

Balanced Eagles raise mark to 9-0

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Kirkwood Eagles know they won't make nineteen 3-pointers too many times like they did Saturday against Iowa Western, so they had a new plan of attack Tuesday night against the Coe junior varsity.

Take it to the rack.

The Eagles attacked the basket and defeated the Kohawks, 85-55, with five players scoring in double figures.

Kirkwood raised its record to 9-0 heading into a short break for Thanksgiving.

"Driving to the hole was our main focus today," said point guard Ajay Lawton, who finished with 12 points, five steals, three assists and three rebounds. "We wanted to get to the bucket as much as possible."

Lawton and Jordan Ashton made six 3-pointers against Iowa Western and Matt Lassen had five, part of a breathtaking performance that saw the Eagles hit 19 of 32 from behind the arc.

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"It was great. A great feeling," said Lawton, a sophomore from Westfield, Ind. "I loved it. All of us loved it. I think that set a record for the most 3's."

Teams that live by the 3 can also die by the 3, so Kirkwood Coach Bryan Petersen wanted to make sure his guys did not fall in love with firing triples Tuesday night.

"I don't want to get to the point where we're settling for jump shots," said Petersen. "That was a huge thing tonight. The team talked about it and I made it clear to them."

Kirkwood shot 7 for 19 on 3-pointers against Coe.

Petersen liked the way Lawton has been running the club this season and Tuesday was no exception.

"I thought Ajay did a great job," the coach said. "He set the tone for getting to the rim. He's continuing to learn how to be the point guard."

Petersen said Lawton has improved since his freshman campaign with the Eagles.

"I think his decision-making is better. And his whole aspect of taking over the team when he's on the floor and running the team is better.

"Ajay is a talent. It's up to him how good he wants to be. He's got all the tools."

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Joe Tagarelli led five Eagles in double figures with 17 points, nine rebounds and three steals. Chike Ukah came off the bench and contributed 14 points, six rebounds and five blocks.

Ashton finished with 13 points. Lassen hit three triples and had 11 points and five assists.

Lawton likes the way Kirkwood has started this season.

"I love it. I love the new team," he said. "They're fun to be around. They're family. We're ready for this year. We're ready.

"We're never selfish," he said. "Everyone is looking for an extra pass. As of right now we're on the right track. We just have to keep going."

Jon Blumberg and Alex Everhart led Coe with 14 points apiece. Josh Jirak scored 12 points.

COE JV (55): Ditch 0 1-2 1, Jirak 5 0-0 12, Blumberg 4 4-4 14, Pflughaupt 1 0-0 3, Everhart 5 4-5 14, Nelson 2 1-2 7, O'Neil 0 0-0 0, Wagner 0 0-0 0, Piotrowski 1 2-2 4. Totals 18 12-15 55.

KIRKWOOD (85): Singleton 0 0-0 0, Lawton 4 4-4 12, Lassen 4 0-0 11, Ashton 5 1-2 13, Tagarelli 7 3-3 17, Richards 0 0-0 0, Bartlett 1 0-0 3, Rhodes 1 2-2 4, Weeks 2 0-2 4, Olson 0 0-0 0, Cowser 1 4-4 7, Martin 0 0-0 0, Ukah 6 2-4 14, Hyberg 0 0-0 0. Totals 31 16-21 85.

Halftime - Kirkwood 41, Coe JV 23. 3-point goals - Coe 7 (Jirak 2, Blumberg 2, Nelson 2, Pflughaupt 1), Kirkwood 7 (Lassen 3, Ashton 2, Bartlett 1, Cowser 1). Fouled out - none.