Najeal Young had a chance to play basketball at one of the most famous prep schools in the country this year, but he declined an offer from Mount Zion Christian Academy to play for Kirkwood.

That's turned out to be good news for Coach Doug Wagemester and the Eagles.

Young made 10 of 11 shots and scored 22 points Tuesday night as Kirkwood rolled by the Grand View junior varsity, 81-56, in the home opener at Johnson Hall.

Young is a 6-foot-5 lefthander from Milwaukee with quick moves around the bucket and a knack for putting the biscuit in the basket.

"My team was finding me and I was finishing," he said modestly. "That's pretty much where it goes. I'll make shots if they find me."

Young poured in 26 points in a 94-89 loss to Indian Hills Nov. 3 and is averaging 15.6 points for the Eagles (2-3). He's ambidextrous and can score with either hand.

"It's just a gift that God gave me and I appreciate it," he said.

Young had offers from three prestigious prep schools and considered Mount Zion, which is located in Durham, N.C. and has produced such NBA stars as Tracy McGrady and Amar'e Stoudemire.

"There are some big names from that school, but I felt that Wags (Wagemester) could prepare me the most and get me ready for the next phase," he said.

Young said he was recruited by mid-major Division I colleges when he was a sophomore and junior in high school, but was a late qualifier and had only a few Division II offers as a senior. He turned down the Division II colleges and prep schools to come to Kirkwood.

"I just decided to take an extra year to develop and that's why I chose Kirkwood," he said.

Wagemester said Young has good perimeter skills and is comfortable near the basket. Kirkwood does not have a big team, but the Eagles appear to have a good collection of players and depth.

"If we give away a little size, we'll have to make up for it with the size of our hearts," Wagemester remarked.

The Eagles got smaller last week when 6-foot-8 center Matt Tiby left the program after being suspended for a violation of team rules. Tiby averaged 12 points and 6 rebounds last season as a freshman and had some Division I offers last year.

"Matt was a quality interior player and could do some things in there, and we don't have him now," Wagemester said. "So the pieces get moved around a little bit. Guys are adjusting."

Gage Heffernan scored 10 points for Kirkwood. Taylor Olson collected eight points and seven assists. Kevin Hunter had eight points and seven rebounds.

The Eagles owned a 44-19 lead at halftime and opened a 37-point bulge at 80-43 before faltering a little in the final minutes.

"I thought our energy and focus were pretty good in the first half, and we lost our focus a little bit in the second half," Wagemester said. "Our whole thing with this young group is consistency. Day to day, possession to possession.

"Just have an identity and stay on it," he said.

Darius Hargrave made five 3-pointers and scored 30 points for Grand View.

GRAND VIEW JV (56): Eblen 3 0-0 7, Smith 1 4-6 6, Baird 1 0-0 2, Mackey 3 0-0 6, Hargrave 12 1-2 30, Lastovka 0 0-0 0, Pawletzki 1 0-0 3, Brownlee 1 0-0 2, Mackel 0 0-0 0, Robinson 0 0-0 0. Totals 22 5-8 56.

KIRKWOOD (81): Young 10 2-3 22, Currie 3 0-3 6, Fuller 3 0-2 6, Olson 1 6-6 8, Semler 2 0-0 6, Hunter 4 0-0 8, Butler 0 2-3 2, Manego 2 0-0 4, Witt 2 1-2 5, Heffernan 5 0-0 10, Douglas 2 0-0 4. Totals 34 11-19 81.

Halftime - Kirkwood 44, Grand View JV 19. 3-point goals - Grand View JV 7 (Hargrave 5, Eblen 1, Pawletzki 1), Kirkwood 2 (Semler 2).