

Stansbury sparks KCC by No. 2 Lincoln

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 11 January 2018 05:51 -



There are hundreds of good colleges between L.J. Stansbury's home town in Delaware and way out here in Cedar Rapids, but he felt at home during his visit to Kirkwood and figured this would be a good place to play ball.

He was right.

Stansbury exploded off the bench Wednesday with 21 points and 10 rebounds to help the Eagles dump second-ranked Lincoln College, 71-55, in a non-conference game at Johnson Hall.

Stansbury, a versatile 6-foot-4 freshman who can play four positions, reached a career-high in points and rebounds and had a double-double by halftime.

"He was huge for us," said Kirkwood Coach Bryan Petersen. "He came off the bench and was able to score and rebound for us. That's the player we feel that L.J. can be."

Stansbury has started eight games for the Eagles this season, but he lost his spot in the lineup in December and has played as a reserve the last five games.

Petersen said Stansbury needed to play with a greater sense of urgency and to value each possession.

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"He's come back (from the holiday break) with a new energy, he's guarding much better on the floor, he's rebounding better for us in practice and it showed tonight," the coach remarked.

Stansbury's previous career-bests this season were 11 points and seven rebounds, but he surpassed both numbers in the first half when he collected 14 points and 10 boards by intermission.

Stansbury kept a positive attitude after losing his spot in the starting lineup and battled back to play a prominent role in one of the best wins of the season.

"Just keep going hard in practice," he told himself after being assigned to the bench last month. "It was definitely a wake-up call to do some things different and make more winning plays.

"It just really woke me up," he said. "It woke up a monster, actually."

Stansbury made 6-of-7 shots from the field, hit a pair of triples and was 7-for-7 at the foul line.

Stansbury had NCAA Division I offers from St. Peter's and Ryder as a high school sophomore and visited Wagner University before coming to Kirkwood, but liked what he found a thousand miles from home.



"I felt the most comfortable here, surprisingly," he said. "It was more the coaches. I just fell in love with them. I could tell they were all about their players.

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"It was a winning program and I could tell I'd fit in here. It's working out."

Nick Richards, who helped Kirkwood win the NJCAA Division II national title in 2016, is from Stansbury's home town in Delaware and attended the same high school. He helped steer Stansbury to Cedar Rapids.

"I talked to him right before I committed," said Stansbury. "He and Coach Bryan (Petersen) are good friends. Yeah, he played a big part in it."

Stansbury said he likes living in Iowa.

"Actually, it's a lot like Delaware," he remarked. "There's not much out here and there's not much in Delaware. It's really cool."

Stansbury said he's been able to concentrate on his classes and basketball at Kirkwood as he works toward finding a four-year school in the future.

Stansbury made an immediate impact against Lincoln after he entered the game in the first half. He hit a follow shot and added a 3-pointer for an 18-6 lead, then came back with another triple for a 21-9 advantage.

Lincoln, which suffered its first loss of the season, pulled within six points, but Stansbury responded with six more points of his own to help Kirkwood grab another 12-point margin in the first half.

Carlo Marble, held scoreless in the first half, hit three 3-pointers and scored 11 points in the second half to help the Eagles keep Lincoln at arm's length.

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One of Marble's high-arching 3-pointers made it 57-40 and another made it 60-42 with 7:35 remaining, giving Kirkwood its biggest lead of the night at 18 points. Lincoln never got closer than 12 points again.

Chris King scored 14 points for the Eagles. Doug Wilson finished with 11 points, nine rebounds, three blocks and several thunderous dunks.

Trayvon Tyler scored 20 points for Lincoln (12-1), but he was the only visitor in double figures.

Kirkwood lost at Lincoln, 86-77, two months ago in the third game of the season on Nov. 11, but the Eagles held Lincoln to 31 fewer points in the rematch.

"We played pretty good," said Petersen. "That's probably the best we've played all year for a full 40 minutes. That's what was so nice to see. Our group kind of grew up tonight. I feel we really got better."

Kirkwood (10-4) will play its conference opener this Saturday at seventh-ranked Iowa Central, which has a 13-2 record. That will make two top-10 opponents in four days for the Eagles.

"We needed to have a good week," said Petersen, "so this was a good start."

LINCOLN (55): Griffith 2 0-0 5, Tyler 7 4-11 20, Rivera 1 0-0 3, Simpkins 3 0-0 7, Austin 3 0-0 7, Jackson 0 0-0 0, Nelson 1 2-2 4, Devane 0 0-0 0, Crumble 0 0-0 0, Watkins 1 0-0 3, Johnson 0 0-0 0, Wright 3 0-0 6. Totals 21 6-13 55.

KIRKWOOD (71): Kale 1 0-0 3, Meeker 1 0-0 2, King 6 1-2 14, Wilson 5 1-7 11, Arrington 0 4-6 4, Stansbury 6 7-7 21, Small 1 0-0 3, Ross 1 0-0 2, Marble 4 0-0 11, Storey 0 0-0 0. Totals 25 13-22 71.

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Halftime - Kirkwood 32, Lincoln 26. 3-point goals - Lincoln 7 (Tyler 2, Griffith 1, Rivera 1, Simpkins 1, Austin 1, Watkins 1), Kirkwood 8 (Marble 3, Stansbury 2, Kale 1, King 1, Small 1).