

No. 3 KCC women ousted by No. 15 DMACC

Written by Jim Ecker

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Kim Muhl would love to win a seventh national title at Kirkwood before he calls it a career as the women's basketball coach, but it won't happen this year.

The third-ranked Eagles were eliminated by No. 15 DMACC, 66-54, in the semifinals of the NJCAA Division II regional tournament Thursday night at Johnson Hall in a mild upset.

Kirkwood swept the season series from the Bears, but the visitors from Boone played a sharp game while the Eagles struggled mightily on offense.

Kirkwood made only one 3-pointer in 18 attempts for a woeful 5.6 percent and committed 22 turnovers.

"We weren't very good, were we?" were the first words out of Muhl's mouth after the game. "Pretty bad. Can't do much about it. Can't hit a shot."

Muhl led Kirkwood to national titles in 1997, 2002, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010, but he said there's more parity in junior college basketball now and it's gotten harder to sign outstanding players.

He's not giving up, however. Muhl said he plans to coach again next season, which would be his 28th at Kirkwood.

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"The good out-weighs the bad. Always, I think," he remarked. "You get a little refresher, get away from it a little bit and get dialed in again.

"It's a good question, though," he said, smiling. "A lot of people are asking it."

Muhl will begin his 28th year at Kirkwood next season with a career mark of 792-147.

Kirkwood scored the first five points Thursday, but it was all downhill from there. The Bears clicked for a 12-0 run and never looked back, bolting to a 15-point advantage in the second quarter and a 17-point bulge in the third period.

Kirkwood got within 10 points late in the game, but never any closer than that.



The Eagles beat DMACC by 15 points in their first meeting at Johnson Hall and clipped the Bears by five points in the rematch at Boone, but Muhl had a hunch his club would have its hands full.

"I knew coming in -- I don't know if the kids did -- I knew how good they've been playing," he said. "They've been popping people. They're big, they're sound."

DMACC (26-6) will visit third-ranked NIACC (21-10) for the regional title Saturday afternoon, with the winner earning a spot in the national tournament. Kirkwood was the No. 1 seed in the regional as the

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regular-season conference champs, but playing at home was not an advantage.

Kirkwood lost to NIACC last Saturday at home and fell to DMACC on Thursday at home, two rare losses for a program that rarely loses at Johnson Hall.

The victory was a milestone for DMACC coach Steve Krafcsisin, who played for a Final 4 team at the University of Iowa during his college basketball career. Krafcsisin had never won a game at Johnson Hall before, including the last 11 years as the women's coach at DMACC and eight years before that as the men's coach at NIACC.

"One win in 19 years here," he said. "It was neat, because this is a very intimidating place with the championship banners and the names."

Kirkwood enjoyed another good year at 27-6 overall record, a 13-1 mark in the conference and a No. 3 national ranking, but it all fell by the wayside Thursday night. The Eagles never got rolling on offense against DMACC's 1-2-2 zone and shot 21 for 75 from the field for 28 percent.

Caitlin Sudduth led Kirkwood with 13 points and Dominique Jennings had 12.

Kiana Peterson led DMACC with 18 points and London Vais had 12.

DMACC (66): Geopfert 1 4-8 6, Dean 1 3-5 6, Knittel 0 0-0 0, Peterson 4 7-8 18, Vais 4 3-4 12, McAtee 1 0-0 3, Cartney 3 0-0 6, Pretz 0 2-4 2, Agoth 4 0-0 8, Hughes 2 1-1 5. Totals 20 20-30 66.

KIRKWOOD (54): Harris 0 0-0 0, Miles 0 0-0 0, Sudduth 4 4-4 13, Hutchins 4 1-1 9, Wood 1 0-0 2, Lemons 0 0-0 0, Downs 1 3-5 5, Wheatly 2 0-0 4,

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Oberman 1 2-2 4, Voss 0 0-0 0, Dampier 2 1-2 5, Jennings 6 0-1 12.

Halftime - DMACC 39, Kirkwood 28. 3-point goals - DMACC 6 (Peterson 3, Dean 1, Vais 1, McAtee 1), Kirkwood 1 (Sudduth 1).