

Petersen reaches 20 wins with Kirkwood

Written by Jim Ecker

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Bryan Petersen never expected to be the head basketball coach at Kirkwood Community College when he was only 26 years old, but he welcomed the challenge of leading the Eagles this season.

By all accounts he's done just fine.

Kirkwood topped Ellsworth, 81-69, Saturday afternoon at Johnson Hall to finish the regular season at 20-9 overall and 10-4 in the ICCAC Conference.

Petersen might be his own worst critic, despite the success.

"I'm not satisfied with it. I wish we were a little better than that," he said. "I wish we would have won the league."

They came close.

The Eagles finished one game behind DMACC in the ICCAC standings and will host NIACC (20-10) in the quarterfinals of the regional tournament Tuesday night at 7:30.

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Kirkwood is seeded No.3 in the eight-team tournament and NIACC is seeded No.6.

Petersen became Kirkwood's interim head coach this season when Doug Wagemester decided to take a year off from coaching and focus on being the school's athletic director. Wagemester has not announced what will happen next year, but Petersen appeared to make a smooth transition from assistant coach to head coach at a young age.

"I can't even imagine being 26 years old and being a head coach at a college," said Kirkwood sophomore Taylor Olson. "Obviously I have tremendous respect for him. I think he's done a great job with the team. I think he had a pretty good handle on it right away."



Petersen, from Clinton, played at Kirkwood and Iowa State. The Eagles were sitting with a 15-9 record a few weeks ago, but they finished the regular season on a hot streak.

"We're on a five-game winning streak, so we've got some things going our way right now," he said. "So we've got to keep rolling with that."

"We've had our ups and downs. There's no doubt about that," he said. "But we can't look back on the past. We've got one game (Tuesday in the playoffs). That's all that's guaranteed to us."

"I've learned a lot this year. But I've enjoyed it, even with the ups and downs. This is the most important part of the year. I'll remember the most what we do in the postseason."

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Matt Lassen, a freshman from Linn-Mar, popped in five 3-pointers and led Kirkwood with 17 points Saturday. Myzeah Batie-Gaddy scored 16 points in a balanced attack. Joe Tagarelli had a double-double with 13 points and 10 rebounds. Ajay Lawton scored 12 points and JC Fuller had 10.

Robert Lee led Ellsworth (21-9, 8-6) with 22 points.

The other first-round pairings in the regional tournament are No.1 DMACC vs. No.8 Southwestern, No.2 Iowa Lakes vs. No.7 Clinton and No.4 Iowa Central vs. No.5 Ellsworth. The semifinals will be held Thursday and the finals on Saturday, with the higher remaining seeds hosting those games.

Kirkwood would play No.2 Iowa Lakes or No.7 Clinton in the semifinals.

ELLSWORTH (69): Lee 8 3-5 22, Moore 1 0-0 3, Collier 0 3-5 3, Kaland Brown 6 1-1 17, Kalehl Brown 5 4-9 15, Jones 0 0-0 0, Milin 0 0-0 0, Wom 0 0-0 0, McFadden 1 0-0 2, Bongomin 0 2-2 2, Assad 2 0-0 5, Lloyd 0 0-0 0. Totals 23 13-22 69.

KIRKWOOD (81): Lawton 4 1-2 12, Fuller 1 8-10 10, Currie 2 5-6 9, Batie-Gaddy 6 3-3 16, Tagarelli 5 3-4 13, Lassen 5 2-2 17, Weeks 0 0-0 0, Olson 0 4-4 4, Ward 0 0-0 0. Totals 23 26-31 81.

Halftime - Kirkwood 42, Ellsworth 34. 3-point goals - Ellsworth 10 (Kaland Brown 4, Lee 3, Moore 1, Kalehl Brown 1, Assad 1), Kirkwood 9 (Lassen 5, Lawton 3, Batie-Gaddy 1).