

No. 6 Eagles shrug off Frederick at NJCAA

Written by Metro Sports Report

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DANVILLE, Ill. - The Kirkwood Eagles sparkled in the second half Tuesday and dumped Frederick, 86-61, in the opening round of the NJCAA Division II men's basketball tournament.

The sixth-ranked Eagles struggled in the first half and trailed 37-35 at intermission, but they pounded Frederick 51-24 in the second half and won easily.

Kirkwood (28-4) will play in the Elite 8 Wednesday night at 8 p.m. against Louisburg (28-5), which defeated South Mountain in its first-round game on Wednesday.

The Eagles blistered the nets in the second half, shooting 71.4 percent from the field and 87.5 percent on 3-pointers. Kirkwood made 15 of 21 shots from the field in the final 20 minutes and was 7-for-8 on 3-pointers.

Josh Meier sparked Kirkwood off the bench with 13 points in 17 minutes. Nick Richards also scored 13 points in a balanced attack.

Cristen Wilson, who was Kirkwood's main threat in the first half, finished with 11 points and eight rebounds. Da'Rion King and Byron Harp contributed 10 points apiece. Al'Tavius Jackson hit three 3-pointers and scored nine points, Jacob Olson had eight points and Hunter Rhodes had seven points.

Kirkwood, which has a deep team with lots of weapons, got 45 points from its reserves and 41 points from its starters.

Frederick reached the national tournament with a losing record, but they bothered Kirkwood in the first half with a zone defense that made it hard to find good shots. The Eagles compounded their problems in the first 20 minutes by missing seven free throws and failing to convert near the basket.

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Kirkwood switched from a man-to-man defense to a zone in the second half and made it much tougher for Frederick to find shots.

Josiah Jones scored 18 points for Frederick, which finished with a 13-17 record.

This is Kirkwood's first appearance at the national tournament since 2011. The Eagles won the national title in 1998.

KIRKWOOD (86): Bartlett 1 0-0 3, Rhodes 2 1-4 7, Richards 5 1-1 13, Olson 3 1-1 8, King 2 6-11 10, Jackson 3 0-0 9, Harp 2 4-6 10, Fagan 1 0-0 2, Meier 3 7-8 13, Wilson 4 3-6 11, Triplett 0 0-0 0. Totals 26 23-37 86.

FREDERICK (61): Bell 4 4-4 13, Robinson 2 1-2 5, Lewis 3 0-0 6, McIntosh 2 0-0 4, Jenkins 1 2-4 4, Blankson 1 4-4 6, DeCelis 0 1-3 1, Dawson 1 0-0 2, Jones 7 2-3 18, O'Neil 0 2-2 2, Meredith 0 0-0 0. Totals 21 16-22 61.

Halftime - Frederick 37, Kirkwood 35. 3-point goals - Kirkwood 11 (Jackson 3, Rhodes 2, Richards 2, Harp 2, Bartlett 1, Olson 1), Frederick 3 (Jones 2, Bell 1).