

Eagles shrug off poor start to upset NIACC

Written by Don Taylor

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Totally lost does not always mean a loss.

Kirkwood shrugged off a mistake-prone first half and beat third-ranked NIACC, 81-68, Friday night in a men's junior college basketball game at Johnson Hall.

Kirkwood (7-5, 1-0 ICCAC) committed many of its 23 turnovers in the first half, but surprisingly only trailed 34-32 at halftime.

"They were who we thought they were," Kirkwood Coach Doug Wagemester said of NIACC. "They did exactly what we prepared for and our kids were totally lost."

At 18 minutes of the second half Kirkwood took its first lead and by the 16 minute mark the Eagles took a lead that they never relinquished.

J.C. Fuller finished with 21 points to lead Kirkwood. Devan Douglas scored points and 18 came in the second half. Gage Heffernan finished with 11 points and a game-high eight rebounds.

"The thing about this team is that on any given night any of us can have the hot hand," said Fuller. "We have a lot of firepower. I just try to do all that I can do within the team concept and tonight I was able to go to the basket because they played me tight."

"In the second half I just felt like I had to step up," Douglas said. "The whole team was more focused in the second half."

Kirkwood's defense certainly was more focused in the second half and it gave the Eagles the opportunity to beat the NIACC defense down the court and provided better shots. NIACC committed 24 turnovers.

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"Amazing how defense goes hand in hand with offense," said Wagemester. "It gave us the opportunity to finish. We have great kids and they all show flashes of good and sometimes not so good.

"Tomorrow was a day off, but it's not now."

NIACC suffered its second loss of the week and dropped to 9-3, 0-1. Former Jefferson prep Alec Saunders scored two points for the Trojans.

NIACC (68): Humphries 4 1-2 11, Skogen 6 1-2 13, Lee 0 1-4 1, Davis 9 1-2 25, Mohamed 1 0-0 2, Don 4 0-2 8, Wagner 0 0-0 0, Williams 3 0-0 6, McDermott 0 0-0 0, Saunders 1 0-0 2. Totals 28 4-12 68.

KIRKWOOD (81): Hunter 5 0-0 10, Fuller 7 6-6 21, Heffernan 5 1-4 11, Olson 0 0-0 0, Douglas 7 5-8 20, Currie 2 2-4 6, Will 0 0-0 0, Manego 2 0-0 5, Young 4 0-2 8, Lang 0 0-0 0, Butler 0 0-0 0. Totals 32 14-24 81.

Halftime – NIACC 34, Kirkwood 32. 3-point goals – NIACC 8 (Humphries 2, Davis 6), Kirkwood 3 (Fuller 1, Douglas 1, Manego 1). Fouled out - Williams.