

Arrington stars for No. 14 Eagles

Written by Jim Ecker

Sunday, 03 December 2017 00:07 -



A new star was born for the Kirkwood Eagles Saturday afternoon at Johnson Hall.

He's 6-foot-10 and 250 pounds and his name is Kyle Arrington, a giant of a young man from Council Bluffs.

Only time will tell if Arrington was a shooting star that lasts for a moment or whether he's a bright new star for the future, but he sure looked good Saturday.

Arrington played the best game of his young college career with 21 points, 15 rebounds, four blocked shots and four assists to spark the 14th-ranked Eagles in an 85-48 victory over Morton College.

It was a stunning performance for the freshman, who had not played more than 10 minutes in a game all season and began the day averaging a modest 3.3 points and 2.3 rebounds.

And don't let the final score fool you. Kirkwood struggled in the first half and trailed, 28-22, at halftime before Arrington and the Eagles took flight in the second half.

Arrington collected six points and four rebounds in the first half, good enough for Coach Bryan Petersen to put his tallest player into the starting lineup for the second half.

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Arrington responded with 15 points, 11 rebounds, three blocks and three assists in the second half alone as the Eagles rolled up 63 points in the final 20 minutes.

Arrington did not play in Kirkwood's first two games of the season, but he's looked much better the last few weeks and now could become a fixture in the lineup.

"It felt really good for me," he said. "It was really tough at the beginning of the season.

"I talked to Coach and asked him a couple of questions, like what I can do better and stuff like that. The one thing that stuck out was just trusting the process.

"I just kept trusting it and trusting it, and coming to practice every day. It's been paying off," he said. "The last couple of games I've been playing a lot more and obviously today I played a lot."



Arrington averaged 15.3 points, 12.2 rebounds and 3.4 blocks as a senior at Council Bluffs Lewis Central last season, but college basketball is a much different game.

"The transition from high school basketball to college basketball is huge," he noted. "You have to adapt to it."

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Prior to Saturday's game, Arrington had 20 points and 14 rebounds in six contests. Then he exploded for 21 points and 15 rebounds in a single afternoon.

Arrington has gotten a lot more aggressive and confident the last few weeks and has rapidly climbed the depth chart.

"He just keeps coming," said Petersen. "He's playing well.

"He sparks us," the coach added. "Every time he's come into a game, something positive has happened. And obviously today was another level.

"I can't say enough about him ... his energy, his positivity. He really carried us today."

Arrington began the second half with two field goals in 31 seconds to pull Kirkwood within 28-26 and steer the Eagles in the right direction after a sluggish first half.

Chris King hit a layup and drilled a 3-pointer to give Kirkwood a 33-29 lead, and they were never headed again.

The Eagles had a 10-point lead at 56-46 when all heck broke loose. King made a pair of 3-pointers, Jay Small hit a triple, Tajen Ross made a layup and 3-pointer, Taejuan Johnson hit two free throws and followed with a dunk, then Ross converted a layup with a behind-the-back feed from Bailey Kale and suddenly it was 76-46 with a 20-point run. LJ Stansbury tacked on two free throws for a 22-point surge and 78-46 lead.

Arrington did not score any points during the 22-0 run, but his ferocious work around the basket softened up the defense and created openings for his teammates throughout the second half.

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He played like a man possessed and turned in a spectacular performance for Kirkwood (6-3).

"If you come with the mentality and the mature attitude that Kyle has the last three weeks, that's usually what happens," said Petersen. "He's a talented kid.

"He did not get off to the kind of start he wanted this season, but he kept on coming every day. This is the process and this is what you get to enjoy with it."

Arrington scored his 21 points in 24 minutes. He was 6 for 7 from the field and 9 for 13 at the foul line.

"He did a great job today," said Petersen. "He obviously has a lot of potential. It's just great to see him experience that success, and we needed it. That's the bottom line. He's going to be a huge piece of what we do."

Kirkwood scored 22 points in the first half, then exploded for 63 markers in the second half. "Good second half. Better than the first," Petersen remarked with dead-pan humor.

Ross had a big game for the Eagles with 19 points and eight rebounds. King finished with 14 points and eight assists. Small contributed 11 points in his first start and Doug Wilson snared 10 rebounds.

Edward Clary scored 16 points for Morton College (5-4).

Kirkwood crushed Morton on the backboards, 50-29, and connected on twelve 3-pointers.

MORTON (48): Moore 0 0-0 0, Vires 3 2-2 8, Clary 6 2-2 16, McReynolds 4 0-2 10, Edwards 1 1-2 3, Owens 0 0-0 0, Davis 0 2-2 2, Reyes 0 0-2 0, Reed 2 2-2 7, Courts 0 0-0 0, Urquizo 0

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0-0 0, Whitehead 1 0-0 2. Totals 17 9-14 48.

KIRKWOOD (85): Stansbury 2 2-2 7, Small 4 0-0 11, Ross 7 2-3 19, King 5 4-8 14, Wilson 1 0-2 2, Kale 1 2-2 5, Ray 1 0-0 2, Johnson 1 2-2 4, Storey 0 0-0 0, Arrington 6 9-13 21.

Halftime - Morton 28, Kirkwood 22. 3-point goals - Morton 5 (Clary 2, McReynolds 2, Reed 1), Kirkwood 12 (King 4, Small 3, Ross 3, Stansbury 1, Kale 1).