

Petersen ready for 2nd year at KCC

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 27 October 2014 17:22 - Last Updated Wednesday, 29 October 2014 21:05

Bryan Petersen does not have to walk around Johnson Hall with the word "interim" hanging over his head anymore, not that it really bothered him last year.

Petersen, 27, is the full-time coach of the Kirkwood men's basketball team this season now that Doug Wagemester has decided to focus solely on being the school's athletic director.

Petersen was the "interim" head coach last year when the Eagles finished 21-10 overall and tied for second in the ICCAC conference with a 10-4 league record. Now there's nothing "interim" about it.

Like any coach, things are a little easier the second time around.

"I definitely feel more comfortable," Petersen said after practice Monday. "I'm not creating everything for the first time like I was last year, so that makes it a little bit easier. But I'm still learning."

Petersen was a junior college All-American at Kirkwood before playing at Iowa State. He returned to Kirkwood two years ago as one of Wagemester's assistant coaches and had Wagemester's full support last season when he was the "interim" guy as everyone waited to see if Wagemester would return to the coaching ranks or not.

The Eagles have only four returning players on this year's team, so in a sense Petersen is starting over again with a new group with 11 brand-new players on the squad. He likes the look

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of things so far as Kirkwood prepares for the season opener at the Southeastern Conference tournament in West Burlington Friday and Saturday.

"With this group, we're really going to have to defend and we're going to have to be a really, really tight-knit group," he said. "For us to reach our goals, we have to become one of the tightest units out there."

Joe Tagarelli, Ajay Lawton, Matt Lassen and Joseph Weeks give the Eagles a quartet of experienced players. Tagarelli, a rugged 6-foot-5 forward, was named first team all-district last season. Lawton, a point guard, was named second team all-district. Lassen, from Linn-Mar, developed as a shooter last season and will join Tagarelli and Lawton in the starting lineup.

Jordan Ashton, a former Class 3A Player of the Year at Mount Pleasant, has transferred to Kirkwood and has cracked the starting lineup in the backcourt. Ronald Singleton, a 6-foot-6 forward, has transferred from a junior college in Arizona and also will be in the starting lineup Friday night.

Ashton spent two years at Northwest Missouri State and will have one year of eligibility with the Eagles.

"He became available and we jumped all over him," said Petersen. "We needed to have him."

Petersen said Weeks and several newcomers are battling for playing in the front court, including Chike Ukah from Iowa City West. Jacob Olson, a freshman from Cedar Rapids Jefferson, is battling for time in the backcourt.

"Jacob Olson has been a nice surprise," said Petersen. "He's definitely batting for some minutes."

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Taylor Olson, Jacob's older brother, played for Kirkwood the past two years and is now at Northern Iowa, where he is being redshirted this season.

Kirkwood fashioned a 15-1 record at home last season, but the Eagles struggled with a 4-9 record on the road. Petersen has been trying to instill a tougher mindset on the club so they can overcome obstacles in road games and claim more victories.

Kirkwood will face Parkland College in the Southeastern Community College tournament Friday at 3 p.m. and will meet St. John's Northwestern Military Academy Saturday at 1 p.m.

The Kirkwood women also are playing in the SCC tournament this weekend.

ROSTER

Ronald Singleton, 6-6, Chicago
Ajay Lawton, 6-0, Westfield, Ind.
Nick Richards, 6-4, New Castle, Del.
Matt Lassen, 6-5, Linn-Mar
Josh Bartlett, 6-5, Houston
JaVairius Amos-Mays, 6-3, Waukegan, Ill.
Hunter Rhodes, 6-0, Canton, Ill.
Joseph Weeks, 6-5, Solon
Jacob Olson, 6-0, Cedar Rapids Jefferson
Jordan Ashton, 6-4, Mount Pleasant
Earnest Cowser, 6-2, Waukesha, Wis.
Kareem Martin Jr., 6-3, Staten Island, N.Y.
Chike Ukah, 6-6, Iowa City West
Joe Tagarelli, 6-5, Bayside, Wis.
Martin Hyberg, 6-11, Stockholm, Sweden

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