

## No. 6 Eagles roll into regional finals

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 03 March 2016 23:02 - Last Updated Thursday, 03 March 2016 23:40

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Kaliph Fagan has a mop of unruly hair at the top of his lanky 6-foot-4 frame, something he humorously calls the Kaliph 'Fro, but there's nothing unruly about the way he plays for the Kirkwood men's basketball team.

Fagan brings a ton of creative energy to the club when coach Bryan Petersen summons him off the bench like he did Thursday night.

Fagan scored 16 points and grabbed seven rebounds as the sixth-ranked Eagles stomped Iowa Central, 90-61, in the regional semifinals at Johnson Hall.

Kirkwood (26-4) will host 18th-ranked Iowa Lakes (25-7) in the regional finals at 3 p.m. Saturday, with the winner advancing to the NJCAA Division II national tournament.

Fagan played 22 minutes, which was the third-most on the team despite coming off the bench. He is famous for his quick drives to the basket, where he can finish or create shots for his teammates.

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Fagan said his primary role, however, comes at the other end of the floor.

"Really come in and definitely make an impact on defense first," he said. "That's before anything. And I think defense opens up my offense. Once I get going, there's no stopping."

Fagan, a freshman from South Holland, Ill., is listed at 6-foot-4, but the Kaliph 'Fro makes him look about three inches taller.

"He's an attacking guard," said Peterson. "He's got some good length, he's a good athlete."

Fagan likes to attack that rim, especially when he gets the ball at the high post in the middle of a zone defense like he did against Iowa Central.

"Ever since high school," he said of his style. "In high school, my coach had me do the same thing. When I get the ball Coach P tells me to attack, and that's what I do."



Fagan led a balanced attack with his 16 points. Da'Rion King scored 14 points, Hunter Rhodes 13 and Nick Richards 11. The

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Eagles hit 57.1 percent of their shots from the field and were never seriously challenged.

"I think we played pretty good," said Fagan. "We've been playing good defense at home. We stopped the three-headed monster, and that's what Coach P said."

The three-headed monster?

"Yeah, their three guards," he explained, "because they've been leading them in scoring. That was our focus, to come out here and guard, and that's what we did."

Kirkwood split two games with Iowa Lakes during the regular season, winning 76-67 at Estherville but losing 95-85 at Johnson Hall, and Petersen expects a stiff challenge Saturday in the regional finals.

"They're a tough team," said Petersen. "They've won 12 or 13 in a row. They came over here and kind of punched us in the mouth, so we have to get ready for them."

Fagan likes the way the Eagles are playing.

"I feel like we're a train right now. We're just going," he said. "When we're playing our best ball, we're the best team."

"When we're playing at our best we can beat anybody. All we have to do is practice hard and prepare."

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Marcus Baldwin scored 18 points for Iowa Central (11-13). Jerrod Moorner added 17.

Kirkwood blasted Iowa Central in bench points, 39-2.

**IOWA CENTRAL (61):** Wright 2 4-6 8, Moorner 7 3-7 17, Frazier 2 2-3 8, Baldwin 6 4-6 18, Sturgill 2 4-4 8, Motley 0 0-0 0, Burgart 0 0-0 0, Joseph 0 0-0 0, Alexander 0 0-2 0, Fransis 0 0-0 0, Moaku 1 0-1 2, Cousins 0 0-0 0. Totals 20 17-29 61.

**KIRKWOOD (90):** Bartlett 2 0-0 4, Rhodes 4 3-3 13, Richards 5 12 11, Olson 4 0-0 9, King 5 4-5 14, Jackson 0 0-0 0, Harp 2 0-0 5, Fagan 6 3-3 16, Meier 3 0-0 6, Wilson 2 2-2 6, Henry 0 0-0 0, Triplett 3 0-0 6. Totals 36 13-15 90.

Halftime - Kirkwood 45, Iowa Central 28. 3-point goals - Iowa Central 4 (Frazier 2, Baldwin 2), Kirkwood 5 (Rhodes 2, Olson 1, Harp 1, Fagan 1).