

Jackson sparks No.2 Kirkwood men

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Kirkwood Eagles were not getting a whole lot accomplished in their men's basketball game against Black Hawk College Saturday afternoon when Coach Bryan Petersen reached deep into his bench and sent Al'Tavius Jackson onto the floor.

The 6-foot-1 freshman got things going in a hurry.

Jackson tossed in eight points with an impressive flurry late in the first half and finished with a career-best 18 points to help the second-ranked Eagles roll Black Hawk, 97-69, at Johnson Hall.

Jackson had not played in Kirkwood's last four games and had scored only 18 points all season. He matched that output in a single showing as the Eagles raised their record to 11-1.

Jackson had no idea he was going to get the call with his team locked in a tight battle in the first half, but he was happy to get a chance to prove himself and help his club.

"You always have to look to create something," he said. "You always have to be ready, because you never know when you're going to go in. You have

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to contribute to your team in a positive manner."

The sluggish Eagles were clinging to a 28-27 lead in the first half and were having trouble trying to score against Black Hawk's zone defense, but Jackson changed all that.

He popped in a 3-pointer for a 31-27 lead, hit another triple for a 36-31 advantage and made a driving layup at the buzzer to give Kirkwood a 41-31 advantage at halftime.

Petersen, obviously happy with Jackson's performance, gave him another chance early in the second half and he drilled another 3-pointer to beat the shot clock and give the Eagles a 50-38 margin. All told, Jackson shot 6-for-7 from the floor, canned all four of his 3-pointers and was 2-for-2 at the foul line.

Perhaps most impressive of all, he scored all 18 of his points in just 12 minutes of action.

"He was great. He came in and sparked us," said Petersen. "The first half we weren't playing very well."

Petersen said Jackson has been working on his outside shot in practice and the coach was looking for someone to pop in a few 3-pointers against that zone defense by Black Hawk.

"It gave him an opportunity to go in there and he delivered, which was huge," said Petersen. "It opened things up a little bit more and our confidence got going a little bit more against that zone."

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