

Eagles, Mustangs, Kohawks rolling along

Written by Jim Ecker

Sunday, 25 January 2015 17:29 -



Some of the best college basketball in Iowa is being played right here in Cedar Rapids.

It's happening at Kirkwood, Coe and Mount Mercy.

The Eagles, Kohawks and Mustangs are not going to unseat the Cyclones, Panthers and Hawkeyes at the top of the college basketball ladder, but the local schools have enjoyed an extraordinary campaign so far.

Just look at the league standings.

Five of the six teams at Kirkwood, Coe and Mount Mercy are in first place in their conference. The Mount Mercy women are the lone exception, and they're tied for second.

Think about that: First, First, First, First, First and Second.

Amazing.

The fourth-ranked Kirkwood women are 17-4 overall and 5-0 in the ICCAC, good for first place all by themselves. The ninth-ranked Kirkwood men are 16-4 overall and 3-1 in the ICCAC, tied with DMACC for the top.

The Coe women are 12-5 overall and 5-1 in the Iowa Conference, tied with Dubuque for first place. The Coe men are 11-6 overall and 5-1 in the Iowa Conference, deadlocked at the top with Buena Vista.

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The 16th-ranked Mount Mercy men are 17-3 overall and 5-0 in the Midwest Collegiate Conference, all alone in first place by two full games in the loss column. The Mount Mercy women are 12-11 overall and 3-2 in the MCC, tied for second with St. Ambrose and Clarke.

The Kirkwood women are riding a 13-game winning streak. The Mount Mercy men have not lost since November and are riding a 10-game streak.

None of this is by accident. All three colleges have quality programs, quality coaches and quality student-athletes.

Kim Muhl won his 750th game as the Kirkwood women's basketball coach Wednesday night. Bryan Petersen, now in his second year as head coach of the Kirkwood men, is one of the rising stars in the business.

Bryan Martin and Randi (Peterson) Henderson have the Kohawks in good shape. The same is true at Mount Mercy, where Paul Gavin has one of his best men's teams in a successful career and Aaron Jennings has a competitive club with the women.

All three colleges feature talented players from the local Metro high schools. Matt Lassen (Linn-Mar) hit seven 3-pointers and scored 32 points for the Kirkwood men Saturday and Jacob Olson (Jefferson) had nine points in that game for the Eagles. Cyerra Hutchins (Prairie) has given the Kirkwood women a nice boost off the bench in recent contests.

Jake Misener, Ben Struss and Kyle Lamaak - all Kennedy grads - are three of the top players at Mount Mercy. Abby Herb (Washington) and Alisa Weiland (Prairie) are key players for the Mount Mercy women.

Aleena Hobbs (Washington), Jordan Holmes (Kennedy), Courteney McCrary (Prairie), Maddie Koolbeck (Jefferson) and Ashley Stulken (Xavier) are all playing vital roles for the Kohawk

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women.

It's terrific to see Marcus Paige, Jarrod Uthoff, Wes Washpun, Matt Bohannon and Josh Oglesby playing for Top 25 teams on TV, but it's also nice to see all of these other local graduates enjoying good careers right here in Cedar Rapids.

If you like good basketball and you're looking for a chance to get out of the house, you might want to consider stopping by Johnson Hall, Eby Fieldhouse or the Hennessey Recreation Center this winter. The price is right and the value is high.

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