

Sneed spurs Eagles into tourney at 24-6

Written by Jim Ecker

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Ariel Sneed is a 6-foot power forward who can do a lot of things for the Kirkwood women's basketball team, but she really likes to hit those 3-pointers.

That's when she smiles the most on the court.

Sneed was all smiles Saturday as she popped in three 3-pointers and scored 22 points as the 11th-ranked Eagles defeated Ellsworth, 76-54, in the final game of the regular season at Johnson Hall.

Kirkwood (24-6, 12-4) will host Iowa Lakes (7-23, 4-12) in the quarterfinals of the ICCAC tournament Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. The Eagles are seeded No.3 in the eight-team tournament and Iowa Lakes is seeded No.6.

Sneed made all three of her 3-pointers, shot 8 for 13 overall, grabbed six rebounds, made three steals and blocked a shot as Kirkwood tied Iowa Central for second place in the conference standings.

Sneed normally plays near the basket, but she's demonstrated an ability to toss in shots from long range, especially if the defense leaves her alone.

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"I've always been able to shoot it, but now I'm working more at it. That's the difference now," she said. "It makes me a threat, outside and inside."

Sneed, from Harvey, Ill., spent one semester at the University of Illinois-Chicago before transferring to Kirkwood last winter. She practiced with the Eagles last season, but did not begin playing until this year. She has one more year of eligibility at Kirkwood, but is entertaining offers from four-year schools.



Kirkwood has enjoyed a successful season despite having 12 new players on the roster. Mikayla Fallon was the only returning letterman from last year's club, which fell one game short of reaching the national tournament.

"Twenty-four and six with a bunch of freshmen and a bunch of injuries," noted KCC coach Kim Muhl. "Now we'll see what happens."

If the Eagles win Tuesday night, they'll advance to the semifinals of the league tournament Friday night in Fort Dodge. The finals are scheduled for next Saturday afternoon in Fort Dodge.

The other first-round pairings Tuesday are No.1 NIACC vs. No.8 Ellsworth, No.2 Iowa Central vs. No.7 Southeastern, and No.4 DMACC vs. No.5 Marshalltown. Kirkwood tied Iowa Central for second place in the standings at 10-4, but Iowa Central won the tiebreaker for the No.2 seed.

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"I think overall we did a pretty good job, for us being such a young team," said Sneed. "It was up and down, but that's what comes with a young team. But overall we gave it what we had and made the most of it. I'm happy with that."

Sneed said there's no secret to what it will take in the league tournament.

"Just effort," she said. "We just have to play 40 hard minutes."

Dani Woolfolk pitched in 13 points for Kirkwood Saturday. Kirsten Larson tossed in three 3-pointers and scored nine points. Fallon had eight points and Taylor Silva had seven.

Keziah Lewis scored 23 points for Ellsworth (9-20, 4-12). Molly Greenfield had 17 points.

ELLSWORTH (54): Campbell 2 0-0 4, Schipper 0 2-2 2, Thigpen 0 0-0 0, Lehman 1 4-4 6, Lewis 5 8-8 23, Harvey 0 0-2 0, Zubrod 0 0-0 0, Greenfield 6 2-2 17, Stockdale 0 0-0 0, Weatherspoon 0 0-0 0, Birkenholz 0 0-0 0, Gates 1 0-0 2, Payne 0 0-0 0, Luebbers 0 0-0 0. Totals 15 16-18 54.

KIRKWOOD (76): Sneed 8 3-5 22, Woolfolk 6 1-2 13, Tuttle 1 0-0 2, Fallon 3 1-1 8, Clark 1 2-3 4, Silva 2 1-2 7, Polite 2 0-0 5, Larson 3 0-0 9, Martensen 1 2-3 4, Bockholt 0 0-0 0, Robinson 1 0-0 2. Totals 28 10-16 76.

Halftime - Kirkwood 44, Ellsworth 34. 3-point goals - Ellsworth 8 (Lewis 5, Greenfield 3), Kirkwood 10 (Sneed 3, Larson 3, Silva 2, Fallon 1, Polite 1).