

## Kirkwood women KO'd by Iowa Central

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 09 March 2013 20:19 -

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KEOKUK - The regional finals of the women's junior college basketball tournament were held at an elementary school in Keokuk before 96 fans, with coaches and players for both teams sitting on the front row of hard metal bleachers.

That's where the Kirkwood Eagles, once ranked No.2 in the country, saw their promising season come to a disappointing end.

Iowa Central Community College went on an astonishing 19-0 run in the second half and bounced Kirkwood, 71-65, for the Region XI title.

Iowa Central (24-8) advanced to the NJCAA Division II national tournament for the second time in three years. Kirkwood (28-5) went home with an empty feeling.

The Eagles defeated the Tritons twice during the regular season, but they came up short in the contest that mattered the most.

"I'll be really honest with you: It's a horrible feeling," said Kirkwood guard Bianca Dufelmeier, who battled hip and back ailments during the final days of the season.

"We're a good team and our record proves it," she said. "It sucks. It sucks so bad."

Kirkwood rallied from a wobbly first half and grabbed a 44-37 advantage early in the second stanza, but things began to slip away from there.

Iowa Central tied the game, 48-48, with an 11-4 spurt. Whitney Rohrbach gave Kirkwood a 51-48 edge with a 3-pointer, but then disaster struck.

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The Tritons scored 19 straight points during the next six minutes and zoomed into a commanding 67-51 lead with six minutes left in the game. The surge doomed the Eagles to defeat.

"We came out and got a seven-point lead, and then we quit doing what got us there," said KCC Coach Kim Muhl. "We didn't guard anybody. Some of them were in zone, some were in man-to-man. And we didn't rebound."

The Eagles also missed shots and threw the ball away during their miserable stretch of basketball. By the time they snapped out of their funk, it was too late.

"We could have played harder. We could have played much harder than we did today," said Kianna Jacobs, Kirkwood's top player who missed nine minutes of the first half with foul problems.

Dufelmeier, the team's second-leader scorer behind Jacobs, sat for 13 minutes in the first half with two fouls of her own, but the Eagles got 10 points off the bench from Haley Faber and Whitney Henderson and led 33-32 at intermission.

It looked like Kirkwood had survived the rocky first half when it grabbed the seven-point margin in the second stanza, but it was an illusion.

Theresa Doyle hit a pair of 3-pointers for Iowa Central during the 19-0 run that sent Kirkwood to an early departure.

The Eagles rallied from their 67-51 deficit and pulled within 70-65 with 63 seconds left on a basket by Rohrbach. Iowa Central missed the front end of a 1-and-1 opportunity with 53 seconds left, but the Eagles fired blanks from there.

Dufelmeier missed a 3-pointer. Henderson grabbed an offensive rebound, but Dufelmeier

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misfired from long range again.

Iowa Central missed another 1-and-1 with 27 seconds left, but Alexis Fitzpatrick missed a 3-pointer for Kirkwood and the Eagles fouled Babaye Oja with 12 seconds to go. Oja made one free throw for a 71-65 lead, Dufelmeier missed another 3-pointer and it was over.

Kirkwood defeated Iowa Central, 74-50, at home Jan. 16 and beat the Tritons again, 72-69, in Fort Dodge Feb. 16. The third time was not a charm.

"They're playing really well right now. They hit shots," said Muhl, saluting the winners.

Jacobs led Kirkwood with 16 points and nine rebounds. Fitzpatrick scored 15 points and Rohrbach finished with 13. Jacobs and Rohrbach were named to the all-tournament team.

Miliak Koyamainavure, a 5-foot-8 freshman from Fuji, led Iowa Central with 16 points. Doyle scored 12.

The Tritons launched 35 3-pointers and hit 11 of them, including four by Doyle.

"We don't care if it's 10 seconds into the shot clock or 20 seconds into the shot clock. We've just got to take that first good shot," said Iowa Central Coach Craig Carlson.

"The longer you go into the shot clock, the less chance you have of scoring. So fortunately today the shots went in for us."

Southeastern Community College of Keokuk was the host for the regional semifinals and finals, but SCC does not have its own gym on campus. Southeastern plays its home games at a Catholic grade school in Keokuk that used to house Cardinal Stritch High School, which no

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longer exists.

IOWA CENTRAL (71): Doyle 4 0-1 12, Dentlinger 4 0-1 8, Oja 3 3-6 9, Koyamainavure 3 10-13 16, Harvey 2 0-0 5, McRae 0 0-0 0, Seibert 0 0-0 0, Gregory 2 0-0 6, Bengen 2 0-0 6, Binion 3 1-5 9, Easton 0 0-0 0, Yetmar 0 0-0 0. Totals 23 14-26 71.

KIRKWOOD (65): Dufelmeier 2 0-0 6, Jacobs 7 2-3 16, Rohrbach 4 3-4 13, Fitzpatrick 6 0-0 15, Chuol 0 2-2 2, Fallon 0 0-0 0, Hobbs 0 0-0 0, Faber 2 2-2 6, Henderson 2 3-3 7, Tow 0 0-0 0. Totals 23 12-16 65.

Halftime - Kirkwood 33, Iowa Central 32. 3-point goals - Iowa Central 11 (Doyle 4, Gregory 2, Bengen 2, Binion 2, Harvey 1), Kirkwood 7 (Fitzpatrick 3, Dufelmeier 2, Rohrbach 2).