

Harris helps No. 1 Eagles clinch title

Written by Jim Ecker

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Except for her bout with bronchitis, Kirkwood sophomore Deleyah Harris had a pretty good day Wednesday.

Harris nearly recorded a triple-double as the top-ranked Eagles held off NIACC, 93-81, to clinch the outright conference title and run their perfect record to 29-0.

On top of that, the 5-foot-9 guard picked up a Division I college scholarship offer after the game from Missouri-Kansas City head coach Marsha Freese, a Cedar Rapids native who was at Johnson Hall.

Harris was happy to receive her first offer from a D-I school, especially one that's close to her home in Omaha, but she was not ready to commit on the spot.

Her commitment right now is to getting healthy and trying to help Kirkwood win the NJCAA Division II national title.

Harris finished with 21 points, 11 rebounds and seven steals in 32 minutes of action. She used an inhaler several times to help her breathing while battling bronchitis, but managed to keep going.

"My adrenaline was running," she said. "I was tired, but I had to keep going."

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Harris is taking medicine to help her sleep through the night. Her coughing keeps her up, but she did not show any ill-effects on the court.

"You know what you'll get every game from her," said Kirkwood Coach Kim Muhl. "She's a warrior. I love her."

Kirkwood clinched the ICCAC conference title with a 13-0 record with one game left in the regular season at Iowa Lakes Saturday. If the Eagles win that contest they'll head into the postseason with an impressive 30-0 overall mark.

Kirkwood has won six national titles, but the Eagles have never had a perfect regular season. Muhl would like to head into the regional at home next week at 30-0, but is not obsessed with it.

"It's nice in theory," he said, "but it's OK if it doesn't happen."

Kirkwood had trouble shaking NIACC until the final minute. The Trojans (16-12, 8-5) pulled within 86-81 with 1:15 left, but Tay Tay Wilson hit a 3-pointer and added two free throws to give the Eagles a 91-81 advantage with 36.4 seconds remaining.

Simone Goods collected 26 points, nine rebounds, four assists, two blocks and a steal for Kirkwood. Wilson finished with 13 points and six assists. Olivia Usher provided 10 points, eight rebounds and five steals.

NIACC launched 45 3-pointers in the 40-minute game and hit 16 of them to stay in the contest.

NIACC (81): Laabs 4 0-3 12, Longs 4 0-0 12, Cuffe 1 6-8 8, Holloway 1 2-4 5, Wolters 0 1-2 1, Galvin 2 0-0 6, Larson 3 0-0 7, Stewart 1 0-0 2, Staniel 3 6-8 12, Willert 5 0-0 14, Davidson 0 2-2 2. Totals 24 17-27 81.

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KIRKWOOD (93): Harris 6 8-9 21, T.Wilson 3 5-5 13, Watkins 3 0-0 7, Goods 11 4-6 26, Usher 4 1-2 10, Puok 1 2-2 4, Axccl 0 2-2 2, Taylor 1 0-0 2, Voss 3 0-0 6, Cotton 0 2-4 2, C.Wilson 0 0-0 0. Totals 32 25-31 93.

Halftime - Kirkwood 39, NIACC 39. 3-point goals - NIACC 16 (Laabs 4, Longs 4, Willert 4, Galvin 2, Holloway 1, Larson 1), Kirkwood 4 (Harris 1, T.Wilson 1, Watkins 1, Usher 1).