

No. 7 Eagles ride 3-pointers to victory

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 10 February 2018 21:37 -



It's a good thing Bryan Petersen did not forbid his guys from shooting any more 3-pointers after the Kirkwood Eagles missed 16 of them in the first half Saturday.

When it counted, the Eagles hit nothing but net.

Kirkwood popped in six straight 3-pointers during a key stretch in the second half to break open a close game and bounce Iowa Central, 85-79, in a conference game at Johnson Hall.

The Eagles were clinging to a 52-48 lead when the 3-point barrage began with eight minutes remaining.

Carlo Marble began the flurry with a triple from the corner. Ethan Meeker followed with a 3-pointer, then Bailey Kale connected from behind the arc to join the fun.

Marble hit another trey, Meeker followed suit and Marble capped the impressive display with another 3-pointer to give Kirkwood a 73-56 advantage with a four-minute onslaught from behind the arc.

"That's what separated us," said Petersen. "It's not how we drew it up, but I'll take it."

Petersen did not want to abandon 3-pointers after the Eagles were only 3 for 19 in the first half. Rather, he simply wanted his players to make another pass and take a good shot.

"I thought we took a lot of tough 3's that were not in rhythm after maybe one pass in the first half," he said. "Those are tough ones to make."

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So no, there was no prohibition on shots from beyond the arc. The only advice was to make an extra pass and take a good one.

"Don't outlaw them," said Petersen. "We've got to keep shooting them and have confidence in our guys."

"Guys stepped up and made the shots, but I was more impressed with how we got the shots. There were a lot of drive-and-kicks and guys finding the right guys."

Kirkwood was 7 for 12 on 3-pointers in the second half, with six of them during the pivotal outburst.

Marble got into early foul trouble and was scoreless at halftime, but he delivered with the game hanging in the balance.

"Like Coach preaches, when opportunity comes, just be ready," he said. "You definitely have to have a short memory in basketball."

Iowa Central (17-8, 3-4) survived the 3-point barrage and pulled within six points at 76-70 with 45 seconds left, but that's as close as the Tritons ever got again.

Chris King hit six straight free throws for Kirkwood in the final 16 seconds and finished with 15 points, tying Doug Wilson for team scoring honors. King also had two strong drives to the basket for conventional three-point plays at key spots.

Bailey Kale collected 11 points and six assists for the Eagles, who won their 10th straight game for an 18-4 overall mark and 7-0 ledger in the ICCAC conference with five games left. Kirkwood has a two-game lead in the conference race.

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"I feel good. We're 7-and-0," said Petersen. "It's a good position to be in. I still feel like our defense has got to get better on some things.

"There's still a long way to go," he added. "We've still got to play five other teams in our league, we still have a couple of tough road games, but we're in a position that we want to be in right now.

"We just have to finish."

Kyle Arrington provided a double-double with 10 points and 12 rebounds. Meeker also scored 10 points.

Tray Croft poured in 30 points for Iowa Central. Dallas Bailey had 19 points and 10 rebounds.

Kirkwood visits NIACC Wednesday night.

IOWA CENTRAL (79): Croft 10 9-9 30, Webb 3 0-0 6, Bailey 7 2-7 19, Shannon 4 2-2 13, Akamarmoi 1 2-2 4, Hawkins 0 0-0 0, Kramer 1 0-0 3, Etheredge 0 0-0 0, Jenkins 1 2-5 4, Kephart 0 0-0 0, Jegede 0 0-0 0, Taylor 0 0-0 0. Totals 27 17-25 79.

KIRKWOOD (85): Kale 3 2-2 11, Meeker 4 0-1 10, King 3 8-8 15, Wilson 7 1-6 15, Arrington 4 2-3 10, Stansbury 2 2-4 6, Small 2 0-0 5, Ross 1 0-0 2, Marble 3 0-0 9, Johnson 1 0-0 2. Totals 30 15-24 85.

Halftime - Kirkwood 32, Iowa Central 28. 3-point goals - Iowa Central 8 (Bailey 3, Shannon 3, Croft 1, Kramer 1), Kirkwood 10 (Kale 3, Marble 3, Meeker 2, King 1, Small 1).