

No.16 KCC men give themselves a hand

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 10 December 2013 23:43 -

Kirkwood Coach Bryan Petersen and his assistants huddled in a hallway at Johnson Hall Tuesday night for about five minutes to discuss their team's performance against Iowa Central before entering the locker room.

As soon as they opened the locker room door, all of the Eagles broke into applause to celebrate a good victory.

The 16th-ranked Eagles passed the ball extremely well Tuesday and handled Iowa Central, 73-59, in the ICCAC opener.

Kirkwood collected 23 assists on 28 field goals, an unusually high percentage that led to 53.8 percent shooting from the floor.

"I loved it," said Petersen, a former point guard at Kirkwood and Iowa State. "I thought we really shared the ball.

"That's one of my big things," he said. "I always want to be a good passing team. One of our goals is always more than 15 assists. To come up with that number (23) in a conference game is really good. We were happy with it."

Ajay Lawton led the Eagles (9-3, 1-0) with eight assists. It was contagious, with eight different players collecting at least one assist and power forward Myzeah Batie-Gaddy notching five.

"Our passing was great today. That's what we needed," said Lawton. "Coach put it on the board: Get 15 assists or more. We got 23 of them."

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One of the prettiest assists came in the second half when Joe Tagarelli grabbed an offensive unit, spied JC Fuller streaking down the lane and fed him a perfect bounce pass for a dunk and a 44-31 advantage.

"We were just looking for the open pass and open man. And I think we accomplished that with the 23 assists," said Tagarelli, who finished with 17 points, eight rebounds, three assists and two steals. "We moved it really well."

Fuller led Kirkwood with 19 points and grabbed five rebounds. Lawton and Batie-Gaddy finished with 13 points apiece.

The Eagles had 14 assists on 16 baskets in the first half, then had nine assists on 12 buckets in the second half for a consistently good effort.

"I want to be a good pass-and-catch team, because that makes you harder to guard," said Petersen. "We're starting to get a better feel for each other a little bit out there."

"Guys are getting more comfortable out there with each other. They know where they're going to be."

Lawton contributed his 13 points, eight assists and four rebounds in 33 minutes off the bench. He did not start the game, but played a lot and kept things moving. Lawton said he's comfortable coming off the bench and not starting.

"I'm fine with that. As long as we win," he said. "I can be the extra spurt off the bench and keep us going in the right direction."

Dylan Travis led Iowa Central (7-4, 0-1) with 19 points.

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Cedar Rapids Jefferson graduate Ky Kramer started for Iowa Central and played 31 minutes, the second-most on his team. He finished with eight points, five rebounds, two assists and a steal.

Kirkwood sophomore Taylor Olson, one of Kramer's former teammates at Jefferson, also finished with eight points, five rebounds and two assists.

Kirkwood plays at NIACC on Saturday.

IOWA CENTRAL (59): Yergler 1 1-2 3, Jones 3 1-2 9, Kramer 1 5-7 8, Travis 7 1-1 19, Biberovikj 5 2-2 12, Kudhot 0 0-0 0, Young 1 0-0 3, Brooks 0 0-0 0, Lawler 0 0-0 0, Pierre 1 1-2 3, Guenther 0 2-2 2. Totals 19 13-18 59.

KIRKWOOD (73): Fuller 8 1-2 19, Currie 1 1-4 3, Olson 2 3-5 8, Batie-Gaddy 6 0-0 13, Tagarelli 8 1-2 17, Atwater 0 0-0 0, Lawton 3 5-5 13, Lassen 0 0-0 0, Swank 0 0-0 0, Weeks 0 0-0 0, Ward 0 0-0 0, Uwadiae 0 0-0 0. Totals 28 11-18 73.

Halftime - Kirkwood 38, Iowa Central 29. 3-point goals - Iowa Central 8 (Travis 4, Jones 2, Kramer 1, Young 1), Kirkwood 6 (Fuller 2, Lawton 2, Olson 1, Batie-Gaddy 1).