wednesday's game because of multiple player violations of team policy.

It is the final home date of the regular season and Wagemester said the team had planned to honor its sophomores. He said those ceremonies for the men will be postponed to Tuesday.

Wagemester said the forfeit was "unfortunate" for both Southwestern and Kirkwood, and said he was concerned about the message it sent about the integrity of the ICCAC.

"I know (SWCC coach) Mike Holmes and (athletic director) Bill Krejci are people of integrity," Wagemester said. "I took it as far as I could with the Commissioner (Thom McDonald). The commissioner said if it was in our lap, we'd do the same thing.

"They felt they needed to do what was best for the integrity of their program. And I'm all for that. I believe in discipline.

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"They felt they wouldn't have enough players, at least for this game, so they had to forfeit."

Wagemester said the Eagles will practice and then watch the women's game, although he would have preferred a game.

"Everything about playing the game would have been positive," he said. "It was sophomore night. They beat us at their place (69-62 on Jan. 26) and our players wanted the chance to pay them back. We wanted to play the game.

"The only thing remotely positive is that we backed into a win that assured us a first-round tournament game at home. But nobody likes to back in."

Kirkwood closes out the regular season with a women/men doubleheader Saturday against DMACC at Boone.

The conference tournament is next week, with highest remaining seeds hosting.